UNDERSTANDING QATARI AMBITION

The Curriculum 2016–20

(Interim Report)

Executive Summary

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August 2020
# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Executive Summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Preface</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Islam and <em>Jihadism</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Toward Democracy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Global Ambition: A New Attitude?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Islamic Outreach in the Name of Peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Britain, the US and China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Islamic Nation and Arab World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Iran and Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Christians, Jews and Israel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>List of Textbooks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Executive Summary

- The Qatari curriculum appears to be in a phase of transformation. While somewhat less radical than previous versions, the process of moderation is in its infancy. Some particularly offensive material has been removed after decades of radical propaganda in Qatari schools but the curriculum does not meet international standards of peace and tolerance.

- Pan-Islamic and pan-Arab nationalism are evident as are elements of Salafism and the Muslim Brotherhood, which dominate the religious tenor of the curriculum.

- Prosperity is tightly linked to cultural and scientific interaction with the world. However, Qatar's involvement in world affairs includes the global spread of political Islam.

- Qatari education is heavily influenced by Western educators, but serious issues remain regarding peace and tolerance. In Islamic religious studies there is very little improvement. Jihad war, martyrdom and violent jihadi movements are praised. English language textbooks are the most moderate.

- Women are encouraged to be brave, serve their homeland and families, and have many children. Despite women's 'empowerment,' careers are not a priority.

- Christians are still seen as infidels (kafrun) and expected to go to hell. Some anti-Christian material has been removed.

- Jew hatred continues to be a central problem for this curriculum, while slightly less widespread than previous iterations. Israel is demonized. Textbooks teach Jews control and manipulate world powers and markets.

- Those GCC countries blockading Qatar are criticized with restraint; the siege is portrayed as an opportunity.

- Democracy and political participation are praised within the curriculum. Students are taught to have tolerance toward the expatriate community, in contrast to the often appalling treatment of immigrant workers throughout Qatar.

- The US, Britain, Turkey, Iran, China and Oman are considered friendly actors; the Ottoman Empire is fondly described as the "Islamic State."

National Identity

A fortunate discovery of fossil fuels in the late 1930s transformed one of the world's poorest countries to one of the richest. Qatar aspires to become a regional and global hub with a highly visible profile, specializing in media, education, sports, the knowledge economy, transportation and diplomacy; yet it continues to face internal challenges, in part resulting from the limited ability of its minority citizenry to vote (only in local elections) and the untenable relationship it has with its almost 90 percent non-citizen population.
The curriculum emphasizes nationalist identity and encourages patriotic sentiment over tribal affiliations. Pan-Islamic and pan-Arab nationalism is also evident as are elements of Salafism and the Muslim Brotherhood. There is a slight movement away from radical jihadism but much still remains. Nevertheless, Qatar's curriculum is heavily influenced by Western educators—displaying the Qatari gift for embracing contradictions.

In previous curricula, students learned that democracy was incompatible with Islam; that befriending non-Muslims was a sin; that a Jewish world conspiracy aimed at taking over the world; that the Jews were treacherous by nature and were using women to sabotage Islam—and that the Church, Crusades, charities, missionary work, Middle Eastern studies and modern Western and Arab liberal thought had all been part of one grand scheme aimed at destroying Islam.

Attitude toward Others

The curriculum now praises democracy and encourages participation in school elections. It conveys an idyllic openness characterizing Medieval Islamic states, and recognizes the role of Christians, Jews and others in the translation movement during that period (former editions represented minorities as collaborating with the enemy). Some offensive material (such as the Protocols of the Elders of Zion) has been removed or replaced. But hatred and persecution of Jews in Nazi Germany is justified by blaming Jews for the downfall of post-WWI Germany and their control and manipulation of regimes and world markets.

While the Turks and Iranians—and even the British and Americans—are respected, Middle Eastern minorities (such as Amazig, Yazidis, Kurds and Maronites) are largely ignored. Demonization of Israel remains part of Qatar's Arab and Islamic identity in what they consider to be support for the Palestinian cause.

With respect to gender, the Salafi voice remains intact. Instead of jihad war, women are expected to go on the [pilgrimage of] the hajj or the umrah. They are encouraged to be brave, serving homes and homeland, loving their husbands while having many children. Students learn about the empowerment of women from their supporting roles during the early stages of Islam; in Qatar, empowerment should not supersede traditionalist beliefs, nor should it upset the economic balance of the country. The curriculum rejects non-traditional gender roles (including actors playing opposite-gender roles).

Changes are slow and not fully consistent. Prosperity is tightly linked to opening education and cultural interaction with the world. However, such behavior is new. Until very recently one could see vicious attacks against Western civilization. Islamic Education textbooks have been fashioned by Muslim Brotherhood affiliates targeting Jews, Crusaders, missionaries, secular-

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2 Social Studies, Grade 7, Vol. 2, 2019, p. 139.
3 Ibid., p. 57.
modernists and secular Arabs. Democracy—a Western innovation—was seen as contradicting Islam. Modern ways were thought to encourage debauchery and extinguish Arab identity. Projects such as hosting the FIFA World Cup and funding the first mosque and Islamic center in Denmark are praised. The curriculum maintains that the Copenhagen mosque is "disseminating the culture of peace" and correcting "the distorted image of Islam." However, it omits Qatar's controversial treatment of local workers building World Cup venues, or the opposition of Danish citizens regarding the activities of the Grand Mosque.

