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The visions and strategies of the GCC countries from the perspective of reforms: the case of Qatar

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The countries of the Arab Gulf have witnessed a wave of production of ‘national’ strategies and ‘vision’ initiatives, most of which have been developed by foreign firms and consultants, and many of which were drafted in English. Two examples of these that form the basis of analysis of this article are the Qatar National Vision 2030 (QNV) issued in 2008 and followed up by the Qatar National Developmental Strategy 2011–2016 (QNDS) in 2011. Neither document was subjected to public referendum, and many of those directly involved in Qatar’s central planning were unable even to obtain copies until after publication in final form. Both are problematic for reason of vague or undefined terms, lack of concrete goals, as well as any explicit mention of *political* development in the country. Even more serious is the question of citizenship, where the huge expatriate populations and permanent residence concessions granted on the basis of ownership of real estate threaten to undermine Arab Qatari identity – a situation aggravated further when English was made the official language of instruction in education and a primary language of administration. This latter development also had the effect of dwindling participation of Qatari citizens in the labour force – already low at 14% in 2001 – to a mere 6% in 2009. The article examines four major deficiencies inherent in Qatar in light of the QNV and QNDS: economic–productive, labour force, political and security. Of these, mention of the political deficiency is conspicuously absent from both documents (where there is not a single mention of terms such as ‘democracy’, ‘citizenship’ or ‘elections’) and both the labour force and economic–productive deficiencies are addressed in terms more relevant and favourable to foreign concerns than those of native Qataris. In the final analysis, both the QNV and QNDS are reflective of Qatar’s severe demographic anomaly where the number of Qatari citizens was estimated to be only 230,000 out of a total population of 1.64 million in 2010; and official policy in terms of both the labour market and the granting of permanent residence on the basis of unregulated foreign purchases of real estate and investment only serves to perpetuate an already precarious situation. If Qatar is unable to restructure and reform its policies to the benefit of the indigenous Arab population, the matter of identity and the future character of the country threaten to be matters of serious doubt by the end date of the QNV in 2030, if not well before then.

Keywords: Qatar; Qatar National Vision 2030 (QNV); Qatar National Developmental Strategy 2011–2016 (QNDS); economic–productive deficiency; political deficiency; expatriate labour force; citizenship; demographic anomaly; unregulated property and real estate investment; unemployment

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Introduction

The countries of the Gulf have recently witnessed a wave of ‘national’ strategies and ‘vision’ initiatives. Every state or emirate with a state has commissioned a foreign advisor to put forward a strategic vision for ‘growth/development’. In this context comes the ‘vision’ for Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Qatar and Tony Blair’s vision for Kuwait along with others.

These ‘visions’ have been prepared in a semi-secret fashion by foreign consulting firms and adopted by rulers of the countries personally, where some of these initiatives subsequently bear their names. These documents are considered today to be alternative official policies to what used to be termed ‘strategic national growth and development plans’, with which they differ in terms of orientations and goals – as though they concern commercial enterprises instead of aspirations to build states and rectify chronic imbalances and defects that still preclude the initiation of a favourable development process in the region today.

This array of visions, strategies and plans that have been elaborated without national consultation have been warmly received and supported by the official and foreign media in an astonishing manner that puzzles both Arab citizens and observers, before they have even had a chance to read the documents objectively. The overall effect has been to shut the gates to reform, in a high-handed fashion, ostensibly in order to initiate a sustainable development process before it is too late.

This paper is presented as a call to all concerned people in the region to deal with the strategic visions of their countries with a critical analytical approach, so that perhaps one may come to understand what transpired decades ago, track the course of events and thereby rectify the errors.

* * *

The ‘Qatar National Vision 2030’ (QNV) was issued in 2008 and followed by the ‘Qatar National Developmental Strategy 2011–2016’ (QNDS) in 2011. When I first perused these visions and strategies – in the light of my study on the ‘case of democracy in Qatar’ (al-Kuwārī 2011a) and my personal belief in the necessity of undertaking reforms before moving onto the subject of development – I concluded that it is my duty to present a reading of them from the perspective of the radical reform that Qatar, as well as the rest of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, requires (al-Mahdī *et al.* 2004, pp. 244–297). I also approach this from the standpoint that the QNV and QNDS are supposed to be tools for the desired reform so that regional countries have in place the prerequisites for sound development and national security.

This analysis necessarily entails the identification of the chronic deficiencies, in all their aspects, that exist in the case of Qatar, along with the rest of the GCC countries. These may be summarized as follows:

- First: the aggravated demographic deficiency.
- Second: the political flaw in relations between the state and society and the absence of democracy.
- Third: the productive/economic deficiencies and persistent reliance on energy revenues.
- Fourth: the security deficit and the persistence of schisms in regional countries that weaken them.

There are in addition other deficiencies in various other areas such as culture, education, media, legislation, equal opportunities, etc.

Therefore, it was expected that the QNV and QNDS would attend to these aspects of chronic deficiency and give reform a high priority, as well as initiate a process that would drive development on a sound basis, as opposed to incurring a ‘development of loss’, which I addressed previously (al-Kuwāri 1996, pp. 269–270).¹ The following will present my analysis from a reform perspective, whereby I will investigate taboos and outline what still needs to be done with regards to the Strategic Vision for Qatar.

First: A perspective on the ‘Qatar National Vision 2030’ (QNV)²

1. The QNV covers a period of two decades – from 2008 to 2030 – which calls for us to identify the frontiers of this vision and what can be anticipated in terms of bringing to fruition desirable changes in twenty years.

The vision begins by stating that ‘Qatar is at a crossroads. ... It is now imperative for Qatar to choose the best development path that is compatible with the views of its leadership and the aspirations of its people’ (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning 2008, p. 1). It may be noticed here that the way in which the ‘views of its leadership and the aspirations of its people’ are to be expressed is left unclear. While it may be a simple matter for those who elaborated the vision to know the wishes and views of the Qatari *leadership* in order to convey these in the vision, to evaluate the aspirations of the *people*, on the other hand, was not so. This is because Qataris do not enjoy the freedom of expression or the freedom of assembly/association. In other words, the government monopolizes expression of these aspirations without the effective or active political participation of the Qatari people in identifying choices or making public decisions. Thus, the QNV is only expressive of the views of the Qatari leadership and their desires, whereas with respect to the aspirations of the people, we do not have evidence of their representation in the vision, except to whatever extent these aspirations might be implicit in those adopted by leadership.

