



## Qatar Refugees Policy for Securitization Agenda before FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022

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**Abstract** - Since being selected as the host of the FIFA World Cup 2022, Qatar has made various strategic efforts to make the country safe from the threat of both hard power and soft power. At the same time, Qatar's reputation has been tarnished due to cases of human rights violations over the death of several foreign immigrant workers related to several facilities building projects of FIFA World Cup 2022. Saudi Arabia with Egypt, Bahrain, and the UAE claimed that Qatar is involved in funding the extremist group of Hamas in Gaza and several acts funding of terrorism in the Middle East. At that time, several Gulf countries blockaded Qatar but Qatar was able to survive. Qatar continues to focus on national branding and securitization before FIFA World Cup 2022. Through Qatar Law No. 11/2018 on *Organizing Political Asylum*, Qatar becomes the first country in the GCC to open its doors to refugees. This strategy allows Qatar to restore its image in international view by providing space for the Muslim Brotherhood to build a collective identity of Islamism and plays a vital role in Middle East political contestation then Covid-19 came. This situation makes Qatar must well prepare to deal with all security threats. The significant research finding is that the Qatar policy strategy aims to secure Al Thani's monarch status in Qatar for the next few years even though security threats come from all sides.

**Keywords:** FIFA World Cup 2022, Human Right, Qatar, Refugees, securitization

### I. INTRODUCTION

Qatar is the part of the GCC group that received the fewest refugees in 2017 where only 188 people and 190 people were accepted in 2018. Bahrain, whose area is smaller than Qatar or about 765.3 KM<sup>2</sup>, received more refugees than Qatar with 255 people in 2017 and 263 people in 2018 (Bank, 2019). Both Qatar and Bahrain did not violate international law at the time of 2017-2018 because they did not ratify the *1951 convention relating to the status of refugees and its 1967 protocol* similar to other GCC members such as Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, and Oman (UNHCR, 2015).

On 4 September 2018, there was a big change in Qatar where Qatar signed a law regarding the refugee policy. Through *Qatar Law No. 11/2018 on Organizing Political Asylum*, Qatar became the first GCC country to realize it. So far, the GCC countries, which are rich because they have huge oil and gas resources in the world, have closed their doors to refugees or asylum seekers (Burdulis, 2018). Security is one of the reasons for the GCC countries closing their doors for refugees or asylum seekers.

Refugees and asylum seekers are issues of concern by the world. The complicated wars and conflicts in the Middle East have made countries in the world have to be prepared to be flooded with asylum applications. Millions of civilians have been displaced by war in the Middle East. They seek safe shelter because forced by the pressing situation. Many of them take a dangerous risk trip to find new hope. So far, refugees have chosen to go to Europe or Australia because the rich GCC countries where are close to them have closed their doors. However, the anti-immigrant issue recently has emerged in the Western public. The government must face anti-immigrant, Islamophobic, and extreme nationalist movements. Their arrival is considered by public to threaten the internal conditions of a country (Jackson, 2016, p. 201).

Meanwhile, Qatar is just the opposite. In *Qatar Law No. 11/2018 on Organizing Political Asylum*, Qatar starts allowing asylum seekers to find a safe place in their small country. This effort was made amid of Qatar's preparations ahead of the world's biggest sports event named the FIFA World Cup 2022 (Burdulis, 2018). On the other hand, Qatar still allows Muslim Brotherhood to spread their ideology even though they are claimed as political wanted by some of the GCC countries because of their radical and extreme. Thousands of the Muslim Brotherhood political organizations found comfortable places in Qatar either before or after Qatar passed the refugee law (Ramadan, 2019).

Qatar is also reported in funding the extremism group of Hamas in Gaza and is suspected of participating in financing terrorist networks in the Middle East such as the Taliban. Qatar also allows Yusuf Al Qaradawi to spread Islamism with his friends by huge Qatar government media of Al Jazeera (Roberts, Reflecting on Qatar's Islamist Soft Power, 2019, pp. 1-2).

