

Higher Influence: How Qatar Pulls the Strings on American Campuses





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The findings and recommendations contained in this publication are solely those of the author.

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I. Introduction

Foreign governments have funded American institutions of higher education for decades. Gulf Arab states, European governments, and East Asian donors have all maintained significant financial relationships with American universities. The regulatory regime governing these relationships, principally Section 117 of the Higher Education Act, was designed to ensure disclosure of the existence and scale of foreign gifts and contracts, and even on those limited terms it has performed unevenly.¹

What Section 117 was not designed to prevent, however, is foreign funding purchasing significant institutional influence. But by shining light on which American institutions of higher education receive money from which foreign countries, and how much, perhaps this law hopes to dissuade or at least reveal attempts to leverage funding for undue influence. Yet, without access to the underlying contracts that set up and govern the relationships between universities and their foreign funders, the question of what foreign money actually buys inside American universities could not be answered, until now. Based on recently released documents, this report shows that Qatar has used complex contractual designs to structure its funding relationships with American universities to acquire access to intellectual property, governance deliberation, academic credentialing, and institutional reputation, and has deployed that access in service of a foreign policy strategy that includes the financial and operational support of Islamist movements hostile to the United States and its allies.

In March 2026, the House Committee on Education and the Workforce released nearly nine hundred pages of contractual and institutional documentation detailing the operating terms of two major American university partnerships in the Emirate of Qatar, the largest foreign donor to American universities. The materials, which included framework agreements, governance charters, intellectual property provisions, memoranda of understanding, confidentiality agreements, and a direct foreign ministry grant contract, made available for the first time the full text of the legal instruments governing these operations. This report analyzes those instruments.²

The materials include the current Framework Agreements governing the Doha branch campuses of Georgetown University (GU-Q) and Northwestern University (NU-Q), internal governance documents of the Joint Advisory Boards that oversee both operations, a direct contract between the Qatari Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Georgetown University's Bridge Initiative, a Confidentiality Agreement between Northwestern University in Qatar and Al Jazeera Media Network (AJMN), and the Memorandum of Understanding between the same parties.

This report analyzes those instruments. Qatar is not the only foreign state whose university relationships warrant scrutiny of this kind. Any comparable release of contractual materials governing the operations of American universities under the funding of other foreign states should receive comparable analysis. The scope of this report is determined by the scope of the available record.

That said, the Qatari case is more than a generic instance of a general problem. Qatar has, as a matter of documented state practice over the past three decades, been adverse to the strategic interests of the United States and its allies. Qatar's relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood and its regional affiliates — including financial support, diplomatic cover, and media amplification through the Al Jazeera Media Network — has been a persistent source of friction with the United States, with allied Gulf states, and with Egypt and Jordan, and was the principal grievance underlying the 2017 blockade imposed on Qatar by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Egypt.³ Al Jazeera itself, wholly funded by the Qatari state, has operated for more than two decades as the most consequential Arabic-language propaganda instrument in the Middle East, with an editorial line that has on occasion called for acts of terrorism against U.S. troops⁴, undermined American and allied strategic objectives in the region, consistently amplified Islamism, and — since October 7, 2023 — served as the principal international media vehicle for Hamas information operations during the war in Gaza. Indeed, the political bureau of Hamas has operated from Doha under Qatari state protection since 2012.⁵

The contractual architecture disclosed in the released materials reveals the government of Qatar's attempts to advance its own national security interests through the educational partnerships it has purchased. This begs the question of the effects of such arrangements on American national security. Moreover, it is clear from the documents that Qatar uses American higher education institutions as instruments of its foreign policy strategy funding politicized research on Islamophobia, acquiring access to intellectual property rights, and having access to the American credentialing system.

The documents also show how Qatar is trying to obscure its attempts to control U.S. universities, presenting the arrangement as a philanthropic investment in American academic excellence abroad not by the government of Qatar but by the non-governmental Qatar Foundation — a Gulf state funding world-class education for its citizens under the full operational control of the American institutional partner. Yet, the Qatar Foundation (QF) for Education, Science and Community Development is the Qatari state's principal vehicle for its international education and development strategy. It is chaired by Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, consort of the former Emir and mother of the reigning Emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, and its senior leadership is drawn from the ruling family and its institutional extensions. It is, in functional terms, an arm of the Qatari state operating under the legal form of a nonprofit organization.

The contracts show that wherever the American university's autonomy would permit decisions adverse to Qatar Foundation's interests, the contracts install a conditioning mechanism — consultation rights over senior academic appointments, prior written approval over intellectual property disposition, governance access through advisory bodies with no reciprocal accountability, admissions objectives calibrated to Qatari state human-capital strategy, confidentiality obligations under Qatari law, and direct Foreign Ministry funding of research on topics of political utility to the Qatari state. These mechanisms are not incidental to the contracts but are their definitive features. The autonomy provisions that precede them in the text exist to supply a public account of the relationship that both parties can maintain before American audiences, American regulators, and the U.S. Congress. The conditioning provisions that follow exist to ensure that Qatar's active role in shaping the output, personnel, governance, and reputational capital of the American institution is preserved in binding legal text, where it is visible only to the parties and their counsel. The sections that follow trace this pattern across the principal domains of the contractual relationship.