Then the QNV continues stating that ‘the National Vision aims at transforming Qatar into an advanced country by 2030, capable of sustaining its own development and providing for a high standard of living for all of its people for generations to come’ (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning 2008, p. 2). This aim is characterized by overgeneralization, leaving much unsaid. Among the areas requiring reform that are not specifically mentioned are: the political system of the state; the necessity for it to transition to a democratic system; the question of Qatar’s identity; the number and percentage of its citizens among the total population; and the role of citizens – since they are the primary current within (and concern of) the state. Also requiring attention is the ongoing trend of a lack of separation between public and private funds or wealth, and the disparities in work opportunities among citizens. All of the above are essential components for defining the chosen path and intended consequences.

2. The QNV affirms the necessity of balancing between the following challenges (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning 2008, p. 3):

- Modernization and preservation of traditions.
- The needs of this generation and the needs of future generations.
- Managed growth and uncontrolled expansion.
- The size and the quality of the expatriate labour force and the selected path of development.
- Economic growth, social development and environmental management.

On the basis of the foregoing, here the QNV leaves (the handing of) these decisive challenges in the formation of the future of Qataris, up to future decision-makers without a clear, definite commitment, where we do not know, for example, what ‘managed growth and uncontrolled expansion’ implies. Neither do we know the magnitude of growth, as well as the intended limits, size and composition of the labour force. And what should be inferred from ‘the needs of this generation and the needs of future generations’? Or who are the future generations exactly? Where is the limit of what is termed ‘modernization’, and which traditions are to be considered taboo and unassailable, and what is meant by ‘traditions’ in the first place? All these choices are left up to the personal and contemporary orientations of the leadership between now and 2030, and this type of ambiguity and generalization characterizes the rest of the document as well.

3. The QNV also specifies the ‘guiding principle of the National Vision’ to the effect that:

Qatar’s National Vision is based on the Guiding Principles of the Permanent Constitution and the directions of Their Highnesses the Emir, the Heir Apparent and Sheikha Mozah, as well as on extensive consultation with government institutions and local and international experts. The National Vision builds on a society that promotes justice, benevolence and equality.

(Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning 2008, p. 10)

First, it may be noticed that the guiding principles of the Constitution do not bind the authorities except to the extent that the leadership desires, since according to the Qatari Constitution of 2004 the Emir is the source of power/authority (*al-sultāt*) despite Article 59 of the Constitution stating that ‘the people are the source of powers [*sic*]³ and Article 60 confirms that ‘the system of Government is based on the separation of powers’ (Permanent Constitution). I discussed this in my research on the status of democracy in Qatar, and thus note that consideration for the guiding principles of the Constitution falls within the unrestricted powers of the Emir and depends on his desire, especially in the absence of a Constitutional Court and the continued existence of an *appointed* Al-Shoura Council. An example of this is that according to Article 34 the guiding principles of the Constitution state that ‘The Citizens of Qatar shall be equal in public rights and duties’ (The Permanent Constitution of the State of Qatar 2004). While other articles state that the governing system is democratic and the official language of the state is Arabic, although English has become the official language of teaching and in many administrative sectors, while the governing system has remained as is and has not transitioned to democratic rule.

Whereas the consultations mentioned in the QNV and noted previously are ostensibly held with governmental institutions and local and international experts, these are merely consultations with officers and employees affiliated to the executive authority as well as foreign experts. Thus, the absence of the influence of people on the contents of the Vision and their lack of participation in determining the country’s guiding principles is clear, and will extend until 2030. It is worth noting that the QNV was never subject to national dialogue and was never discussed in the media or even submitted to the appointed Al-Shoura Council so that its members could express their opinion of it.

I will conclude this section by reiterating that the express goal of the Vision is the ‘development of a just and caring society based on high moral standards’ (Qatar

General Secretariat for Development Planning 2008, p. 11), which is a very general statement that is impractical to achieve if the causes of the deficiencies are not considered, and if the society is not based on foundations that preserve its existence and secure its identity, language and interests. Also required is the effective political participation of people and meeting the requisite demands of security and growth, until justice, benevolence and equality are achieved.

The document identifies the ‘pillars’ of the Vision as follows:

- Human development: ‘Development of all its [Qatar’s] people to enable them to sustain a prosperous society’ (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning 2008, p. 11), where it is clear that the human development of Qatari residents, of whom 12% are citizens and 88% expatriates, is apparently without preferential bias in favour of Qatari citizens. Upon analysing this, we find that the QNV affirms this through the caveat: ‘establishing advanced educational and health systems, as well as increasing the effective participation of Qataris in the labor force. In addition, Qatar will continue to augment its labor force by attracting qualified expatriate workers in all fields’ (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning 2008, p. 13).

The QNV justifies the reason for the expansion of the scope of human development to include expatriates equally with local citizens saying that:

for the foreseeable future Qatar will not have a sufficient number of citizens to manage the complex systems, infrastructure and other requirements of a rapidly growing, diversifying and technologically sophisticated economy. In order to realize Qatar’s future ambitions, it will be necessary to make up for the shortages of local labor with expatriate workers.
(Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning 2008, p. 14)

This indicates that the need for increasing the expatriate labour force is not only due to the insufficient number of Qatari citizens alone, but also ostensibly because a complex and diversified system based on a ‘sophisticated economy’ *requires* them. Perhaps the slogan of ‘sophistication’ is the reason why many Qataris were dismissed from their jobs and early retirement was forced upon thousands of Qatari teachers when English became the official language of instruction and learning, which led in part to the decline of Qatari participation in the labour force from 14% in 2001 to 6% in 2010.

- Social development: ‘Development of a just and secure society, based on high moral standards’ and social care initiatives, and capable of establishing relations and interacting with other societies, as well as ‘playing a significant role in the global partnership for development’.
- Economic development: ‘Development of a competitive and diversified economy capable of meeting the needs of all its people for the present and for the future, and securing a high standard of living’ for them.
- Environmental development: ‘Management of the environment such that there is harmony between economic growth, social development and environmental protection’ (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning 2008, p. 11; Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning 2011, p. 2).

What is clear, therefore, is the absence of mention of *political* development in the focal points of the QNV. The document concludes with a section entitled ‘Achieving the

Vision' where 'Qatar's National Vision provides the foundation for the formulation of a National Strategy' is confirmed along with the assertion that 'the General Secretariat for Development Planning (GSDP), with the guidance of Qatar's Higher Authorities, will coordinate the formulation of this National Strategy' (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning 2008, p. 34).

Second: The Qatar National Development Strategy 2011–2016⁴

1. The QNDS begins by confirming the QNV and mentioning its four pillars without mention of political development, as previously noted. It concludes by reaffirming the five challenges mentioned in the QNV (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning 2008, p. 3; Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning 2011, p. 2).

