



ADDRESSING THE IMPACTS OF REGIONAL CONFLICTS ON ENERGY SECURITY: TOWARD A LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CREDIBLE AND TRANSPARENT MEDIATION

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This study examines how the continued reliance of Western powers on Gulf oil and LNG shapes global energy security and creates a structural need for sustained conflict mediation during Middle Eastern crises. Using a qualitative legal-analytical methodology, the article evaluates historical energy disruptions, market transformations, and the evolving geopolitical role of Gulf states as both energy superpowers and mediators. The findings show that despite diversification efforts, Western economies remain vulnerable to Gulf-based supply shocks - especially amid Qatar's rising dominance in LNG markets and ongoing regional chokepoint risks. The results also reveal a growing paradox: Gulf mediators possess both the leverage to stabilize conflicts and economic interests that complicate perceptions of neutrality. The study concludes that effective global energy security now depends on hybrid mediation frameworks in which Western states partner with regional actors to prevent market-disturbing escalations and secure long-term stability.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Understanding global energy security requires looking closely at how crises in the Middle East disrupt markets far beyond the region. Unlike conflicts elsewhere - where the potential effects on supply chains can often be anticipated - tensions in the Gulf carry a unique capacity to generate sudden and severe shocks because of the concentration of oil and gas production in this geographically sensitive area. For decades, Western powers have relied on Gulf energy to stabilize their economies, raising the question of whether they must more actively support conflict mediation to prevent disruptions that threaten international markets.

However, while the strategic necessity of engaging Gulf mediators is clear, this very solution introduces a profound and potentially paradoxical question: can a state whose economic and political influence is so fundamentally tied to its capacity to shape - and potentially destabilize - global energy markets truly be perceived as a neutral honest broker? The historical apprehension toward Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC's) oil predominance, a primary driver for Western mediation, may simply be replicated in the LNG arena. If a mediating nation retains the latent power to withhold volumes, manipulate prices, or flood markets to achieve strategic economic goals, does this not fundamentally challenge the credibility and perceived impartiality essential to its conflict resolution role? This inherent tension between the possessor of immense market power and the facilitator of stability suggests that the emerging mediation architecture, while pragmatic, is built upon a foundation of conflicting interests that must be scrutinized.

Recent regional conflicts demonstrate that energy security risks in the Middle East remain systemic rather than episodic. ¹Although the United

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States has reduced its direct dependence on Gulf oil, European energy security remains highly exposed, particularly following the reduction of Russian gas supplies. Qatar alone supplies nearly one quarter of global LNG exports, a share expected to increase significantly by 2030. As a result, even conflicts that do not directly target energy infrastructure generate immediate price volatility, supply uncertainty, and strategic vulnerability across international markets. These structural conditions explain why Middle Eastern instability continues to pose disproportionate risks to global energy security.

Despite this exposure, Western-led mediation efforts have not consistently translated into durable regional stability. Structural alignments, strategic alliances, and energy-security imperatives often compromise perceptions of neutrality, limiting the effectiveness of Western states as mediators in conflicts that directly affect energy markets.² This gap between dependency and credibility has encouraged the emergence of alternative mediation actors - particularly Gulf energy producers - whose economic leverage enables access but simultaneously raises concerns regarding impartiality. The resulting tension between energy power and mediation legitimacy lies at the heart of contemporary debates on global energy security governance.

This article argues that contemporary global energy security cannot be sustained through traditional Western-led mediation models alone, given their structural credibility constraints and evolving energy dependencies. Instead, it contends that effective conflict management in the Middle East requires legally grounded, transparent, and hybrid mediation frameworks that integrate regional actors while addressing neutrality and accountability concerns.

This article examines how regional conflicts in the Middle East continue to shape global energy security by combining historical analysis of oil and LNG market vulnerabilities with a critical assessment of mediation as a

to say, all views and errors are personal to me. Any comments could be addressed to t.alemadi@qu.edu.qa

¹ See the section 4 below.