II. Findings

A. The Intellectual Property Extraction Clause

The Framework Agreement governing GU-Q provides, at Article 12.2.2, that all intellectual property created at the Doha campus outside a narrowly defined set of traditional academic works “shall be jointly owned and jointly vest in GU and the Qatar Foundation,” and further obligates Georgetown University, where it is responsible for commercialization, to “jointly protect and commercialize the Intellectual Property in a manner that promotes the growth of Qatar’s knowledge based economy.” The contract specifies that this obligation “may be met by requiring” substantial manufacturing in Qatar, substantial company-funded research and development in Qatar, a substantial business presence in Qatar of any licensee or commercial developer, or other criteria approved by Qatar Foundation’s designated Intellectual Property Office. This purpose clause is a contractual direction tying the commercialization pathway of American academic output to the development strategy of Qatar.

The significance of this provision becomes clearer when read alongside Article 12.3, which governs the treatment of intellectual property developed with funding from the United States federal government. The article authorizes Georgetown to “accept alternative ownership or dispositions” of such intellectual property with non-Qatar Foundation parties, but only subject to prior written approval from Qatar Foundation’s Intellectual Property Office, or through written procedures pre-approved in writing by that office. Where federal funding is used to develop

intellectual property at the Doha campus and Georgetown has failed to obtain such prior approval or to follow such pre-approved procedures, the contract provides that “the Qatar Foundation shall jointly own or, if not allowed under U.S. law, be granted from GU a non-exclusive, transferable, world-wide, sub-licensable royalty-free license” to use, make, sell, offer to sell, and import the intellectual property in question to the maximum extent United States law permits.

Where United States law does permit foreign joint ownership of federally funded research output, Qatar Foundation receives it as a matter of default in these contracts. Where United States law forecloses joint ownership, Qatar Foundation receives the next-most-valuable instrument short of ownership, namely a perpetual license that is worldwide in geographic scope, transferable to third parties, sublicensable to further third parties, and royalty-free. The license has no exclusion in the contract text for end-user category, third-party nationality, subject-matter sensitivity, or defense application. A Qatar Foundation-affiliated entity may sublicense to any party it chooses, in any jurisdiction, for any purpose permitted under the contract, at no charge.

The Bayh-Dole Act⁶ and the regulations promulgated thereunder permit federal agencies, under specified conditions, to waive title to inventions developed with federal funding, and allow the entity performing the research to retain ownership subject to a government-purpose license held by the United States.⁷ The Georgetown contract routes the commercial disposition of such inventions through a Qatari-approved pathway by default and, where that pathway is legally foreclosed, installs Qatar Foundation as the functional commercial licensee by operation of the contract itself. Georgetown, by executing the Framework Agreement, has pre-committed rights to Qatar Foundation in every case in which American law does not affirmatively forbid the transfer.

According to publicly available data, no agency currently awarding federal research funding to Georgetown faculty whose work touches the Qatar campus has received contemporaneous disclosure of this pre-commitment in a form that would allow it to assess the implications under the Bayh-Dole regulation. A systematic audit of federally funded research projects, if any exist, connected to GU-Q is warranted. The conclusion of such an audit should include a determination whether the pre-commitment of rights to Qatar Foundation is compatible with the government-purpose license reserved to the United States under 35 U.S.C. § 202(c)(4).

B. Direct Foreign Ministry Contract

The release contains the full text of a contract executed on June 13, 2024, between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar and Georgetown University, governing a grant of \$630,000 disbursed in three annual installments of \$210,000, supporting the work of Georgetown’s Bridge Initiative on what the contract identifies as “research related to Islamophobia.” The contract is

signed on the Qatari side by the Director of the Office of the Minister of State for International Cooperation, and on the Georgetown side by the University's Vice President of Advancement.⁸

The contract obligates the Bridge Initiative, “annually and throughout the duration of this Agreement,” to organize international conferences on the Globalization of Islamophobia and similar themes, and to “consult with the Islam and Muslims Initiative, which is supported by the Ministry, and consider recommendations regarding sessions, themes, and speakers.” The Islam and Muslims Initiative referenced in the contract is a separate project supported by the same Qatari Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The contract, therefore, establishes a consultative relationship between two Qatari government-funded programs, one operating out of Doha and one operating out of Washington under Georgetown's institutional banner, with respect to the programming of the American-side events. Travel and accommodation expenses of event guests are to be covered by the grant. The Ministry retains audit rights over Georgetown's use of the funds, exercisable “upon reasonable notice and at reasonable times,” by the Ministry directly or by independent auditors it appoints.

