**Country in Focus: Qatar**

![Qatar Skyline](image)

**BACKGROUND**

Qatar, a small country located on the Arabian (Persian) gulf off the Eastern shore of Saudi Arabia, gained its independence in 1971 and has been taking the world by storm ever since. As of 2007, Qatar is the wealthiest nation per capita in the world. This wealth came about in the 1990s when gas found in Qatar in 1971 was finally able to be liquified and exported in tanker ships. Exxon partnered with Qatar to help develop a liquification plant on Qatar’s north coast. This partnership succeeded, gas boomed, and Qatar accounted for 30 percent of the global market by 2010.

Prior to this great wealth, Qatar was a relatively poor British protectorate country which relied on pearling, trade, piracy and the camel industry. Now, with an unemployment rate of 0.10%, American universities, and free land, one can hardly find a poor Qatari individual. In 2011, the capital city of Qatar – Doha - was included in Fortune’s 15 best new cities for business and will host the FIFA World Cup in 2022.

Qatar has been ruled by an absolute monarchy - the Al-Thani family - since the mid-1800s and remains under the rule of this family today. The nation’s official religion is Islam and Arabic is the official language in Qatar although English is widely spoken. Qatari authorities follow Sharia law – the Islamic law derived from the teachings of the Quran and of Muhammad, which gives a set of principles on varying aspects of life. Shariah law can be interpreted in numerous different ways by Islamic scholars and is practiced uniquely around the world. Because of these variations in the interpretation and practice of Sharia law, there is conflict and contradiction in many Qatari policies.

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Currently there is a dispute between Saudi Arabia and the Emirates. Qatar has been the target of an air and sea boycott led by its neighbors, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates motivated by the accusations that Qatar has been financing terrorism, “cozying up” to Iran, and harboring fugitive dissidents. This dispute continues today and has caused concern that the struggle will continue and grow more serious, bringing major consequences to the U.S. as well as other nations in the Middle East.

Despite its current diplomatic conflicts and contradicting policy, Qatar is a forward thinking nation, looking toward the future with every decision made and positioning itself to nearly triple in size in the next ten years and further grow its wealth.

LET’S THINK ABOUT IT

Your SWAC leader will prompt you with questions revolving around the same idea: the economy and diplomatic relations in Qatar and the U.S.’s part in the conflict between the Gulf States and the fight against terror.

Express your thoughts and contribute to discussion with your fellow peers!

(room to write your thoughts)

This lesson plan is meant as an aid for the Faculty Sponsor, President or Vice-President to lead their respective SWAC chapter in the discussion of this two weeks’ focus: Qatar.

Kahoot! Introductory Quiz

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Kahoot! is an online Quiz platform. This small six-question quiz is to test the student’s prior knowledge of Mexico and its elections and leaders and introduce them to the discussion to come. The quiz does not require the proctor to have a Kahoot account in order to start. Students will use an electronic device in order to answer. The link is below; click START NOW and select Classic mode. After the Game PIN is generated, students will be able to join the session by accessing kahoot.it on their computer or mobile device. Begin the quiz once all students have joined! This activity shouldn’t take more than 10 minutes.

LINK: https://play.kahoot.it/#/k/38c17850-bf8e-4384-be19-97d46f56f39f

Lesson Handout

Now is when the handouts should be passed out to students. This handout will cover the current diplomatic struggles in Qatar and how the US has responded to these issues. It is recommended that the handout be read aloud as a group instead of individually. Take some time after the document has been read to cover the material with the students and make sure that its been generally understood. Ask questions to students; get them to summarize what they’ve read and make sure that the students are engaged and understanding. The reading shouldn’t take more than 20 minutes.

Video Resources

We have two video resources below that will go over in more detail the current event portion of the handout and expand upon it. Following each link we’ve included a description of the video and possible questions that you can ask students to see what they’ve taken away from watching the clips. Each video clip is between 1 and 6 minutes; coupled with questions this segment should take no more than 15 minutes. The last video is an additional source which offers more detailed information on the influence of Qatar and its rise to wealth and influence.

QATAR’S DIPLOMATIC CRISIS IN 60 SECONDS
LINK: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yWJxFisM4G0
➢ In the video, the presenter mentions the U.S. military base located in Qatar and how Qatar perceived this base to be a form of protection for them against the United States. How might this base provide protection and do you think the base would actually prevent the U.S. from making a move against Qatar?
➢ What might push the U.S. to intervene in this conflict? Would they do so diplomatically or by force?

WHAT’S BEHIND THE DRAMATIC DIPLOMATIC RIFT WITH QATAR?
LINK: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kP3TNliYsv8
Would you consider this diplomatic detachment from Qatar a success? Would you have handled the situation differently?

What do you perceive to have been the “breaking point” for these Gulf States to act against Qatar? How have these actions potentially negatively affected the other Gulf States more so than Qatar itself?

Considering 40% of its food supplies come from Saudi Arabia, how long do you think Qatar can last without the help of Saudi Arabia? How might Qatar be making up for this loss of food supply?

Joyce Karam mentions there being “two camps”. Which camp would you be in if you were a member of the Gulf States?

QATAR: A TINY COUNTRY ASSERTS POWERFUL INFLUENCE

LINK: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b_ZuXbOtBbo

DISCUSSION

This shouldn’t take more than 10 minutes – total estimated meeting time: no more than 1 hour.

Imagine if the technology to liquify gas had never been developed. Where do you think Qatar would be? Their economy?

How do you think gas has affected Qatar’s influence in diplomatic relations?

Do you agree with Saudi Arabia and the UAE’s decision to boycott Qatar?

If you were an ambassador to one of these nations (Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE), how would you advise their leaders to handle the disagreement and tension amongst them?

How do you perceive the Trump administration has approached the Middle East and how might their contradictory response to the diplomatic struggle in Qatar?

Do you feel terrorism will increase or decrease in the next ten years based on the current climate and diplomatic relations?

BIBLIOGRAPHY


A. (2017, June 08). Qatar's diplomatic crisis | IN 60 SECONDS. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vWJxFiSmAG0


