

The Nation as Brand: Postcolonial Construction of National Identity in Late 20th/21st Century Qatar

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Abstract : Despite its relatively short history as an independent state, Qatar has emerged as a highly regarded Gulf state and global power. Since its independence in September 1971, the state has employed deliberate policy initiatives designed to put Qatar on the map and distinguish it from other Gulf states. Because Qatar and its neighbors are resource-poor apart from energy, whoever is first to introduce a unique aspect of branding not only takes the lead but assumes what is often an insurmountable advantage. This study examines three specific modes of branding undertaken by Qatar: (1) energy policies to utilize its natural gas to become a dominant supplier; (2) the deliberate construction of a distinct cultural brand utilizing sports, architecture, museums, and media; and (3) 'niche diplomacy' to serve as a mediator in regional and intra-national conflicts, especially as interlocutor between the United States and Arab regimes and Muslim groups. Gleaning data from a range of sources, this study analyzes the effectiveness and significance of Qatar's place branding on the global stage, as well as potential disadvantages and limits in this branding, including problems encountered before and after the 'Qatar crisis.'

Keywords : national branding, national-identity, Qatar, soft-power

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