The document deals with the strategy by alleging that it is 'the first National Development Strategy for the State of Qatar 2011–2016', which is not accurate since the Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning had previously prepared in 1995 the 'Public Strategy of Social and Economic Development in Qatar' that had specified the goals of development stating that:

the basic goals of society are represented in preserving the security and stability of the country, based on its Arab-Islamic affiliation (*intimā*); preparing/building a strong citizen who believes in his religion and is proud of his country; anchoring sound foundations for setting down the pillars of democracy; and achieving an economic renaissance and social well being/comfort for both the individual and society.

(General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning 1995, p. 5)

It appears that this disregard for the 1995 strategy and the orientations and goals set forth therein, which was shelved and never executed after the dissolution of the General Secretariat for Development Planning, confirms the necessity of reform and redress for some of the more prominent chronic deficiencies in Qatar, such as the absence of democracy; the security deficiency; confirmation of the role of the citizen in society; and endeavouring to resolve the demographic anomaly (or imbalance between citizens and expatriates). That is, dealing with all issues that are not acknowledged in the current Strategy and which therefore, does not present any solution for them.

2. In discussing the preparatory stage of the QNDS, the document indicates the expansion of the scope of consultations about the strategy in a way that covers and 'includes the entire society'. The truth is that, to my knowledge, when the Strategy was first declared no one in Qatar had been given the opportunity to discuss it or even to see it. At that time I wrote a paper entitled 'al-Ishādah bil-Istrāṭijyah qabl al-Itīlā' 'alayhā Naw' min al-Nifāq (Praising the Strategy before Looking at it is a Type of Hypocrisy) (al-Kuwārī, 2011b). In this regard, Qatari newspapers surprised us with waves of effusive praise for the document from certain persons, while those who are generally concerned with public affairs were still searching for the document to read it.

The 2011–2016 QNDS contains reference to the way in which it was prepared: 'the strategy of national development is a plan of action. It presents new initiatives while building on what already exists' (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning 2011, p. 3). This indicates that the QNDS in Qatar is *not* a strategy in the familiar sense, but rather an amalgam of 14 sector development strategies, each one of which was prepared individually for a specific sector in Qatar by foreign consultants and originally in English. Likewise the QNDS was drafted in English before being translated into

Arabic. Therefore, we find the repetition of expressions and idiomatic phrases characteristic of English such as: ‘it is possible’, ‘it is to be expected’, ‘it is anticipated’ along with phrases such as ‘[such] must/ought to’, ‘should’, ‘will be completed’ and ‘depends upon’, along with other expressions that indicate that reading the QNDS more closely resembles reading a file containing prevailing conceptions more than it does a document of authoritative strategies demanding the commitment of persons charged with implementing such.

3. Perhaps this methodological shortcoming in the QNDS is what led ʿīsā al-Ghānim – one of the few Qatari specialists in planning – to remark when discussing it that typically:

a strategy is formulated methodologically, after studying the surrounding environment ... through an analysis of: Strengths in order to exploit such; Weakness/Limitations to minimize such; Opportunities to choose; Threats to deal with/neutralize; or to follow what is, therefore, termed SWOT (or SLOT) analysis, which must also be undertaken with the participation and involvement of influential parties and people with interests. (al-Ghānim, 2011)

He adds that analysing ‘the surrounding environment should have been undertaken in a detailed manner that would reveal and treat strategic issues’. Among the issues raised by al-Ghānim, I mention the following:

- ‘How to deal with the inflationary “bubble” economy and the unregulated economic growth, which is the key to resolving many crucial problems.’
- The issue of the demographic anomaly is what al-Ghānim considers to be the greatest threat facing the country’s future. He adds that it was expected that specialists would be asked to formulate a plan with time-dependent quantitative criteria in order to resolve the demographic anomaly.
- Drafting a plan for the petroleum sector that would deal with the depletion of gas and oil reserves and create alternatives for the growth of revenues.
- Resolving the issue of the unregulated property/real estate investment market that is destructive to the economy, the environment and society, including the exacerbation of the demographic anomaly. About this al-Ghānim says, ‘in the strategy there is nothing more than a description of some of the problems without calling any party or side to resolve them’ (al-Ghānim 2011). He adds that there might be two main reasons for not attempting to deal with these problems. The first is a technical–methodological one whereby, upon preparing the QNDS, what happened to a great extent was the combining of the tasks and functions of institutions, ministries and participating organizations in preparing the strategy and its current projects and then adopting a logic that would represent their efforts as part of a ‘national strategy’. While ‘the second reason is non-technical given that these challenges are products of the pattern of development prevailing since the 1970s, which cannot be treated within the general environment ...’ (al-Ghānim 2011).

4. The QNDS begins the section on ‘Achievements and Economic Outlook 2011–2016’ with the claim that ‘The trajectory of Qatar’s economy is tightly linked to developments in the hydrocarbon sector’ (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning 2011, p. 4). In this there is confirmation of the continued orientation towards keeping the matter of natural gas and oil revenues outside the scope of national planning.

Worthy of note is the incapacity and the lack of desire of petroleum-exporting countries to subject energy exports and the revenue allocation pattern to developmental considerations, which is one of the main reasons for the continuation of the chronic economic-productive deficiency in the region. And after mentioning a number of existing investments and new trends such as those in the air transport, media, healthcare and education sectors, the document acknowledges that the strategies planned for these areas 'have suffered from a lack of integration and alignment. In addition, some measures have taken place only on paper or suffer from lags in implementation' (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning 2011, p. 4). It goes on to state: 'While Qatar's National Development Strategy 2011–2016 will leverage existing initiatives, it must also provide a framework that can fill gaps and provide effective integration and alignment across sectors' (p. 4). Thus, we can enquire here if the above are among the obligatory tasks of the strategy, then why did the QNDS not undertake these at the outset instead of leaving these concerns suspended?

The QNDS states that 'The growth of hydrocarbon income will tail off in 2012–2013 as Qatar's highly successful 20-year investment programme in hydrocarbons culminates' (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning 2011, pp. 4–5). This matter requires clarification and verification/documentation in order for us to be assured of the success of Qatar's investment programme and its sustainability over the next twenty years and to rest assured of its trajectory. This is so given that the Supreme Council for Economic Affairs and Investment does not reveal the amount or distribution of public investments and does not issue final accounting reports that disclose such data or, thereby, track the performance of public investments, or what debts have accrued in this regard, if any. Praising this investment programme uncritically means the continuity of it in its present form, and perhaps perpetuating the ambiguities therein instead of promoting transparency in these affairs. Here the QNDS adds that 'Central government ("public") investment is estimated at QR 347 billion. Based on current plans, public infrastructure spending will peak in 2012. This trajectory reflects existing plans for the launch of mega projects' (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning 2011, p. 5).

It is worth noting that the Strategy includes huge expenses for the current mega-infrastructure and its maintenance, which amount to an estimated QR50 billion annually – or about one-third of the public budget.

