

Qatari Funding of “Choices Program” in American Schools

By Kelleigh Nelson



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For far too long, a staggering amount of foreign money has flowed into our colleges and universities with little to no transparency or oversight. –Caitlin Sutherland, executive director of Americans for Public Trust

By pumping cash into campuses across the country, American adversaries are able to “[stifle academic freedom](#),” spread propaganda, and gain access to valuable intellectual property. China pursues this strategy aggressively. –Rep. Michael Baumgartner (R-WA)

The current system has allowed foreign adversaries to infiltrate our colleges and universities. Congress is taking action because it is imperative that we hold these universities – which have turned a blind eye for too long – accountable and bring to light malignant foreign entities lurking in our schools. –Rep. Tim Walberg (R-MI)

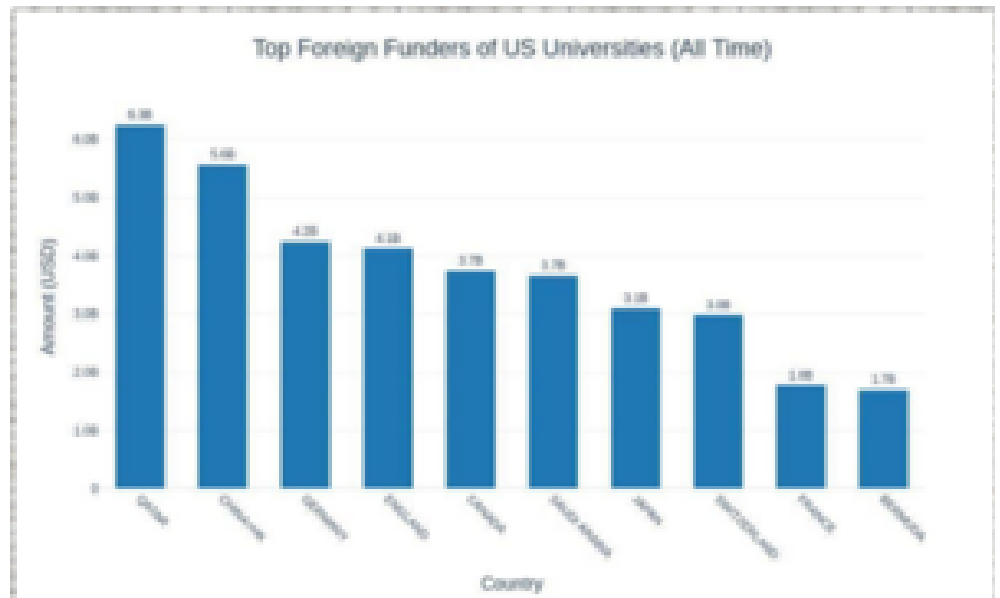
Foreign government contributions to universities almost always come with strings attached or, at the very least, ulterior motives. –Ben Freeman, the director of the Democratizing Foreign Policy program at the Quincy Institute.

Hostile powers are buying influence on American campuses at an industrial scale. Foreign countries such as Qatar, whose

state religion is Islam, and Communist China have poured \$29 billion into campuses over the past few years.

That \$29 billion figure is more than double the total for the preceding four years, and accounts for half of the estimated \$57.97 billion in foreign funding since 1986, when the federal government began tracking the data.

In the last four years, foreign funding of American universities has ballooned. Qatar is the largest funder with China coming in second.



Harvard has historically received the most funding from foreign donors (\$3.2 billion), followed by Cornell and Carnegie Mellon (each received \$2.8 billion). [“Follow the Money”](#) reports, “Despite receiving large amounts of funding from Qatar over the years, Columbia University has not reported any of this funding to the Department of Education (DOE). As well, there have been no references to connections between Columbia University and Qatar or Qatari entities in its financial statements.”

Trump’s recent [Executive Order](#) threatened to scrap federal grants to universities if schools failed to accurately disclose overseas sources of funding. [A 2024 study](#) published by the National Association of Scholars found that universities failed to disclose at least \$1 billion in foreign funding since Biden took office, the majority of which came from authoritarian countries such as Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and

Turkey.

([The Defending Education Transparency and Ending Rogue Regimes Engaging in Nefarious Transactions Act](#) passed in the house, and is now in the Senate.)

While Qatar holds the designation of a [major non-NATO ally](#) of the United States, the country is also known for [harboring the leaders](#) of Hamas and [exporting political Islamism](#), including support of the Muslim Brotherhood, across the Middle East.

The [Free Press](#), reports, "Part of the answer lies in an [NCRI study](#) (Network Contagion Research Institute) published last year in *Frontiers of Social Psychology* that found a strong correlation between universities that receive foreign funding from authoritarian countries and a rise in antisemitic incidents. The study concludes 'that providing massive financial support to campuses with ascendant illiberalism serves the interests of foreign actors hostile to the U.S. in particular or liberal democracy in general.'"

Rather than sending their children here to be educated, Qatar has been [importing America's universities](#). "The Qatari capital is home to "[Education City](#)," which hosts an outpost of Northwestern's journalism school and Georgetown's foreign policy school, each of which has received hundreds of millions from the wealthy Gulf state. Cornell, which built a [medical school campus](#) in Doha, has received \$2.1 billion from Qatar."

