



Image-Building through Humanitarian Diplomacy: The Case of Qatar

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Abstract

In a globalized world, the countries are more inclined to build their images through employing the peaceful tools. One of core instruments that emerged in the last decades is humanitarian diplomacy, which is based on providing assistance and rescue operations and empowering societies. Qatar as ambitious country were employed its strategies to support the building of its image in the world through humanitarian intervention in the crises zones, as one of its active tools. This article is trying to go through the case of Qatar and how it's developed its model in humanitarian diplomacy, the research will seek to present the main humanitarian entities and how they proceed under the vision of Qatar.

Keywords: Qatar; Humanitarian Diplomacy; Aid; Financing; Politics

1. Introduction

Diplomacy nowadays it's not only about the well-known notion of building the relations politically between two states, but it extended to economic, cultural, sport, educational, and humanitarian as well. It's a demonstration of the state ambitious and strategic vision in the regional, global sphere, and it's acts according to it's strategic interests (Abdurahmanlı, 2021; Alsukhni, 2024). It's a notion that extends to reflects the values, ethos, and believes of the states as well (Ratajczak & Broś, 2023).

One of the expansions of the diplomacy is the humanitarian side, which is emerges as reflection of the constructive and benevolent kind of practice in the politics. The action of humanitarian diplomacy aims to build humanitarian support and it consider an element of the foreign policy of the state (O'Hagan, 2016; De Lauri, 2018). The act of the humanitarian operations it's a kind of adopting the emotional and bilateral helpfulness and a tool of strengthen the relations or extending it to extra diminution (Battaloğlu & Farasin, 2024; O'Hagan, 2016).

The deep understating of the humanitarian assistance is considered a sort of the plan of the nations to branding itself in the global sphere and making it's soft power (Bogatyreva, 2022; O'Hagan, 2016). As this kind of activities it's a mix of the humanitarian activities and cross-boarders political tools (Barakat,

2019). Also, this kind of responds it including a deep intervening into the domestic relations of the country and with the base of the people to assist them in very critical moments. (Barakat, 2019).

For an ambitious state like Qatar, working for building its image and branding its vision it in the core of its foreign policy in the last couple of decades. Qatar tries to Search for ranking globally in many spheres in world like the other nations seeking as other (Gong, 2021; Peterson, 2006; Hazime, 2011). Nowadays, nation branding for Qatar it's not a new thing, after adopting many tools in the diplomacy, including hosting the mega-sport events, political mediation in the disputed conflicts, and humanitarian aid. And employing the humanitarian diplomacy it's not far from it (Mohib & Carroll, 2024; Ahmed, 2020).

This paper tries to overview the role of Qatar's humanitarian diplomacy in as tool for building it's image and branding it's reputation in the regional and global sphere, as a tool that extends to the other it's soft power and nation branding sources. The paper structure is divided into three sub-topics. First, it will provide a general conceptual overview about the notion of the humanitarian diplomacy. Second it will go through Qatar general policy in the global sphere and mainly in the past decades. Then in the third part the article will show Qatar's tools in delivering humanitarian aid and employing this kind of diplomacy in the operational level. The article will work to sidelight on the role of the humanitarian aid as peaceful and valuable tool for the countries to build an image in the popular level and sustain its reputation. Also, there are some of the key factors that helped Qatar to success in adopting humanitarian diplomacy.

2. Humanitarian Diplomacy: An Overview

Humanitarian diplomacy can be defined as sort of support and assistance for the victims or need for empowering individuals (Bogatyreva, 2022; Veuthey, 2012). The humanitarian diplomacy meaning is takes a wide conceptual and philosophical dimensions. While it's an expression of solidarity with the states and ordinary people, the humanitarian diplomacy it's a manifestation of the cooperation and partnership between the countries came in very urgent time in the history of the county. The more meaningful way in employing the humanitarian diplomacy it's a tool for boosting the bilateral relations between the countries and taking it to higher levels, and at the end of the day it's a continuing of the general diplomatic relation with the other countries, and achieving the general goals and strategies of the countries. While despite the positive usage of this tool in the diplomacy, there are concerns about to what extent the transparency and integrity is taking into consideration in these cases (O'Hagan, 2016; Alsukhni, 2024).

