

Gulf Studies 22

Anis Ben Brik

Social Welfare in Qatar

Historical Context, Policy Development,
and Future Imperatives

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Chapter 1

Social Welfare in Qatar: Context and Theoretical Framework



Abstract This introductory chapter provides a context for understanding the transformation of a nation from a small pearling society to a global energy leader. This chapter also presents the book’s analytical framework, which encompasses the Policy Arrangement Approach, Rentier State Theory, and Historical Institutionalism. These frameworks help us understand the evolution of social welfare in Qatar. The chapter discusses the objectives of the book, which focuses on analyzing the development and institutional arrangement of social welfare systems across nine sectors: public health, education, social security, social care, housing, disability, employment, family, and gender. A core focus of this book is the concept of “modern traditionalism”—Qatar’s deliberate strategy of integrating modern state welfare provisions with traditional cultural values. The chapter also delineates the book’s methodology, using a mixed-methods approach that blends secondary data analysis and qualitative interviews to produce a comprehensive, well-rounded analysis. This provides readers with both a broad historical perspective and an in-depth understanding of policy dynamics. This chapter sets the stage for exploring how Qatar has managed to modernize while maintaining cultural continuity, particularly through its social welfare system, which blends contemporary policies with traditional norms.

Keywords Social welfare · Rentier state · Modern traditionalism · Institutional arrangement · Qatar

1 Introduction

Qatar’s vast oil and gas resources, strategic infrastructure investments, and influential tribal families have shaped its modernization and economic development. The discovery of the Dukhan oil field in 1940, followed by the exploitation of the North Field in the 1990s, allowed Qatar to become a global leader in the energy sector. Today, Qatar continues to modernize through its focus on sustainable development, economic diversification, and building a knowledge-based economy. As the country

moves forward, it must balance the competing demands of rapid modernization, population growth, and the preservation of its cultural and social traditions.

Social welfare systems are vital to providing essential services such as healthcare, education, housing, and income support, which contribute to social stability and equity. Natural resource revenues often finance welfare systems in resource-rich states like Qatar, thereby shaping the relationship between the state and its citizens. The evolution of Qatar's social welfare system exemplifies the country's ability to blend modern social policies with its rich cultural and religious heritage. Through the strategic use of modern traditionalism, Qatar has created a unique welfare model that meets the needs of its rapidly modernizing society while preserving its core values. As Harkness (2020) notes, Qatar can maintain social cohesion and political stability by ensuring that modern and traditional elements coexist in harmony. Whether in healthcare, education, housing, or gender equality, Qatar's social welfare policies reflect a broader narrative of modern traditionalism (Harkness, 2020), where the state strategically balances the demands of modernization with the preservation of its cultural and religious identity.

2 Objectives of the Book

The primary objective of this book is to analyze the development and institutional arrangements of Qatar's social welfare systems. The study focuses on understanding how Qatar has navigated the complex interplay between modernity and tradition in shaping its social welfare policies. Specifically, the book explores the evolution of social policy across nine key sectors: public health, education, social security, social care, housing, disability, employment, family, and gender. These sectors are critical for providing a holistic view of the welfare landscape in Qatar and its unique socioeconomic development trajectory. Furthermore, the book seeks to shed light on the evolution of social welfare policies in Qatar, their current structure, and potential adaptations to future challenges. The concept of "modern traditionalism" serves as a recurring theme throughout the analysis, providing insights into how Qatar has managed to modernize while preserving its cultural heritage.

The importance of this book on social welfare systems in the Gulf region is growing, both academically and politically. Gulf states, including Qatar, have developed welfare systems that differ significantly from those in Western welfare states, largely due to their reliance on oil and gas revenues. The rentier state model, in which the government finances welfare programs through external rents rather than taxation, raises important questions about the sustainability and effectiveness of these welfare systems (Hertog, 2010). Qatar's welfare system also offers valuable insights into the broader challenges faced by resource-rich states in balancing wealth distribution with long-term sustainability. As global energy markets become increasingly volatile and Qatar seeks to transition to a knowledge-based economy, its welfare system must adapt to new economic realities (Weber, 2014). This book contributes to the literature by examining how Qatar is navigating these challenges while maintaining social

stability and cohesion. Furthermore, the state's cultural and religious values deeply influence Qatar's welfare policies. The preservation of traditional social structures, particularly those related to family and gender roles, has been a key consideration in the formulation of welfare policies. However, Qatar's modernization agenda—articulated in initiatives such as Qatar National Vision 2030—has introduced new pressures to reform social policies in line with global norms (General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2008). This book explores these tensions and assesses how Qatar is managing the competing demands of tradition and modernity.

3 Context: Qatar's Modernization and Economic Development

The discovery of oil and natural gas, along with strategic modernization efforts initiated by its rulers, profoundly intertwined Qatar's transformation from a small pearling society into one of the world's wealthiest and fastest modernizing nations. The country's economic growth, urbanization, and increasing population, along with its rise as a global energy leader, underscore its economic transformation. Qatar's development story also highlights its socio-political shifts, including the influential roles of its tribal families, its interactions with British colonial powers, and its efforts to balance tradition with modernization.

3.1 Early Economy and Pre-oil Period (1900-1940s)

Before oil was discovered, Qatar's economy was primarily dependent on pearling, fishing, and small-scale trade. For centuries, pearling has been the backbone of Qatar's economy, as the country was known for producing high-quality pearls that were traded across the Persian Gulf and beyond. However, the economic decline of the pearling industry began in the 1920s due to competition from Japanese-cultured pearls, which led to widespread economic hardship in the region. The collapse of the pearl market left Qatar in a precarious economic situation.