Some anti-Christian material has been removed. But Christians, along with Jews as "People of the Book" are blamed for causing divisions among Muslims. The curriculum appears to respect Western scientists and scholars. Britain, the US, Turkey Iran, China and Oman are viewed as friendly actors. But China's abuse of its Muslim minority is criticized as is India; jihadism in Kashmir is applauded. Textbooks stress that European governments strive to assimilate their Muslim populations and that Muslim minorities are persecuted in many countries. The curriculum acknowledges the centrality of Britain in securing Qatar's independence and the struggle against the slave trade. The Ottoman Empire is referred to as an "Islamic State."

Some antisemitic myths were removed from at least one textbook, as was the description of Zionism as a racist movement. The curriculum labels the Jewish national movement as a "colonial-settler enterprise."

There is no anti-Shiite material, perhaps in deference to the large Shiite population and the current close relations with Iran. Criticism of the Arab siege countries is restrained, leaving open avenues for dialogue. The siege of Qatar is viewed somewhat positively, strengthening patriotic sentiment and allowing Qatari leaders to display magnanimity toward their rivals.

The Expatriate Community

Finally, the curriculum teaches students to show tolerance to the expatriate community. It encourages students to respect all members of the Qatari population and cautiously fosters the idea that democracy represents the future. Yet, numerous reports including those of Amnesty

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8 History, Grade 11, Vol. 2, 2019, p. 43.
9 Social Studies, Grade 8, Vol. 1, 2019, p. 113.
10 Social Studies, Grade 10, Vol. 2, 2019, p. 93.
International and major news organizations have documented the abuse of workers by various companies—with the implicit cooperation of Qatari authorities.\textsuperscript{11}

The Qatari curriculum \textit{appears} to be in a phase of transformation. Qatar's involvement in world affairs includes the global spread of political Islam. As one might expect, there are many contradictory signals attending such outreach.

Such international preoccupation tends to muddy the foremost problem faced by Qatar's regime: namely, the expatriates living and working in the peninsula. A more serious attitude toward improving conditions for the majority of its population may or may not be in the works. However, such changes, if real, could help Qatari leaders to channel their global ambitions into more meaningful and beneficial arenas, ultimately manifested in an improved curriculum.


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Preface

There is much to be concerned about in the Qatari curriculum. Most troubling is the realization that the leaders of this proud and unique country have allowed their children to be exposed for years to one of the most radical jihadi educations in the world. It is hard to conceive that there are still countries on this planet in which more than 95 percent of the workforce have no citizen rights and can be deported in a moment. Some have been treated no better than slaves. More worrying, for many, this has been until very recently, internationally legal and "acceptable."

The report fairly settles the debate about the motivation behind Qatar's support for radicals and the resources it invests to undermine fellow Arab countries, while aggressively interfering in Europe, the US and elsewhere. They supported radicals because they were radicals. One does not expose the souls of one's young children to a radical curriculum written by radical individuals unless one is a radical.

But the Qatari enigma remains. It revolves around the mystery of why such a small and dynamic country ends up using its endless resources and great talent to create havoc around the world. The most conspicuous example is perhaps that of Al Jazeera, which initially seemed to revolutionize Arab media but has long since lost its image as a balanced news outlet. Both the English and Arabic versions of Al Jazeera are now seen by many as a harmful and manipulative "useful tool for its Qatari political masters" (Guardian July 1, 2009) spreading antisemitic and anti-Western radicalism.

So, what can the textbooks teach us about this Qatari enigma? The curriculum appears to be in a change-mode, moving in a direction from jihadi radicalism toward open engagement with the world. To its credit, and with the exception of antisemitism and the Jewish/Israeli Other, the textbooks bravely touch upon the most sensitive issues: citizens and non-citizens, mosques in the West, slavery in the Gulf, Islam as a civilization which learned from others, tribal affiliation, enemies that are brothers, non-Arabs that helped build Islamic civilization, and discussions of democracy in a country that is, objectively, little more than a privately owned family business.

Most astounding is the open recognition of Britain's role in securing Qatar's existence, the presentation of Britain as saving Arab tribes from fighting against each other, Ottoman intervention, insecurity on the seas, arms trafficking and the slave trade. All this flies in the face of the pro forma anti-colonialist declarations one hears so often in the Middle East; in truth it persists even in some parts of this curriculum.

The narrative from a tenth-grade Social Studies textbook, tells us that the Al-Thani family emigrated from Najd in what is currently Saudi Arabia, and quickly gained prominence in the
Qatari Peninsula. The Gulf was only just awakening after centuries of tribal infighting and colonial competition. The Al-Thanis made a small fortune in the pearl trade, which provided them with comfort and status while giving them the resources necessary to bring together the indigenous tribes. Their tools of choice were wisdom, education, poetry, religious and cultural proficiency, business savvy and political skill. Security and prosperity were accomplished by putting such skills to use—cooperating with both the Ottomans and the British, respecting both, but at times pitting one against the other in order to secure Qatar's independence, well-being and ambitions.