The humanitarian diplomacy is a sort of saving the humans which is emerged from the other approaches of the diplomatic intervention types, basically in the armed conflicts and wars or natural disastrous. But in today's politics the convention of humanitarian diplomacy is to build their reputations and make using it as nation branding tool. And activating the diplomacy from the freezing relations, even it may take many forms like supporting the refugees from the conflicts, and from natural disastrous like earthquakes and dams collapse, and sending technical teams to build the infrastructure networks. It is noteworthy that each country Is followed a different approach in practicing the humanitarian diplomacy, even from the level of contribution or in the forms of engagement. like development the infrastructure and empowering the human rights. And these projects are leading to build their image for the countries positively. The humanitarian diplomacy is a forms for the countries to fill the gap of activity in the diplomacy worlds globally and in the bilateral relations (Gong, 2021; Davutoğlu, 2013).

The concept of the humanitarian diplomacy is the emerged in the mid of the recent century mainly after the cold war. And since the late of 21 centuries, the raise of the conflicts and famine and epidemic increased the flow of the humanitarian diplomacy. Its core purpose is to support the vulnerable people by

providing a different kind of assistance like the medical aid and daily needs of the people, it includes a information's and sharing the expertise. This kind of diplomacy is based on the general principles among the practitioners like providing the assistance without looking to the personal beliefs, ethnicities, and religion (Seysane & Tanrıverdi-Şeyşane, 2022; Abdurahmanlı, 2021).

The humanitarian diplomacy is an additional instrument in the hands of the state diplomatic institutions, can be employed among the other tools like the negotiations, mediations and public activities. In the same time, the main player of the humanitarian diplomacy is executed mainly by the non-governmental entities, despite it's at the end of the day moving under the umbrella of the state (Seysane & Tanrıverdi-Şeyşane, 2022; Bogatyreva, 2022; Ratajczak & Broś, 2023).

The practice of the humanitarian diplomacy in the ground is based on many factors. Like the context of the event of the humanitarian needs, and the time and urgency priority, and the form of the needs to the country of the conflict zone (Cross, 2016; Kelly, 2024; Seysane & Tanrıverdi-Şeyşane, 2022).

One of the outcomes of the humanitarian diplomacy practices is to increase the awareness of the mutual support among the countries and entities and improving its importance, and that can push the other countries to intervene humanitarian. Also, this kind of diplomacy can increase the mutual diplomatic relations between the countries (Seysane & Tanrıverdi-Şeyşane, 2022).

The literature is containing many of the similar concepts that refers to humanitarian diplomacy, like the disasters diplomacy, human rights diplomacy, humanitarian cooperation. Even in the layers of the practice there are many pathways that taken for instance (1) the economic support and empowering assistance, (2) rescuing the communication who are facing the epidemics and pandemics, natural disastrous, (3) empowering the communities in the post-conflicts phase. (4) special and limited humanitarian interventions like rescuing specific communities and categories like health care services like covid-19 (Bogatyreva, 2022).

According to Alsukhni (2024), the best ideal practice of the humanitarian diplomacy is about understanding the needs of the targeted community or the case. The state should take in consider the “political, cultural, socio-economic dynamics within conflict settings.” Even in the conflict zones, knowing the context of the parties who are fighting is important in shaping the map the humanitarian support, for building “trust and confidence-building measures with armed groups to facilitate meaningful engagement.”

The Globalization is effected the patterns of the humanitarian diplomacy, which is by other means converted the countries closer and enabled sharing the interests, concerns, and support. That is means this kind of action is crossing the cultures, ethnic, religious backgrounds, despite that the driver power back to the economic factors and technology exchange. The internet and new modern communication tools allowed the people to share their feelings and carry the humanitarian stories across the globe (Alsukhni, 2024), and therefore being a force to encourage practicing this kind of diplomacy.

