



Gulf Insights

What Qatar Teaches About Societal Resilience in
Times of War

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Recent escalations following the United States-Israel attack on Iran have once again exposed the Gulf region to increased uncertainty. Although much of the analysis has focused on military dimensions of the conflict, economic risks, and geopolitical realignments, a less examined but equally critical dimension is the societal impact of such crises. These tensions do not remain confined to the political level, and they filter rapidly into everyday life, shaping public sentiment, behavior, and social cohesion.

Across the Gulf, societal reactions have varied. In some examples, uncertainty has translated into visible anxiety and panic. [Reports of panic buying](#) have surfaced in parts of Dubai following claims of Iranian attacks in the region, with unverified videos circulating on social media showing shoppers rushing to supermarkets and shelves appearing empty. Yet in Qatar, the response has been notably different. Rather than fragmentation or fear-driven behavior, Qatari society has demonstrated a remarkable degree of resilience, rooted in trust, coordination with state institutions, and a shared sense of responsibility. This response is not accidental. It is the outcome of

lessons learned and structural transformations that began in response to the 2017 Gulf Crisis.

The 2017 crisis, marked by the blockade imposed by neighboring states, was a defining moment for Qatar. Initially perceived as a severe geopolitical and economic shock, it quickly evolved into a catalyst for long-term societal transformation. The blockade disrupted supply chains, threatened economic stability, and created a widespread sense of insecurity among both citizens and residents. Yet it also forced Qatar to fundamentally rethink its approach to security not merely in military or political terms, but at the societal level.

One of the most immediate concerns during the blockade was food security. Qatar, heavily reliant on imports from its neighbors and internationally, faced the risk of shortages in essential goods. [The state responded](#) swiftly by diversifying supply routes and investing in domestic production. Initiatives such as the “Baladna” project became emblematic of this shift toward self-sufficiency. What began as an emergency response soon evolved into a broader strategy of resilience, ensuring that critical needs

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could be met even under conditions of blockade.

The transformation went far beyond. The blockade reshaped the relationship between the state and society, as well as among the diverse communities within Qatar. This moment of shared experience also played an important role in [redefining Qatar's national identity](#). Traditionally, identity formation in Qatar has been inward-looking, often emphasizing cultural preservation and demographic boundaries. Yet the blockade encouraged a more inclusive understanding of belonging, one that recognized the contributions of all residents to the country's stability and prosperity. Non-nationals were no longer viewed solely as temporary participants in the economy, but as integral components of the social fabric. This shift aligns closely with trends toward broader societal inclusivity and resilience.

At the same time, the crisis fostered a powerful sense of unity and solidarity. [Slogans and narratives](#) that emerged during this period reflected not only loyalty, but also a shared determination to withstand external pressures. For many, the blockade was experienced as a moment akin to an independence struggle, one that reinforced sovereignty and strengthened national consciousness.

Importantly, this unity extended beyond symbolic expressions. It was reflected in practical adaptations across

different societal layers. Businesses reoriented supply chains, entrepreneurs seized new opportunities in local production, and institutions collaborated to ensure continuity in essential services. Since then, Qatar had not only [stabilized its economy but also initiated new growth strategies](#) around inclusive national identity and societal resilience. Perhaps the most profound outcome of the 2017 crisis, however, lies in its long-term societal implications. The experience of collective hardship and adaptation has left a lasting imprint on how resilience is understood and practiced in Qatar. It has institutionalized a model of societal security that prioritizes preparedness, inclusivity, and adaptability that are now evident in the country's response to new regional tensions.

In the current context of heightened geopolitical uncertainty, these lessons have become particularly relevant. Indeed, the recent regional crisis has involved a greater degree of military escalation, including retaliatory strikes affecting Qatar and other Gulf countries. Unlike the earlier crisis, which was primarily characterized by political and economic measures, the current situation introduces heightened security concerns because of the unprecedented military attacks on its critical infrastructure and core economic assets.

Nonetheless, from the earliest days of the strikes targeting Qatar, preventive measures to maintain social

stability were clear. Authorities in Qatar acted swiftly to reinforce public confidence, ensure the continuity of essential services, and mitigate potential disruptions. Government communication was open and consistent, helping to manage public perception and prevent widespread panic, while also actively [countering disinformation](#).

Even as certain infrastructure came under threat, resilience remained particularly strong in critical sectors such as food and water security. [As reported by Gulf Times](#) during the early days of the war, H.E. Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah Al Attiyah, Minister of Municipality, affirmed Qatar's progress in its food production system, achieving 99% self-sufficiency in dairy and its derivatives. It reflects the success of national policies aimed at enhancing self-sufficiency, supporting market stability, and ensuring the sustainable availability of food, driven in large part by the contributions of national companies. Similarly, in his statement, H.E. Minister of Interior, Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani, emphasized in [his interview on Qatar TV](#) that, with regard to water reserves, Qatar has worked over the past years to develop an integrated water security system and establish a strategic reserve sufficient for several months, equivalent to approximately three months of consumption.

Beyond the state level, societal responses in Qatar further reinforced

this resilience. Drawing on the experiences of the past decade, public reactions were largely calm and adaptive. While initial sounds of interceptions caused localized concern, the general atmosphere returned to a business-as-usual mode within approximately 24 hours. [As reported by The Peninsula Qatar](#), many expatriates expressed trust in the state of Qatar, its mediation role and the broader push for de-escalation. Speaking to the newspaper, one resident stated, "we have seen crises before and Qatar has always emerged stronger through dialogue," while another noted, "the attacks were shocking but our resilience is real."

Additional evidence of societal resilience is visible in social media discourse. On platforms such as X (formerly Twitter) and Instagram, even during periods of heightened tension, such as the retaliatory strikes targeting Qatar, public reactions remained largely calm and coordinated with the official channels. Rather than spreading unverified information, users augmented official communications, reflecting strong trust in state institutions. Hashtags were used [to express solidarity and reassurance](#), with residents sharing supportive messages. Qatar's experience over the past decade demonstrates that resilience is not built in moments of calm, but through the deliberate restructuring of systems and relationships during times of crisis. In this context, all residents in Qatar,

regardless of national or non-national, have responded to recent regional escalations and missile interceptions with sustained trust in the state, and a strong sense of collective belonging.

Although Qatar still has further steps to take toward achieving the goals of the Qatar National Vision 2030, important societal measures remain integral for continued development. These include further strengthening of a shared sense of national belonging beyond local affiliations, as well as fostering additional platforms for civic engagement and encouraging more active participation. Drawing on lessons from ongoing conflict, Qatar has the potential to further develop its societal policies, alongside its economic and military strategies.

As the Gulf region faces a new wave of challenges, societal resilience is becoming increasingly critical for all Gulf states. To build a more comprehensive security architecture, conceptualization of Gulf security needs to be extended beyond state strength and hard security measures to include greater societal resilience. In the short term, inclusive models of national identity, bringing together both citizens and non-citizens as active participants, can strengthen social cohesion and collective response. In the longer term, a more unified regional framework that accommodates multiple identities within a shared vision of societal resilience could further enhance the region's capacity to withstand future crises.

About the author

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The "Gulf Insights" series is published by the Gulf Studies Center on a weekly base with the aim to promote informed debate with academic depth. The Gulf Insights are commentaries on pressing regional issues written by the GSC/GSP faculty, staff PhD and MA students, as well as guest scholars, and they can be between 1,200 to 1,500 words.

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