
SIGNIFICANCE OF QATAR'S FOREIGN POLICY IN INTERNATIONAL LAW: BASED ON PANEL DATA ANALYSIS

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*What is the precise nature of Qatar's foreign policy? What is its significance in international law? This study examines Qatar's foreign policy, which centers on mediation efforts, through a multiple linear regression analysis of panel data from the perspective of inferential statistics. The findings indicate that the frequency of Qatar's mediation activities is mainly determined by the level of development within the relevant foreign states and Qatar's influence over these states. Accordingly, Qatar's foreign policy employs strategies and measures to strengthen its presence by actively and positively exerting its influence on these states. These advanced strategies drive Qatar to fulfill its obligation to actively intervene in conflict resolution, supported by *opinio juris sive necessitatis* under international law based on the Qatar Constitution. This study concludes that Qatar's state practices hold significance in international law, offering a new interpretation of the principle of peaceful settlement of international disputes, especially concerning non-parties to conflicts, and contributing to the development of relevant customary international law.*

I. INTRODUCTION: OVERVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDIES

It is undeniable that Qatar has become a focal point in recent diplomatic studies. Since 1995, when former Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani ascended the throne, Qatar has adopted highly multifaceted strategies, significantly enhancing its presence in the international community.¹ Specifically, Qatar has implemented its foreign policy through mediation of international, regional, and internal disputes, including armed conflicts; cooperation with international and regional organizations; foreign aid and international investments backed by its abundant energy resources; the exertion of hard power through economic leverage and military capacity; and the application of soft power through institutions such as Al Jazeera and the Qatar

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1. Jamal Abdullah, *Qatari Foreign Policy: Fine Tuning or Redirection?* 3 (Al Jazeera Centre for Studies, 2014).

Foundation.² These diverse diplomatic initiatives have drawn the attention of global leaders, diplomatic experts, and scholars across various fields, including politics and international relations.

Scholarly perspectives on Qatar's foreign policy are divided between those who theorize and commend its strategic approach and those who argue that no coherent strategy exists. The following section introduces key research on both sides of this debate.

A. *Theorizing and Commending Qatar's Foreign Policy Strategies*

Kamrava characterizes Qatari foreign policy under Sheikh Hamad Al-Thani as an exercise of "*subtle power*," defined as "the ability to exert influence from behind the scenes"³ through "purposive choices and carefully calibrated policies."⁴ According to Kamrava, Qatar's *subtle power* is derived from four key elements: military-backed security guarantees, prestige-building through branding and reputation, an expanded international presence through proactive diplomacy, and the strategic use of wealth as a form of hard power, especially through international investing.⁵ By effectively balancing these four elements, including hyperactive diplomatic engagement, vast resources, international prestige, centralized leadership, and strategic advantages over neighboring states, Qatar has emerged as a significant influencer in both regional and global affairs.⁶

Kusumawijaya and Machmudi assess the strategic value of Qatar's foreign policy through the lens of rational choice theory. They highlight how Qatar not only expands its influence within the Muslim world by supporting Islamist groups and regional leaders but also strengthens its global presence through soft power, especially during Sheikh Hamad Al-Thani's rule.⁷ Applying rational choice theory, they argue that Qatar systematically evaluates the costs and benefits of available diplomatic options, consistently selecting the most optimum and stable preferences.⁸ Additionally, they contend that Qatar's mediation-based foreign policy is rooted in relational power, which evolves from social power and is executed strategically by aligning with states that elevate Qatar's international standing.⁹

Steinberg, examining Qatar's diplomatic initiatives across multiple sectors, finds internal consistency in its foreign policy and argues that Qatari leaders

2. See, e.g., *id.* at 3–5.

3. Mehran Kamrava, *Qatari Foreign Policy and the Exercise of Subtle Power*, 14 INT'L STUD. J. 91, 112 (2017).

4. *Id.* at 119.

5. *Id.* at 112–19.

6. *Id.* at 94, 113–19, 120–22.

7. Kresna Kusumawijaya & Yon Machmudi, *Qatar Foreign Policy in Middle East Conflict Mediation*, 9 J. MIDDLE E. & ISLAMIC STUD. 1, 13 (2022).

8. *Id.*

9. *Id.* at 14.

operate within well-defined strategic parameters.¹⁰ Since the mid-1990s, following Sheikh Hamad Al-Thani's rise to power, Qatar has pursued three diplomatic strategies: expanding its influence in global markets through increased gas production and exports, forging a close alliance with the United States to secure military protection, and making substantial investments in media, culture, education, tourism, and sports.¹¹ These strategies, according to Steinberg, form the basis of Qatar's regional policies, which include mediating regional conflicts, supporting Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, and engaging in strategic competition with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.¹²

B. Counterarguments to the Existence of Qatar's Foreign Policy Strategies

This study also examines previous studies that challenge the very existence of a coherent Qatari foreign policy strategy.