Human habitation of the Qatar Peninsula dates back 50,000 years, with the region serving as rangeland for nomadic tribes from Saudi Arabia's Najd and Al-Hasa regions (Blanchard, 2010). The Al Bin Ali tribe, an offshoot of the Bani Utbah tribe, migrated to Zubarah in the eighteenth century and turned the town into a thriving trade and pearling center. Zubarah, located on the northern coast of Qatar, became a focal point for trade, attracting merchants from Basra, Kuwait, and other parts of the Gulf. However, the rise of the Al Thani family shifted the political and economic center of power to Doha in the late nineteenth century (Blanchard, 2010).

Table 1 Key oil discoveries in Qatar

Year	Oil field	Significance
1940	Dukhan field	Qatar's first oil discovery, marking its oil market entry
1960	Idd al-Sharqi Offshore field, Saudi Arabia	First offshore oil discovery to expand Qatar's oil production capacity
1971	North field (natural gas)	The world's largest natural gas field is crucial to Qatar's economic future

Source: Al-Siddiqi and Dawe (1999)

3.2 British Influence and the Early Political Landscape

Qatar's relationship with the British Empire heavily influenced its political landscape during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1871, with the expansion of the Ottoman Empire into eastern Arabia, Qatar became increasingly vulnerable to external control. However, by 1913, the Ottoman Empire renounced its claim to Qatar, and in 1916, Qatar signed a treaty with Britain that recognized Sheikh Abdullah bin Jassim Al Thani as the ruler of Qatar (Blanchard, 2010). This agreement allowed Qatar to remain semi-autonomous while benefiting from British protection. The British treaty also set the stage for the discovery and exploitation of oil, which would radically transform Qatar's economy.

3.3 Discovering Oil

Qatar's fortunes began to change in the late 1930s with the discovery of oil. The first major oil discovery occurred in 1940 at the Dukhan oil field on Qatar's western coast (Sorkhabi, 2010). By the end of the decade, the Dukhan oil field was producing approximately 4480 barrels of oil per day, marking Qatar's entry into the global oil market. This marked the beginning of Qatar's transformation into a major oil producer and exporter, a development that would fuel its rapid modernization and economic growth in the coming decades (Table 1).

3.4 The Oil Boom and Urbanization (1950s–1990s)

The post-1945 period was a turning point for Qatar's economic development. The revenues generated from oil exports in the 1950s and 1960s allowed the government to invest heavily in infrastructure, healthcare, education, and urban development. Qatar's capital, Doha, grew from a small fishing village into a rapidly modernizing city, characterized by new roads, hospitals, schools, and housing projects (Sorkhabi,

Table 2 Population growth in Qatar (1950–2020)

Year	Population	Annual growth rate (%)
1950	25,000	–
1970	111,000	8.5
1990	476,000	6.2
2010	1.9 million	7.8
2020	2.8 million	4.5

Source World Bank (2020)

2010). The government's efforts to provide free healthcare, education, and housing for its citizens were key to the establishment of Qatar's welfare state.

During the 1950s and 1960s, Qatar's population began to grow rapidly due to an influx of foreign workers needed to support the booming oil industry. By 1970, Qatar's population had reached approximately 111,000, and by 1990, it had grown to 476,000 (World Bank, 2020). Massive oil revenues and population growth have fueled the development of new urban centers and infrastructure projects throughout the country. The discovery of offshore oil fields like Idd al-Sharqi in 1960, in addition to the development of offshore oil fields like Dukhan, bolstered Qatar's oil production (Sorkhabi, 2010). Offshore oil fields, including Maydan Mahzam and Bul Hanine, played a critical role in increasing Qatar's oil production and exports during the 1960s and 1970s. These findings positioned Qatar as a key player in the global oil market (Table 2).

Significant investments in modernizing the country's infrastructure fueled Qatar's urbanization during the oil boom. Doha, which was once a small coastal town, became the epicenter of Qatar's urban growth. The construction of roads, ports, and airports has transformed the city into a modern metropolis, while new residential and commercial developments have changed the landscape of the capital. By the 1990s, Qatar's government had completed numerous large-scale infrastructure projects, laying the groundwork for the country's future as a global hub for business and trade (Fig. 1).

3.5 Economic Diversification and the Rise of Natural Gas (1990s–Present)

While oil remained the backbone of Qatar's economy throughout much of the twentieth century, the discovery of the North Field in 1971 marked a new chapter in Qatar's economic development. The North Field, located off the northeast coast of the Qatar Peninsula, is the world's largest non-associated natural gas field. The exploitation of this vast natural gas reserve in the 1990s positioned Qatar as the world's leading exporter of liquefied natural gas (LNG) (Sorkhabi, 2010). By the early 2000s, LNG had surpassed oil as the primary driver of Qatar's economy, significantly contributing to the country's GDP growth and international economic standing (Fig. 2).