² Steve Wood, 'Energy Security and Liberal Democracy: Ideals, Imperatives and Balancing Acts', *International Handbook of Energy Security* (Edward Elgar Publishing 2013).

tool for preventing energy-related disruptions. It then analyses the structural limitations of Western-led mediation and the legal tensions arising from the growing role of Gulf energy producers as intermediaries. The article concludes by identifying targeted legal and policy pathways to enhance the credibility and effectiveness of mediation in energy-sensitive disputes, particularly in the context of LNG concentration and the energy transition.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: ENERGY SECURITY, REGIONAL CONFLICT, AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

For the purposes of this article, energy security is understood as the condition in which energy systems ensure the reliable, affordable, and continuous availability of energy supplies, supported by secure transportation routes and predictable market conditions, in a manner compatible with long-term environmental sustainability and development objectives.³ This functional definition reflects the convergence of international energy policy, trade law, and sustainable development discourse, where supply stability is not an end in itself but a prerequisite for economic resilience, social welfare, and energy transition planning.⁴ Within conflict-prone regions such as the Middle East, energy security is therefore inseparable from the management of political and security risks, as disruptions to production, transit, or pricing mechanisms directly undermine development outcomes and delay investment in both conventional and low-carbon energy infrastructure.⁵ This section uses this definition as an analytical baseline to review the literature on how regional conflicts affect energy security and, in turn, how energy insecurity constrains sustainable development, thereby framing mediation not

³ BW And, WL Choong and TS Ng, 'Energy Security: Definitions, Dimensions and Indexes' (2015) 42 *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews* 1077.

⁴ Aleh Cherp and Jessica Jewell, 'The Concept of Energy Security: Beyond the Four As' (2014) 75 *Energy policy* 415.

⁵ Andrea Prontera and Mariusz Ruszel, 'Energy Security in the Eastern Mediterranean.' (2017) 24 *Middle East Policy*.

merely as a diplomatic practice but as a legally and policy-relevant instrument for safeguarding long-term development interests.

Taken together, the literature demonstrates that regional conflicts undermine energy security not only through physical supply disruptions but also by eroding legal certainty, market predictability, and investment confidence, thereby directly constraining sustainable development outcomes and exposing the limitations of existing legal and policy frameworks to address energy-related conflicts in an integrated manner.

3. HISTORICAL ENERGY DISRUPTIONS AND MARKET VULNERABILITY

The need to protect global energy security and to avoid disruptions became clear with the 1973 Oil Embargo. The embargo was the response of the Arab oil exporters to US resupply of weapons to Israel, which was at risk of defeat from Egypt and Syria. This led to a deep global recession and a fourfold increase in the oil price. By that time, the world economy had become heavily dependent on oil supplies from the Middle East.⁶ In 1977, OPEC nations were the source of 70% of US total petroleum imports and the source of 85% of US crude oil imports.⁷

The embargo was followed by other two events. In late 1978, the Iranian revolution resulted in an average drop of 3.9 million barrels per day (MMbbl/d) in Iran's crude oil production over the 1978 to 1981 period, with the initial supply loss reaching nearly 90 percent of total Iranian production in January 1979. The disrupted volumes were mainly restored with increased production from Arabian Gulf neighbors. Similarly, when Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990, oil supplies from these two countries were disrupted, causing a sudden crude oil price run-up. The peak lost

⁶ Daniel Yergin and Madeline Jowdy, 'The Importance of US LNG for Economic Growth and the Global Energy Transition' (*Atlantic Council*, 2025) <<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/content-series/global-energy-agenda/the-importance-of-us-lng-for-economic-growth-and-the-global-energy-transition/>> accessed 18 September 2025.

⁷ EIA, 'Oil and Petroleum Products Explained' (*U.S. Energy Information Administration*, 2024) <<https://www.eia.gov/energyexplained/oil-and-petroleum-products/imports-and-exports.php#:~:text=In 2020%2C the United States,time since at least 1949>> accessed 16 November 2025.

production of about 4.3 MMbbl/d of combined Iraqi and Kuwaiti crude oil tested markets.⁸

These historical disruptions demonstrate a consistent pattern: when instability occurs in the Gulf, the ripple effects are immediate, global, and often unpredictable. They form the foundation for understanding why Western powers continue to monitor Gulf conflicts closely and why mediation becomes not only a diplomatic tool but an economic necessity.

These recurring episodes of disruption reveal a persistent regulatory deficit: although international energy markets remain structurally exposed to regional conflict, existing legal and policy frameworks continue to operate in a largely reactive manner, offering limited preventive or mediation-oriented mechanisms capable of mitigating conflict-induced energy insecurity.