A hallmark of the Qatari conduct tends to look favorably at foreign powers securing the peace in the Gulf, allowing Qataris to focus on their own interests. Much attention in this curriculum is given to the composition of Qatari national identity: Islamic, Arab and global. The peninsula seems committed to having a finger in every pie while advancing Qatari-Arab and Islamic culture worldwide. And after decades of radical Islamist teaching, Qatari students now learn the first article of the constitution includes the idea of democracy.

Qatar is a sovereign independent Arab state. Its religion is Islam and Islamic Sharia is a major source of its legislation; its regime is democratic, its official language is the Arabic language and the people of Qatar are from the Arab nation.

_Social Studies, Grade 10, Vol. 1, 2019, p. 90._

Thus, Islamic Sharia is a major source for legislation but not the only one. The constitution declares: Qatar's "regime is democratic" And though the world (and students) know Qatar is far from democratic, its vision, as taught in school textbooks, includes democracy. But democracy, throughout history has taken many forms. Will this vision of democracy follow Western models of citizen states? Or will it seek the ancient Greek or Islamic-Medieval model of an unequal but moderate and culturally open society that includes slaves, "protected people" (dihimmis) and women who are second class citizens? One hopeful sign: The incompatibility between democracy and Islam seen in the text two years ago is no longer there.

Qatar will likely continue on its determined course to engage the world. And while the current changes seen in the curriculum point to a process of reassessment, they are partial and reversible.

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Introduction

This interim report focuses on Qatar's school curriculum for grades 1–12. IMPACT-se's goal is to provide an assessment by analyzing as many textbooks as possible using international standards based on UNESCO and UN declarations and other recommendations and documents on education for peace and tolerance. Our qualified review of 238 textbooks for the calendar years 2016–20, determined that the Qatari curriculum does not yet meet international standards. It should be noted that the final assessment will ultimately depend on numerous changes unfolding throughout the curriculum and the emirate.

Beyond compliance with international standards, our reports strive to attain some understanding as regards the significance of our findings. Curricula often reveal the contours of how a given nation sees itself, the Other, and, hopefully, a future direction for the society. Thus, a curriculum translates into a national project—a survey of sorts—that may reflect the intentions of a nation, but hopefully goes far beyond. In Qatar the ultimate authority rests with an Emir. Nevertheless, tribal, constitutional and Islamic traditions require the consultation (shura) of others. Such consultative values extend to Qatar's curriculum where certain democratic values are explicitly described and inculcated in the textbooks. The researched corpus clearly reflects input emanating from a plethora of groups and individuals within the citizenry, expatriate community and also foreign advisors and participants from the Arab and Western worlds.

The scope of the curriculum's stakeholders ranges from the RAND Corporation to a host of authors affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood and the Qatar-based Egyptian Islamist Sheikh Yusuf Al Qaradawi, for many years assigned to construct the Islamic Education textbooks. Their combined efforts have influenced the curriculum and the minds of the Qatari community.

Although the report notes the curriculum's many positive changes in recent years, some are not conclusive; there are certainly problematic directions as well. Moreover, the cumulative incitement of past years may have left an indelible effect on Qatari hearts and minds. As an

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illustration, the percentage of Holocaust denial in Qatar is among the highest in the world (79 percent).\textsuperscript{15}

And while the Weill Cornell Medical College in Doha hosts the Oxford University Press journal: *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, it is doubtful whether this has any impact on the general public.\textsuperscript{16} More likely to be read is the Arabic version of the antisemitic: *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* found in Qatar's National Library.

Until recently, the curriculum was rife with jihadism and contained numerous antisemitic and anti-Christian tropes. The current edition appears to demonstrate a desire to move from isolationist and xenophobic attitudes to a more culturally interactive view. This is perhaps predicated on Qatar's 2030 Vision, its efforts to secure a knowledge-based economy, and the branding of the Qatari mini-state in ways to permit an active and continuous role in world affairs.\textsuperscript{17}

And despite positive changes, our analysis of the curriculum does not offer a clear path to decipher the Qatar enigma. In any discussion of Qatar one is likely to touch on the question of whether support for Islamist movements around the world reflects a genuine inclination to Islamism or just stems from the pragmatic security needs of a small country surrounded by real or imagined enemies. To what extent does Qatar's participation in destabilizing a host of Arab countries and supporting anti-Israeli terror groups an ideological consideration, or purely pragmatic or opportunistic gamesmanship that should be seen in a wider context?

Some analysts believe these policies emanate from such realpolitik considerations.\textsuperscript{18} Yet, for many years Qatari children were taught a curriculum largely authored by the radical Muslim

\textsuperscript{15} Second only to the Palestinian Authority. Arno Tausch, "The Political Geography of Shoah Knowledge and Awareness, Estimated from the Analysis of Global Library Catalogues and Wikipedia User Statistic," *Jewish Political Studies Review*, 31, nos. 1–2 (January 14, 2020):

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.


Brotherhood. This should be evident when considering Qatar's motivation in supporting a host of radical Islamic groups in the region and throughout the world. Delegating the education of the country's children to radicals demonstrates that radicalism is—or at least was—for many years at the core of Qatar's worldview. It is also true that the official Islam recognized in Qatar is the Wahhabist creed of Salafism, although the curriculum follows more orthodox Salafi tenets. Unlike Saudi Arabia, the Ministry of Education in Qatar controls all state schools, possibly because there is no powerful class of local religious scholars (ulama). The Ministry allows Muslim Brotherhood-inspired education in the school system. The numbers of Qatari teachers in the Religious Institute, a secondary government supported school founded by Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, skyrocketed from zero to 40 percent.