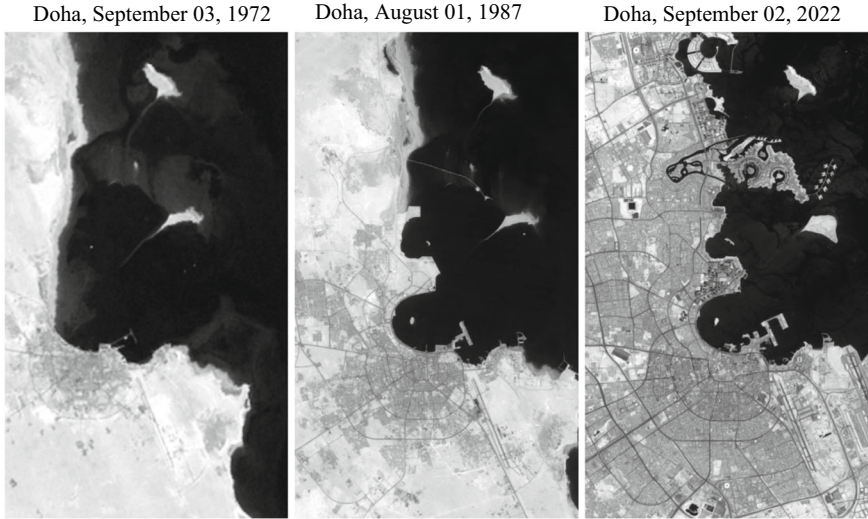


Fig. 1 Urban development in Doha since 1970. *Source* Earth Resources Observation and Science (EROS) Center, 2024

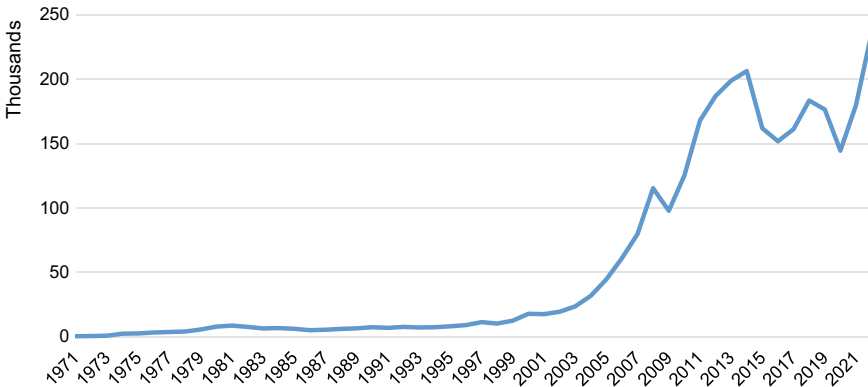


Fig. 2 Qatar's GDP (current US\$) from 1971 to 2021. *Source* World Bank (2020)

3.5.1 Economic Diversification and Major Infrastructure Projects

Qatar's rapid economic growth, fueled by LNG exports, enabled the government to launch a series of ambitious infrastructure projects in the 2000s and 2010s. These projects include the construction of Lusail City, Hamad International Airport, and the Doha Metro. Qatar's commitment to innovation and sustainable urban planning is evident in the design of Lusail City, which can accommodate 450,000 residents. The development of new urban centers and smart city technologies reflects Qatar's

long-term strategy to diversify its economy and reduce its hydrocarbon reliance (Scharfenort, 2012).

4 The Evolution of Social Welfare in Qatar

Qatar's social welfare system represents a careful balance between modern social policies and traditional cultural values, a phenomenon often referred to as "modern traditionalism" (Harkness, 2020). This concept, as discussed by Harkness (2020), highlights how Qatar strategically merges contemporary elements with customary ones to create a cohesive national identity. Qatari leadership, particularly the ruling Al Thani family, uses this approach to navigate the complexities of modernization while preserving the core values of Qatari society. This section explores the development of Qatar's social welfare system through the lens of modern traditionalism (Harkness, 2020), examining how the state balances welfare policies with its traditional and Islamic roots to create a unique model that meets the needs of its citizens while maintaining cultural continuity.

4.1 *The Role of Modern Traditionalism in Shaping Qatar's Social Welfare*

Qatar's social welfare system, which integrates modern state provisions like healthcare, education, and housing with traditional values of family, tribalism, and religious charity (zakat), reflects modern traditionalism in various aspects. Harkness (2020) argued that Qatar's leadership does not frame modernity and tradition as oppositional forces. Rather, they strategically combine elements from both to cater to diverse audiences and situations. This blend allows Qatar to maintain its cultural heritage while implementing modern policies that support rapid social and economic development.

Table 3 illustrates how Qatar's welfare system incorporates both modern and traditional elements. Although the state provides healthcare, education, and housing as universal rights, traditional structures such as family and community networks remain integral to social support systems. These traditional values continue to play an essential role in caregiving, particularly for the older adults and the disabled. Moreover, the state's emphasis on individual empowerment through modern employment policies and gender equality initiatives coexists with deeply embedded traditional gender roles and family expectations.