The small oil and natural gas rich Islamic country of Qatar has weaseled its way into America's culture. Trump appointees, Pam Bondi, Susie Wiles, Kash Patel, Lee Zeldin and Steve Witkoff are all connected to Qatar either by lobbying, consulting or monetary bailouts. They make this administration look as though they're advertising that foreign influence is welcome in the USA.

In Joshua Hoffman's article, [How Muslims Will Take Over America](#), he writes, "Of all people, Winston Churchill

distinctly understood this urgent problem all the way back in 1899, when he said, 'Individual Muslims may show splendid qualities, but the influence of the religion paralyzes the social development of those who follow it. No stronger retrograde force exists in this world.'"

Follow the Money

In July 2019, Dr. Charles Asher Small, Director of the [Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy \(ISGAP\)](#), participated in the Department of Justice (DOJ) Summit on Combatting Antisemitism in Washington, D.C. Dr. Small presented the findings of an ISGAP research project started in 2012, entitled "[Follow the Money](#)." They included foreign funding of American universities, specifically highlighting the substantial, yet unreported, funding from Qatar. His research revealed potential violations of reporting requirements and raised concerns about the impact of such funding on academic independence and antisemitism on campuses.

Follow the Money states, "[ISGAP uncovered and established](#) that the foreign donations from Qatar, have had a substantial impact on fomenting growing levels of antisemitic discourse and campus politics at US universities, as well as growing support for anti-democratic values within these institutions of higher education.

"Dr. Small's testimony and research focused on the systematic evasion of transparency requirements by universities and the potential for foreign donations to compromise academic integrity. He also highlighted the need for greater transparency and accountability in reporting foreign funding."

His findings led to a federal government investigation in 2019.

ISGAP's research uncovered billions of dollars in unreported funds from Qatar and other Middle Eastern countries to US

universities. This led to investigations by the Department of Education into universities like Georgetown, Texas A&M, Cornell, Yale, Harvard, and Rutgers, [says ISGAP](#). Dr. Small's work also included concerns about the impact of foreign funding on promoting anti-democratic values and antisemitism on campuses.

Billions of U.S. dollars are going to universities via Qatari State-owned NGO's and commercial entities!

ISGAP's "Follow the Money" project previous reports have laid out the following:

- *Qatar is the largest foreign donor to U.S. universities*
- *The Muslim Brotherhood's Islamist ideology is intertwined with the State and furthermore the links that Qatar has with the Muslim Brotherhood's Palestinian Chapter – Hamas*
- *The fact that money coming from foreign states such as Qatar is having a direct effect on increasing antisemitism and anti-democratic views/activity*

*This report lays out the way that Qatar is operating a war-chest with between **\$500 Billion – \$1 Trillion USD** of assets and growing, to affect soft power in the west – including the U.S.' prestigious universities.*

According to a 2022 study, Qatar contributed \$4.7 billion to dozens of academic institutions across the United States between 2001 and 2021. Some of the amounts are classified as "gifts" while others are labeled as "restricted agreements."

Ariel Admoni, a PhD student at Bar Ilan University in Israel, who specializes in foreign and domestic relations of Qatar and the Arabian Gulf, states that Qatar's links to American academia date back to the 1970s and 1980s. "The Qatari's aim to be tone-setters, active participants in the discourse, exerting influence wherever they can impact and where decision-makers gather," Admoni added. "This involves

investing in global sports, culture, politics, and academia to establish 'soft power' influence. It's a form of soft diplomacy, ensuring that they cannot be ignored."

Qatar's Choices Program

The lavish K-12 Arabic language and culture program sponsored by the Qatar Foundation to influence curriculum in American public schools is not the first time a Middle Eastern country has attempted to do so. Saudi Arabia had the same idea. Through higher education, the Saudis were able to support programs to train teachers on specific content they wished to sponsor through [Title VI of the Higher Education Act](#).

This act gives a grant to certain universities for regional studies, including Latin Studies, Post-Soviet Studies, Middle Eastern Studies, etc. In order to get the grant, the professors in these departments are required to have teacher-training workshops for teachers of kindergarten through 12th grade, or for librarians.

Senator John Kennedy (R-LA) sounded off on the "Stop Gaza Genocide Toolkit" being promoted in the NYC Public Schools newsletter. The [US Campaign for Palestinian Rights](#) is behind this Toolkit. They are funded by grants from foundations like the [Rockefeller Brothers Fund](#). The eight-minute video is shocking.

The [Jewish Onliner](#) reveals that Qatar's "Choices Program" has now permeated America's higher education:

"A new [report](#) from the [Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy \(ISGAP\)](#) reveals that more than one million American students across all 50 states (in over 8,000 schools) are learning from a curriculum, developed at Brown University that is allegedly fueled by undisclosed Qatari funding and designed to delegitimize Israel. The [Choices Program](#), widely used in secondary schools, has been found to

systematically distort historical facts, promote anti-Israel narratives, and operate under a legally ambiguous structure that may be skirting federal disclosure laws. In response, ISGAP is calling for an immediate federal investigation, the suspension of the program, and congressional hearings to address foreign influence in U.S. classrooms.