IM refugees and Islamist groups are increasingly finding comfortable transit places in Qatar especially after the new Qatar refugee law was passed. Qatar prohibits them to come back to Egypt, Saudi Arabia, or the UAE even though they are political outlaw in their homeland (Counterextremism, 2019). In practice,

*Qatar Law No. 11/2018 on Organizing Political Asylum* has not been realized properly because the refugees from Yemen and Syria were rejected by Qatar in 2019. Qatar argues that the infrastructure needed to enforce refugee laws is not yet optimal (Hrw, 2019).

Why did Qatar legalize *Qatar Law No. 11/2018 on Organizing Political Asylum* if the reality is opposite, is the law only to cover or reimage Qatar in the international world? Can Qatar strengthen the securitization of the region ahead of FIFA 2022 while security threat was faced by Al Thani's monarch?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

So far not found similar research with the author. A few research on the topic about Qatar and the FIFA World Cup 2022 will help the writer to develop the latest ideas and knowledge.

First, John Fahy's writing in the journal *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* entitled *International Relations and Faith-Based Diplomacy: The Case of Qatar*. John Fahy concluded that since Qatar was chosen to host the FIFA World Cup 2022, Qatar's diplomacy has been more moderate. Qatar often wants to bridge the East (Muslim) world and the West as well as through the global football event. On the other hand, Qatar has to deal with bad news related to funding to extremist Islamic groups issues. According to Qatar, diplomacy based on a moderate way can improve Qatar's image on the international stage.

Second, David Roberts's research, *Reflecting on Qatar's Islamist Soft Power*, in this 2019 policy brief, writes that Qatar uses the religious doctrine of the Muslim Brotherhood as its soft power. As a small country with huge financial resources, Qatar needs more human resources. Qatar's leaders rely on personal relationships with Islamist groups as the modus operandi of foreign policy, especially in the Middle East region to protect Qatar from various threats.

The significant difference with the author's writing is focused on the securitization agenda carried out by Qatar. Qatar puts forward the strategic and media aspect, especially the issue of immigrants because Qatar has been considered irresponsible. On the other hand, the issue of Qatar as connector for foreign funds to extremist and jihadist groups has tarnished Qatar's reputation. Qatar finally changed its law direction regulating refugees from close door to open-door policy to secure the Al Thani family regime image who has long led Qatar.

## III. SECURITIZATION THEORY

Securitization theory is a security theory commonly used to answer a series of complex questions in international relations. Securitization involves many transnational actors such as international institutions, non-state actors, civil society, and individual actors. What needs to be protected is often related to the sovereignty of a country and the power of government. To protect power status requires a securitization strategy so that the power can last longer (Emmers, 2016, p. 180).

After the Arab Spring happened in late 2010, the number of refugees from the Middle East increased along with the internal conflict. Many people think that Qatar has an important role in the Arab Spring because after the event, Qatar was able to improve internal relations in all fields with Arab countries (Baskan, 2016, pp. 83-84). The issue of refugees after Arab Spring is a common concern of Arab countries including Qatar.

The wave of refugees is considered a threat to the identity of a nation. The increase in the number of refugees in a country is suggested by carrying the risk of civil war, terrorism and, mass violence. This means they are considered dangerous people for domestic politics. Refugees also get discrimination from residents in the host country. They are persecuted by indigenous people who refuse the presence of refugees but the law from the government is unable to criminalize them (Savun & Gineste, 2019, pp. 88-89).

Political parties play a role in the refugee issue – some parties support refugees as part of human rights, and some claim it as a threat. In Germany, for example, the *Alternative für Deutschland* party increasingly gets many voters and becomes the third largest party at the election because of its main agenda of rejecting refugees even though it is a newly established party (Ilgit & Klotz, 2018, pp. 613-614).