The contract contains the standard disclaimer that the Ministry “may not direct the Bridge Initiative's research, scholarship, or teaching,” and that nothing in the agreement should be construed to restrict academic freedom. Such language allows the recipient institution to describe the relationship as consistent with academic independence. But a foreign ministry funding research on a contested political topic over a three-year period at a specified dollar amount, conditional on the production of conferences whose themes and speakers are subject to consultation with a parallel ministry-funded project, is not an active constraint on the freedom of individual scholars but is a predetermination of what kind of scholarship can be produced.

The structure of this arrangement requires examination against the character of the state that funds it. Qatar is not a democracy. It does not permit political opposition. It does not tolerate independent civil society. It does not protect freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, or freedom of the press within its own borders. Its domestic legal order criminalizes political speech, restricts religious practice by non-Muslims, and subjects its migrant labor force — which constitutes the overwhelming majority of its resident population — to conditions that have drawn sustained international criticism on human rights grounds. This is the state whose foreign ministry is paying an American university to produce research, convene conferences, and generate institutional authority on behalf of a category — “Islamophobia” — that functions in American domestic discourse as a civil rights and human rights claim. The Bridge Initiative operates under Georgetown's institutional banner, publishes under Georgetown's name, and participates in American public debate on discrimination against Muslims as though it were an independent academic enterprise. The contract shows it is a foreign-ministry-funded project

whose conference programming is subject to consultation with a parallel foreign-ministry-funded initiative operating out of Doha.

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**Contract on Providing a Grant
for Georgetown University Initiative (Bridge Initiative)
Between
The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the State of Qatar
And
Georgetown University in the United States of America**

Preamble

On this Day Thursday corresponding to 13/06/2024, this Agreement was executed between:

The First Party: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the State of Qatar, referred to hereafter as “The Ministry” or “First Party”, represented, in this Agreement, by Qatari official in his capacity as Director of the Office of the Minister of State for International Cooperation,

And

The Second Party: Georgetown University in (Washington DC, USA), which is a private institution chartered by Congress in the United States of America, hereafter referred to as “The University” or “Second Party”, represented, in this Agreement, by Georgetown administrator in his capacity as Vice President of Advancement,

Each of which individually referred to as “Party” and collectively as “Parties”.

Whereas the Ministry is interested in supporting research at the University related to Islamophobia, and the Ministry has selected the University as a recipient of the Grant to support research objectives of the University, specified in this Agreement, and in accordance with the conditions stipulated,

The Parties agreed to the following:

Article (1)

The above Preamble constitutes an integral part of this Agreement and is complimentary to it.

Article (2)

1. The Ministry shall grant financial support to the University, with a total value of six hundred and thirty thousand (630,000) US dollars. The amount shall be distributed over three (3) years, and shall be disbursed exclusively for the purposes specified in this Agreement and in accordance with the conditions stipulated.

A state that does not permit its own citizens the civil liberties it funds an American university to advocate for in America is not engaged in human rights philanthropy. It is purchasing the institutional vocabulary and academic prestige of American civil rights and deploying them in service of a political category that aligns with its foreign policy objectives. The category of “Islamophobia” as usually operationalized is not a neutral analytical term. It is a contested political instrument whose principal function in international discourse has been to delegitimize criticism of Islamist political movements — the same movements with which Qatar maintains documented operational and financial relationships. When a foreign ministry that funds Hamas, hosts the Muslim Brotherhood, and operates Al Jazeera simultaneously funds an American academic program dedicated to stigmatizing criticism of political Islam as bigotry, the programmatic coherence of the investment is difficult to miss.

Qatar is using Georgetown's institutional credibility to shape American public discourse on a topic central to its own political and ideological interests. Whether this triggers registration obligations under the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) is a legal question requiring analysis of the Bridge Initiative's activities against the definitional terms of the Act. The Act's central prohibition, codified at 22 U.S.C. § 612, requires registration by persons acting within the United States as agents of foreign principals, including through political activities, public-relations activity, publicity work, information-service activity, or the dissemination of informational materials in the interests of that foreign principal.⁹ The 1938 statute was enacted in direct response to the problem of foreign governments funding American-based entities to shape American discourse on contested political questions, in ways that would mislead American audiences about the origin and motivation of the material. The Bridge Initiative's contractually specified work product is funded by the foreign ministry of a state whose regional geopolitical posture is at variance with that of the United States on precisely those questions. Moreover, recently, the Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law sent a letter to the U.S. Attorney General calling for the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to investigate Georgetown University specifically because Bridge is violating FARA.¹⁰

C. The Governance Simulation

The Framework Agreements governing both Georgetown-Qatar and Northwestern-Qatar establish a Joint Advisory Board as the principal standing institutional body through which Qatar Foundation and the American university parties interact on management and oversight. At Georgetown the board consists of three members appointed by the University, three appointed by the Qatar Foundation, and three jointly appointed, with the Provost of Georgetown and the President of Qatar Foundation Higher Education, or the most senior person in the Qatar Foundation higher education division, serving as Co-Vice Chairs. At Northwestern, the structure is parallel: three appointed by the University, three by Qatar Foundation, and up to three jointly

appointed, with the composition required to remain equal “at all times.” The board at each institution reviews the annual budget, comments on strategic plans, receives audit reports and unaudited quarterly financial statements, advises on curriculum offerings and faculty and staff development, reviews and comments on candidates proposed for appointment as Dean, and serves as the first forum for resolution of disputes between the parties.