Analyzing the motivations behind Qatar's foreign policy, Khatib argues that it "does not appear to be based on a coherent political strategy."¹³ Her study identifies four key motivations: (1) maintaining Qatar's security and stability; (2) countering Iran's influence while maintaining amicable relations; (3) expanding Qatar's influence over Saudi Arabia; (4) establishing Qatar as a recognized "international ally of the West."¹⁴ Based on the analysis, Khatib contends that Qatar's foreign policy aligns with classic political pragmatism and remains within the framework of good-neighboring practices.¹⁵ She further suggests that Qatar's approach is largely reactive and opportunistic,¹⁶ making it vulnerable to both international and domestic destabilizing factors, thereby increasing the risk of fluctuation.¹⁷

Haykel similarly asserts that Qatar's foreign policy under Sheikh Hamad's rule lacks ideological grounding.¹⁸ According to his analysis, Qatar's policies, especially its calculations involving the United States and Saudi Arabia, are not guided by principles such as human rights or the rule of law.¹⁹ Instead, they are shaped by opportunistic considerations aimed at maximizing Qatar's interests.²⁰

Likewise, Abu Sulaib, based on his analysis of Qatar's mediation efforts, geopolitical positioning, and alliances, argues that Qatar's foreign policy lacks a

10. Guido Steinberg, *Qatar's Foreign Policy: Decision-Making Processes, Baselines, and Strategies*, 4 STIFTUNG WISSENSCHAFT & POLITIK RES. PAPER 1, 6 (2023).

11. *Id.* at 6, 12, 15, 22.

12. *Id.* at 6.

13. Lina Khatib, *Qatar's Foreign Policy: The Limits of Pragmatism*, 89 INT'L AFFS. 417, 417 (2013).

14. *Id.* at 418–20.

15. *Id.* at 420.

16. *Id.* at 428–29, 431.

17. *Id.* at 417, 431.

18. Bernard Haykel, *Qatar's Foreign Policy*, NORWEGIAN PEACEBUILDING RES. CENTER POL'Y BRIEF 1 (2013).

19. *Id.* at 2.

20. *Id.* at 1, 2.

systematic approach.²¹ While this lack of structure grants the policy flexibility, it also renders it ambiguous.²² Roberts echoes this perspective, asserting that Qatar does not operate with a grand strategic plan in shaping its foreign policy.²³ Instead, he focuses on Qatar's branding efforts and its emphasis on mediation rather than a broader, well-defined strategy.²⁴

C. *Challenge to the Classical Realistic Views*

Beyond these debates over Qatar's foreign policy strategies, some scholars argue that Qatar's policies do not conform to classical international relations theories. However, these studies refrain from engaging in an aggressive theorization of Qatar's diplomatic strategies. For instance, Kabalan examines the diplomatic patterns under Sheikh Hamad Al-Thani and asserts that Qatar's role in coordinating the Middle Eastern power structure transcends classical realism.²⁵ He suggests that Qatar's foreign policy challenges conventional realist concepts such as "bandwagoning and balancing," which typically characterize the diplomatic behavior of small states.²⁶ Similarly, Kaussler contends that Qatar's "activist foreign policy" raises fundamental questions about the applicability of small-state realist assumptions, again such as bandwagoning and balancing, to its diplomatic practices.²⁷ Álvarez-Ossorio and García further argue that Qatar's "mediator-integrator" role, which heavily relies on soft power tools, does not align with realism's traditional view of small states as passive actors in international relations.²⁸ According to their perspective, classical realism assumes that smaller states engage minimally in global affairs and seek alliances primarily to avoid conflicts, a notion that Qatar's foreign policy directly contradicts.²⁹

D. *Methodological Consideration in Evaluating Qatar's Foreign Policy*

The preceding studies can be categorized into two main narratives. Scholars who theorize and commend Qatar's foreign policy strategies present a context in which Qatar actively and positively expands its influence and asserts itself on the global stage. On the contrary, the perspective that denies the existence of Qatar's foreign policy strategies suggests a narrative in which Qatar acts passively and

21. Faisal Mukhyat Abu Sulaib, *Understanding Qatar's Foreign Policy, 1995–2017*, 24 MIDDLE E. POL'Y 29, 30–32, 35 (2017).

22. *Id.* at 32.

23. David B. Roberts, *Understanding Qatar's Foreign Policy Objectives*, 17 MEDITERRANEAN POLS. 233, 233 (2012).

24. *Id.* at 236.

25. Marwan Kabalan, *Actors, Structures and Qatari Foreign Policy*, 2 ALMUNTAKA 61, 61–63, 69 (2019).

26. *Id.* at 62.

27. Bernd Kaussler, *Tracing Qatar's Foreign Policy and its Impact on Regional Security*, ARAB CTR. FOR RSCH. & POL'Y STUD. 1, 1–3 (2015).

28. Ignacio Álvarez-Ossorio & Leticia Rodríguez García, *The Foreign Policy of Qatar: From a Mediating Role to an Active One*, 56 REVISTA ESPAÑOLA DE CIENCIA POLÍTICA 97, 104–05, 108 (2021).

29. *Id.* at 108.

negatively in response to the influence of other nations. Notably, arguments asserting that Qatar's foreign policy falls outside the scope of classical realist theories in international relations align more closely with the former perspectives, as such theories assume that great powers take active roles while smaller states react passively.

What methodologies can help assess the significance of Qatar's foreign policy and reconcile the divergence between these two viewpoints? The fundamental difference between the two lies in whether Qatar actively exerts influence over other states or passively reacts to external pressures. Therefore, determining which perspective aligns more closely with the realities of Qatar's foreign policy requires an examination of the theoretical framework proposed in the preceding studies.