Table 3 Modern traditionalism’s narrative in social welfare

Modern	Traditional
Social equity	Charity (<i>Zakat</i>)
Welfare as a citizen’s right	Welfare as a form of benevolence
State-funded healthcare	Community care
Universal education	Family responsibility
Women’s workforce participation	Traditional gender roles
Public health initiatives	Religious health practices
Social security and pensions	Family support systems
Disability rights and inclusion	Traditional care for the disabled
Legal protection of vulnerable groups	Community protection networks
Children’s rights	Parental authority
Elderly care through state programs	Elder care within the family
Public housing programs	Family housing responsibilities
Employment policy and Qatarization	Patron-client employment relationships
Access to global health technology	Localized traditional healing
STEM and vocational education	Islamic education and cultural preservation
Maternity leave and workplace rights	Women’s role as caregivers
Environmental sustainability initiatives	Islamic stewardship of nature

Adapted from Harkness (2020)

4.2 *Healthcare: A Blend of Modern and Traditional Care*

Qatar’s healthcare system is most advanced in the region, with the state providing universal healthcare to all citizens. The modern elements of this system include world-class hospitals, advanced medical technologies, and government initiatives aimed at improving public health. However, traditional values still shape the delivery and reception of healthcare. Family members often play a significant role in caregiving, particularly in cases involving older adults or disabled relatives, reflecting the collectivist nature of Qatari society. This blend of modern healthcare infrastructure and traditional family-based care ensures that the healthcare system aligns with both international standards and Islamic principles of compassion and charity (*zakat*) (Al-Kaabi & Al-Hammadi, 2021).

4.3 *Education and Social Equity*

Education is another key area where Qatar’s social welfare system clearly demonstrates modern traditionalism. Qatar has invested heavily in developing a modern, globally recognized education system, as exemplified by the establishment of

Education City, which houses branches of leading international universities. This modern educational infrastructure is part of Qatar's broader goal of building a knowledge-based economy, as outlined in Qatar National Vision 2030.

At the same time, traditional Islamic values and family responsibilities play an essential role in education. Religious education is a core component of the curriculum, and parents are deeply involved in ensuring that their children are not only academically successful but also morally and religiously grounded. This combination of modern educational policies and traditional family involvement helps preserve Qatar's cultural identity while preparing its youth for participation in a globalized world (Weber, 2014).

4.4 Housing: Modern Welfare Provision with Tribal Roots

Qatar's housing policies are another example of how modern social welfare and traditional values intersect. The state provides free or subsidized housing to its citizens, ensuring that all Qataris have access to modern living conditions. However, the traditional importance of extended family living arrangements is still prevalent, particularly in rural areas where multiple generations of a family may live in proximity. Tribal and family structures continue to influence modern welfare provisions, with the majlis, or family council, playing a central role in housing and property decision-making (Harkness, 2020).

4.5 Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in a Traditional Society

While Qatar has made significant strides in promoting gender equality, particularly through educational and professional opportunities for women, traditional gender roles remain influential. For instance, Qatar encourages women to pursue careers and higher education, while also expecting them to fulfill traditional roles within the family. Qatar's broader approach to modern traditionalism, which empowers women in the public sphere while still adhering to cultural norms regarding family life, reflects this dual expectation (Liloia, 2019).

The state's gender equality policies carefully balance modern social justice principles with the preservation of traditional family values. For example, while women in Qatar have achieved significant progress in education and workforce participation, there remains a strong cultural emphasis on marriage and motherhood. This duality allows Qatar to project a progressive image to the international community while maintaining its cultural and religious heritage at home (Brannagan et al., 2023).

4.6 *Social Equity and the Role of Religious Charity*

Social equity in Qatar is a fundamental aspect of the welfare system, with the state providing free healthcare, education, and housing to all citizens. However, the traditional practice of Islamic charity (*zakat*) continues to play an important role in supporting vulnerable populations. The state provides welfare services, but it also encourages individuals and communities to engage in charitable acts as part of their religious duty. This blend of modern social equity policies and traditional charity practices highlights the importance of Islamic values in shaping Qatar's welfare system (Kamrava, 2009).

5 Analytical Framework

This book employs an analytical framework (Table 4) to systematically examine the evolution of Qatari social policy, focusing on its development and arrangements. We structure the framework into seven dimensions to scrutinize the historical, institutional, and prospective aspects of social policy. The Policy Arrangement Approach (PAA) serves as the primary basis for each of these dimensions. Besides this approach, other theories like historical institutionalism (Pierson, 2000; Thelen, 1999), rentier state theory (Beblawi & Luciani, 1987; Hertog, 2010), modernization theory (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Lerner, 1958), developmental state theory (Evans, 1995; Woo-Cumings, 1999), and rights-based approach (Esping-Andersen, 1990; OHCHR, 2006) help us understand how Qatar's welfare system has changed over time and how complicated it is.

5.1 *The Policy Arrangement Approach*

The Policy Arrangement Approach provides a robust framework for analyzing the dynamics of social welfare in Qatar, particularly in relation to social policy (Arts & Leroy, 2006; Arts et al., 2000). By examining four key dimensions—discourse, actors, resources and power, and rules of the game (Fig. 3)—the PAA facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the various forces that shape and influence social policies.

The discourse dimension explores the prevailing narratives and problem definitions within a policy field. This extends to the conceptualization of social welfare. In Qatar's centralized governance structure, understanding the dominant discourse surrounding social welfare is crucial for examining policy formation at both legal and societal levels.