Article 3.3.2 of the Georgetown Framework Agreement provides that “the role of the Joint Advisory Board is advisory and non-binding in nature. The Joint Advisory Board shall have no governance or management authority over the Qatar Foundation or GU-Q.” A parallel provision governs the Northwestern arrangement. The board has no fiduciary duty, no decisional authority over the management of either the American university or the Qatari funding entity, and no ability to bind either party to any action. It is constituted, meets, receives information, and advises.

ARTICLE 3. MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS

3.1 Operational Responsibility and Authority. In accordance with Article 1.1.4, GU shall have full operational control of GU-Q, including the responsibility and authority to: (i) select, hire, supervise and terminate faculty; (ii) recruit, admit, enroll, instruct and dismiss students; (iii) select, hire, supervise and terminate administrative and other staff, subject to the requirements set forth in Article 3.2; (iv) prescribe plans and set standards for the operation of GU-Q to satisfy the quality and other requirements set forth in this Agreement; and (v) design and implement the academic curriculum and programs.

3.2 Appointment of the Dean and Associate Deans of GU-Q. GU-Q shall be under the direction of a Dean, who shall be the Chief Executive Officer of GU-Q. The Dean and all Associate Deans shall be appointed in accordance with GU policies and procedures for such appointments. **GU shall consult with the Qatar Foundation during the candidate review and selection process of such appointments.**

3.3 Joint Advisory Board. The Qatar Foundation and GU have established and will maintain a Joint Advisory Board for GU-Q. The composition and duties of the Joint Advisory Board are and shall be as follows:

3.3.1. The Joint Advisory Board shall consist of three (3) members appointed by GU, including the Provost of GU, who shall serve as Co-Vice Chair of the Joint



The board's lack of formal authority does not limit Qatar Foundation's influence over the institution but insulates that influence from scrutiny. A body with decisional power could be held accountable for the decisions it makes, such as a blocked hire, a rejected curriculum, or a vetoed budget item. An advisory body that merely consults, reviews, and comments leaves no such

record, but the effect is the same. The American university knows who funds it, knows who sits across the table at every significant institutional discussion, and knows that Qatar Foundation holds a unilateral termination right exercisable on thirty days' notice. Under these conditions, consultation is not advice strictly speaking. It is a standing signal about what the funding party expects, and the institution's internalization of that signal shapes hiring, curriculum, and programming long before any formal decision is recorded. A scholar whose work is critical of Islamist movements, of Al Jazeera, or of Qatar's regional posture is unlikely to emerge from a candidate review process conducted under consultation with Qatar Foundation appointees drawn from the Qatari ruling family. The board does not need to exercise a veto. It needs the institution to ensure that the occasion for a veto never arises.

The identities of the Qatar Foundation's appointees matter to the practical operation of this system. Qatar Foundation is chaired by Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, consort of the former Emir and mother of the reigning Emir, and its senior leadership is drawn from the Qatari ruling family and its institutional extensions.¹¹ A Qatar Foundation appointment to the Joint Advisory Board of an American university is therefore not, in the ordinary case, a commercial or academic appointment of the kind familiar from American university boards. It is an appointment from within the administrative core of a ruling foreign royal family, to a position of access and deliberative presence inside an American institution of higher education.

D. The Operational Control Illusion

The Framework Agreements respond to the evident institutional interest of the American university parties in being able to state, in public and before government auditors, that they retain full operational control of their Doha campuses. Article 3.1 of the Georgetown agreement provides that "GU shall have full operational control of GU-Q, including the responsibility and authority to: (i) select, hire, supervise and terminate faculty; (ii) recruit, admit, enroll, instruct and dismiss students; (iii) select, hire, supervise and terminate administrative and other staff... (v) design and implement the academic curriculum and programs." The parallel Northwestern provision is substantially identical. These clauses are the public answer to the charge that a Qatari-funded campus is a Qatari-controlled campus, and they are the paragraphs cited by university representatives in every setting in which the question arises.¹²

Read against the remainder of the contractual instrument in which the clauses appear, they are qualified at every point that matters. Article 3.2 of the Georgetown agreement provides, immediately following the operational-control provision, that "The Dean and all Associate Deans shall be appointed in accordance with GU policies and procedures for such appointments. GU shall consult with the Qatar Foundation during the candidate review and selection process of such appointments." The parallel Northwestern provision specifies that "The Dean and all

Associate Deans of NU-Q shall be appointed... following consultation with the Qatar Foundation during the candidate review and selection process.” Article 12.3 of the Georgetown agreement, as discussed in Section I above, subjects any alternative disposition of intellectual property rights to prior written approval from the Qatar Foundation Intellectual Property Office. Article 2.3.2 of the Northwestern agreement and Article 2.3 of the Georgetown agreement establish Qatari-citizen admissions goals of 70 percent and 60 percent, respectively, framed as objectives rather than quotas, but functionally binding.