4. GLOBAL SUPPLY GROWTH AND CONTEMPORARY ENERGY SECURITY CHALLENGES

Since these major disruptions, the oil market has changed in terms of global supply growth. Four countries now in the Americas - the US, Guyana, Canada, and Brazil - have the capacity to partially offset near-term voluntary production cuts from countries participating in the OPEC+⁹ agreement.¹⁰ The shares of US petroleum imports from OPEC

⁸ EIA, 'Effects of Crude Oil Supply Disruptions: How Long Can They Last?' (*U.S. Energy Information Administration*, 2011) <<https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=730#>> accessed 16 November 2025.

⁹ An expanded alliance of OPEC members and non-OPEC oil-producing allies, formed in 2016 to collectively manage global oil supply. Russia is the dominant non-OPEC partner. The group coordinates production cuts/adjustments to influence prices and balance markets. In 2016, largely in response to dramatically falling oil prices driven by significant increases in US shale oil output, OPEC signed an agreement with 10 other oil-producing countries to create what is now known as OPEC+.

¹⁰ EIA, 'What Is OPEC+ and How Is It Different from OPEC?' (*U.S. Energy Information Administration*, 2023) <<https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=61102>> accessed 16 November 2025; EIA, 'Four Countries Could Account for Most Near-Term Petroleum Liquids Supply Growth' (*U.S. Energy Information Administration*, 2024) <<https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=61583>> accessed 16 November 2025.

and Arabian Gulf countries declined, and the share of imports from Canada has increased. In 2022, about 12% of US total petroleum imports and 12% of US crude oil imports were from Arabian Gulf countries.¹¹ The below table illustrates the updated status of the reliance of the US and European Union on Gulf energy.

Table 1: Contributions of Gulf Countries to U.S. and EU Oil Imports¹²

Country	% of U.S. Oil Imports (2018)	% of U.S. Oil Imports (2023)	% of EU Oil Imports (2018)	% of EU Oil Imports (2018)
Saudi Arabia	9.4%	6.5%	7.7%	6.2%
Iraq	6.0%	4.8%	8.3%	7.5%
Kuwait	2.3%	1.8%	2.0%	1.9%
UAE	1.2%	1.5%	1.5%	1.3%
Qatar (LNG)	N/A	N/A	4.2%	5.5%

Key Insights

1. Shift in US Oil Dependency: Around 2018, the US became the world's greatest oil producer, reducing its need on Gulf oil imports. This is seen in the lower numbers from nations such as Saudi Arabia and Iraq.¹³
2. Europe's Continued Dependence: The European Union remains heavily reliant on Gulf oil, mainly from Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Despite the minor drop, the need for diversification and expanded renewable energy usage is clear.¹⁴

¹¹ EIA, 'Oil and Petroleum Products Explained' (n 8).

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ Eurostat, 'Continued Drop in EU Imports of Energy Products' (*EU*, 2024) <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20240322-2?utm_source=chatgpt.com> accessed 16 November 2025.

3. Qatar's importance as a provider of liquefied natural gas (LNG) has expanded, particularly in Europe, as countries seek alternatives to Russian energy sources.¹⁵

In this context, it is still safe to say that international markets rely on Gulf energy to a certain extent. During the first quarter of 2024, Brent oil prices generally increased due to worsened geopolitical risks mainly related to the growing Middle East conflict. Even though the war between Israel and Hamas did not directly affect supplies, the conflict rose the risk of regional supply disruption. For instance, Yemen-based Houthi conducted events against vessels entering the Red Sea that caused major trade disruptions as ships, including oil tankers, re-routed to avoid the area.¹⁶ Also, due to a potential escalation between Israel and Iran, the market feared problems in the Strait of Hormuz, which connects the Arabian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea. The Strait of Hormuz is the world's most important oil chokepoint and in 2022 its oil flow represented about 21% of global petroleum liquids consumption.¹⁷

The Gulf region's strategic importance in global energy markets cannot be overstated. Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, and Kuwait account for over 30% of global crude oil exports and hold significant natural gas reserves. Qatar, for example, supplies nearly 25% of the world's LNG, making it a critical energy partner for Western economies.¹⁸ This concentration of energy resources in a geopolitically volatile region creates inherent vulnerabilities for Western powers dependent on these supplies.