[“Qatar Foundation International \(QFI\)”,](#) a U.S.-based LLC tied to Qatar’s powerful Qatar Foundation, has been directly involved in shaping the curriculum and teacher training workshops. According to the report, Brown University has not disclosed this funding as required under [Section 117 of the Higher Education Act of 1965](#), potentially placing the university in violation of federal law.”

Initially the Choices Program started out with accurate information on Israel, her capitol as Jerusalem and Israel’s historical and religious significance. But over a decade, this has radically changed, casting the region as essentially Islamic and Jews as outsiders, and calling Israel a settler-state, when the land has been theirs since around 1400 BCE.

IMPACT, a research, policy, and advocacy organization that monitors and analyzes education, published an extensive report on the educational content of school textbooks in the country of Qatar. The report told of pervasive amounts of antisemitism, anti-Western propaganda, Islamic rhetoric and clear sympathy to Islamic causes. There is a heavy Muslim Brotherhood influence and a celebration of jihadism. Like Hamas, Hezbollah and the Houthi’s, Qatar is adamant about passing ideological content to their children.

The curriculum guide that Qataris most frequently use is Audrey Shabbas’ [“The Arab World Studies Notebook”](#). It is funded by AWAIR ([Arab World Islamic Resources and School Services](#)). AWAIR receives its funding from [ARAMCO](#), Saudi’s largest oil producer, and the [Middle East Policy Council](#), both of which receive their funding directly from the Saudi

government. While the Department of Education allows the Bible, both the Hebrew and Christian portions, to be taught only as literature, the Notebook is teaching Quran as empirical knowledge.

They are now passing it on to America's children and most Americans have no idea what is taught in K-12 or higher education.

ISGAP reports that in 2021, the Choices Program migrated their materials behind a password protected site, preventing educators, school boards, and parents from monitoring changes. There are no alerts to schools when there are any changes.

Investigations by ISGAP expose changes including the removal of key historical documents and the omission of others, the misrepresentation of Israel's capital in maps, and the exclusion of balanced perspectives on Israeli history and diplomacy. The report also reveals that Qatar Foundation International (QFI) has played an undisclosed role in shaping the Choices Program's curriculum and teacher training, influencing how American students are taught about the Middle East and Israel.

The Gulf kingdom has lavished billions on US higher education as it seeks soft power; the money may also be fueling anti-Israel and anti-Jewish trends at schools.

Israel isn't the only topic. The Choices Program softened its descriptions of Iran and Hezbollah, no longer referring to either as terrorist states or organizations. ISGAP called it a sanitization of extremism within the curriculum.

In a 2022, ISGAP study, [The Corruption of the American Mind](#), foreign funding in higher education by widely undisclosed Islamic regimes is not only changing the tenor of democratic norms in our Republic, but it is purposely increasing the antisemitic protests on campuses and making life unbearable on

those campuses for Jewish young people.

Kenneth Marcus, who served as assistant secretary for civil rights at the US Department of Education from 2018 to 2020, noted that over the last 20 years, anti-Israel attitudes in academia had expanded, having once been largely isolated to Middle Eastern studies programs but now being present in a wide range of fields of study. "Even mental health programs, psychology programs, and medical schools are now badly infected with anti-Zionism," he said.

According to Marcus, the draw of Qatari money also means school administrators may be less willing to call out antisemitism on campus. "It's not at all surprising when US administrators are reluctant to impose the same discipline on foreign students when they're getting foreign money because there is a range of pressures on them to avoid doing the right thing," he said.

Congress and the President must enforce transparency requirements, lower reporting thresholds and prohibit gifts from entities in countries of concern. The Trump administration is preparing to accept a super luxury Boeing 747-8 jumbo jet from the royal family of Qatar, a gift he may use as Air Force One until his retirement. It will then be transferred to the Trump presidential library foundation.

Attorney General Pam Bondi and Trump's top White House lawyer David Warrington concluded it would be "legally permissible" for the donation of the aircraft to be conditioned on transferring its ownership to Trump's presidential library before the end of his term, according to sources familiar with their determination.

Trump's Trip to Qatar

This is the first time an American president has visited Doha in 20 years. We know Qatar plays all sides. They host the largest US air base in the region while maintaining open

relationships with enemies of Israel and the West, the Taliban, Hamas, Houthis and Iran. They are not mediators unless they have direct stakes in the outcomes.

Their strategies are subtle but pervasive and they have spent years cultivating influence across American institutions. Billions upon billions have flowed from Doha to the US, not only our schools and universities, but lobbying firms, think tanks and even real estate, very much like China. As Amine Ayoub writes in [Middle East Forum](#), "Qatar is a global operator with a sophisticated PR engine and an appetite for influence."

Their money shapes far too much and steers public discourse to protect their interests. It is soft power and soft persuasion, but it will have dire consequences for America and her people.

Any US-Qatar relationship must include a commitment to ending their backroom dealings with terrorist organizations.

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