The QNDS states without substantiation that the 'government's fiscal position is expected to remain strong and will certainly be adequate to support future capital investments and the initiatives under the National Development Strategy 2011–2016' (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning 2011, p. 5); adding that:

The total population of Qatar is expected to grow steadily at an average of about 2.1% a year during 2011–2016, with the total population rising from 1.64 million at the end of 2010 to just less than 1.9 million in 2016.

(p. 5)

From the perspective of reforms, this means a lack of acknowledgment of the demographic anomaly and the absence of reform initiatives; while the population will increase by about 260,000 people. It is not in the interest of those responsible for the QNDS or its proponents to mention the number of citizens or their relative percentage with respect to the total population of Qatar, or the impact of this increase in actually

decreasing the percentage of citizens from 12% to less than 10% during the period under study. The document then concludes its interpretation of the general status quo by confirming that all indications and projections will depend on the production and price of oil and natural gas. Here, the QNDS can be seen to be unconcerned with oil and gas production policy that falls outside the scope of national planning.

5. The document also contains a section on the FIFA World Cup 2022 and the higher government spending, which appears to be an addendum or appendix to the QNDS, since Qatar's hosting of the World Cup was not confirmed until the beginning of 2011, at a time when the Strategy had already been drafted. This is an indication that the Strategy is a study of the current reality and still subject to what future governmental decisions.

In the section on the goals of 'sustaining economic prosperity' the QNDS mentions the following three interrelated and interconnected economic goals; whereby it 'looks to sustain a high standard of living, to expand innovation and entrepreneurial capabilities and to align economic outcomes with economic and financial stability' (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning 2011, p. 7). These are general goals, and not time specific, which concern not only citizens, but also the entire population; expatriates and those who will immigrate and gain citizenship. Upon reading the section on 'preserving and leveraging Qatar's heritage and culture' (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning 2011, p. 23) it is noticeable that the QNDS stresses 'maintaining [of] the inherited status and prestige of the leading families', stating that:

despite rapid socioeconomic change over a relatively short period, Qatari society has maintained the essence of its culture and continuity with the past. This continuity includes observing the fundamental principles of Islam, maintaining the inherited status and prestige of the leading families and preserving the family unit as the core of society.

(p. 20)

As for the section on 'Advancing from strategy to implementation', the document refers to the orientation of the country's leadership saying that:

successful implementation will depend first and foremost on the demand by the country's leadership for regular information on progress and results. It will also depend on mainstreaming the strategy across the whole government. Ministries and agencies will need to take ownership of the strategy within their own operational plans and accept accountability for delivery. At the centre, the strategy will have to influence processes that drive crucial decisions on how resources get used

(p. 24)

In order to continue our selective reading of the QNDS, Table 1 on 'Qatar's 20 key challenges' is presented in conjunction with our previous reading in order to evaluate the Strategy from the standpoint of reforms.

Third: The QNV and the QNDS from the standpoint of reform

In discussing any vision initiative or national development strategy of any country among those of the GCC, the issue of reforms – needed in the region – comes immediately to mind. And the most important conditions and circumstances in need of radical and rapid reform are the aforementioned chronic deficiencies.

Table 1. Qatar National Developmental Strategy 2011–2016 (QNDS), p. 26 (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning 2011).

Qatar National Vision 2030 pillar	Major challenges	Strategic response
Promoting sustainable prosperity	Ensuring sustainability in a setting where hydrocarbon resource depletion is still the dominant source of income	Establishing a hydrocarbon depletion policy; sustaining high rates of saving and making sound investments in human, capital and financial assets for the future
	Promoting stability in an environment where hydrocarbon price volatility creates risk and presents challenges for calibration of economic policy	Reforming budgetary and fiscal processes, public investment programming, liquidity management and domestic capital market development
	Enhancing efficiency in the use of all resources to support high standards of living for current and future generations	Promoting competition, trade and investment; improving regulation; strengthening demand management for water, power and fuel; reforming agriculture
	Diversifying the economy to create durable wealth and support wider societal viability	Bolstering enterprise creation and private sector development; improving the business climate, strengthening regional integration; reforming the labour market
Promoting human development	Rebalancing the healthcare system to reduce the emphasis on hospital-based care and increase integration between levels of care	Establishing an integrated healthcare system to shift the balance of care towards a patient-focused, preventive and community-based model
	Meeting critical needs for a high-quality workforce across the health sector (and affecting other sectors)	Developing and implementing a national workforce plan that takes a multifaceted approach and optimizes the skills mix
	Raising the achievement of Qatari students at all levels, especially in maths, science and English and, through that, increasing educational attainment	Strengthening reforms in K-12 and higher education to ease demand and supply constraints
	Coordinating education and training providers and aligning with labour force needs	Addressing quality, efficiency, inclusiveness and portability across the entire education and training systems
	Aligning labour market composition of Qataris with the objectives of a diversified knowledge economy	Realigning demand and supply in the Qatari workforce, with an emphasis on continuously upgrading skills
Reducing reliance on low-cost, low-skilled foreign labour	Reviewing the sponsorship law and identifying ways of attracting and retaining higher skilled expatriate workers	

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued).

Qatar National Vision 2030 pillar	Major challenges	Strategic response
Taking an integrated approach to sound social development	Balancing the forces of modernization and globalization with the support of traditional Qatari family values and patterns of family formation	Implementing cross-cutting measures to strengthen family ties, values and relationships
	Strengthening social inclusiveness	Launching a multi-stakeholder programme that strengthens an inclusive social protection system
	Improving road safety and ending the growing epidemic of traffic accidents, particularly among youth	Introducing a holistic approach to road safety, with cross-sectoral partnerships
	Preserving traditional Qatari culture and Arab identity	Using culture as a platform to safeguard and develop Qatar's national heritage
	Encouraging a more active lifestyle for young people to reduce the health-related risks of inactivity	Promoting local sports participation and development as part of a comprehensive, active lifestyle programme
Sustaining the environment for future generations	Reforming unsustainable water consumption patterns	Establishing an integrated water management plan across the value chain
	Encouraging sustainable urbanization and consumption patterns that reduce environmental stresses	Promoting more sustainable urbanization and a healthier living environment
Developing modern public sector institutions	Strengthening weak institutional capacities	Strengthening the role of central functions to support institutional development and modernization
	Expanding human resources capacities across the public sector	Applying policies to attract talent, including staff development programmes
	Establishing a centralized system for managing for results and for linking resource allocation to strategic plans	Launching a public sector performance management framework linking institutional performance to strategic plans and budgets

Perhaps the goal of forming the GCC, 30 years ago, was for countries of the region to cooperate as a preliminary step towards unification according to Article 4 of the 'Basic Law' of the GCC. This is an acknowledgment from regional countries that they need to form a union or unified entity that promotes security and facilitates the initiation of a development process after reforming aspects of the chronic deficiencies – some of which cannot be reformed if the Eastern Gulf area were to remain divided into sub-states, most of which lack the necessary factors to provide for security or conditions conducive to development.