One of the core necessities of practicing this kind of diplomacy is the capacity to urgent response and timely intervention, diplomatically and humanitarianly. And that is means the deep understanding of the different dimensions, including the political, cultural, socio-economic contexts in the conflict zone. The humanitarian interventions are not always going seamlessly, in the armed conflicts knowing how to build the bridges between the parties is important to avoid any miscalculation that can affect the process of the circulation of the humanitarian aid in that area, that is may encourages the disputed parties to target that area (Alsukhni, 2024).

3. Qatar: From Foreign Policy to Image Building

It's very clear and intuitive in the political sciences and diplomacy that the states are employing many ways to meet their interests and saving their sovereignty. That category of the tools includes diplomacy with its branches, culture, economy, and soft power.

For instance, a country that employing media and propaganda in sharing values, specific ideas, and circulating messages to mobilize people, though running public relations campaigns to persuade the people, even with the changes in the media platforms and communication technologies nowadays which is allowing many tools and choices in making the campaigns or content creation (Kaneva, 2011).

While the goals can be also extending to achieve economic, political, and strategic goals for the nations. The history carries many ways that assures the using of the image building tools to achieve the goals of the nations by adopting the slogans, flags, mottos in terms to keeping the main goals in the memories (Volcic, Z., & Andrejevic, 2011).

Qatar, a country member in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), with a huge Liquefied Natural GAS (LNG) Reserves, in the last couple of decades emerges as a key pillar in the global politics and diplomacy, thanks to its active engagement in the mediation efforts in the conflicts, hosting mega events, and building modern infrastructure and empowering the income of individuals in the country, which is majority of migrant workers, Focusing on the economic welfare internally, Qatar education and health level boosted in the last decades.

In Qatar strategy, branding and image-building was a key pillar in leading its position in the world. Branding requires building a network of values, comprehensive concepts, consistent discourse, and targeting a right case that can serve the plans of the country. Another matter that is vital for ensuring the effectiveness of the campaign is the obvious and precise goal whether is improving or correcting the image of the country. And then employing the right model by using the economic, or cultural, or political tools (Anholt, 2006).

In its politics, Qatar in the past decades had executed a very critical and cautious diplomacy that based on building stable political relations with the countries in the Middle East and Arab region as well as globally, even amid of the tensions and disputes in the middle east.

In the foreign policy level, Qatar played a very effective role in building a soft power, regionally and globally. The ambitious of Qatar increased in the last two decades, basically in managing the mediations between the different parties in the conflicts, and hosting peace talks. Case after another, it compiled a trusted credit in handling the complex political dilemmas in the region (Khatib, 2013). The most clear cases of Qatari interventions to solve the tensions through mediation were in Lebanon, Sudan, and Yemen. (Kamrava, 2011) and in Palestine (Alqashouti, 2021), and in encouraging Iran and United States to engage in peace talks to find a resolution for Iran's nuclear issue, thanks to its relations with the two parties, (Milton et al., 2025).

one of the key reasons that Qatar followed this policies that Qatar as geographically small country but in the past decades achieved to build a prestigious position among regional powers (Kamrava, 2011). but is allowed Qatar to take a middle position amid the tensions between the disputed countries, and also to play a constructive role in solve the conflicts, in addition to find a hedging strategy and balance the key powers in the region (Araghchi & Samadi, 2024). Even in some case that is didn't avoided Qatar from the accusation of siding anti-GCC members like with Iran, and that was a key factor in imposing a blockade of June 2017 (Zaccara & Mohiddin, 2021).

Beside employing mediation and peaceful politics in building its prestigious position, Qatar used other strategies in image building and position itself in the map of the core regional countries and global ranking in some cases. Through hosting the mega-events, like FIFA 2022 World Cup, and global conferences and summits, which increased the attraction of the global public figures and prompt decision makers to observe the Qatari experience and how it emerged to a global hub for the conferences.

Also, Qatar is seeking to image building because it's a way for getting a recognition in the world. This way is a part of achieving the broad and strategic foreign policy of the country, that could push the other aspects of the state like the economic and trading and cultural aspects (Eggeling, 2020).