The actor dimension identifies the individuals, organizations, and institutions involved in social welfare policymaking. While the state plays a central role in Qatar's

Table 4 Analytical framework

Dimension	Questions explored	Relevant theory
Discourse	What are the origins and historical milestones of Qatar’s social policy? How have socioeconomic changes shaped policy development? What cultural and political factors have influenced the direction of these policies?	Policy arrangement approach, historical institutionalism
Actors	Who are the key actors in social policy, and what roles do they play? How is social policy governance structured across different levels of government? How do international organizations impact national policy decisions?	Policy arrangement approach, rentier state theory
The rules of the game	<i>Institutionalization and policies</i> What legal and institutional frameworks support Qatari social policy? How has the policy been embedded in public institutions, and what significant reforms have occurred? <i>Social policy formulation</i> What stages are involved in developing social policy? What roles do different stakeholders play in the process and what are the main challenges? <i>Social policy formulation</i> What strategies are used for policy implementation, and how is effectiveness evaluated? What challenges arise during implementation and how do institutions impact these processes?	Policy arrangement approach, developmental state theory, modernization theory, rights-based approach
Resources and power	What educational programs, research centers, and professional training opportunities exist for social policy in Qatar? How do grants and publications contribute to the field?	Policy arrangement approach, developmental state theory

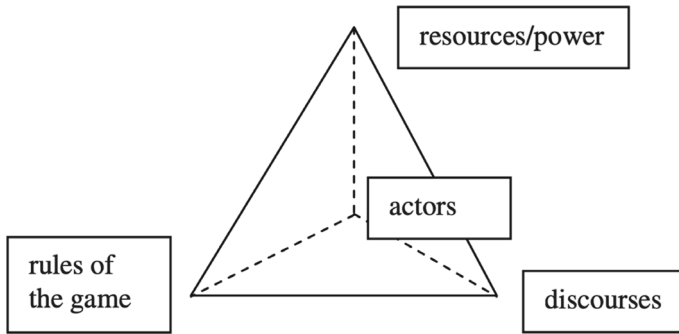


Fig. 3 Dimensions of a policy arrangement approach. *Source* Van Tatenhove et al. (2006)

social policy development, other entities, such as international organizations, NGOs, and advocacy groups, also exert influence. The PAA helps elucidate the relationships between these actors and the distribution of power and influence among them.

The resources and power dimension investigates how actors use various resources—financial, informational, or organizational—to achieve policy objectives. Qatar’s rentier state system centralizes resource control, with the state wielding significant power due to its control over oil and gas revenues (Arts & Leroy, 2006; Arts et al., 2000). The PAA framework helps analyze how this resource concentration affects social welfare and how other actors might leverage alternative resources to influence social policy.

The rules of the game dimension examine the formal and informal institutions that structure interactions between actors in the policy domain (Arts & Leroy, 2006; Arts et al., 2000). This includes laws, regulations, policies, cultural norms, social expectations, and unwritten practices. The PAA provides a lens through which to analyze how these institutions impact Qatari social welfare, helping to identify enablers and constraints in policy implementation.

The Policy Arrangement Approach offers valuable insights into Qatar’s welfare policy dynamics, but it has certain limitations in the Gulf context. The approach assumes a pluralistic policy environment with multiple competing actors, which does not fully align with Qatar’s centralized governance structure in which the state maintains predominant control over policy decisions. Additionally, while the PAA’s emphasis on formal and informal rules helps analyze institutional arrangements, it may not fully capture the nuanced ways in which tribal customs and Islamic principles inform policy implementation beyond formal governance structures.

5.2 *Historical Institutionalism*

Historical institutionalism emphasizes the role of critical junctures and path dependency in shaping institutional development. In Qatar, the discovery of oil in the 1940s represents a critical juncture that enabled the state to build a comprehensive welfare system (Pierson, 2000). Early decisions, such as the state’s use of oil revenues to finance welfare programs, have shaped Qatar’s developmental trajectory, making it difficult to change course without significant disruption (Fukuyama, 2013). This theory helps explain how Qatar’s welfare system has evolved incrementally through processes of institutional layering, where new policies are added to existing structures without fundamentally altering the system.

Historical institutionalism effectively explains path dependencies in Qatar’s welfare development, particularly following the critical juncture of oil discovery. However, the theory’s focus on formal institutions may have underestimated the role of informal tribal networks that continue to influence welfare provision alongside state institutions. Furthermore, the theory’s emphasis on institutional inertia may not fully account for Qatar’s demonstrated ability to rapidly transform its welfare

institutions when deemed necessary, as seen in recent reforms aligned with Qatar National Vision 2030.

5.3 Rentier State Theory

Rentier state theory is central to understanding the dynamics of welfare provision in Qatar. In a rentier state, the government derives most of its revenue from external rents, such as oil and gas, rather than taxation (Beblawi & Luciani, 1987). This model allows the state to provide generous welfare benefits to its citizens without requiring them to contribute through taxation, which has important implications for the state-citizen relationship. However, rentier states are also vulnerable to fluctuations in global energy markets, which can affect their ability to sustain welfare programs over the long term (Hertog, 2010). This theory provides a framework for analyzing the sustainability challenges facing Qatar's welfare system.

Although rentier state theory provides crucial insights into Qatar's welfare financing and state-society relations, it has limitations in explaining the country's recent development trajectory. The theory tends to present rentier states as passive distributors of oil wealth, overlooking Qatar's strategic use of resource revenues to build sophisticated welfare institutions and pursue economic diversification. Additionally, the theory's focus on economic relationships may underestimate the importance of cultural and religious values in shaping welfare policies.

5.4 Modernization Theory

Modernization theory provides a lens through which to examine the tensions between tradition and modernity in Qatar's welfare policies. As Qatar modernizes its economy and society, it faces increasing pressure to reform its welfare system in ways that align with global norms, particularly in areas such as gender equality and labor market participation (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). However, these modernization efforts often clash with traditional social structures, particularly those rooted in Islamic values. Modernization theory helps explain Qatar's handling of these tensions and their implications for its welfare policies.