The functional position is this: the American university operates the institution, subject to consultation with Qatar Foundation on the selection of its most senior academic leadership, subject to prior written approval by Qatar Foundation on the disposition of intellectual property rights with third parties including under U.S. federal research funding, subject to Qatar Foundation’s rights of inspection and audit, subject to annual budget review by a body on which Qatar Foundation holds equal representation, subject to the contractual obligation to maximize Qatari-citizen admissions in accordance with Qatar Foundation’s stated objective, subject to Qatari law in the operational layer of the institution including its property, personnel, and local legal relationships, and subject to Qatar Foundation’s unilateral termination right on thirty days’ notice for convenience. These conditions do not negate operational control. They condition it at every point at which it would otherwise be exercised in a manner adverse to Qatar Foundation’s interests. The autonomy clause is the headline. The conditioning clauses are the text.

This grant-then-retrieve drafting pattern is the mechanism through which the entire architecture of Qatari official involvement is sustained. It permits the American university party to issue truthful public statements about its autonomy. It permits the Qatari party to secure, in the text of the contract, every instrument of influence it requires. And it permits both parties to agree on a public account of the relationship that is more favorable to continued operation than a full disclosure of the contract terms would be.

The credentialing dimension of this arrangement warrants separate attention. The 70 percent Qatari-citizen admissions objective at Northwestern University in Qatar, and the 60 percent equivalent at Georgetown, represent the purchase by the Qatari state, through Qatar Foundation, of American-accredited credentialing services for its nationals at a scale that would not be available through conventional admissions pathways at the home campuses. The educational and professional credentials conferred are, by contract term, identical “in all material respects” to those conferred in Evanston and Washington. The United States government has, through its accreditation recognition authority at the Department of Education and its visa administration at the Department of State, an interest in the integrity of American credentials and in the question whether they are being made available to a foreign state for allocation in service of that state’s human capital strategy.

E. Al Jazeera

Among the agreements released is a Memorandum of Understanding dated March 2013 between Northwestern University in Qatar and Al Jazeera Media Network, and a Confidentiality Agreement dated February 14, 2014, between the same parties. The Memorandum of Understanding describes a strategic partnership encompassing research cooperation “with a special emphasis on the needs of the AJMN and NU-Q,” cooperation in journalism and media studies, scholarship and training programs for NU-Q students, employment pathways for NU-Q graduates into the Al Jazeera Media Network, training delivered by NU-Q faculty to the executive leadership of AJMN, and the organization of joint conferences and workshops. The Memorandum establishes a joint working group for implementation.¹³ The Confidentiality Agreement is governed by the laws of the State of Qatar, commits both parties to mutual confidentiality obligations with respect to a defined class of information including “Al Jazeera Media Network projects, strategy, research etc.,” and, in a textually striking passage, describes Northwestern University in Qatar as “a company incorporated and existing under the laws of Qatar.” The American university’s Doha operation enters the confidentiality relationship with Qatari state media not in its capacity as a branch of an American university but in its capacity as a Qatari corporate entity.

Al Jazeera Media Network is not a private-sector media organization but a brute instrument of Qatari foreign policy, funded by the Qatari state, whose Arabic-language coverage in particular has for more than two decades tracked the positions of the Qatari government on the central questions of Middle Eastern politics, and whose editorial role in the dissemination of Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas-aligned propaganda has been a persistent feature of its operation. For over a decade, the network provided a platform to Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the Muslim Brotherhood's most influential cleric, who used Al Jazeera's flagship program Shariah and Life to issue fatwas endorsing suicide bombings as 'the supreme form of jihad,' to call for the 'abduction and killing of Americans in Iraq,' and to legitimize attacks on civilians as 'heroic operations of martyrdom.'¹⁴ In 2019, AJ+ Arabic, the network's online platform, published a video questioning the historicity of Holocaust and claiming it was manufactured by Israel, content for which Al Jazeera fired the journalists involved only after international exposure by the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI).¹⁵ On October 7, 2023, the day of the Hamas massacre, Al Jazeera presenter Tamer Almisshal celebrated the attack, writing that 'Gaza manufactures victory and honor for its homeland and nation.' Anchor Ahmad Mansour circulated footage of Hamas militants dragging Israeli soldiers and called the image worth 'as much as the hundreds of billions of dollars that the world's Zionists have invested in Israel.'¹⁶ A 2020 MEMRI study cataloguing over 700 video clips documented two decades of Al Jazeera content functioning as a platform for global jihad, antisemitism, Holocaust denial, and the promotion of anti-Israel and anti-American terrorism.¹⁷

Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism is among the most prestigious journalism schools in the United States. Its Doha branch campus, the only American journalism school operating a degree-granting program in Qatar, has contractually committed to a bilateral relationship with Qatar's state media apparatus that includes placement of its graduates into AJMN, training of AJMN leadership by Northwestern faculty, mutual confidentiality obligations under Qatari law, and consultation with AJMN on research programs tailored to the network's stated needs.



dismiss fifty percent (50%) or more of the directors thereof; and a particular Company is indirectly controlled by a Company or Companies (the "parent Company or Companies") if a series of Companies can be specified, beginning with the parent Company or Companies and ending with the particular Company, so related that each Company of the series, except the parent Company or Companies, is directly controlled by one or more of the Companies earlier in the series.