On the other hand, some say that the identity of a nation can change from a weak state to a strong state (Jackson, 2016, p. 203). The identity that Qatar is trying to build is the collective identity of Islamism. The existence of the Muslim Brotherhood can strengthen a sense of solidarity among Muslims, especially since the religion of the majority of Middle Eastern refugees is Islam. The Muslim Brotherhood is not just an ideology or way of thinking but more than that, a guide to life. With a collective feeling like this, Muslim refugees can define relations between powers, the role of members in organizations, affiliations, global strategies that encourage collective action (al-Anani, 2016, pp. 118-119).

Qatar's closeness to the Muslim Brotherhood is like the relationship between a child and a father. The two of them cannot be separated due to historical factors. The identity of the Muslim Brotherhood is well preserved as part of the securitization strategy. With Al Jazeera, Qatar plays an important role in creating a good image for both the government of Qatar and the identity of the Muslim Brotherhood in the eyes of the Middle East region or the world. This can be seen from the government of Qatar which provided space for Yusuf Al Qaradawi to spread the influence of his Muslim Brotherhood doctrine globally (Roberts, 2014, pp. 84-85).

#### IV. THE THREATS BEHIND FIFA WORLD CUP 2022: FROM VARIOUS ACCUSATIONS UNTIL COVID-19

Qatar is a small country flanked by two powerful regional powers, Saudi Arabia and Iran. Unlike Iran, Qatar has quite a similar system to that of Saudi Arabia. If in Saudi Arabia, the power is held by the Al Saud family, then in Qatar, it is held by the Al Thani family. The difference with Saudi Arabia is that Qatar has a smaller population. Before the oil era, the cities around Doha were only inhabited by 12,000 people (Fromherz, 2012, p. 63). In 2020, the population of Qatar reaches 2,881,053 or increases of about 1% from 2019 which amounted to 2,832,067 (Worldometers.info, 2020). More than half of Qatar's population or 88% are expatriates. The native population of Qatar is only 10% (Onlineqatar.com, 2019).

Despite being small and having few populations, Qatar was chosen to host the world's prestigious sports event, the FIFA World Cup 2022. The election process began in March 2009 in conjunction with the selection of the 2018 FIFA World Cup host. The voting stage took place in November 2010, and thirteen countries were proposed. However, two of them were not included in the voting. Qatar won 14 votes, making Qatar the first country in the Middle East and the smallest country in the world to host the FIFA World Cup (Jahanfard, 2011).

Qatar's success in hosting the FIFA World Cup in 2022 has not made him free from accusations and protests. Qatar is considered to have cheated, bribery, and corruption to be elected. Moreover, so far no small country has taken part in the FIFA World Cup despite having a great football team. Politics in the governing body of the FIFA World Cup has also become the world's spotlight (Bishop & Cooper, 2018, pp. 21-22). Not only about corruption but Qatar is also facing allegations of human rights violations related to the deaths of 44 Nepalese immigrant workers in the accelerated construction of several facilities ahead of the 2022 FIFA World Cup (International, 2019, p. 5).

From some of the descriptions, Qatar must face two threats, both soft power, and hard power ahead of the FIFA World Cup 2022. In the threat of soft power, Qatar faces a sway of opinion that Qatar has neglected its immigrant workers as newcomers. Coupled with the issue of bribery and corruption, Qatar's image is getting worse internationally.

Meanwhile, about the threat of hard power, Qatar must face a blockade from neighboring countries that are members of the GCC plus Egypt community and military threats from two major regional powers, both Saudi Arabia and Iran. To deal with bad probability, Qatar seeks to multiply ties with the West such as purchasing super expensive fast jets from the United States, France, and the UK (Roberts, Reflecting on Qatar's Islamist Soft Power, 2019, p. 8). Not only about the GCC plus Iran but Qatar also must face the invasion of immigrants and refugees from other neighboring countries, terrorism, and the spread of the Covid-19 virus.

The spread of Covid-19 is both a contemporary and serious national threat. Until October 29, 2020, the total cases of Covid-19 in Qatar are 131.939 with 230 reported death (JHU, 2020). Covid-19 isn't only affected the health system or tourism but also preparing for FIFA World Cup 2022. FIFA and Asian Football Confederation postponed the second round of Asian qualifiers of FIFA World Cup 2022 until next year, 2021 (Post, 2020). Qatar surely decides to not postpone the main agenda of FIFA World Cup 2022 match because of believing in the high health system security of the nation (Keyser, 2020).