To address this issue, this study validates previous studies and examines Qatar's foreign policy strategies through quantitative analysis. Specifically, it employs inferential statistics methods to analyze Qatar's foreign policy during the reign of Sheikh Hamad Al-Thani, a period that has been the focal point of these debates. By conducting multiple linear regression analysis of panel data, this study statistically assesses the extent of relationship between Qatar's influence on foreign states, the influence of these foreign states on Qatar, and Qatar's mediation efforts, a hallmark of its foreign policy.³⁰ Based on this statistical assessment, this study reassesses Qatar's foreign policy strategies and in doing so, considers their significance within the framework of international law.

Accordingly, this study is structured as follows: Part II details the research methodology, including the sample size, dependent (explained) variable, independent (explanatory) variables, control variables, and the statistical model used for the panel data multiple linear regression analysis.³¹ Part III presents the findings of the regression analysis along with their interpretations.³² Part IV discusses Qatar's foreign policy strategies and their implications in international law, drawing on the study's empirical findings and their broader theoretical implications.³³

II. ANALYTICAL METHOD (PANEL DATA MULTIPLE LINEAR REGRESSION)

30. According to the website of the Qatari Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the cardinal points of Qatar's foreign policy are international cooperation, human rights, and mediation. On this point, see Ministry of Foreign Affairs, STATE OF QATAR, <https://mofa.gov.qa/en/home> (last visited Sept. 2, 2025) [<https://perma.cc/KV54-JXES>].

31. *See infra* Part II.

32. *See infra* Part III.

33. *See infra* Part IV.

ANALYSIS)

A. Sample Size

This study conducts a quantitative analysis of Qatar's 19-year foreign policy under the rule of Sheikh Hamad Al-Thani (1995–2013), the period most commonly examined in preceding studies. As noted in the previous Part, the objective of this statistical analysis is to assess the degree of relationship between Qatar's influence on foreign states, the influence of these foreign states on Qatar, and Qatar's mediation activities, which are centered on its foreign policy. For this analysis, relevant foreign countries are defined as those within the Middle East and North African (MENA) region, given Qatar's regional diplomacy engagement and mediation efforts, along with the United States and the United Kingdom. The inclusion of the United States is due to its strong military and strategic ties with Qatar, notably through its stationing of troops at Al-Udeid Air Base.³⁴ The United Kingdom is included due to its historical role as Qatar's protecting state from 1916 to 1971.³⁵ Specifically, the relevant foreign states in this study are the United States, the United Kingdom, and the countries categorized under the MENA region by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.³⁶

With these twenty foreign states, this study quantitatively analyzes Qatar's foreign policy over nineteen years. The panel data is thus computed by multiplying twenty countries by nineteen years. However, after addressing missing values through listwise deletion, the total sample size is 346.

B. Dependent (Explained) Variable

The statistical analysis aims to determine the extent to which Qatar's influence on relevant foreign states, or the influence of these states on Qatar, relates with Qatar's execution of mediation actions. Accordingly, the dependent (explained) variable in this study is the annual frequency of Qatar's mediation activities.

Data on the frequency of Qatar's mediation is obtained from Appendices I and II seen at the "Qatar's Mediation Efforts" page on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar.³⁷

34. *U.S. Security Cooperation With Qatar*, U.S. DEP'T OF STATE (Jan. 20, 2025), <https://www.state.gov/u-s-security-cooperation-with-qatar> [https://perma.cc/F5GJ-NMGA].

35. James Onley, *Britain and the Gulf Shaikhdoms, 1820–1971: The Politics of Protection*, 4 CTR. FOR INT'L & REG'L STUD. OCCASIONAL PAPER 1, 1, 3, 10, 23 (2009).

36. *Countries*, U.N. OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMM'R FOR HUM. RTS., <https://www.ohchr.org/en/countries> (last visited Sept. 3, 2025) [https://perma.cc/N3QH-GZHQ].

37. *Qatar's Mediation Efforts*, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFS., <https://mofa.gov.qa/en/foreign-policy/mediation> (last visited Sept. 3, 2025) [https://perma.cc/Z3HH-7NRB].

C. *Independent (Explanatory) Variables*

In response to the dependent variable, and in line with the objectives of this study, the influence exerted by Qatar on twenty selected states and the influence of these states on Qatar are defined as the independent (explanatory) variables. These variables represent the quantitative degree of reciprocal influence between Qatar and the selected nations. To quantify this influence, this study uses the Formal Bilateral Influence Capacity (FBIC) Index, which measures relational power within the international system across all state pairs. The FBIC Index was developed by the Frederick S. Pardee Center for International Futures at the University of Denver.³⁸

The FBIC Index calculates “influence capacity” or “relational power” based on the size of interactions and the degree of dependence between states in economic, political, and security domains.³⁹ This Index is grounded in the idea that influence is shaped by two factors: (1) the volume of interaction in economic, political, and security fields, which provides opportunities for states to exert mutual influence, and (2) the extent of dependence between states in economic and security dimensions, which establishes dominance relationships and affects states’ decision-making.⁴⁰ The first factor, interaction volume, is measured by a subindex called “Bandwidth,” which is further categorized into economic, political, and security components.⁴¹ The second factor, dependence, is measured by a subindex called “Dependence,” which includes economic and security elements.⁴² The core input variables of the FBIC Index include trade in goods, foreign aid, arms trade, diplomatic exchange, shared intergovernmental organization memberships, trade agreements, military alliances, GDP, and military expenditures.⁴³

