

[Back](#)

Donald Trump's Promises to Qatar Could Get Him — and the U.S. — Into Trouble

Algemeiner - Monday, October 20, 2025 by [Jonathan Ruhe](#)

President Trump made sure to thank Qatar for helping get his [Gaza ceasefire](#). Yet amid the negotiations leading up to this deal, and even if it completely ends the war, his decision to give Doha a formal [security guarantee](#) will undermine his broader efforts to assert diplomatic leadership and ultimately secure his Nobel Peace Prize.

Trump's promise — the first-ever official public US commitment to defend a Middle East country militarily — the security guarantee for Qatar departs entirely from the mutual defense treaties that underpin American deterrence and the global stability it brings. As "mutual" suggests, our pacts with 53 countries across five continents embody the principle that allies must contribute their fair share to defending each other.

This includes NATO's "Article 5" commitments to treat an attack on one member of an alliance as an attack on all. For example, NATO invoked Article 5 after September 11, 2001. It also includes "Article 3" clauses that all parties maintain capable armed forces. Recent NATO additions Sweden and Finland — with their well-trained and motivated militaries — are shining examples of what we look for in allies. With a small handful of exceptions like Turkey, all our treaty partners also share democratic values.

Qatar stands apart. It is an absolute monarchy that has poisoned generations of Middle Eastern minds with state-sponsored anti-American misinformation on par with that of Russia. It has supported Muslim Brotherhood-style [extremism](#) across the region, including well before hosting Hamas leaders. Perversely, Qatar leverages these destabilizing policies to portray itself as an indispensable intermediator for American efforts, and thus ostensibly deserving of protection, to help undo them.

In these contexts, extending a security umbrella over Doha is a giveaway. The deal asks nothing new of Qatar. Instead of helping Qatar ensure it can help protect itself and support America's freedom of action, the deal requires advance US contingency planning to do all the heavy lifting, and ties our hands operationally. Our alliance with South Korea, by comparison, joins our two countries' forces under combined command in wartime.

Nor will Qatar reciprocate by allowing US forces to use al-Udeid Airbase for operations against Iran's threat network. Notably, in World War II, we gave security guarantees to Australia and Brazil in exchange for, among other things, using their bases to project power against the Axis.

The Qatar freebie promises the opposite, both regionally and globally. Because of this deal, our partners in Jerusalem, Riyadh, Abu Dhabi, Amman, and elsewhere — all of whom shoulder burdens for US-led collective defense — will look askance at American leadership and question the value of deeper partnership, precisely when we need them to take on more of those burdens.

And how can Washington credibly demand its NATO allies do likewise in Europe, if problematic and freeloading Qatar is gifted such an unmerited handout? Similar questions naturally arise for Taiwan, Singapore, and certain Southwest Pacific nations that do what America asks of its partners, despite having no Article 5-type backstop.

Iran certainly welcomes these sharpening divides that undermine the incredible regional security integration being driven through US Central Command.

There was a telling absence of urgency to seal this deal earlier this summer, after Iran attacked al-Udeid. Whatever the wisdom of Israel's decision to target Hamas leadership in Doha, the Israel Defense Forces do not remotely threaten Qatar's strategic viability or existence, nor its Arab Gulf neighbors. But Iran's missiles, drones, naval forces, and nuclear ambitions certainly do, hence the longstanding American tripwire at al-Udeid.

It's all the more concerning, then, that the US-Qatar pact effectively is aimed at a fellow American partner rather than the shared threat from Iran.

America's first collective defense treaty, the 1947 Rio Pact, cemented the Monroe Doctrine in a hemispheric alliance. President Trump's [similar vision](#) for the Middle East, an alliance that combats extremism and sidelines Iran, China, and Russia, requires doubling down on his [successes](#) with the Abraham Accords, Israel's assignment to CENTCOM, Operation Midnight Hammer against Iran's nuclear program, and other initiatives that bring our regional partners closer together and enable them to do more.

Rather than a blank check for Qatar, President Trump should pursue mutual defense treaties with our allies, and perhaps even countries such as Saudi Arabia. True partnerships like these can supercharge his diplomatic achievements and promote his overarching [vision](#) of a more stable and prosperous Middle East.

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Originally published in [Algemeiner](#).