

Preface

MICHAEL D. TUSIANI

My introduction to Qatar came on March 9, 1977, when I first met Dr. Ali Al Kuwari, then the marketing director of the Qatar General Petroleum Co., the country's national oil company, at a liquefied petroleum gas, or LPG, conference I moderated in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, France. He was responsible for the sale of LPG from a newly constructed export facility expected to be completed later that year. Dr. Al Kuwari and I hit it off, and we agreed to meet in Doha the following month to discuss a potential purchase on behalf of a client.

When I arrived at Dr. Al Kuwari's office a month later, he greeted me at the door and said: "Sorry, you've traveled all the way from New York for nothing—there's no LPG to buy, the plant exploded and is gone." My reaction was disbelief. Sadly, it was true. The accident had happened on April 3. While a huge setback for Qatar, the incident nonetheless led to my career-long involvement in the country.

I met many interesting people in Doha and learned a great deal about Qatar's unique way of doing business. There was always intrigue and confusion. It felt as though "wheels within wheels were spinning" in both the public and private sectors. What amazed me the most during those early days was that no one understood, or wanted to understand, the concept of "conflict of interest." Government officials, regardless of rank or position, were allowed to have their own private businesses. They engaged in transactions directly or via family members or friends, even in areas where they had decision-making authority or influence. The politics behind this soon became apparent. I learned the key to success in Qatar, as in other countries in the region, was to identify the primary decision maker on any project and then the individual(s) in his inner circle who could influence the outcome.

Over a span of fifty years, I've had the pleasure to deal with many high- and medium-level Qatari government officials and local businesspeople. The experiences were eye opening and diverse. I witnessed former U.S. vice-president Dan Quayle telephone his counterpart, the Crown Prince, to provide my client, Newport News, a chance to be considered to build ships for Qatargas, the country's first liquefied natural gas, or LNG, export project and entry into a global industry in which Qatar became a leader. This highly qualified shipbuilder had not been invited to bid because of a technicality that was deliberately included in the tender document to eliminate any possible U.S. participation in this Japanese-dominated project. I was delighted when Mobil Oil followed my advice and guidance about entering Qatar's fledgling LNG sector. It was a great achievement for Mobil and continues to be an even bigger success for ExxonMobil.

Given the emphasis on the environment and climate change, natural gas in the form of LNG will continue to serve as the transitional fuel substituting for coal in power generation and supporting the increasing use of renewables. Natural gas emits much less CO₂ than coal and petroleum products, and it complements the intermittency of renewables rather than competing with them. This will be the case until large, utility-scale battery technology is developed that proves to be economical. Worldwide LNG demand has grown from just 2 million tons per year in 1970 to 103 annually in 2000 and 357 million tons in 2020, when—absent the COVID-19 pandemic—it would have reached 375 million. Demand is projected to surpass 535 million tons per year by 2030 and 575 million tons annually by 2035. Currently among the world's top three LNG exporters, Qatar is preparing to supply over 25 percent of global supply—an amazing amount given that Saudi Arabia accounts for about 15 percent of global oil exports.

Keeping everyone constantly guessing and pitting one person or company against the other to create uncertainty rather than clarity seems to be the country's modus operandi on all levels—political and commercial. For many years Qatar was seen as a small and rather insignificant nation. The insecurity this generated forced the country to forge its own identity apart from its larger and often more powerful neighbors. In the process, Qatar's leaders made what many considered to be unconventional and controversial political decisions. Sitting on top of one of the world's largest gas reserves was no doubt luck, but Qatar learned how to leverage this largesse to its best advantage. With a vision for future generations, it invested heavily in education and human capital. There will continue to be bumps in the road, but more success will undoubtedly follow. Qatar—home to

only 3 million people, barely more than 10 percent of whom are nationals—knows it doesn't need enemies even if it has repeatedly demonstrated that it is not afraid to chart an independent path if its self-interests dictate. With determined independence and global ambition, it has indeed found its identity, its place in the region, and its destiny in the world.