4. Humanitarian Institutions In Qatar And How It Serves The Vision

Image-building goes through a systematic way, includes many ways including using of the modern technologies are effective tool in modern image-building. It can be used to strengthen the relations with other countries. Some of the written literatures talking about the soft power as sort of public diplomacy, which is the opposite of the hard power or the forced or coercive power. In the scale of the humanity (Heng, 2016).

After presenting the notion of the humanitarian diplomacy and how Qatar developed its position regionally and globally through employing the mediation and soft power (Brannagan & Giulianiotti, 2018), this part will present the tools that Qatar used to execute its humanitarian diplomacy plans on the ground. The findings indicate that the NGO's in Qatar are playing a huge role in running that strategies, with systematic process in response and implementation which indicates the Institutionalizing the efforts. The list includes many of the charity and humanitarian diplomacy institutions in Qatar that working under the umbrella of the Qatar humanitarian diplomacy. For instance, Sheikh Eid Charity Foundation, Thani Bin Abdullah Humanitarian Foundation, Jassim & Hamad Bin Jassim Charitable Foundation, Sheikh Nasser bin Khalid Al-Thani Charitable Institution, Al Faisal Without Borders Foundation, Saeed Bin Salem Al-Muhanadi Institution (Ataa), Afif Charity, Faisal Bin Fahad Al Thani Charitable Association, Naser Bin Jassim Al Thani Charitable Association. Qatar Society for the Rehabilitation of Special Needs, Qatar Cancer Society.

Qatar Charity

Qatar Charity considers one of the most effective humanitarian institutions in Qatar, which is leading a mega charity projects in Qatar and overseas in many fields, including education, healthcare facilities, building basic infrastructure, and empowering low-income families, and circulating donations as well.

Qatar charity is eagerly designing its campaigns with very effective messages and attractive expressions which is encouraging the people to donate and support its projects, alongside their individual initiative, and by dealing with them emotionally.

Depending on media and public relations campaigns and huge visual materials, Qatar Charity by following this strategies in media is achieving some of the key successes for it as charity organization and for Qatar as country, including promoting Qatar efforts in the other country by supporting them and reflecting the humanitarian diplomacy in the macro executional level, and carrying out a communication campaigns to express their purposes and how it can serve the other communities (Bayoumy, 2011).

The organization through this kind of practices is working to image-building in the strategic level and branding even Qatar or it as charity organization in the map of humanitarian diplomacy practitioners.

Qatar Red Crescent

Qatar Red Crescent is one of the key institutions in Qatar which is working in the humanitarian field, and the first official entity which specialized in this field. The Qatar red crescent is the first humanitarian organization in Qatar established in March 1978, as one of the NGO's focused on handling the humanitarian projects in the local and global sphere and cooperating with the international institutions.

Qatar Red Crescent is working according to its plans on providing the humanitarian assistance and running the projects. The Qatari Red Crescent has a huge groups of recuing team around the world and volunteers who can support the plans in the fields and doing emergency interventions.

The projects of the entity also aim to support the and empowering the weak families who suffers from low income (Elkamali & Elayah, 2020).

The Qatari International Search and Rescue Group (Lekhwiya)

Qatar through establishing the Qatar International Search and Rescue Group of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya), delivered many of rescue operations to the countries around the world who faces natural disastrous, fires, and fulfilling the humanitarian needs of the friendly countries to Qatar. The core role of this Group is carry the urgent assistance to the people who suffered from the disastrous.

The group operations were in many of the countries like Syria, Turkiya, Lebanon, and other countries to help in rescue operations and giving humanitarian assistance. It's notable that the operations that being occurred only under the supervision of the countries and all of them are friendly to Qatar.

The cooperation of humanitarian assistance is extending to building the rescue teams and providing the equipments to the countries, basically for ensuring the stability after the conflicts and supporting the rescue and humanitarian operations by supplying the logistics.

That is a way of extending the humanitarian assistance to the ground and side by side to the brotherly countries which is an expression of solidarity and reflecting facing the same pain. As well as allowing the individuals to engage with the ordinary people and build a friendly relation which is derived from the popular diplomacy, and in addition to empowering the skills of the humanitarian aid workers to develop their capabilities by exchanging the experiences and knowledge.