And in acknowledgement of the need for reform and for the initiation of the developmental process, in 1983 the General-Secretariat of the GCC appointed a group of individuals from the region to propose a strategic framework according to which developmental initiatives and plans could work in the region. I was among those who had the pleasure to prepare a study based on which a proposal for a strategic framework for development projects in the region was drafted. Significantly, this strategic framework begins with the following proposed reforms (al-Kuwārī 1985, pp. 49–113):

- Decreasing reliance on oil and rendering its production subject to developmental considerations.
- Decreasing the size of the expatriate labour force and modifying its composition as well as improving its quality.
- Subjecting public expenditures to the criteria of economic feasibility.
- Reforming the administration and developing it first and foremost before the goal of establishing an alternative economic base to that of relying on oil exports and what follows other developmental goals.

Consequently, the QNV and QNDS were praised on the supposition that they would be tools for radical reform of aspects of chronic deficiencies prior to achieving regional unity among the various states, similar to the vision initiatives of Dubai, Bahrain and Abu Dhabi. Will the QNV and QNDS be able to confront the chronic deficiencies and set in motion national efforts towards a purposeful radical reform aimed at the initiation of a genuine and sound developmental process in the framework of a democratic union that comprises regional states and promotes security in all of its dimensions – for the countries, societies and citizens? That is, can such plans provide a form of security that will safeguard the Arab–Islamic identity of the people of the region, protect its societies from the risks of demographic anomalies and security deficits, and ensure the future of its people over consecutive generations through a process of sustainable development?

The following will analyse these chronic deficiencies to determine, first, to what extent the QNV and QNDS do acknowledge the existence of such concerns and, second, if what they present in terms of policies, measures and plans for treatment of these are sufficient for the task of beginning the process of the sustainable development.

The demographic anomaly

The demographic anomaly is the most serious chronic defect in Qatar. It has led to the decrease of the number of citizens from 44% of the overall population in 1970 to 12% in 2010. It is the most dangerous aspect of the chronic deficiencies as well as most challenging, most pressing and most in need of radical reforms. The persistence of this demographic anomaly threatens to deracinate Qatari society, mask its identity and culture, remove its Arab language from parlance, and disavow the role of citizens where their role in any healthy country should be the primary one in the state where they constitute the leadership and cadres of administration, in general, and *public* administration, in particular.

It is important to note that, at the local and official levels, the demographic anomaly in Qatar was acknowledged long ago, and its rectification was proposed half a century ago. This remained the case until just recently, as noted, when through the QNDS a core change in the official perspective towards the issue of the demographic anomaly was

signalled, and the official orientation towards the problem changed from one of attempting to resolve it to one of simply conceding it and accepting the continuing decrease in the proportion of Qatari citizens relative to the total population and the labour force, including what this entails in terms of destroying their role and threatening their future.

In the QNV and QNDS, the demographic anomaly has not been mentioned, if not to say it has become a taboo. Instead, the discourse has become directed towards the total population of Qatar (i.e., including expatriates) without even mentioning the number of Qatari citizens and their relative proportion within the total population. With this orientation, it seems as though Qataris may turn from being citizens, who enjoy their rights as citizens, into merely a minority of the population of Qatar, competing with expatriates over work opportunities, education and social care, and in these not even within the context of their native Arabic language. Thus, the situation of Qataris would in this regard be similar to that of the native Malaysians in Singapore.

Perhaps the new Citizenship Law 38 of 2005 paves the way towards transforming most citizens into residents who do not enjoy legitimate rights of citizenship, where the law deprived about two-thirds of citizens of their political rights because they had acquired citizenship through naturalization, rendering their status more akin to that of permanent residents than citizens. Similarly, Article 150 of the Constitution suspended promised political rights for the rest of the citizens, as few as they may have been. In describing the demographic situation in Qatar as being abnormal, one is thereby calling for its necessary and prompt rectification, since the number of Qatari citizens was estimated to be approximately only 230,000 out of a total population of 1.64 million in 2010 (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning 2011, p. 5).

The QNDS acknowledged that the total numbers in the labour force increased from 323,000 in 2001 to 1.265 million in 2009, and, therefore, the average participation of Qataris within the labour force decreased from 14% in 2001 to only 6% in 2009 (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning 2011, p. 146). Furthermore, the primary cause behind the growth of the expatriate population by a factor of four and the concomitant decrease of Qatari participation in the labour force to only 6% between 2001 and 2009 is due to the official policies since 2004. These are represented in real estate expansion, and what this has precipitated in the form of huge real estate projects and related infrastructure, for the aim of selling apartments as investment properties in exchange for granting buyers/owners permanent residence in Qatar – even if there is no need for them in the job market. Therefore, the root causes of the perpetuation of the demographic anomaly are to be found not only in Qatar's conventional need for expatriate labour, but also in its official policy of real estate expansion and that of building cities and new neighbourhoods, not out of a necessity to house citizens and expatriates, but to bring in other new residents (or *settlers*) who are attracted to purchase residential investment properties in exchange for receiving permanent resident permits for themselves and their families, without having to hold a work permit or visa, such as is required of all other expatriates.

This choice and real estate expansion policy, including related infrastructure-building and a social, cultural and Western entertainment base, attracts real estate investors and buyers to a country suffering from a chronic demographic anomaly. The diminution of the role of Qatari citizens in number and percentage relative to the total population is what indicates that this demographic anomaly in Qatar is no longer acknowledged and furthermore that official policy is actually *aggravating* it, while the Qatari media at the same time is not only ignoring and remaining silent on the issue, but also obscuring it.

From a national perspective the demographic anomaly should not continue to persist or be disregarded and ignored, even though it is in itself without precedent in any other state – large or small – anywhere in the world, with the exception of Qatar’s neighbouring sister state, the United Arab Emirates. No nation or society can possibly absorb a number of expatriates that is greater than its own population, and certainly not at the rate of eight to one, while simultaneously promoting antagonistic activities that lead to an increased influx of expatriates to a point where this jeopardizes the role of the country’s citizens, obliterates their identity and culture, and brings about the disappearance of their language.

As this reading of the logic of the QNDS and what it portends clarifies, the orientation towards the demographic anomaly is such that reform and the prevention of further aggravation are no longer the national policy. Rather, the official policy has become directed towards actually *increasing* the numbers of expatriates from all over the world. Consequently, the Strategy considers ‘modest’ the potential increase in the population from 1.64 million at the end of 2010 to 1.90 million in 2016, i.e. an increase of 260,000 – a number that exceeds the number of Qatari citizens (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning 2011, p. 5).