"**Agreement**" means this Confidentiality Agreement.

"**Confidential Information**" means that information described in Clause 4.

"**Disclosing Party**" means with respect to any Confidential Information, the Party or Parties that from time to time disclose or has disclosed, directly or indirectly, that Confidential Information to the other Parties pursuant to this Agreement.

"**Limited Purpose**" means use by a Party for the sole purpose of communications pertaining to:

a) **Al Jazeera Media Network projects, strategy, research etc.**

b) AJ+ channels launch.

c) Any proprietary information about Al Jazeera Media Network which is not in the public discourse.

"**Notice**" means a communication by one Party to another Party that complies with the provisions of Clause 17 of this Agreement.

"**Person**" means any person, company, firm, partnership, association, body corporate, governmental institution, or other entity not a Party to this Agreement without limitation, any corporation, company, partnership, or other legal entity; or any natural person or group of individuals or legal entities.

"**Receiving Party**" means, with respect to any Confidential Information, the Party or Parties that from time to time receives or has received, directly or indirectly, that Confidential Information from the other Party pursuant to this Agreement.

"**Signature**" means the date this Agreement is signed by an authorized signatory of each Party.

"**Transaction**" means an arrangement to be consummated by execution of one or more written agreements, between some or all of the Parties, regarding the implementation of the Limited Purpose.

CLAUSE 2 - RELATIONSHIP OF PARTIES

2.1 Several Liability

The obligations and liabilities of the Parties to this Agreement are several and neither joint nor joint and several.

American journalism education is among the principal soft-power instruments through which United States values regarding press freedom, editorial independence, and adversarial journalism are transmitted to future generations of journalists worldwide. An American journalism school operating in Qatar under contractual integration with the Qatari state media is not transmitting those values. It is providing professional credentialing, Western brand reputation, and trained personnel to the information apparatus of a state whose information posture is aligned against key United States interests. The graduates of NU-Q who enter AJMN carry Northwestern credentials into an institution whose function in the regional information environment is, in concrete terms, to publish material that undercuts American, Israeli, and allied Gulf state strategic positions on the principal conflicts of the region.

As a matter of fact, in 2020, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) asked Al Jazeera to register as a foreign agent within thirty calendar days,¹⁸ which to date, has not occurred.¹⁹ The Department of State, the United States Agency for Global Media, and the bipartisan community of press-freedom organizations have, on the public record, not registered a position on whether an American journalism school operating under contractual integration with a foreign state's media apparatus — an apparatus the DOJ has itself identified as warranting foreign agent registration — is consistent with the values American journalism education is otherwise understood to embody.²⁰

F. The Governing-Law Asymmetry

The dispute resolution architecture of the Framework Agreements reflects, in a final respect, the asymmetric structure of the relationship. The Framework Agreement between Georgetown University and Qatar Foundation is governed by the laws of the State of New York, with arbitration under the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) rules in London and the International Chamber of Commerce as appointing authority. The Framework Agreement between Northwestern University and Qatar Foundation is governed by the laws of England, with arbitration likewise seated in London. The American universities secured favorable, familiar, English-language dispute resolution forums for the master relationship. In each case, the master agreement sits above a subsidiary operational layer that is substantially governed by the laws of the State of Qatar.

The Confidentiality Agreement between NU-Q and Al Jazeera Media Network, at Clause 18, provides that the agreement “shall be governed by and construed, interpreted and applied in accordance with the laws of the State of Qatar without regard to any conflict-of-law rules,” with Qatari courts retaining jurisdiction over pre-arbitral relief.²¹ The American university's relationship with the state media of the foreign government funding its operation is adjudicable in the courts of that government.

The pattern is consistent across the record. Where the American university party could plausibly refuse to proceed without American or English-law governance — namely at the level of the master Framework Agreement — it obtained such governance. Where Qatar could insist on local law without losing the transaction — namely at the level of operational agreements, local employment, and content relationships with state-affiliated entities — it insisted on local law. The American university parties accepted, as the price of the operation, that the operational substance of the relationship would sit in Qatari jurisdiction. The practical consequence is that the contractual layer in which American institutional values are most likely to come under pressure — the layer governing daily operations, content relationships, personnel decisions, and interaction with state-affiliated entities — is the layer in which those values are least protected by the legal system in which they originate.

III. Conclusion and Recommendations

The materials released by the House Committee reveal a coherent contractual architecture, executed across more than a decade by the senior leadership of two of the most prominent private universities in the United States, with the funding arm of a foreign government whose strategic posture in the Middle East is at variance with that of the United States at a significant number of consequential points. While the architecture is not illegal, it is adverse. It binds the intellectual output of American academic institutions, including output generated with American taxpayer funding, to the development strategy of a foreign state. It grants that foreign state standing access to the deliberations of the institutions without imposing reciprocal accountability. It commits American journalism education to structural integration with that state's information apparatus. It funds the production of American civil rights discourse by a foreign ministry whose own domestic order denies its citizens the rights that discourse purports to defend. It preserves the public appearance of American institutional autonomy through drafting devices that grant the appearance and condition the substance.