In previous years, students learned that democracy was against Islam; that befriending non-Muslims was a sin; that there was a Jewish world conspiracy in place aimed at taking over the world; that the Jews were treacherous by nature and have always been so; and that the Church, Crusades, charities, missionary work and Middle Eastern studies and modern Western and Arab liberal thought—had all been part of one grand scheme aimed at destroying Islam. Minorities were described as unreliable and believed to collaborate with the "enemy." The attitude toward Israel was radical and verged on an eliminationist approach. Gender relations left much to be desired in past editions; current textbooks range between women's empowerment and strict traditionalism.

But there is much positive material in the current 2019 textbooks. The Qatari curriculum is mindful of contributions toward its independence and sovereignty by various nations (the Ottomans, UK, US) and their efforts to maintain peace in the Gulf. It avoids spewing hate against problematic neighbors, even the current GCC "siege coalition." Democracy is hailed and revered. Schools have elections and citizens vote in local elections. Global cultural interactions and openness are emphasized. Much attention is given to the non-Muslim members of the eighth-century translation movement, which was mainly Graeco-Arabic but also included material from Sanskrit, Persian and Syriac. Modern Western scholars are praised. The Two-State solution is acknowledged, despite reservations, as a blueprint for future relations between Israelis and Palestinians.

23 *Social Studies*, Grade 7, Vol. 2, 2019, p. 139.
24 *Arabic Language*, Grade 2, Vol. 1, 2019, p. 16.
The curriculum also warns against tribal and national chauvinism, as it emphasizes Qatari patriotism, loyalty and participation in local elections. English and science textbooks offer much content about the culture of peace and the need for prosperity and scientific collaboration. Yet, in an educational system that now appears to teach tolerance, among the population there has been serious maltreatment of the majority expatriate community; they remain without a path to citizenship. And while there seems to be no thinking of equal rights for all in Qatar at the moment, the curriculum, at least, seems sensitive to this huge social problem facing Qatar in the long term.

A brief introduction to Qatar's background is germane to the curriculum and may help readers identify nuances in the excerpts provided. Some general information about Qatari education is also included to compliment the reader's perspective of the curriculum.

**Historical Background**

On a peninsula of less than 4,471 square miles jutting into the Persian Gulf, with a population under three million (of which only 10.5 percent are citizens), Qatar is not only prospering but has become a global actor. The percentage of Qatari citizens is steadily shrinking; expat residents now comprise 95 percent of the workforce, a constant source of uneasiness for the ruling regime. As the world's 158th smallest nation, comprising, arguably, little more than a family business with a seemingly endless income stream, Qatar's impact in the region and beyond is considerable.

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25 The remaining 89.5% are expats. Numbers for Qatar's ethnic and religious composition vary. According to Priya D'Souza's website Qatar's population by nationality in 2019 included 333,000 Qatari nationals (10.5%). Among the expats the largest in quantity are: 700,000 Indians (1.8%); 400,000 Bangladeshis (12.5%); 400,000 Nepalis (12.5%); 300,000 Egyptians (9.35%); 236,000 Filipinos (7.35%); 150,000 Pakistanis (4.7%); and 140,000 Sri Lankans (4.35%). The rest (less than 2%) come from around 80 other countries. These include 60,000 Sudanese; 51,000 Jordanians; 40,000 Lebanese; 40,000 Americans; and 30,000 Iranians; Jur Snoj, "Population of Qatar by Nationality—2019 Report," Priya D'Souza Communications, August 15, 2019, https://priyadsouza.com/population-of-qatar-by-nationality-in-2017/;

By religion, the population is divided into Muslim, 67.7% (80% Sunni, 20% Shiite); Christian, 13.8%; Hindu, 13.8%; Buddhist, 3.1%; Other religion, 2%,
https://armedforces.eu/Qatar.

26 Qatar's annual military budget is $19.3 billion for 11,800 active personnel,
https://armedforces.eu/Qatar.

27 From 40% in 1970, to 24% percent in 2004 to 10.5% in 2019; Snoj, "Population."

28 Pete Pattisson and Naveen Nair, "Asian Town, Qatar's Mall for Migrants: 'You Can't Ignore the Racial Undertones,'" The Guardian, October 9, 2018,
Qatar’s economic success derives from the late 1930s discovery of petroleum and natural gas, which the peninsula began producing in 1949. With oil and gas exports, Qatar’s citizens soon achieved one of the world's highest per capita incomes. Before discovering the oil and gas fields, Qatar's income depended on fishing and pearl-diving; Japanese cultured pearls, introduced amidst a world depression, drove many poverty-stricken Qatars out of the peninsula.

As outlined in the national school textbooks, Qatar's existence as a political entity owes much to nineteenth century British policies which led to freeing the Gulf dwellers from Ottoman control. British and later American policies aimed at the region had a dramatic role in creating Qatar and making it "the richest country in the world . . .".

There have been consequences from this dramatic transformation. The change from the poorest to the richest nation—but with a weak military—has created a structural schism in the face of powerful neighbors not always harboring the best of intentions.