Modernization theory helps explain Qatar's developmental trajectory but falls short in several areas. Its assumption of linear progress toward Western-style institutions fails to capture Qatar's selective approach to modernization, where traditional values are actively preserved alongside modern institutions. The theory also struggles to explain how Qatar maintains its traditional social structures while achieving rapid economic development, challenging the presumed inevitability of Western social transformation.

5.5 *Developmental State Theory*

Developmental state theory focuses on the role of the state in directing economic development and shaping social policies (Evans, 1995). In Qatar, the state has played a central role in promoting human capital development through investments in education, healthcare, and employment. Initiatives such as the Qatarization program, which aims to increase the proportion of Qataris in the workforce, reflect the state's efforts to reduce dependency on foreign labor and foster a more sustainable, diversified economy (Weber, 2014). This theory explains the connection between Qatar's welfare policies and its wider developmental objectives.

While developmental state theory illuminates Qatar's strategic economic and social development, it requires adaptation to fully explain the Gulf context. The theory, developed primarily from East Asian experiences, assumes a clear separation between state and business interests that does not reflect Qatar's political economy. Furthermore, it may not fully capture how Qatar's welfare policies serve developmental and traditional legitimacy-maintaining functions.

5.6 *Rights-Based Approaches*

The shift to a rights-based approach in Qatar's welfare policies is evident in sectors such as healthcare and education. The government has emphasized the importance of providing universal access to essential services, thus reflecting a commitment to human dignity and social justice (OHCHR, 2006). This approach aligns with the concept of commodification, as outlined by Esping-Andersen (1990), which refers to the extent to which individuals can access welfare services independently of their participation in the labor market. Rights-based approaches provide a framework for analyzing how Qatar is addressing issues of social equity and inclusion in its welfare policies.

Rights-based approaches offer valuable insights into Qatar's welfare provisions but are limited in their application. While these approaches help analyze formal welfare rights, they do not fully capture how access to Qatari welfare is mediated through citizenship status and tribal affiliations. Additionally, the universal rights framework may not adequately reflect how Islamic principles of social justice shape welfare provision in ways that differ from Western conceptions of rights.

The analytical framework is depicted in Fig. 4, illustrating how each dimension of social welfare interacts to provide a comprehensive understanding of Qatar's social welfare.

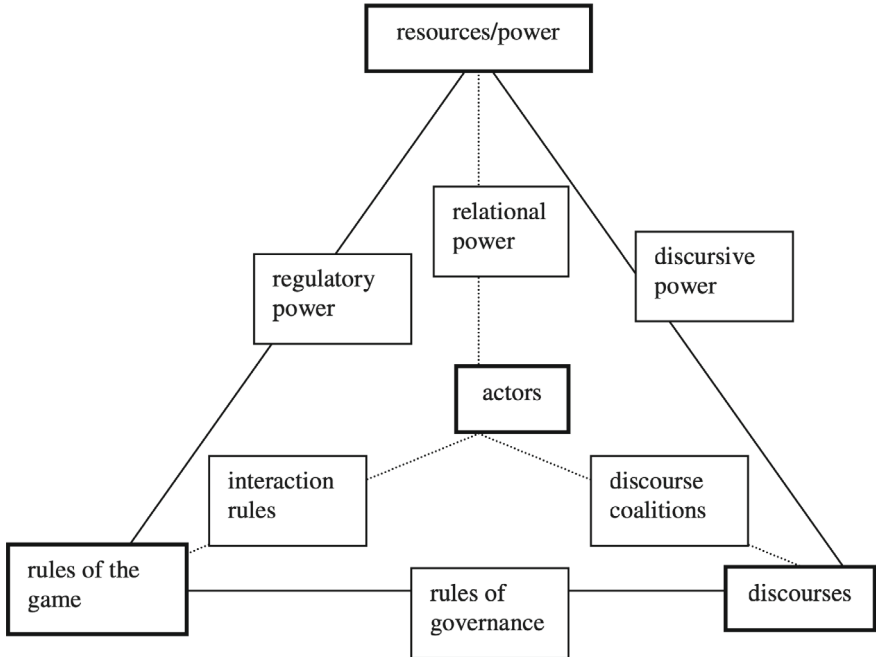


Fig. 4 Dimensions of the policy arrangement approach. Source Liefferink (2006)

5.7 Discourses

The Policy Arrangement Approach primarily informs the discourse of social welfare in Qatar (Pierson, 2000; Thelen, 1999). The PAA provides insight into the prevailing narratives and problem definitions within the policy field, while historical institutionalism emphasizes the role of critical junctures and path dependency in shaping institutional development. In Qatar, the discovery of oil in the 1940s represents a critical juncture that enabled the state to build a comprehensive welfare system. Early decisions regarding the use of oil revenues to finance welfare programs created a path-dependent trajectory that shaped the subsequent evolution of Qatar’s social policies. This theory elucidates the gradual evolution of Qatar’s welfare system, frequently through the process of institutional layering, which involves the addition of new policies to pre-existing structures without any significant systemic changes.

5.8 Actors

The actor dimension identifies key actors, such as government agencies, NGOs, and international organizations, and their roles. The Policy Arrangement Approach

helps identify the key actors, their roles, and the power dynamics at play. Rentier state theory (Beblawi & Luciani, 1987; Hertog, 2010), which explains how Qatar's reliance on external rents (such as oil and gas revenues) influences the state-citizen relationship and shapes governance structures, further enriches this analysis. Qatar's rentier nature allows it to provide generous welfare benefits without imposing direct taxation on its citizens. However, this reliance makes the welfare system vulnerable to global market fluctuations.