The record supports the proposition that Congress should move beyond a disclosure-only model of foreign influence in higher education. Section 117 of the Higher Education Act is no longer adequate to the scale and nature of the problem.²² It can reveal the presence of foreign money, when properly enforced, but it does not reveal the operative terms through which foreign money acquires institutional force. Congress should therefore adopt and expand the legislative approach reflected in the Defending American Research Act and the No Branch Campuses in Hostile Countries Act.²³

The question whether the Bridge Initiative contract triggers obligations under the Foreign Agents Registration Act is a legal question for the National Security Division of the Department of Justice.

The question whether Al Jazeera’s integration with an American journalism school compounds the DOJ’s existing, unanswered demand that the network register as a foreign agent is a question for the same division. These are enforcement questions, and the contractual record now available to the public and to Congress provides the evidentiary basis on which they can be answered.

At minimum, institutions of higher education that operate branch campuses in Qatar or other designated high-risk jurisdictions, or that receive funding from foreign governments or their controlled instrumentalities — entities that are formally separate from a government but function as extensions of its authority, such as Qatar Foundation — for research, programming, training, or operational activity touching national security, strategic communications, artificial intelligence, biotechnology, quantum information science, defense-relevant technology, journalism education, or public-policy formation, should be required to certify the absence of foreign-state control, access, or preferential rights as a condition of receiving federal research and development awards. That certification should not be satisfied by general assurances of academic freedom. It should require submission of the underlying contracts, side letters, memoranda of understanding, confidentiality agreements, intellectual-property provisions, governance charters, and foreign-law instruments necessary for federal agencies to assess the actual architecture of the relationship. Where such materials show that a foreign state or its instrumentalities have acquired rights in federally funded research, standing access to internal governance, operational integration with state media, or contractual leverage over academic production, Congress should authorize suspension, ineligibility, clawback, or enhanced review of federal funds. The purpose of such legislation would not be to criminalize international education, nor to prohibit ordinary academic exchange. It would be to establish a simple principle: no American university should receive federal research support while maintaining undisclosed or inadequately reviewed contractual arrangements that transfer the benefits of American academic production, credentialing authority, or taxpayer-funded research capacity into the strategic architecture of a foreign state.

Endnotes

- 1** Congressional Research Service, "Section 117 of the Higher Education Act: Reporting of Foreign Gifts and Contracts" (March 25, 2026), <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IF12927>.
- 2** U.S. Department of Education, Foreign Gift and Contract Report Portal (January 2026). As of February 2026, Qatar was the country of attribution with the largest dollar amount of reported transactions (approximately \$8.8 billion). See also: JNS, "Qatar is biggest foreign funder of US colleges, per Education Department" (January 9, 2026), <https://www.jns.org/ed-department-portal-finds-qatar-highest-source-of-foreign-funding-to-us-colleges-universities/>.
- 3** CNBC/Reuters, "Qatar: Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Egypt cut diplomatic ties with Doha" (June 5, 2017), <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/06/04/saudi-arabia-bahrain-and-egypt-cut-diplomatic-ties-with-qatar.html>. Saudi Arabia stated the decision was based on "Qatar's embrace of various terrorist and sectarian groups aimed at destabilizing the region, including the Muslim Brotherhood." See also: Arab News, "The boycott of Qatar" (May 30, 2020), <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1660946>.
- 4** Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), "Al-Jazeera Arabic, Qatari-Owned TV Channel, Promotes Islamist Terrorism Worldwide — Updated" <https://www.memri.org/reports/al-jazeera-arabic-qatari-owned-tv-channel-promotes-islamist-terrorism-worldwide-%E2%80%93updated>.
- 5** France 24, " Hamas Qatar office in spotlight as Gaza war intensifies" (October 19, 2023), <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20231019-hamas-qatar-office-in-spotlight-as-gaza-war-intensifies>. See also: Stimson Center, "The Future of Hamas in Qatar" (December 2023), <https://www.stimson.org/2023/the-future-of-hamas-in-qatar/>.
- 6** National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), "Intellectual Property Reporting" (accessed 2026), <https://www.nifa.usda.gov/data/intellectual-property-reporting>. ("The Bayh-Dole Act grants to the recipient of Federal research funding the entire right, title, and interest throughout the world to inventions covered by the Act, subject to the conditions of the Act. It also grants to the Federal government a nonexclusive, nontransferable, irrevocable, paid-up license to practice or have practiced for or on behalf of the United States the invention throughout the world.")
- 7** 35 U.S.C. § 200–212 (Bayh-Dole Act), <https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=%2Fprelim%40title35%2Fpart2%2Fchapter18&edition=prelim>. See specifically § 202(c)(4) on the government-purpose license
- 8** Contract between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar and Georgetown University, executed June 13, 2024, published in supplementary materials accompanying the House Committee on Education and the Workforce report, "How Campuses Became Hotbeds: The Rise of Radical Antisemitism on College Campuses" (March 2026).
- 9** 22 U.S.C. § 611 et seq., Foreign Agents Registration Act of 1938, as amended.
- 10** Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law, "Brandeis Center Calls on DOJ to Investigate Georgetown University for Violating Foreign Agents Registration Act over Secret Qatar-Linked Deal" (May 7, 2026), <https://brandeiscenter.com/brandeis-center-calls-on-doj-to-investigate-georgetown-university-for-violating-foreign-agents-registration-act-over-secret-qatar-linked-deal/>.
- 11** Qatar Foundation, official leadership page. See also: Wikipedia, "Moza bint Nasser," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moza_bint_Nasser. ("She is the co-founder and chair of the Qatar Foundation... She is the mother of the current emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.")
- 12** Georgetown University–Qatar Foundation Framework Agreement, Articles 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 12.3; Northwestern University–Qatar Foundation Framework Agreement, Articles 2.3.2, 3.1, 3.2. Published in supplementary materials accompanying the House Committee on Education and the Workforce report (March 2026).