At home, stability is a consideration. The citizen population is heterogeneous with certain rights but not necessarily with access to political power. Yet, the return to aspects of tribal identity has apparently served as a source of pride and family-channeled political clout for the non-ruling citizenship. The bond of tribal belonging, (asabiya in sociology), has surprisingly reasserted

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32 Asabiya is a term coined by famous Arab social scientist Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406).
itself even in urban settings in Qatar. One explanation offers seven components of Qatari citizenry.

First, in no particular order, there is the Al Thani family, a family that traces its lineage back to the Nejd of the central Arabian Peninsula. Second, there is the component of the citizenry who trace their lineage to one of the two Bedouin tribes indigenous to the Qatari Peninsula (Al Murrah and Bani Hajir). Third, there are those Bedouin tribes who trace their lineage to other tribes not indigenous to the Qatari Peninsula, many of whom arrived to serve and protect the ruling family and state in various political conflicts in the past. Fourth, there are various families and clans originally from Bahrain—pearling and merchant families who settled the northern peninsula. Fifth and sixth, there is the portion of the citizenry who trace their roots to Persia in some manner or another—those who claim Arab ethnicity, as well as those who do not. Seventh, there are several clans from Yemen who have a longstanding presence in Qatar. To this list, one might be tempted to add the descendants of the slave population brought to Qatar from Africa, but they are already integrated into the genealogical social structures described above.

Some experts argue that conflict between the Saudis and Qatar is tribal in nature, the Saudi royal family being part of the Anza tribes, while the Qatari Al Thani family belongs to the regional Banu Tamims. Qatar therefore supports clans belonging to Banu Tamim—Sunni and Shiite alike—inside Saudi Arabia. These ancient tribal conflicts, originating from struggles in the heart of the Arabian Peninsula, hover over the current conflict between Qatar and its Arab neighbors in the Persian Gulf.

An echo of this complexity reverberates in the country’s textbooks. Students are warned against highlighting their status and tribal affiliation. The GCC conflict is extensively covered.

Although Qataris are predominantly Sunni Muslims, the large Shiite population has developed unique and accepted forms of expression. Other groups may be categorized in various circumstances: from Bedouins to city dwellers and Persians to ethnic Arabs. But the dilemma

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34 Ibid., p. 57.
35 Inside Qatar itself, the ruling family has taken drastic measures against dissenting groups; in 1996, it stripped citizenship from thousands (although most later had rights restored). "Al-Ghufran: A Story of a Tribe Oppressed by the Two Hamads," *Al-Ain News* (Arabic), Mar 11, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8NIJXYKTqC;
most critical for Qatar, stems from the majority population of non-Arab, non-Muslim residents forming a perpetual citizenless majority.

One should consider the geopolitical position of life on a peninsula in the Gulf between a powerful rival on land and an even more powerful one just beyond the Gulf. Arguably, the vulnerability of living on a peninsula may have led Qatar to a proactive—even aggressive—mentality in dealing with the region and world.

**School Education**

Qatar's public school system has three components: six years of primary school; three years of junior high school (preparatory); followed by a three-year high school course.

The modern public school system emerged in the 1950s. Previously, there had been no formal education in the peninsula except for a few low-level kuttab (religious schools for young children). Girls' schools also started in the mid-1950s. Following the British pullout from the Gulf in 1971, Qatar decided not to merge with the UAE and hence became an independent country with a distinct educational system.

Schools in Qatar are regulated by the Ministry of Education and the Supreme Education Council. The 1980s saw approximately forty-six thousand students in a few hundred public schools. This led Emir Sheikh Hamad, in the mid-1990s, to develop an educational curriculum for the entire population. The Qataris eventually sought help from RAND Corporation, which in 2001 proposed *Education for a New Era*, a K-12 reform.

The results were significant, but problems lingered. International test scores were initially unimpressive. There were concerns that too many studies were offered in English at the expense of local language and culture. Since 2014 however, education quality improved dramatically at all levels with the development of school-wide learning portals (K-Net) and e-governance services (Hukoomi). Qatar ranks number one in the Arab world and fourth in the world according to the World Economic Forum's January 2019 Education Quality Index. While much help was received from a variety of sources, there remain serious issues in the curriculum regarding peace and tolerance.

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40 RAND's summary of the first years of the *Education for a New Era* Reform, Brewer et al., *Education for a New Era*, pp. 153–68.
The disparity of cultures and even language among teachers and students creates its own problems. Only one-quarter of the teachers in grades 1–12 are Qatari nationals. Teachers have a fairly low social status and non-citizen teachers can be deported at any time. Most of the foreign teachers are Arabs, but not from the Gulf, so they don't speak the *khali ji* (Gulf Arabic) dialect. This means that in some classes there are several versions of Arabic heard in addition to English. Fortunately, textbooks are written in standard modern Arabic, which serves as a common denominator. Most of the students come from a Salafi orthodox background and adhere to Bedouin traditions. Boys and girls study separately.

Qatar has become a vibrant international hub for education. Apart from 312 government public schools teaching the Qatari curriculum for citizens, there are 450 international curriculum schools, forty-seven Arab private schools and seventy foreign community schools serving the large expatriate and foreign student communities. Only government schools are free. The state curriculum is supervised by the Ministry of Education, and includes the Religious Institute which teaches the national curriculum with added religious studies.

State schools are considered "independent"; while they must meet curriculum standards, they are free to write their own syllabi and create their own textbooks.