Public attention during Covid-19 is focused on two important areas, medical and social dominant including economic, political, legal, and cultural aspects. Future uncertainty along with Covid-19 arises with crisis insecurity. Then, Covid-19 is not only a national threat but also global threat that will affect any possibilities (Rogg, 2020, pp. 55-56). Similar to Qatar, Covid-19 is also a dangerous threat which will affect economy revenues of small country to hold the FIFA World Cup 2022.

#### V. QATAR REFUGEES POLICY FROM SHUT DOOR TO OPEN DOOR

Since Emir Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani came to power from 1995-2013, Qatar has emerged as a regional power but reaching international scope. The smart policy and sustainability for the future from Qatar can create global power for Qatar's national interest. Oil and gas resources make Qatar's socio-economic life

work well. Then the existence of Al Jazeera as a media liberalization allows Qatar to play in the Middle East and North Africa region in a fully strategic manner (Ulrichsen, 2014, pp. 37-38).

The political position job was held by a few indigenous people so that the domestic conflict in Qatar could be controlled by the emir and his family. When conditions in the country are stable, Qatar is not afraid to play further regionally and globally. Qatar's involvement in the Arab Spring through the giant Al Jazeera media has also informed the world about a series of demonstrations demanding an authoritarian regime to step down from power. Starting from Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, to Yemen (Ulrichsen, 2014, pp. 99-100).

A very visible example of Qatar's involvement during the Arab Spring event is after Hosni Mubarak stepped down from the throne - Qatar fully supports the next regime, Morsi, and the Muslim Brotherhood by providing tens of billions of dollars in funds and free access to Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) to him. Furthermore, the protest actions in several other countries were used by Qatar to align its democratic and free foreign policy with western-centric norms (Roberts, Qatar and the Muslim Brotherhood: Pragmatism or Preference?, 2014, p. 84).

In the middle of the Arab Spring, Qatar was faced with a lack of population in their country. Due to this small population, Qatar also needs a lot of foreign immigrant workers, especially after Qatar was chosen to host the FIFA World Cup 2022 in 2010. Qatar can't complete all sports facilities development projects without the existence of foreign immigrant workers from developing countries. Because of the lack of manpower of native Qatari experts and a lack of interest of Qatari people to work as construction labor, Qatar needs more foreign immigrant workers (Muftah, 2016, pp. 271-272).

The status of foreign immigrant workers caused a polemic for Qatar after the international public knew their human rights violations. Starting from the kafala system, which requires foreign immigrant labor to obtain permission from the sponsor, access to a place to live that is far from appropriate, to the minimum health standard environment. As a result, 44 workers from Nepal died and several other workers were also injured due to negligence of the sponsor (International, 2019, pp. 9-16). Meanwhile, according to the Guardian report, it is possible that hundreds of workers died in the construction project of several FIFA facilities in Qatar during 2012-2013 because most of them did not have official documents or were deliberately hidden by the sponsor, while Qatar seemed to shut up (Gibson & Pete, 2014).

Immigrant workers are different from refugees. If the time limit for immigrant workers is when the work contract expires, then the time limit for refugees is until conditions in the country of origin are safe. Even though they are different, both have the same pattern, namely looking for good fortune. However, what is often questioned is why the Gulf countries closed their doors to refugees even though their country is located close to the source of the conflict, while the doors for workers or expatriates are very wide open.

Before Qatar Law No. 11/2018 on Organizing Political Asylum is legalized, Qatar is one of the countries that closes its doors to refugees but is wide open for workers. However, the average worker in Qatar, for example, workers in Qatar Petroleum gives part of their salary to help the lives of refugees outside Qatar. The government of Qatar together with other Gulf countries only provide financial contributions for refugees outside their territory. \$900 million through charities, individual donations, and gulf governments to help support the social, educational, and economic lives of refugees (Stephens, 2015).