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- 13** Memorandum of Understanding between Northwestern University in Qatar and Al Jazeera Media Network (March 2013); Confidentiality Agreement between the same parties (February 14, 2014). Published in supplementary materials accompanying the House Committee on Education and the Workforce report (March 2026).
- 14** MEMRI, "Sheikh Yousef Al-Qaradhawi in London to Establish 'The International Council of Muslim Clerics'" (July 8, 2004), <http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/0/1168.htm>. See also: MEMRI, "Reactions to Sheikh Qaradhawi's Fatwa Calling for the Abduction and Killing of American Civilians in Iraq" (October 6, 2004), <http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/0/1231.htm>. See also: Counter Extremism Project, "Yusuf al-Qaradawi," <https://www.counterextremism.com/extremists/yusuf-al-qaradawi>
- 15** MEMRI, "MEMRI Translates Antisemitic Video on Al-Jazeera Network Stating Israel Is Biggest Winner from Holocaust" (May 20, 2019), <https://www.memri.org/reports/memri-translates-antisemitic-video-al-jazeera-network-stating-israel-biggest-winner>
- 16** MEMRI, "Presenters, Reporters from Qatar's Al-Jazeera Praise Hamas Attack, Celebrate Israel's Disaster" (October 17, 2023), <https://www.memri.org/reports/presenters-reporters-qatars-al-jazeera-praise-hamas-attack-celebrate-israels-disaster>
- 17** MEMRI, "Al-Jazeera Arabic, Qatari-Owned TV Channel, Promotes Islamist Terrorism Worldwide — Updated" (2020), <https://www.memri.org/reports/al-jazeera-arabic-qatari-owned-tv-channel-promotes-islamist-terrorism-worldwide-%E2%80%93-updated>. The study indexes over 700 video clips documenting Al Jazeera as a platform for global jihad, antisemitism, Holocaust denial, and support for terrorism.
- 18** Wiley Rein LLP, "DOJ Directs U.S. Affiliate of Qatari-Owned Al Jazeera to Register as Foreign Agent" (September 2020), <https://www.wiley.law/alert-DOJ-Directs-US-Affiliate-of-Qatari-Owned-Al-Jazeera-to-Register-as-Foreign-Agent>.
- 19** U.S. Press Freedom Tracker, "Al Jazeera's AJ+ ordered to register as foreign agent" (September 14, 2020), <https://pressfreedomtracker.us/all-incidents/al-jazeeras-aj-ordered-to-register-as-foreign-agent/>. Jay Bratt, chief of the DOJ's counterintelligence and export control section, wrote that AJ+ acts "at the direction and control" of the leaders of Qatar.
- 20** Letter from Senators Charles Grassley, Marco Rubio, et al. to Attorney General Merrick Garland regarding Al Jazeera and FARA compliance (July 1, 2021), <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/download/senators-to-justice-dept-al-jazeera-foreign-agent-registration?download=1>.
- 21** Georgetown University–Qatar Foundation Framework Agreement, dispute resolution provisions; Northwestern University–Qatar Foundation Framework Agreement, dispute resolution provisions; Confidentiality Agreement between NU-Q and Al Jazeera Media Network, Clause 18. Published in supplementary materials accompanying the House Committee on Education and the Workforce report (March 2026).
- 22** 20 U.S.C. § 1011f (Section 117, Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended).
- 23** Sen. Rick Scott, Reps. Elise Stefanik & Josh Gottheimer Introduce Bipartisan Bills to Limit Foreign Influence on American Universities (May 5, 2026), www.rickscott.senate.gov/2026/5/sen-rick-scott-reps-elise-stefanik-josh-gottheimer-introduce-bipartisan-bills-to-limit-foreign-influence-on-american-universities.