Along with matters of security, US influence in education is also significant, even as large parts of the curriculum contradict American values. Qatar hosts branches of Western universities in Doha's Education City; many are American, which confirms the influence of Western values in Qatari society. With their large enrollments of international students, these transplanted universities are meant to supply the framework for Qatar's future knowledge-based economy. However, there is an apparent wide gap in such Western values education between the state colleges and universities and the education available in Doha's Education City.

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41 “Qatar has 845 Schools with 296,323 Pupils,” *The Peninsula*, February 24, 2017, [https://thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/24/02/2017/Qatar-has-845-schools-with-296,323-pupils](https://thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/24/02/2017/Qatar-has-845-schools-with-296,323-pupils);
"List of 89 Best Schools in Qatar (2020 Fees),” *Edarabia*, [https://www.edarabia.com/schools/qatar/](https://www.edarabia.com/schools/qatar/).

42 *Al Sharq*, "Abdullah Al-Nuaimi."


[Professor] Leo Lefebure describes his class of Problem of God, at Georgetown University in Qatar: 'One student commented that in her earlier schools she had absorbed extremely negative attitudes toward all other religions from her teachers. Georgetown offered her the first opportunity to learn more about other traditions in a more open-minded atmosphere, and her attitude today is much more positive.'

While this educational gap in Western values still lingers on the tertiary level, the current primary and secondary curriculum textbooks have shown themselves to be somewhat more open-minded.

Qatari education should be seen as part of the state’s effort to gain worldwide visibility in what appears to be a concerted effort to make it a hub of education, knowledge education, media and diplomacy; using "subtle power" to attain a "tiny giant" effect is the goal. For example, since there is no Nobel Prize for education, in 2011, the Qataris launched their own equivalent prize, the WISE, worth $500 thousand. In another area garnering wide attention, sports, investments include the purchase of the Paris Saint-Germain Football Club (PSG) and Qatar’s hosting of the 2022 FIFA World Cup (with much unintended bad publicity over the exploitation of foreign workers).

As the following report will suggest, the tolerance for peace in Qatari education for grades 1-12 has, for years, remained abysmally low. While some adjustments are being made, at the time of this research, they appear incremental at best.

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45 Leo D. Lefebure is a Professor of Theology at Georgetown University in Washington, DC, and a Berkley Center faculty fellow. Quotations in: Magdalena Rostron, "Liberal Arts Education in Qatar: Intercultural Perspectives," *Intercultural Education*, 20, no. 3 (2009), see endnote 14, p. 228.


Conclusion

Qatar has shown itself to be an ambitious country with a great many challenges in its path. The movement from poverty to affluence starting in the mid-twentieth century, along with a mostly capable leadership, has allowed the Gulf nation to create a viable economic plan (Vision 2030) to support its active involvement in regional and world affairs. Like Saudi Arabia with its Vision 2030 program, Qatar aspires to become a regional and global hub focusing on high visibility and specialization in the domains of media, education, sports, knowledge economy, transportation and diplomacy. The curriculum maintains that Qatar's involvement in world affairs is ongoing and includes the global spread of political Islam.

While its enormous wealth allows Qatar to employ a carrot-and-stick interventionist policy in a host of regional issues, the tiny peninsula with its miniscule army is constantly challenged by its more powerful neighbors in the Arabian Peninsula, the Gulf and Iran. At the same time, it continues to face internal challenges resulting from its demographic makeup. This focuses on an autocratic regime ruled by a minority immigrant tribe with the remainder of citizens, eligible to vote only in local elections. Most strikingly, almost 90 percent of Qatar's population are non-citizen immigrants who can be deported at any time, often experiencing segregation and discrimination. Such discrimination and the ensuing unrest it creates, contributes to Qatar's geopolitical vulnerability; its source of revenue, owes to a fortunate discovery of fossil fuels in the late 1930s.

The curriculum emphasizes nationalist identity which seems to be in the midst of a resurgence—likely in part due to the siege crisis affecting the emirate country. However, pan-Islamic and pan-Arab nationalism is also evident—though somewhat reduced from previous curricula. The Islamic dimension includes elements of Salafism and the Muslim Brotherhood. But Qatari education, despite such extreme religious influences, remains heavily influenced by Western educators displaying the Qatari gift for embracing contradictions.

Within the Islamic discourse there appears to be a slight movement away from the jihadism of the Muslim Brotherhood as well as from the cultural isolationism of the Salafists. Yet both defensive and offensive jihad is taught with contexts from early, Medieval and contemporary Islam. Certain particularly offensive material (such as the Protocols of the Elders of Zion) has been removed or replaced.

The curriculum expounds on the openness of Medieval Islamic states, leading to their rise in prominence culturally and economically. It attributes much of Qatar's financial success on education and openness; the historical emphasis on the Medieval translation movement in school

49 Pattisson, "Asian Town," The Guardian
textbooks recognizes the role of Christians and Jews and stresses the critical importance of tolerance and openness in Muslim societies. One should bear in mind that this moves the curriculum away from the Salafi ideal.\(^{50}\)

With gender, however, the Salafi voice remains intact. Women are encouraged to be brave, serving homes and homeland, to love their husbands, and to have many children. Yet, the empowerment of women is documented from supporting roles during early Islamic times and currently in the opportunities afforded them by education and the ability to participate in the Consultative Council (\textit{Majlis al Shura}); but such empowerment is not at the expense of strict adherence to traditionalist beliefs.