5.9 *The Rules of the Game*

The game dimension examines the formal and informal norms, laws, and regulations that govern interactions among actors. Developmental state theory (Evans, 1995; Woo-Cumings, 1999) further complements this analysis by highlighting the state's role in directing economic development and shaping social policies. In Qatar, the state has actively promoted human capital development through investments in education, healthcare, and employment initiatives, such as the Qatarization program, which aims to reduce dependency on foreign labor. These policies reflect the state's broader developmental goals and demonstrate the interconnectedness between economic development and social welfare. The institutionalization of social welfare has occurred by embedding these initiatives within public institutions supported by a robust legal framework.

Modernization theory (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Lerner, 1958) and rights-based approaches supplement the Policy Arrangement Approach to help understand the dynamics involved in the policy formulation process, including the roles of different stakeholders and the rules governing their interactions. Modernization theory provides insight into the tensions between tradition and modernity as Qatar strives to modernize its economy and align its welfare policies with global standards, particularly regarding gender equality and labor market participation. However, these efforts often clash with traditional social structures rooted in Islamic values. The rights-based approaches (Esping-Andersen, 1990; OHCHR, 2006) emphasize the importance of ensuring universal access to essential services such as healthcare and education, reflecting the government's commitment to social justice and human dignity.

The Policy Arrangement Approach primarily influences the implementation and evaluation of social policies, focusing on how actors use resources and navigate power dynamics to achieve policy objectives. In Qatar, the rentier state's control over oil revenues centralizes resource distribution, which significantly impacts implementation strategies and evaluation capacity. Developmental state theory provides further insight into state-led initiatives for human capital development and how they are implemented to align with broader economic goals. We frame evaluation mechanisms around assessing the effectiveness of state interventions in achieving developmental objectives.

5.10 Resources and Power

The resources and power dimension focuses on how actors use financial, informational, and organizational resources. This dimension examines the mobilization of these resources to support educational programs, research initiatives, and professional training opportunities. This dimension considers educational programs, research initiatives, and professional training opportunities that contribute to building a skilled workforce capable of advancing social policy. Developmental state theory further highlights the state's investment in creating educational and professional pathways aimed at fostering national development. Qatar has established various programs that focus on social policy, preparing professionals for roles in policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation.

6 Future Trends and Challenges

In addition, this book discusses future trends and challenges in the social welfare system. The book investigates the emerging trends, technological advances, and global influences that are affecting social welfare. We anticipate future challenges and strategic adaptations. Both the rentier state theory and modernization theory can effectively analyze future trends and challenges. The rentier state theory suggests that Qatar's welfare system will face sustainability challenges because of fluctuations in global energy markets. Modernization theory helps explain the pressures that Qatar will face as it attempts to balance modernization with traditional values, particularly in response to globalization and increasing calls for social reform. Together, these theories help identify the challenges that Qatar's welfare system will face in the future and the strategic adaptations needed to address them.

7 Methodology

This book's methodology primarily relies on secondary data analysis, with interviews with relevant stakeholders serving as a supplement. We selected secondary data because it offers a broad historical and institutional perspective on social policy, enabling a detailed examination of existing trends and practices. We conducted interviews to add qualitative depth and context, capturing the perspectives and experiences of those directly involved in policy implementation and development. Together, these methods provide a comprehensive analysis of Qatar's social policy.

The chapters draw on a wide range of secondary data sources, including government reports (e.g., Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics reports from 2000 to 2022), historical records (such as archival documents from the National

Library covering the period from the 1960s to the 1980s), academic publications (notably peer-reviewed journals on Middle Eastern welfare policies published between 2000 and 2020), and statistical databases (e.g., World Bank and IMF datasets from 1990 to 2022). We used these data to establish an understanding of the historical, institutional, and socioeconomic aspects of welfare policies.

While this approach offers substantial insights, it has limitations, particularly regarding the potential biases of secondary sources and the subjective nature of stakeholder interviews. We mitigated biases by cross-referencing multiple sources, validating data through triangulation, and integrating diverse perspectives through interviews, thereby ensuring a richer and more balanced analysis.

Qualitative data were collected through interviews with key stakeholders, including policymakers, representatives of NGOs, and academic experts, to enrich the analysis. These interviews provided in-depth insights into the dynamics of social policy development, the influence and interactions of key actors, and the evolution of Qatar's welfare systems.

Two experts specializing in the relevant welfare sectors, including senior academics and experienced practitioners with extensive backgrounds in social policy, independently reviewed each chapter. This peer review process helped ensure the accuracy and depth of the presented content.

7.1 Limitations

The proposed methodology has several limitations. Primarily relying on secondary data could introduce biases from the original sources, and the interpretation of historical records and government publications could lose certain nuances. We mitigated these biases by cross-referencing multiple sources and incorporating stakeholder interviews to validate and enrich the data. Additionally, while interviews with stakeholders provide valuable qualitative insights, these perspectives may be subjective and not fully representative of all views within the policy landscape. Lastly, the peer review process, while ensuring academic rigor, may still be subject to the biases of individual reviewers. However, having multiple independent reviewers helps reduce these biases by providing a more balanced and comprehensive evaluation. We used a mixed-methods approach to collect primary and secondary data, enabling triangulation and a thorough analysis of the various aspects of social policy. Qualitative data were collected by conducting interviews with key stakeholders such as policymakers, NGO representatives, and academic experts. These interviews provided in-depth insights into the dynamics of social policy development, the role of key actors, and the evolution of welfare systems.