This study incorporates two types of FBIC Index values as independent variables: (1) the FBIC Index of Qatar, representing its influence on the selected foreign states, and (2) the FBIC Index of the foreign states, representing their influence on Qatar. As discussed in the preceding Part, if theoretical perspectives that support Qatar’s active and strategic foreign policy are to be validated, the relationship between the dependent variable and Qatar’s FBIC Index (its influence on foreign states) should be relatively stronger. These perspectives suggest that Qatar actively and positively exerts influence over these states. Conversely, if arguments emphasizing the absence of a coherent Qatari foreign

38. *The Frederick S. Pardee Institute for International Futures*, JOSEF KORBEL SCHOOL OF GLOBAL AND PUB. AFFS. AT THE U. OF DENVER, <https://korbel.du.edu/pardee/> (last visited Sept. 4, 2025) [<https://perma.cc/8C8S-S7WR>].

39. JONATHAN D. MOYER, COLLIN J. MEISEL, AUSTIN S. MATTHEWS, DAVID K. BOHL & MATHEW J. BURROWS, CHINA-US COMPETITION: MEASURING GLOBAL INFLUENCE, THE ATLANTIC COUNCIL & FREDERICK S. PARDEE CTR. FOR INT’L FUTURES AT THE U. OF DENVER’S JOSEF KORBEL SCHOOL OF INT’L STUD. 1, 1 (2021), <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/China-US-Competition-Report-2021.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/R3PT-QDJR>].

40. *Id.* at 28.

41. *Id.* at 7, 28.

42. *Id.* at 29.

43. *Id.* at 26, 28.

policy strategy are to be supported, the relationship between the dependent variable and the FBIC Index of foreign states (their influence on Qatar) should be comparatively stronger. This perspective suggests that Qatar acts passively and negatively in response to external influence.

D. Control Variables

In addition to the two independent variables, this study incorporates two control variables that are associated with the frequency of Qatar's mediation activities (the dependent variable). The first control variable is the Composite Index of National Capabilities (CINC), and the second is the Human Development Indicators (HDI).

The CINC is measured through the creation of the National Material Capabilities (NMC) dataset by the Correlates of War (COW) project.⁴⁴ This Index utilizes six variables: military expenditure, military personnel, energy consumption, iron and steel production, urban population, and total population. The CINC is derived by dividing the sum of the percentages of a nation's contribution to each of these variables by the number of variables considered.⁴⁵ Thus, the CINC can be interpreted as representing the percentage of a nation's material capabilities relative to the global total, making it a reliable indicator of national power from the perspective of military strength, industrial output, and population dynamics.

There is a possibility that Qatar's mediation activities are influenced by changes in the material capabilities or national power of relevant foreign countries. Thus, the CINC is included as a control variable to account for the relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

The HDI is a dataset created by the United Nations Development Programme⁴⁶ that quantifies the level of development in each country. This index goes beyond economic growth, measuring people's capabilities across three dimensions: long and healthy life, knowledge, and a decent standard of living.⁴⁷ The HDI is calculated based on the four indicators corresponding to these dimensions: life expectancy at birth, expected years of schooling, mean years of schooling, and GNI per capita.⁴⁸ Consequently, the HDI serves as a credible indicator of comprehensive development within a country.

44. *About the Correlates of War Project*, CORRELATES OF WAR, <https://correlatesofwar.org/> (last visited Sept. 4, 2025) [<https://perma.cc/9MAZ-4V7F>].

45. *National Material Capabilities (v6.0)*, CORRELATES OF WAR, <https://correlatesofwar.org/datasets/national-material-capabilities/> (last visited Sept. 5, 2025) [<https://perma.cc/R366-VYN6>]. Regarding this data set, see Singer, J. David, Stuart Bremer & John Stuckey, *Capability Distribution, Uncertainty, and Major Power War, 1820–1965*, in PEACE, WAR, AND NUMBERS 19, 19–48 (Bruce M. Russett ed., 1972); Singer, J. David, *Reconstructing the Correlates of War Dataset on Material Capabilities of States, 1816–1985*, 14 INT'L INTERACTIONS 115–32 (1988).

46. *United Nations Development Programme: Home*, <https://www.undp.org/> (last visited Sept. 4, 2025) [<https://perma.cc/27DH-XDPL>].

47. *Human Development Index (HDI)*, U.N. DEV. PROGRAMME, <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/human-development-index#/indicies/HDI> (last visited Sept. 4, 2025) [<https://perma.cc/TS66-MK8K>].

48. *Id.*

There is also a possibility that Qatar's mediation activities are influenced by the success of domestic politics or changes in the development status of the relevant foreign states. Therefore, the HDI is included as a control variable to account for the relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

E. Statistical Model

To determine the degree of relationship or influence of the independent and control variables on the dependent variables, this study employs panel data multiple linear regression analysis. In this type of regression analysis, regression equation accounts for individual effect, which captures heterogeneity among entities or individuals (i.e., the relevant foreign nations in this study) by allowing for differences in intercepts. Depending on how the individual effect is treated, three types of statistical models are commonly used in panel data multiple linear regression analysis.