Qatar's commitment to issues important to the Arab world remains strong; occasionally one finds such support replaced with sections that favor Qatari national causes. Demonization of Israel conveniently becomes part of that identity in supporting the Palestinian cause. Absent from the curriculum is an understanding of the perennial Middle Eastern crises affecting non-Arab or non-Muslim minorities or their various issues. While the Turks and Iranians—and even the British and Americans—are respected, others are not.

Hatred and persecution of Jews in Nazi Germany is justified for their role in the downfall of post-WWI Germany and their control and manipulation of governments and world markets. Concerns related to the origin of Israel and the Jews in the region, Western antisemitism and the Holocaust, and the condition of Jews in Islamic lands, particularly in the modern age leading to mass exodus from Arab countries, are avoided. Other ethnic and religious minorities and tribes such as the Amazig, Yazidis, Kurds and Maronites are among those excluded. The curriculum teaches students the importance of protecting Muslim minorities, who are persecuted worldwide. China and India's abuses of their Muslim minorities is criticized. European governments strive to assimilate their Muslim populace.

An idyllic presentation of the history of Islam as tolerant, liberal, interactive and advanced is preferable to the radicalism and \textit{jihadism} that still exists across the curriculum. Yet from the perspective of UNESCO standards it is important to present such history more completely and accurately.

Qatar appears to be in a process of reducing decades of radical education. Changes are slow and not fully consistent. A good starting point to view the curriculum is from the perspective of IMPACT-se's UNESCO-derived standards for \textit{SOUND PROSPERITY} and \textit{COOPERATION}, reflecting society's vision.

\(^{50}\textit{Al-salaf al-salih} (the righteous early), refers to the first three generations of Islam: The "friends" (of the Prophets), the "followers," and the "followers of the followers" [الصحابية, التابعون، تابعو التابعين].\)
In the Qatari curriculum, prosperity is tightly linked to opening education and cultural interaction with the world. However, such behavior is new. Until very recently one could see vicious attacks against Western civilization. Islamic Education textbooks have been fashioned by Muslim Brotherhood affiliates targeting Jews, Crusaders, missionaries, secular-modernists and secular Arabs. Democracy—a Western innovation—was seen as contradicting Islam.

The new curriculum speaks of democracy and cultural exchange. This may explain Qatar's intention to maintain high visibility in international affairs. Various projects such as hosting the FIFA World Cup and funding the first mosque and Islamic center in Denmark are praised. The curriculum maintains that the Copenhagen mosque aims at "disseminating the culture of peace" correcting "the distorted image of Islam," while repudiating violence and hatred and spreading tolerance. However the curriculum omits Qatar's controversial treatment of workers building World Cup venues or the opposition of Denmark citizens to the activities of the Grand Mosque. Students are also taught to be proud of Qatar's involvement in Gaza and to be enthusiastic over attacks against Israeli civilians.

There is no education for peace in the Israeli-Palestinian context even as the two-state solution is mentioned. The "obligation of Muslims is to liberate Palestine from the Occupation." Simply, the curriculum's presentation of Israel, peace and Jewish issues do not meet UNESCO'S standards. The textbooks provide very little UNBIASED INFORMATION regarding Jews and Israel; they do not show RESPECT nor do they acknowledge INDIVIDUAL OTHER Israelis, let alone Israel as a national entity. HATE continues to be instilled through examples that carry over to some textbooks from previous curricula, such as the "The Treacherous Jew"; "Zionism is an extremely racist political movement"; and "Israel is an Occupying State" representing "the most severe type of colonialism." Students are taught to support Palestinian "resistance" and to expect "victory against Israel and annihilation of the enemy . . . without compromise" Thus, PEACEMAKING is almost never found in this context.

And yet, Jews are mentioned in the context of the Medieval translation movement. The description of Zionism as a racist movement still remains but was removed from at least one textbook as were some antisemitic myths. Old Islamic anti-Jewish tropes exist, but were minimized in recent editions. The curriculum still falsely frames the Jewish national movement as a colonial-settler enterprise, and Israel as an occupation state.

Similarly, some anti-Christian material has been removed. But Christians, along with Jews as "People of the Book" are blamed for causing divisions among Muslims. The curriculum respects Western scientists and scholars. The US, Britain, Turkey Iran, China and Oman are portrayed as friendly actors. China's persecution of Muslims is detailed; jihadism in Kashmir is applauded. There is no anti-Shiite material, perhaps in deference to the large Shiite population and the current close relations with Iran. Criticism of the rival Arab siege countries is restrained, leaving open avenues for dialogue. The curriculum's idyllic portrayal of the Islamic treatment of minorities is simplistic (former editions described minorities as collaborating with the enemy).

Finally, the curriculum teaches students tolerance toward the expatriate community. It encourages them to respect all members of the Qatari population and cautiously fosters the idea that democracy represents the future. Regarding GENDER, the curriculum exhorts both traditional values and empowerment for women, at times creating contradictions. Careers for women are not a priority. They are encouraged to be brave, serving homes and homeland, loving their husbands while having many children. The curriculum rejects non-traditional gender roles (even actors playing opposite-gender roles).