We conducted quantitative data analysis using data from government reports, international databases, and statistical publications to identify trends and patterns in social policy indicators, including government spending, beneficiary numbers, and socioeconomic impacts. We used data visualizations to illustrate these trends and support the interpretation of the findings.

8 Book's Organization

The book is organized into several chapters, each addressing a key aspect of Qatar's social welfare, modernization, and the role of traditionalism in its development. This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the evolution of Qatar's welfare system, contextualizing its development within broader socio-political and economic frameworks. The book is structured into three parts, encompassing eleven chapters that examine various aspects of Qatari social welfare.

Part I: Introduction

This chapter introduces the historical context of Qatar's development and the theoretical frameworks used to analyze its social welfare system. This chapter outlines Qatar's transition from a pearling economy to an oil-rich nation and discusses concepts such as rentier state theory and modernization theory as they apply to Qatar's social policy development.

Part 2: Social Welfare Sectors in Qatar

Each chapter in Part II follows a consistent analytical framework, examining the historical development, institutional setting, policy formulation, implementation, evaluation, professionalization, and future trends of each social welfare sector.

Chapter 2 examines Qatar's social security system, tracing its evolution from early welfare provisions to the current comprehensive system. The study analyzes the role of key institutions like the General Retirement and Social Insurance Authority and discusses challenges in extending coverage to all segments of society.

Chapter 3 explores Qatar's social care services, including support for families, children, the elderly, and vulnerable populations. This study discusses the transition from traditional family-based care to institutionalized social services and examines the role of both government agencies and civil society organizations in providing care.

Chapter 4 analyzes Qatar's housing policies, from early public housing initiatives to current strategies for ensuring adequate housing for citizens. This study examines the government's role in housing provision, the impact of rapid urbanization, and efforts to balance traditional housing preferences with modern urban planning.

Chapter 5 traces the development of Qatar's public health system, from basic healthcare provision to the current comprehensive health strategy. The study examines major health initiatives, the role of institutions like Hamad Medical Corporation, and efforts to address lifestyle-related health challenges.

Chapter 6 explores Qatar's family policies, including marriage and divorce laws, child welfare policies, and support for working parents. This study examines how Qatar balances traditional family values with the needs of a modernizing society and discusses efforts to strengthen family cohesion.

Chapter 7 analyzes Qatar's employment policies, including labor laws, Qatarization initiatives, and workforce development programs. The study examines the challenges of developing a skilled national workforce while managing a large expatriate labor force.

Chapter 8 focuses on Qatar's policies aimed at empowering women, including education initiatives, labor force participation programs, and political representation efforts. The study examines the progress made in women's rights and the ongoing challenges in a traditionally patriarchal society.

Chapter 9 explores Qatar's policies for people with disabilities, including education, employment, and accessibility initiatives. The study examines the evolution of disability rights in Qatar and efforts to create a more inclusive society.

Chapter 10 examines Qatar's higher education policies, from the establishment of Qatar University to current knowledge economy initiatives. The study analyzes Qatar's efforts to develop world-class educational institutions and build a skilled workforce to support economic diversification.

Part III: Synthesis and Future Prospects

Chapter 11, synthesizes the findings from sector-specific analyses. This study identifies common themes and challenges across different areas of social welfare policy, traces the overall trajectory of Qatar's welfare state development, and discusses future imperatives for ensuring sustainable and effective social welfare provision in Qatar.

Through this structure and comprehensive analysis, the book offers a thorough examination of Qatar's social welfare system, tracing its historical development, analyzing current policies and institutional frameworks, and considering future challenges and opportunities across various sectors of social welfare provision.

9 Conclusion

The introductory chapter of this book discusses Qatar's journey from a pearling society to a global energy powerhouse, setting the stage for understanding the nation's broader socioeconomic evolution. The discovery of oil in the 1940s and the subsequent exploitation of natural gas reserves catalyzed Qatar's transformation, allowing for substantial investments in infrastructure, social welfare, and economic diversification. These developments have not only reshaped Qatar's economy but have also had profound impacts on its social and political landscape, establishing Qatar as a key player on the global stage.

The book will explore themes such as the tensions between tradition and modernization, the strategic governance choices made by Qatar's leadership, and the socio-political dynamics that influence its development, all of which have their roots in this chapter. Central to these discussions is the concept of "modern traditionalism," which encapsulates Qatar's deliberate approach to blending the old with the new in a way that supports both progress and cultural continuity. The analytical framework

introduced in this chapter, including the Policy Arrangement Approach and Rentier State Theory, provides tools for examining these dynamics in detail.

The methodology outlined, combining secondary data analysis and stakeholder interviews, ensures a comprehensive exploration of Qatar's socioeconomic policies and governance structures. Future chapters will further explore the critical theme of sustainability in Qatar's hydrocarbon-dependent economic model. The global shift toward renewable energy presents both challenges and opportunities for Qatar as it seeks to diversify its economy and reduce its reliance on fossil fuels. This introductory chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the key factors driving Qatar's development, including its unique blend of modern policies and traditional values, serving as a springboard for deeper analysis of its social policies, governance frameworks, and the unique challenges faced by a nation at the crossroads of tradition and modernity.

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