First, the pooled ordinary least squares (pooled OLS) model assumes no individual effect despite the panel structure of data, meaning all entities are considered homogeneous.⁴⁹ Second, the fixed-effects model assumes a correlation between the individual effect and the independent variables.⁵⁰ Third, the random-effects model is based on the premise that the individual effect is uncorrelated with the independent variables.⁵¹

To determine which of these models is most appropriate, this study conducts three statistical tests. First, an F-test is performed at a 5% significance level to test the null hypothesis that all entities share the same individual effect. If the null hypothesis is rejected, the fixed-effects model is preferred over the pooled OLS model, as it accounts for variations in individual effects across entities. Second, the Breusch–Pagan Lagrange Multiplier test is conducted at a 5% significance level to test the null hypothesis that the variance of individual intercepts is zero (i.e., there is no individual effect). If this hypothesis is rejected, the random-effects model is preferred over the pooled OLS model. Third, the Hausman test is conducted at a 5% significance level to assess whether the random-effects model provides consistent estimators. If the null hypothesis is rejected, the fixed-effects model is preferred over the random-effects model.

At the beginning of the next Part, this study conducts these three tests to determine which models to adopt. Once the appropriate model is selected, this

49. Let Y_{it} (i represents an individual, and t represents a surveyed point in time) be the dependent variable, let $X_{1it}, X_{2it}, X_{3it}, X_{4it}$ be the independent and control variables, let α be the constant term (indicating that all entities share the same individual effect), let $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4$ be the partial regression coefficients that correspond to the each dependent and control variable, let u be the disturbance term. The regression equation of the pooled OLS model is as follows:

$$Y_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1 X_{1it} + \beta_2 X_{2it} + \beta_3 X_{3it} + \beta_4 X_{4it} + u_{it}$$

50. Let α_i be the constant term concerning the individual effects (α_i correlates with X_{kit}). The regression equation of the fixed-effects model is as follows:

$$Y_{it} = \alpha_i + \beta_1 X_{1it} + \beta_2 X_{2it} + \beta_3 X_{3it} + \beta_4 X_{4it} + u_{it}$$

51. Let v_i be unobservable variables concerning the individual effects (v_i is uncorrelated with X_{kit}). The regression equation of the random-effects model is as follows:

$$Y_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1 X_{1it} + \beta_2 X_{2it} + \beta_3 X_{3it} + \beta_4 X_{4it} + v_i + u_{it}$$

study proceeds with statistical analysis and interprets the findings. Basic descriptive statistics for the variables are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1. BASIC STATISTICS (TABLE BY AUTHOR)

	Maximum	Minimum	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
Qatar's mediation frequency	3	0	0.947368421	0	1.147381289
FBIC Index of Qatar	0.1359	0	0.012918421	0.0026	0.02149258
FBIC Index of Foreign States	0.1904	0	0.024755763	0.0056	0.039736989
CINC	0.15630208	0.00046894	0.012347065	0.003844102	0.031796403
HDI	0.923	0.389	0.718393258	0.7295	0.115672984

III. RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE ANALYSIS

A. Statistical Test

Table 2 presents the results of the three statistical tests discussed in Part II.E.

TABLE 2. STATISTICAL TEST RESULTS (TABLE BY AUTHOR)

	Test Statistics	P-value
F-test	F (18, 323) = 18.6479	0.000
Breusch–Pagan LM test	Chi-square (1) = 1.58462	0.208096
Hausman test	Chi-square (4) = 310.417	0.000

At a significance level of 5% (0.05), the null hypotheses of the F-test and Hausman test are rejected, whereas the null hypothesis of the Breusch–Pagan Lagrange Multiplier test is not rejected. Consequently, the following conclusions can be drawn: First, based on the F-test result, the fixed-effects model is preferred over the pooled OLS model, as individual effects vary across entities. Second, the Breusch–Pagan Lagrange Multiplier test result indicates that the pooled OLS model should be used instead of the random-effects model. Third, the Hausman test result suggests that the fixed-effects model is preferred to the random-effects model.

Accordingly, this study employs the fixed-effects model as the primary model and the pooled OLS model as the secondary model for the panel data multiple linear regression analysis.

B. Panel Data Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Table 3 displays the results of the panel data multiple linear regression analysis using both the fixed-effects model and the pooled OLS model.

TABLE 3. PANEL DATA ANALYSIS RESULTS (TABLE BY AUTHOR)

	Fixed-Effects Model		Pooled OLS Model	
		standardized		standardized
FBIC Index of Qatar	12.3124 ** (4.24065)	0.230634 ** (0.0794352)	13.4265 *** (3.28266)	0.251503 *** (0.0614903)
FBIC Index of Foreign States	4.27478 (2.82738)	0.148048 (0.0979202)	-4.37783 * (1.84509)	-0.151616 * (0.0639006)
CINC	-20.7033 (25.4695)	-0.573734 (0.705814)	-0.298000 (2.20080)	-0.00825823 (0.0609889)
HDI	24.9495 *** (1.53728)	2.51528 *** (0.154981)	2.10430 ** (0.634946)	0.212145 ** (0.0640119)
Constant	-16.9755 *** (1.13826)	0.00861938 (0.0393873)	-0.583600 (0.429250)	0.0367265 (0.0518947)
Within R-squared	0.547281	0.547281		
LSDV R-squared	0.556196	0.556196		
R-squared			0.094994	0.094994
Adjusted R-squared			0.084378	0.084378
n	346	346	346	346

Note. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$; standard errors are presented in parentheses.