The Qatari curriculum appears to be in a phase of transformation. Qatar's ambition to be actively involved in world affairs includes the global spread of political Islam, supporting Iranian and Turkish agendas, radical movements such as Hamas and Muslim Brotherhood, and subverting other regimes such as Egypt. There are many contradictory signals attending such outreach: Building an Islamic Center in Denmark or supporting so-called human rights causes around the world can be interpreted in various ways. An us-versus-them mentality is taught to confront non-Muslims worldwide; the apparent goal is to destroy Israel and support Muslim victims of oppression, negative campaigns, displacement, genocide and even "benign" efforts by Europe to integrate them into society at large.

Such international preoccupation tends to obfuscate the major problem affecting the Qatari homeland, to wit, the maltreatment of its majority expatriate population. A more serious attitude toward improving conditions for this population could ultimately help Qatari leaders to channel their global ambitions into more meaningful and beneficial arenas. The curriculum includes hints in that direction, particularly with its discussions of democracy. If, as promised, the Consultative Council convenes as a parliament in 2021, we may hopefully see some of the promised changes. We will continue to watch closely if the curriculum—and the society it represents—evolves.
### Methodology

IMPACT-se utilizes a content analysis research method to examine textbooks according to the following condensed criteria of UNESCO’s standards for peace and tolerance in school education:

1. **RESPECT**: The curriculum should promote tolerance, understanding and respect toward the "Other," his or her culture, achievements, values and way of life.\(^54\)

2. **INDIVIDUAL OTHER**: The curriculum should foster personal attachment toward the "Other" as an individual, his or her desire to be familiar, loved and appreciated.\(^55\)

3. **NO HATE**: The curriculum should be free of wording, imagery and ideologies likely to create prejudices, misconceptions, stereotypes, misunderstandings, mistrust, racial hatred, religious bigotry and national hatred, as well as any other form of hatred or contempt for other groups or peoples.\(^56\)

4. **NO INCITEMENT**: The curriculum should be free of language, content, and imagery that disseminate ideas or theories which justify or promote acts and expressions of violence, incitement to violence, hostility, harm and hatred toward other national, ethnic, racial or religious groups.\(^57\)

5. **PEACEMAKING**: The curriculum should develop capabilities for non-violent conflict resolution and promote peace.\(^58\)

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\(^{54}\) As defined in the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance Proclaimed and signed by Member States of UNESCO on November 16, 1995, Articles 1, 4.2. See also the UN Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding Between Peoples (1965), Principles I, III. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948): Education shall be directed to the full development of human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial and religious groups and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

\(^{55}\) The goal of education for peace is the development of universally recognized values in an individual, regardless of different socio-cultural contexts. See Ibid., Article 6. See also, on exchanges between youth, the UN Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples (1965), Principles IV, V.


\(^{57}\) As defined in Article 4 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2106 (XX) on December 21, 1965. See also Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2200A (XXI) on December 16, 1966.

6. **UNBIASED INFORMATION**: Educational materials (textbooks, workbooks, teachers’ guides, maps, illustrations, aids) should be up-to-date, accurate, complete, balanced and unprejudiced, and use equal standards to promote mutual knowledge and understanding between different peoples.  

7. **GENDER**: The curriculum should foster equality and mutual respect between women and men. It should refrain from stereotyped gender roles.

8. **SOUND PROSPERITY and COOPERATION**: The curriculum should educate for sound and sustainable economic conduct and preservation of the environment for future generations. It should encourage regional and local cooperation to that effect.

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60 The preamble to the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance proclaimed and signed by member states of UNESCO on November 16, 1995, notes the Convention on the Elimination of Any Form of Discrimination against Women and emphasizes respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to gender.

61 Based on UNESCO recommendation concerning education for international understanding, cooperation and peace and education relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms, adopted by the General Conference at its eighteenth session, Paris, November 19, 1974, Articles III.6, and IV.7. On the imperative for developing “systematic and rational tolerance teaching methods that will address the cultural, social, economic, political and religious sources of intolerance,” see the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance proclaimed and signed by member states of UNESCO on November 16, 1995, Article 4.2. On education for international cooperation, see also the UN Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples (1965), Principle II.
List of Textbooks

The following Qatar curriculum textbooks were analyzed for the research in this study. The titles both here and referenced in the text have been translated into English to aid the reader. IMPACT-se typically researches all available textbooks used in a curriculum. If new textbooks or previously unavailable books become available after a report's publication, every effort will be made to update reports to include any relevant material. For this report, IMPACT-se acquired a large majority of the textbooks used in the Qatar curriculum. The remaining books were either unavailable or made unavailable for unknown reasons. We welcome any comments related to the acquisition of any omitted materials (http://www.impact-se.org/about-us/contact-us/).

Grade 1

Grade 2
27. Computing and Info Technology, Grade 2, Vol. 2 (Workbook), 2019

**Grade 3**

**Grade 4**

**Grade 5**


**Grade 6**


Grade 7


Grade 8


**Grade 9**


**Grade 10**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>196. <strong>Grade 11</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>224. <strong>Grade 12</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>227. <strong>English</strong>, Grade 12 (Foundation), 2018.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>228. <strong>English</strong>, Grade 12 (Foundation Workbook), 2018.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
229. Information Technology, Grade 12, Vol. 2 (Technology Track), 2019.
236. Social Studies, Grade 12, Vol. 2 (Foundation), 2016.