The fund's contribution did not completely solve the problem. The wave of refugees grew bigger due to the unfinished war. The provision of safe shelters for them is increasingly limited. Gulf countries were urged by countries that ratified the 1951 convention relating to the status of refugees and its 1967 protocol to immediately take concrete steps so that the wave of refugees could be accepted in their near and safer countries. Moreover, the average population in the Gulf countries is expatriate. It means that they are accustomed to foreigners so that a wave of anti-immigrant, Islamophobia, and extreme nationalism can be avoided unlike what happened in other parts of Europe (Ouaki, 2016).

Amid Qatar's bad reputation for what it did to foreign immigrant labor, Qatar changed its legal perspective to accommodate refugees through *Qatar Law No. 11/2018 on Organizing Political Asylum*. That means there are signs that Qatar has changed its pattern of policy from being closed to open. Meanwhile, other Gulf countries have not followed Qatar's steps even though Qatar is not comparable in size either land or sea to the UAE, Oman, and Saudi Arabia (Burdulis, 2018).

*Qatar Law No. 11/2018 on Organizing Political Asylum* consists of 13 articles signed by Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, Qatar's emir who has been in power since 2013 after succeeding his father, Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani. The law was legalized on 4 September 2018. It is the first in the history of a modern state to regulate global political asylum even though Qatar is not one of the countries that ratified *the 1951 convention relating to the status of refugees and its 1967 protocol* (Sadek, 2018). The law regulates who is entitled to refugee status and what processes must be done to obtain refugee status (al-Tsani, 2018).

Those who can obtain refugee status as stipulated in article one are individuals from outside Qatar who cannot stay in their home country because of fear of execution or punishment, torture, inhuman treatment, persecution due to ethnicity, religion, or affiliation with certain groups by country or militant

group. Meanwhile, those who are prohibited by the Qatari government as stated in article three are those who are involved in non-political criminal crimes, committing war crimes or against humanity, committing crimes that are against the principles of the United Nations, and those who have dual citizenship. After obtaining refugee status, they are prohibited from engaging in political movements in Qatar, their activities are restricted, and they are prohibited from moving abroad or returning to their home countries without the approval of the Qatari authorities (al-Tsani, 2018).

The gate from and to Qatar was guarded by staff to ensure the passenger free from the virus. Additionally, Qatar suffered the world's highest coronavirus infection rate per head of the population (News, 2020). Qatar never knows that Covid-19 will come globally. An open-door policy is not the best choice for security agenda especially from the health aspect but Qatar still optimizes to down the virus spread by health infrastructure and health protocol.

## VI. MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD BEHIND "OPEN DOOR POLICY" OF QATAR REFUGEES LAW

Qatar is building a collective identity for Islamism amid rumors that the government is helping finance the extremist group Hamas and the terrorism group of Al Qaeda, and the Taliban. This accusation was raised by its rival, Saudi Arabia allied who also blockaded Qatar in 2017. Saudi Arabia is guided by the existence of Yusuf Al Qaradawi in Qatar as strong evidence (Bodetti, 2019). Yusuf Al Qaradawi is a Muslim Brotherhood activist who has been in and out of prison when he lived in his homeland in Egypt. Now, Yusuf Al Qaradawi has received citizenship status from the government of Qatar and lives in Doha. Yusuf Al Qaradawi was also given place by Al Jazeera in its weekly program, *Al-Shari'a wal-Hayāt* (Islamic Law and Life). The program has been watched by more than 60 million viewers worldwide (Bartal & Rubinstein-Shemer, 2018, pp. 1-3).

Qatar's relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood was initially limited to education. Abdul-Badi Saqr is a Muslim Brotherhood academic from Egypt who later became director of education in Qatar in the 1950s. Under his leadership, many teachers from the Muslim Brotherhood background were brought in to teach with the Muslim Brotherhood ideology to the next future leaders of the nation of Qatar (Roberts, 2014, pp. 24-25). From here, Qatar bonds strong relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood in a wider field. Finally, many immigrants from the Muslim Brotherhood became an inseparable part of every development of Qatar.