In the fixed-effects model, which serves as the primary model, an examination of the significant standardized partial regression coefficients reveals the HDI (2.51528) has the strongest relationship with the dependent variable, followed by the FBIC Index of Qatar concerning its influence on the relevant foreign states (0.230634). When comparing the two FBIC Indexes (both measured in the same unit), the partial regression coefficient of the FBIC Index of Qatar (12.3124) is approximately three times greater than that of the FBIC Index of the relevant foreign states concerning their influence on Qatar (4.27478), though the latter is statistically insignificant.

Furthermore, since all R-squared values (coefficients of determination) exceed 0.5, the goodness of fit of the fixed-effects model is considered high, indicating that the analytical findings of this model are robust. Thus, based on the fixed-effects model, it can be statistically interpreted that the frequency of Qatar's mediation activities (the dependent variable) is primarily determined by

the degree of development within the relevant foreign states (HDI) and Qatar's influence on these states (FBIC Index of Qatar).

In contrast, in the pooled OLS model, which serves as the secondary model, an analysis of the significant standardized partial regression coefficients indicates that the FBIC Index of Qatar (0.251503) exhibits the strongest positive relationship with the dependent variable, followed by HDI (0.212145). Conversely, the FBIC Index of the relevant foreign states concerning their influence on Qatar (-0.151616) has a negative association with the dependent variable, suggesting that an increase in this index is associated with a reduction in the dependent variable's value. However, both the R-squared and adjusted R-squared values are below 0.1, indicating extremely low explanatory power. Given the poor fit of the pooled OLS model, its analytical results are not considered reliable for interpretation.

Taking all of the above results into account, this study adopts the interpretation derived from the fixed-effects model: the frequency of Qatar's mediation activities is primarily determined by the degree of development within the relevant foreign states and Qatar's influence on these states. In Part IV, based on this interpretation, an analysis will be conducted on the significance of Qatar's foreign policy from the perspective of international law.

IV. DISCUSSION

As mentioned in the Introduction, to assess the significance of Qatar's foreign policy, it is useful to consider which of two contrasting perspectives more accurately reflects its approach: (1) Qatar actively exercises its influence over relevant foreign states or (2) Qatar passively reacts to the influence of these states. In this regard, the statistical analysis in this study indicates that the frequency of Qatar's mediation activities is primarily determined by the degree of development within the relevant foreign states and Qatar's influence over these states.

Based on these findings, it can be argued that Qatar's mediation policy is a strategic response to domestic policy movements, and developments in foreign states, implemented in alignment with its influence over these countries. This analysis suggests that Qatar's foreign policy reflects a proactive effort to enhance its international presence through active and positive engagement with foreign nations. Consequently, the previous studies that theorize and evaluate Qatar's foreign policy strategies remain relevant. In other words, Qatar's foreign policy can be regarded as a well-defined and systematic approach that merits theoretical consideration in the field of international relations.

The next question to consider is: what significance do these advanced foreign policy strategies hold from the perspective of international law? To date, no previous studies have directly addressed this issue.

As emphasized by Khalid Bin Mohammed Al-Attiyah, then Qatar's Foreign Minister, the legal foundation of Qatar's mediation-centered foreign

policy is embedded in Article 7 of the Permanent Constitution of the State of Qatar.⁵² Article 7 states:

The foreign policy of the State shall be based on the principle of consolidating international peace and security, via encouraging the peaceful resolution of international disputes, in line with the State's role in resolving such disputes at both the regional and international levels through mediation and dialogue, and all that is required thereby for maintaining balanced relations with all parties, supporting the right of people to self-determination, refraining from interference in the internal affairs of countries, and cooperating with peace-loving nations.

Regarding the interpretation of Article 7, Alqashouti asserts that the Qatari government has a constitutional obligation to engage in mediation activities.⁵³ Furthermore, he emphasizes that Qatar's foreign policy aligns with international law and the principles of the United Nations.⁵⁴

Indeed, Article 7 of Qatar's Constitution, with its explicit commitment to maintaining international peace and security⁵⁵ and respecting the principle of self-determination,⁵⁶ aligns with the key objectives of the United Nations.⁵⁷ These commitments are consistent with the principle of the peaceful settlement of international disputes,⁵⁸ which is recognized as a means of achieving these objectives. If Article 7 imposes a constitutional duty on the Qatari government to engage in mediation, then it can be argued that Qatar has effectively incorporated the principles of the United Nations and international law, especially the obligations to settle disputes peacefully as stipulated in the United Nations Charter, into its domestic legal framework.

It can be concluded that Qatar has legislated domestic rules reflecting its international legal obligation to uphold the principle of peaceful settlement of international disputes. Moreover, in light of the results of the statistical analysis, Qatar has actively implemented this principle through its mediation activities, demonstrating its commitment to exerting influence constructively and proactively on the international stage.