In discussing the population, the QNDS neglects to mention the number of citizens, the composition of expatriates in terms of nationality and profession, and does not entertain the subject of the capacity of Qatari culture to absorb their cultures. Over and above this, it does not disclose the sources of the population increase (of 260,000) which begs a series of questions. How many among these are citizens? How many speak Arabic? How many have work visas/work permits? How many have acquired permanent residence permits through their purchase of or investment in residential real estate properties? How many are considered to be technicians or what the QNV would term ‘higher-skilled’ workers who are indispensable to the state and must be granted permanent residence permits?

The Strategy then justifies expectations of the increase of population within the QNV as follows. The human development pillar of QNV 2030 calls for the ‘development of all its people to enable them to sustain a prosperous society’ and ‘to meet the needs of this generation without compromising the needs of future generations’ (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning 2011, p. 12), specifying the goals of: ‘nurturing a healthy population’, ‘building knowledge and skills’ and ‘fostering a capable and motivated workforce’ (pp. 13–16).

Throughout the document there is no positive bias towards or preferential treatment of Qatari citizens, especially given that the Strategy states that ‘a critical question is how much the wage gaps should narrow between Qataris and expatriates and between public sector and private sector workers’, while adding that ‘policies on immigration, regulations, sponsorship and licensing will be reviewed and revised, as appropriate, to create more strategic demand for expatriate workers in line with the aim of recruiting and retaining the right mix of expatriate labor’ (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning 2011, p. 16).

It seems that the QNDS perceives the overwhelming presence of expatriate workers – who constitute 94% of the total labour force in Qatar at present – not simply as a *temporary* expediency, where foreign workers can be gradually replaced by Qatari citizens in some fields, when and where possible. Rather, the QNDS affirms the necessity of ‘retaining’ expatriates. The Strategy does not attempt to cap the number of expatriates as should logically be expected, and then subsequently gradually reducing that number – with the aim of increasing the number of Qatari citizens in the labour force and their

relative percentage of the total population by 1% annually, for instance, so that by 2030 the percentage of Qataris would be 50%. On the contrary, the QNDS is anticipating even greater increases in the number of incoming expatriates if the trend in lower private sector wages persists.

The QNDS states that ‘policies that accelerate the shift towards high value-added, capital- and knowledge-intensive activities suggest a trajectory in which total population might be in the range of 2.2–2.8 million by 2030’ (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning 2011, p. 55). Therefore, it must be noted that the expected population increase averages in a range of 800,000–1.4 million. Then, as a result of the Strategy’s stark indifference to the size and composition of the population, it goes on to assert: ‘but a persistence of low wages in the private sector would entrench the bias towards labor-intensive technologies and push in the direction of a larger but less skilled population’ (p. 55). In all cases, the uncertainty and equivocation of the Strategy extends not only from uncertainty in the mode of production, but also from abrupt political decisions, as in admissions within the document along the lines of: ‘the timing and scale of activities related to the FIFA World Cup 2022 preparations add to the uncertainty’ (p. 55).

The absence of a precise population estimate for Qatar by the end of the term of the QNV in 2030 demands analysis. The projection is left open-ended without a ceiling, while the composition according to cultural, linguistic factors and nationality is also not specified and, therefore (apparently), open to all kinds of influences and random tendencies. This is an irresponsible and abnormal situation, where typically the first given upon which development plans are based in any country is the projected population and its composition, and thence a basis for fulfilling the interests of citizens and safeguarding society.

In fact, the future population estimates in Qatar change from one governmental institution or branch to another, because each estimate is tied to the orientations of those who administer it. For example, when talking about the Doha metro it is found that the QNDS is not in agreement with the projected estimates of the Qatar National Rail Network, where the Strategy concludes: ‘the scale and scope of the project are based on implausibly high population and passenger-traffic projections’ (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning 2011, p. 87). This indicates a lack of specific or defined population estimates – and thus the absence of projections and scenarios – not only in the QNV and QNDS, but also among important and influential government establishments such as the Qatari Diar, the major governmental real estate investment company (which includes investment cities) whose estimates differ considerably from the projections of the General Secretariat for Development Planning, which is responsible for the demographic strategy that generated the QNDS.

It is worth mentioning that in mid-2011, despite the warnings of the Strategy, the Qatari government established the Qatar National Rail Network (for train and metro) to implement the transportation mega-project (at an estimated cost of US\$27 billion) that had been contested by the General Secretariat for Development Planning on the contention that it was based on gross overestimates.

The political deficiency

In the absence of democracy, the political deficiency in the system is represented in the lack of effective, popular political participation in determining choices and public decision-making, never mind that the provisional Basic Law of 1970 states that the

governing system in Qatar is ‘democratic’. Likewise, the Permanent Constitution of 2004 states that the people ‘are the source of powers [*sic*]’, in addition to affirming the separation of powers.

As I have presented in a recent analysis entitled ‘The state of democracy in Qatar’ (al-Kuwārī 2011a), absolute rule prevails, both prior to and after the drafting of the Permanent Constitution. My study found that the governing system of Qatar has yet to transition to democracy and this process cannot possibly move forward as long as the rest of the provisions of the Permanent Constitution contradict and undermine the claims therein about the ruling system being ‘democratic’ and the people are the source of authority and power. Furthermore, Article 150 suspended the ‘legislative authority’ until the election of the promised Al-Shoura Council, which – at the time of writing – was due more than seven years ago.

Given the absence of democracy and effective political participation, the QNV and QNDS were expected to give top priority to political development and ensuring a transition to the promised system of democratic rule, as well as presenting the long-anticipated plan for political reform. Yet, a reading of the QNV 2030 reveals its neglect of political reforms, and silence on the matter of political development in the discussion on the pillars of the Vision. Instead it identifies and delimits various aspects of development including human, social, economic and environmental, without any mention of *political* development, and it is therefore not among the focal points or pillars of the Vision. Despite a segue at the beginning of the QNV to the effect that ‘Qatar is at a crossroads’, indicating that ‘it is now imperative for Qatar to choose the best development path that is compatible with the views of its leadership and the aspirations of its people’ (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning 2008, p. 2), the Vision does not consider political development to be among the prerequisites or preconditions of the ideal path, and does not acknowledge the political aspirations of Qatar’s people.