Qatar continues to build its Islamism identity by always holding open dialogue internationally. Qatar wants to be imaged as a carrier of moderate Islamic teachings and a bridge between the West and the East through its diplomacy. This is done so that the image of Islam as a religion of terrorism can be avoided with Qatar as the main actor in the Middle East region (Fahy, 2018, pp. 86-87). Qatar also maintains ties with the United States in combating terrorism movements in the Middle East. Through the Middle East North Africa Financial Action Task Force (MENAFATF), Qatar seeks to fight money laundering and global terrorism (Katzman, 2020, p. 20).

On the other hand, Qatar still protects Yusuf Al Qaradawi in spreading Islamism, allegedly funding terrorist groups and supporting the Muslim Brotherhood movement which is identified as a threat to moderate Islam and political stability in the Middle East region. By building its Islamic political identity, Qatar strives for the Al Thani family to survive without anyone disturbing its existence. Qatar is in the same position as other Gulf countries where the position of the family dynasty monarchy could fall at any time if it is not properly guarded and not regulated as cleverly as possible (Fromherz, 2012, pp. 435-437).

Islamic political identity did merge with the sentiment of nationalism in the early 20th century. At that time, several regions headed by tribes in the Middle East responded firmly to growing feelings of colonial injustice. The political Islamic monarchy in Qatar is the same as several other Gulf countries that were born out of the petty bourgeoisie at that time. They try to guarantee social justice for their people by fully implementing Islamic law in their country (R.Hadiz, 2019, pp. 96-103).

Before the oil boom, the indigenous people of Qatar mostly worked as fishermen and pearl seekers. However, the price of pearls had plummeted when the Second World War broke out. This made Qatar slumped and became a very poor country. The scenario has changed completely since oil was discovered in the 1950s. The Qatari petty bourgeoisie finally rose in class and was able to eliminate poverty and unemployment in the country after oil was (Fromherz, 2012, pp. 15-16).

At the same time, Islamism in Qatar has grown in popularity since Qatar received religious scholars from the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt and its surroundings in the 1960s. Not only aimed at the scope of Qatar alone, the Muslim Brotherhood is also being projected by the Qatar government to reach out to other modern countries in the Middle East. Al Jazeera's veiled support for the Muslim Brotherhood at the time of the Arab Spring was Qatar's expansionary agenda in building a broadly collective Islamist identity that Qatar could control in the future (Roberts, 2014, pp. 90-91).

## VII. CONCLUSIONS

Qatar has its reasons why it must legalize Qatar Law No. 11/2018 on Organizing Political Asylum during preparations for the FIFA World Cup 2022. The fact that refugees are the biggest threat to the security of a country but not for Qatar, which has close ties to the Hamas group in Gaza and the Muslim Brotherhood. The Refugee Law is a cover to provide a place for IM and the Islamist community to develop widely in Qatar so that there will be no terrorist attacks from Middle East extremists and radical groups when FIFA 2022 takes place because of Qatar's closeness to Islamic group networks.

On the other hand, the reason Qatar imposes the Refugee Law is only an effort to maintain a good image in the views of the international community. Qatar wants to appear friendly to refugees after previously being labeled as violating human rights to foreign immigrant labor who participated in every infrastructure development project related to the FIFA World Cup 2022 such as sports facilities, stadiums, and hotels. In practice, only certain refugees can be accepted in Qatar because Qatar rejected proposals for refugee applications from Yemen and Syria in 2019 or a year after the law was passed in 2018.

Securitization may strengthen Al Thani's monarch with Qatar's approach to political and law imaging. Although the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 has made Qatar's financial stability decline and several countries have begun to tighten their territories, Qatar still uses Qatar Law No. 11/2018 on Organizing Political Asylum as a strategy to secure the positive image of the Al Thani family in international views while the practice is opposite so that Al Thani can survive last longer. Qatar will not be disturbed by negative assumptions from neighboring countries again especially when another GCC accused Qatar of financing terrorism.

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