This study does not simply provide a superficial or insufficient consideration of Qatar's foreign policy, including its assertive mediation activities, to adhere to the principle of the peaceful settlement of international disputes. Rather, Qatar's foreign policy should be understood as extending far

52. Khalid Bin Mohammed Al-Attiyah, Remarks at the Chatham House 5 (Chatham House, London (Dec. 4, 2013) (transcript available with ETH Zürich), <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/174526/041213Qatar.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/AD6A-LYYD>].

53. Mirdef Alqashouti, *Qatar Mediation: From Soft Diplomacy to Foreign Policy*, in CONTEMP. QATAR 73, 75 (M. Zweiri & F. Al Qawasmi eds., 2021).

54. *Id.* at 73, 78.

55. THE PERMANENT CONSTITUTION OF THE STATE OF QATAR June 8, 2004, art. 7.

56. *Id.*

57. U.N. Charter art. 1 ¶¶ 1, 2.

58. *Id.* at art. 2 ¶ 3, 33 ¶ 1.

beyond the mere fulfillment of the obligation, as traditionally interpreted in international law. The fact that Qatar actively engages in mediation efforts, even in disputes to which is not a party, as a means of upholding both its international and constitutional obligation, signifies that it assumes a responsibility beyond the traditional expectations placed on non-parties under the principle of peaceful settlement. This suggests that Qatar not only acknowledges the obligation of this principle (i.e., holds *opinio juris sive necessitatis* in international law) but also establishes a novel state practice whereby non-parties to disputes proactively exercise their obligations beyond what has traditionally been imposed upon them. In doing so, Qatar advances the interpretation of this principle further.

The core aspect of the international law principle of the peaceful settlement of international disputes is generally understood to prohibit coercive dispute resolution through the use of armed force while requiring parties to conflicts to seek amicable or judicial solutions.⁵⁹ Article 2(3) of the Charter of the United Nations states that “All Members shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means”⁶⁰ thereby implying that the obligation applies specifically to states that are parties to international disputes. Article 33(1) of the Charter explicitly provides that “The parties to any dispute, . . . shall . . . seek a solution by . . . mediation . . . or other peaceful means of their own choice[.]”⁶¹ explicitly placing the obligation to resolve disputes peacefully on the parties involved. Notably, the International Court of Justice has recognized the obligation of peaceful settlement imposed on parties to disputes under Article 33 as customary international law.⁶²

The 1970 Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations (1970 Friendly Relations Declaration), which reaffirms fundamental principles of international law related to states’ rights and obligations, emphasizes that “[s]tates shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security and justice are not endangered[.]”⁶³ In line with the wording of Article 2(3) of the United Nations Charter, the principle suggests that the primary subjects of international disputes bear the responsibility for a peaceful settlement. Moreover, the

59. For instance, Rosenstock states that the principle of peaceful settlement of disputes is “the other side of the coin of the obligation not to use force.” Robert Rosenstock, *The Declaration of Principles of International Law Concerning Friendly Relations: A Survey*, 65 AM. J. INT’L L. 713, 725 (1971).

60. U.N. Charter art. 2 ¶3 (emphasis added).

61. *Id.* at art. 33 ¶1 (emphasis added).

62. Military and Paramilitary Activities in and Against Nicaragua (Nicar. v U.S.) 70/1984, I. C. J. ¶ 290 Judgement on the Merits (June 27, 1986). The Court stated:

The Court has however also to recall a further principle of international law, one which is complementary to the principles of a prohibitive nature examined above, and respect for which is essential in the world of today: the principle that the parties to any dispute, particularly and dispute the continuance of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, should seek a solution by peaceful means. Enshrined in Article 33 of the United Nations Charter, which also indicates a number of peaceful means which are available, this principle has also the status of customary law.

Id.

63. G.A. Res. 2625 (XXV), at 123 (Oct. 24, 1970) (emphasis added).

Declaration distinguishes between the obligation of parties to disputes and those of non-parties, as demonstrated in the following provision.

The parties to a dispute have the duty, in the event of failure to reach a solution by any one of the above peaceful means, to continue to seek a settlement of the disputes by other peaceful means agreed upon by them. States parties to an international dispute, as well as other States, shall refrain from any action which may aggravate the situation so as to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, and shall act in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations.⁶⁴

The obligations underlying the principle of the peaceful settlement of international disputes consist of three key duties: the obligation to continue seeking peaceful resolutions, the obligation to refrain from aggravating disputes, and the obligation to resolve conflicts through peaceful means, including mediation.⁶⁵ A literal interpretation of the relevant provisions suggests that while parties to disputes bear all these obligations, non-parties are only bound by the duty to refrain from exacerbating disputes. This obligation, imposed on non-parties, is considered a duty of inaction, requiring them to avoid any actions that could escalate the dispute.

The 1982 Manila Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of International Disputes, which particularizes and marshals the content of the obligations of the peaceful settlement of international disputes, follows and reinforces the demarcation between the obligation of parties to disputes and that of non-parties, which is mentioned in the 1970 Friendly Relations Declaration. The parties to international disputes assume two kinds of obligations in regard to their disputes: the obligations of action that require the parties to settle the disputes by peaceful means including mediation⁶⁶ and continue to seek peaceful settlement;⁶⁷ and the

64. *Id.* (emphasis added).