Naturally, when reading the QNDS, it comes as little surprise that it too – like the QNV – restricts the pillars of development to the four previously mentioned categories that do not include political development. In fact on the subject of ‘preserving and leveraging Qatar’s heritage and culture’ (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning 2008, p. 5) the Strategy states that:

despite rapid socioeconomic change over a relatively short period, Qatari society has maintained the essence of its culture and continuity with the past. This continuity includes observing the fundamental principles of Islam, maintaining the inherited status and prestige of the leading families and preserving the family unit as the core of society. A primary and persistent challenge is to maintain a proper balance between modern life and the country’s cultural and traditional values.

(Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning 2011, p. 20)

And if complying with the basic principles of Islam is a goal that enjoys great importance and is a matter of consensus within Qatari society, then ‘maintaining the inherited status and prestige of the leading families’ (p. 20) is a goal shrouded in ambiguity, which might even be contradictory to the principle of full and equal citizenship, upon which democratic rule is based. Furthermore, it might also contradict the essential principles of Islam, human rights accords and the Permanent Constitution of Qatar of 2004, especially when the perpetuation of the inherited social status system entails the provision of salaries and stipends from public funds, in addition to special status passports and manifest advantages with respect to appointment to public offices.

If one considers Article 24 of the 2004 Qatari Constitution, it states that ‘the citizens of Qatar shall be equal in public rights and duties’ (Ministry of Foreign Affairs). If this Article is to be taken seriously, then the QNDS would necessarily have had to rectify the relation between people in authority with inherited status and influence, on the one hand, and society at large, on the other hand, on a basis of justice, equality and democracy. What is genuinely regrettable in the reading of the QNV and QNDS from a reform perspective is the absolute silence on political reform and the absence of any attention to transition to democratic rule or mention of political development. This is even to the extent that there is not a *single* occurrence of the terms ‘democracy’, ‘citizenship’ or ‘elections’ among tens of thousands of words in either document.

The economic–productive deficiency

The economic–productive deficiency in Qatar, as in the rest of the GCC countries, represents a chronic and fundamental one characterized by the following primary manifestations:

- **Productive deficiency:** represented by an absolute and increasing reliance on revenues deriving from the finite and non-renewable natural resource of crude oil (oil and liquefied natural gas – LNG). Most of the primary revenues of Qatar’s rentier economy are derived from the increase in oil prices, at a rate ten times more than the cost of its production. This deficiency appears clearly in the gross domestic product and other national accounts as well, because the source of these revenues is the rent on a non-renewable natural resource, as opposed to a tax on institutions and individuals, as is the case in productive economies.

As a result of the lack of desire or perhaps the inability of each individual country of the region to adopt individually national oil policies that render oil revenues subject to developmental considerations, global demands for oil have been met blindly, without even minimal consideration for absorptive capacities or the depletion of oil resources. Therefore, reliance on a form of rentier economy has only increased over the decades and the rent deriving from oil revenues has become the primary source of the funds for the public budget and public investments (public reserves) as well as all other national accounts. For these reasons, Qatar and the rest of the Gulf countries became characterized as rentier states par excellence, suffering from chronic productive deficiencies. These cannot be resolved without subjecting oil and natural gas exports to sound developmental considerations, and correlating exports to growth in the absorptive capacity of the exporting country’s economy, with the aim of creating an alternative economic base that will be gradually less and less dependent on oil revenues.

This productive deficiency along with other chronic and pervasive ones leads the analyst to describe the mode of oil-dependent development, over the last two decades, according to the concept of ‘the development of loss’. This is due to the depletion of non-renewable petroleum resources and all other natural resources without establishing an alternative economic base, as well as the uprooting of civil society and concealment of its identity as a result of the perpetuation and perilous exacerbation of the demographic anomaly. This pattern of ‘the development of loss’ has unfortunately become thoroughly engrained in the region and no attention is paid to the risks entailed, with a view to rectifying the course and mode of development.

- Economic deficiencies: these accompany the rentier-based economy and the perpetuation of political regimes without popular accountability or transparency, where the most significant deficiencies of are: mixing public and private funds and the absence of transparency, to the degree of considering public funds and reserves akin to a secret withheld from citizens. This situation has led to numerous cases of embezzlement or unaccounted dispersion of funds, wastage and poor allocation of oil revenues, as well as underdeveloped policies for the circulation of revenues internally and externally (with the exception of Kuwait since promulgation of its constitution in 1962). Similar to the rest of the countries of the Gulf, Qatar does not issue final account statements for the public budget, or disclose precise certified accounts of public reserves, nor does it publish the reports of the Audit Bureau, if any such exist.

As I reported in a recent study, the Institute of International Finance (IIF), affiliated with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), noted that the scale of relative-rate embezzlement or unaccounted dispersion of oil revenues – i.e., the amount that did not reach the public budget – was 50% of aggregate Qatari oil revenues, and more than one-quarter of total revenues in the rest of GCC countries, except for Kuwait (al-Kuwārī 2009, p. 84). Over and above this, the percentages of unaccounted-for dispersion – in some countries – might even reach 50% of estimated public budgets (again, excepting Kuwait), where such funds are spent as stipends, grants and donations without a public purpose to justify their expenditure.

Upon close inspection of the remaining one-quarter of oil revenues that might be termed public expenditure, it is found that most of these have been channelled to support consumption and conceal the failure of the pattern of development. Most have not been used to foster productive activities or to mobilize people's capacities for initiating a process of sustainable development.

- The labour force deficiency: due to consumption patterns, the participation of Qatari citizens in the total workforce has dropped to only 6%, where a large number can be categorized under the rubric of concealed unemployment, in order to cover up the failure of the state to generate productive work opportunities and prepare its citizens for such.

Discussing development before putting in place proper and prerequisite economic-productive reform is an implicit acknowledgment of the pattern of the 'development of loss' (discussed above) as well as a consecration of it. The consequences are destructive when: oil resources run dry without an alternative economic base having been established in their place; public oil resources become inherited private property; and when the roots of society are extirpated as a result of a strategic reliance on expatriate workers in a way that denies Qatari society the opportunity to exercise its role as the main current of the state.

Did the QNV or the QNDS acknowledge the productive-economic flaw? Did they present solutions to redress its manifestations through a radical reform process that would pave the way for the inception of a sound development process, instead of the current mode of the 'development of loss'? The QNV mentions future challenges as embodied in balancing between available options, citing the following, within the economic sphere (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning 2008, p. 3):

- The needs of this generation and those of future generations.
- Growth and avoiding uncontrolled expansion.
- The size and quality of the expatriate labour force (appropriate to the selected path of development).
- Economic growth with social development and environmental management.