The key rescue operation which delivered by the team were Syria, to support their teams to face the different cases that required the intervention of the rescue team mainly after the new political regime in Syria took power with a poor capabilities in their needs of many fields including the civil defense (Basu, 2025; The Peninsula Qatar, 2025; SANA, 2025).

Reuniting families amid Russia Ukraine Conflict

As a war that very far from the GCC region, Russia-Ukraine Conflict was also an area that the humanitarian diplomacy had a need mainly after some families missed some of their members due to war conditions.

Qatar since the war lunched in February 2022, managed many of the mediation efforts to reuniting families' members as part of engaging in the humanitarian efforts in the conflict. It managed to carry

many rounds of reuniting. According to the state official numbers, the overall number of reunited children reached to 107 within fourteen humanitarian operations.

That is also came in cooperation of Qatar humanitarian efforts with the global organizations.

Qatar also according to official statements established Qatar also participated in building healthcare facilities in Ukraine, and managing children care places to prtotect them from the consequences of the war (Qatar Tribune, 2026; The Peninsula Qatar, 2026; Qatar News Agency, 2025).

The political relations of Qatar supported its plans for reaching successful humanitarian diplomacy, even in the Russian side or the Ukrainian.

Qatar Fund For Development

Qatar Fund For Development according to its mission is a “public development institution committed, on behalf of the State of Qatar, to improving the livelihood of communities around the world.” (Qatar Fund For Development, 2025, December 11). The cooperation of the entity is extended to build cooperation to provide technical support and operation experiences like boosting the financial sector in Syria (Qatar News Agency, 2026).

Education above all

Education above all its an institution that works to circulate education and support the communities around the world to educate and cooperate with the other institutions to improve the educational environment. The entity is achieved many quantum leaps in adopting the students around the world and reaches more than 69 million. This educations' body is considering one of the core pillars of Qatar tools to circulate the education abroad.

Covid-19

During the outbreak of covid-19 pandemic in the beginning of 2020, despite that Qatar was one of the infected countries as the other countries, it worked to run a humanitarian aid bridges to support the other countries to boost their vaccination plans and immunization. Also, that challenge was a very important station to show the cooperation with the global organizations like World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the UNHCR, and the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI). According to the figures, the funding of the humanitarian aid plans to contain covid by Qatar globally reached \$88 million through its many humanitarian non-governmental and governmental institutions (Himpel & Ayad, 2022).

During that period, Qatar also through its official aircraft, Qatar Airways, played an important role in carrying the migrants back to their homeland. On that time, most of the global airlines stopped their flights due to curb the steadfast outbreak of the pandemic, but by following a different strategy, Qatar airways continued its flights and operated the flights to play a role alone in delivering the passengers back to their country safely and avoiding any disruption in the global airlines operations.

As the preview shows and according to the observations by the author of the humanitarian institutions humanitarian fields work, the kind of humanitarian interventions are in building a sustainable projects that can support the venerable communities in the long-term and can find a sources of income for them, like water, creating jobs, and boosting the daily life infrastructures.

5. Conclusion

As the article elaborated, Qatar is worked very deeply in building its image through employing the humanitarian diplomacy as a very effective tool and to reach the vulnerable communities around the world. But despite its ambitions, the challenges did not curb the plans of Qatar in doing its responsibilities in humanitarian diplomacy fields. As the article stated the humanitarian diplomacy is a complicated process that based on the core capabilities of the state, economic power, political relations, resilience, and working experience in working in high risky environments. Qatar non-governmental intuitions also got a very high experience through the institutional work since decades, thanks to their field networks in the world and management efficiency, and timely response toward containing the crises zones.

Accordingly, continuing in the humanitarian diplomacy for Qatar and even for the small states who are looking for getting global recognition and higher role regionally is very effective tool in the foreseeable future as it's achieving the humanitarian needs in the micro level and supporting the image-building process in the macro level. Also, the expansion of Qatar relations in the economics and political side in the future will support its plans in increasing its involvement in the humanitarian diplomacy fields and therefore to increase its power in image-building in the global level.

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