65. Regarding the obligation of peaceful settlement, the 1970 Friendly Relations Declarations states: "States shall accordingly seek early and just settlement of their international disputes by negotiation, inquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements or other peaceful means of their choice." *See id.*

66. G.A. Res. 37/10, at 262 (Nov. 15, 1982). Article I ¶ 2 states: "Every State shall settle its international disputes exclusively by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security, and justice, are not endangered." *Id.* at art. I ¶ 2. Article I ¶ 5 further provides:

States shall seek in good faith and in a spirit of co-operation an early and equitable settlement of their international disputes by any of the following means: negotiation, inquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional arrangements or agencies or other peaceful means of their own choice, including good offices. In seeking such a settlement, the parties shall agree on such peaceful means as may be appropriate to the circumstances and the nature of their dispute.

Id. at art. I ¶ 5.

67. *Id.* Article I ¶ 7 states: "In the event of failure of the parties to a dispute to reach an early solution by any of the above means of settlement, they shall continue to seek a peaceful solution and shall consult forthwith on mutually agreed means to settle the dispute peacefully. Should the parties fail to settle by any the above means a dispute the continuance of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, they shall refer it to the Security Council in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and without prejudice to the functions and powers of the Council set forth in the relevant provisions of Chapter VI of the Charter." *Id.* at art. I ¶ 7.

obligation of inaction that calls for the avoidance of factum confounding disputes. In contrast, the non-parties to the disputes remain saddled merely with the obligation of inaction that states shall not aggravate the disputes of others despite the widening of the content compared to the 1970 Friendly Relations Declaration. On this point, the related quotation from Article I(8) is given below.

States parties to an international dispute, as well as other States, shall refrain from any action whatsoever which may aggravate the situation so as to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security and make more difficult or impede the peaceful settlement of the dispute, and shall act in this respect in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations.⁶⁸

To summarize the traditional interpretation of the international law principle of peaceful settlement of international disputes, it can be said that the principle involves two kinds of obligations: one requiring action for settlement through means such as mediation and continued pursuit of peaceful resolution, and the other demanding inaction to avoid intensifying the dispute. Parties to disputes are bound by all these obligations, while non-parties are only required to observe the obligation of inaction, refraining from actions that could aggravate the disputes.

Returning to the main theme of Qatar's foreign policy, this study asserts that, despite not being a party to disputes, Qatar has actively fulfilled obligations that go beyond the mere obligation of inaction that is specifically the avoidance of actions that could aggravate disputes. Qatar demonstrates its intention, based on Article 7 of the Constitution, to adhere to the obligations under the international law principle of peaceful settlement of disputes. It has intervened in international disputes between other states, adopting mediation as one of the peaceful means of resolution. Although Qatar, as a non-party to disputes, is only intrinsically required to refrain from actions that intensify the disputes, it has taken an active role in mediation efforts aimed at resolving or alleviating such conflicts. By doing so, Qatar has not only fulfilled its obligation of inaction but has also engaged in actions to serve as a mediator in international disputes, thereby exerting influence over the relevant foreign states and contributing to the principle of peaceful settlement.

Qatar's foreign policy exemplifies how non-parties to disputes can undertake assertive actions to facilitate dispute resolution and prevent aggravation, based on *opinio juris sive necessitates*, which is one of the elements of customary international law, as state practices within the framework of international law. This raises the argument that Qatar's proactive state practices could support a reinterpretation of the obligations of non-parties to disputes. Specifically, it suggests that such obligations may not only encompass refraining from intensifying disputes but may also extend to actively engaging in mediation or other peace-promoting measures. Furthermore, if similar state practices

68. *Id.* at art. I ¶ 8.

accompanied by *opinio juris* continue to accumulate over time, an obligation of protection mediation for non-parties to disputes could potentially crystallize into customary international law. Therefore, Qatar's active foreign policy and strategic initiatives hold significant implications for shaping new legal interpretations and rules concerning the principle of peaceful settlement of international disputes within the international legal framework.

V. CONCLUSION

Previous studies on Qatar's foreign policy can be broadly categorized into two opposing perspectives: one that theorizes and praises the strategies of Qatar's foreign policy, and the other that denies the existence of these strategies altogether. The present study utilizes quantitative analysis through inferential statistics to bridge the gap between these two views and move closer to an accurate understanding of Qatar's foreign policy in practice.

This study employs multiple linear regression analysis of panel data, where the influence of Qatar on relevant foreign states and vice versa are treated as independent variables. The findings, based on the partial regression coefficients derived from the fixed-effects model, reveal that the frequency of Qatar's mediation activities is primarily determined by the degree of development in the relevant foreign states and the influence Qatar exerts on these states.

This analysis demonstrates that Qatar is actively and positively working to strengthen its presence by exerting influence on related foreign nations through its foreign policy. Consequently, the studies that theorize and commend Qatar's foreign policy strategies appear to present a more accurate portrayal of the reality.

Qatar's foreign policy, driven by advanced strategies, actively propels mediation activities following the *opinio juris sive necessitatis* under Article 7 of the Constitution of Qatar. These state practices suggest that non-parties to disputes can comply with the principle of peaceful settlement not only by refraining from actions that aggravate the disputes but also by actively intervening to facilitate conflict resolution. As a result, Qatar's foreign policy practices hold significance in international law, offering a novel interpretation of the principle of peaceful settlement of international disputes involving non-parties. This contributes to the early formation of relevant customary international law.