However, the QNV does not mention appropriate orientations when ascertaining and defining the options open to Qatar, where it does not admit to the productive–economic deficiency or acknowledge its aforementioned manifestations. Rather, it begins discussion of economic growth in a way that implies the continuation of the current development pattern without considering the correct aspects of the productive–economic deficiency. The Vision concludes that the desired goals of ‘economic development’ are: ‘Sound Economic Management; Responsible Exploitation of Oil and Gas; Suitable Economic Diversification’ (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning 2008, p. 26; Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning 2011, p. 249).

In assessing the components of these aims and goals, it appears that the QNV did not present solutions, orientations or projections, but instead mentioned general goals – which should supposedly be elaborated in detail in the QNDS – that aim to redress the productive–economic deficiency and resolve its manifestations. Yet, is there any evidence of this?

The QNDS starts by contending that ‘Qatar has built a solid foundation for embarking on the National Development Strategy 2011–2016’ (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning 2011, p. 3), adding that ‘The trajectory of Qatar’s economy is tightly linked to developments in the hydrocarbon sector. Hydrocarbons still dominate the economic landscape, but Qatar is branching out into new areas’ (p. 4). It goes on to mention ‘petrochemical and metallurgy sectors’ indicating that: ‘a foothold has also been established in new areas, including air transportation and media services’ (p. 4) and that ‘the Qatar Science and Technology Park now tenants more than 30 (foreign) ventures ... serving the needs of a larger and more complex economy’ (p. 4).

In this context, the QNDS summarizes its responsiveness to the QNV with respect to promoting sustainable prosperity (Table 1). The strategy acknowledges the impact of oil price changes in foreseeable future scenarios, asserting that ‘predicting the future is always a hazardous activity’ (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning 2011, p. 5) and, therefore, the QNDS reveals that its task is not to recast the future but to ‘predict’ it! When analysing the statistics of the QNDS, it is found that it mentions the total revenues of the government and government expenditures in figure 2.4 only (Figure 1). However, no statistics are found for aggregate oil and natural gas revenues so as to be able to confirm allocation of all oil revenues to the public budget.

Similarly, no detailed breakdown of revenues and public expenditures by sector is found that would enable the amount of allocations, gifts/stipends and grants and the like of such among expenditures in the public budget to be tracked. Likewise, statistics for total public reserves or areas of public investment are unavailable, as are numbers for annual profits, just as there is no mention of the number and proportion of Qatari citizens among the total population. All these facts and figures are considered to be state secrets that citizens have no right to know, apparently.

- The security deficiency: this is represented in the incapacity of the state to defend itself and it being compelled to ally itself with foreign forces and to be party to treaties that permit the establishment of foreign military bases and the stationing

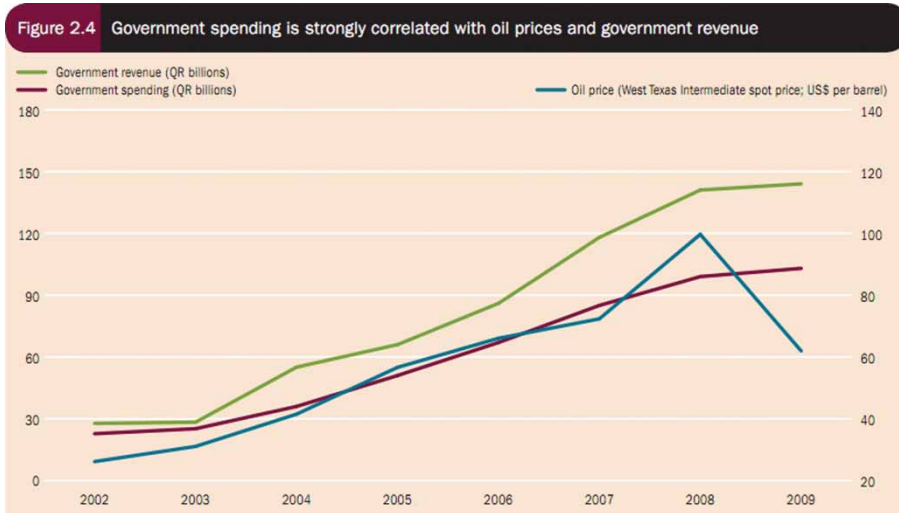


Figure 1. Figure 2.4 on p. 48 from the Qatar National Developmental Strategy 2011–2016 (QNDS) (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning 2011).

of foreign forces on its territory. This was the situation in most of the member countries of the GCC during the period of the British mandate (until 1971), and thereafter the United States gradually increased its presence, though not in Qatar initially. However, the presence and involvement of foreign forces became firmly ensconced after the 1991 Gulf War, and pervasive after 2003, when these foreign bases and personnel played an active role in the war against Iraq and in its occupation without the states of the region being able to adopt a neutral position, even if they wanted to, or to participate in the military effort – on the consideration of them being neighbouring countries with fraternal connections or the long range interests of their peoples.

This security deficiency obliged the states of the region to adopt hostile positions that are similar to those that have foreign military bases on their territories, and to bear the burden of the military conflicts and the latent dangers of weapons of mass destruction and savage wars in which there is no say and that leave no way out, once begun. In addition, it exposed the people of the region, their economies and their good neighbourly relations to danger for the benefit and in the interest of major foreign states; and they were unable to influence the decisions of the war. If it was comparatively difficult for each state of the region to provide individually for the demands of national security, then the sole solution is to be found in the formation of a unified entity among the members of the GCC to provide a minimum defensive capability and to established balanced foreign relations, just as it would foster the conditions for sound sustainable development.

Did either the QNV or the QNDS address the security deficiency and to what extent did it seriously endeavour to deal with this chronic problem through integration of the member states of the GCC into a single unified entity that could meet security demands and provide suitable conditions for a sustainable development process? The QNV remains silent about the security deficiency and does not address the problematic of

the presence of foreign military bases and personnel on Qatari territory. The security deficiency is not listed among the challenges, or an indication of the importance of meeting the demands of self-sufficient regional security.

Likewise, the QNDS maintains a similar silence about this threat and does not deal with any aspect of defence or the necessity of regional action and cooperation between countries of the GCC that would lead to the unity of its members as specified in Article 4 of the Basic Law of the GCC. This is on the consideration that the integration of the GCC member countries into a unified political entity, such as the Malaysian Union, is a strategic means for satisfying the demands of regional security and sound sustainable development.

Notes

1. Editor's note: see also al-Kuwārī, 'Alī Khalīfah, 2010. al-Naft wa Aqtār Majlis al-Ta'awun: Tanmiyat al-Ḍayā'. *al-Nahār Journal*, 19 April. Available from: <http://www.aldemokrati.org/ar-BH/ViewArticle/6/3130/Articles.aspx> [Accessed 16 November 2011].
2. Editor's note: Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning (2008).
3. Editor's note: The Permanent Constitution of the State of Qatar (2004).
4. Editor's note: Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning (2011).

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