¹⁵ Eurostat, 'EU Imports of Energy Products - Latest Developments' (*EU*, 2025) <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=EU_imports_of_energy_products_-_latest_developments&utm_source=chatgpt.com> accessed 16 November 2025.

¹⁶ EIA, 'Brent Crude Oil Prices Traded in a Narrow Range in 2024' (*U.S. Energy Information Administration*, 2025) <<https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=64144>> accessed 16 November 2025.

¹⁷ U.S. Energy Information Administration, 'The Strait of Hormuz Is the World's Most Important Oil Transit Chokepoint' (*EIA*, 2023) <<https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=61002#>> accessed 17 September 2025.

¹⁸ International Energy Agency (IEA), 'Gas Market Report, Q4 2021' (2021) <<https://www.iea.org/reports/gas-market-report-q4-2021>>.

Historical precedents demonstrate how disruptions in Gulf energy supplies can have global repercussions. The 1973 oil embargo organized by the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) quadrupled oil prices and caused widespread economic turmoil.¹⁹ Similarly, the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s disrupted oil production, highlighting the Gulf's significance in maintaining global energy stability.²⁰ These historical examples underscore the interconnectedness of Gulf stability and Western economic interests.

5. THE NEW “SWORD OF DAMOCLES”: LNG MARKET CONCENTRATION

The rapid transformation of global LNG markets has created a new geopolitical vulnerability that mirrors historical oil dependence patterns. While Western powers have reduced their reliance on Gulf oil through domestic production growth and diversification,²¹ they are simultaneously increasing their exposure to concentrated LNG suppliers - primarily Qatar - creating a contemporary version of the energy security dilemma that necessitates strategic mediation in regional conflicts. This emerging dynamic represents a structural shift in global energy security that requires urgent scholarly and policy attention.

5.1 Qatar's Strategic Position in Global LNG Market

Qatar's dominance in the global LNG landscape is both substantial and growing. The country has embarked on an ambitious North Field expansion project that aims to boost its LNG output from 77 to 142

¹⁹ James D Hamilton, 'Oil and the Macroeconomy since World War II' (1983) 91 *Journal of political economy* 228.

²⁰ Nuclear Energy Agency, *Energy Policy of the International Energy Agency (IEA) Countries. General Review of the Year 1990* (1st edn, NEA 1992) <<https://inis.iaea.org/records/1trqy-07660#:~:text=This book is a general review on,energy efficiency%2C energy supply and energy source>>.

²¹ Commodity Insights and Market Intelligence, 'Major New US Industry at a Crossroads: A US LNG Impact Study - Phase 1' (2024) <<https://www.spglobal.com/content/dam/spglobal/global-assets/en/special-reports/lng-study/USLNGImpactStudyPhase1.pdf>>.

million tons per annum (mtpa) before 2030, an 85% increase in capacity.²² This expansion will solidify Qatar's position as the world's preeminent LNG exporter, controlling a significant portion of global supply at a time when demand is projected to grow from 400 Mt in 2023 to 650-700 Mt by 2040.²³ What makes this concentration particularly significant is that much of this new production capacity remains uncontracted, granting Qatar substantial discretion over future destination patterns and pricing mechanisms.

The European Union's energy security considerations have further enhanced Qatar's strategic position. Following the reduction of Russian pipeline gas, European countries have increasingly turned to LNG imports, with Qatar emerging as a critical supplier.²⁴ This dependence is likely to deepen as European countries seek to diversify away from residual Russian gas imports while managing energy transitions. The geopolitical significance of this relationship is magnified by Qatar's unique economic advantages in LNG production, which enable competitive pricing strategies that other producers cannot match.²⁵

5.2 Mechanisms of Market Influence

Qatar's potential leverage stems from several structural advantages in LNG production and marketing. The country possesses some of the world's lowest production costs, extensive liquefaction infrastructure, and a strategically geographic position that allows relatively efficient access to

²² PwC, 'Navigating the Future of LNG: Strategy, Supply and Global Demand Shift' (*PwC*, 2025) <<https://www.pwc.com/us/en/industries/energy-utilities-resources/library/future-of-lng.html>> accessed 15 September 2025.

²³ Anders Porsborg-Smith, 'LNG Market at a Crossroads: Oversupply or Stability Ahead?' (*Gastech Bangkok*, 2025) <<https://www.gastechevent.com/press-collection/press-release/2025/july/lng-market-at-a-crossroads-oversupply-or-stability-ahead/>> accessed 15 September 2025.

²⁴ Felicity Bradstock, 'Europe Gas Supply Shift 2025: U.S. and Qatar Replace Russia' (*Energy Network Media Group*, 2025) <<https://shalemag.com/europe-gas-supply-shift-2025/#:~:text=As the European Union debates,by the end of 2027.>> accessed 15 September 2025; Majed MA Munasser, Sabla Y Alnouri and Abdelbaki Benamor, 'The Assessment of LNG Export Scenarios for Qatar in the European Gas Market', *Computer Aided Chemical Engineering*, vol 53 (Elsevier 2024).

²⁵ PwC (n 23).

both European and Asian markets.²⁶ This cost advantage creates the potential for market behaviors that could significantly impact global energy security, including: (1) strategic withholding of volumes to influence prices; (2) offering preferential pricing and flexible contracts to capture demand in key markets; or (3) flooding the market to capture market share and drive out higher-cost competitors.

The potential for such market influence is particularly acute given the projected supply-demand dynamics. Current forecasts suggest that more than 200 MTPA of new liquefaction capacity is under development across 124 global projects.²⁷ If all these projects proceed, nameplate LNG liquefaction capacity could surpass 700 MTPA by 2030, up from approximately 490 MTPA in 2024,²⁸ creating potential oversupply conditions that would enhance the market power of low-cost producers like Qatar. Even under more conservative scenarios that account for rising capital costs and regulatory challenges, Qatar's expansion plans position it to dominate the next wave of LNG supply growth.

5.3 Implications for Mediation and Conflict Resolution

The concentration of LNG market power creates a fundamental tension in Qatar's dual role as both energy superpower and conflict mediator. This paradox mirrors the historical challenges faced by oil-dependent Western powers whose mediation efforts were frequently viewed as compromised by energy security interests.²⁹ Qatar's growing influence in LNG markets potentially undermines its perceived neutrality as a mediator, as its

²⁶ Qatar News Agency, 'Strategic Location Supports Qatar's Economy' (*The Peninsula*, 2023) <[https://thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/23/05/2023/strategic-location-supports-qatars-economy#:~:text=Khaled Walid Mahmoud%2C PhD researcher in political,the continents of Africa%2C Asia and Europe.>](https://thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/23/05/2023/strategic-location-supports-qatars-economy#:~:text=Khaled%20Walid%20Mahmoud%20PhD%20researcher%20in%20political,the%20continents%20of%20Africa%20Asia%20and%20Europe.>) accessed 15 September 2025; Carole Nakhle, 'Qatar Builds up Its Gas Muscle' (*GIS*, 2019) <[https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/qatar-gas-production/#:~:text=Gas-rich,production is fully absorbed locally.>](https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/qatar-gas-production/#:~:text=Gas-rich,production%20is%20fully%20absorbed%20locally.>) accessed 15 September 2025.

²⁷ Porsborg-Smith (n 24).

²⁸ *ibid.*

²⁹ Ira Joseph and Anne-Sophie Corbeau, 'How Qatar's LNG Decisions Will Impact an Oversupplied Global Market' (*Energy Policy*, 2025) 2–6 <<https://www.energypolicy.columbia.edu/publications/how-qatars-lng-decisions-will-impact-an-oversupplied-global-market/>>; Stefano Valente, 'LNG as a Geopolitical Tool: Qatar's Role in a Transforming Global Market' (2025) 77 *Международни проблеми* 91.

economic interests become increasingly entangled with regional stability and energy transportation security.

The Strait of Hormuz exemplifies this entanglement. As the world's most critical oil chokepoint, handling approximately 21% of global petroleum liquids consumption in 2022, its security is paramount to global energy markets.³⁰ Qatar's LNG exports transit this same waterway, creating both a shared interest in maintaining freedom of navigation and potential vulnerabilities to regional conflicts. Any disruption in the Strait would immediately impact Qatar's export capabilities while simultaneously increasing the value of its uncontracted volumes, creating a complex interplay of economic and security interests.

Hence, While Qatar state have demonstrated practical effectiveness as intermediaries, their expanding mediation role highlights a regulatory blind spot, as prevailing mediation norms fail to address the implications of mediators simultaneously exercising significant influence over energy markets.

5.4 Structural Vulnerabilities in the LNG Market

The growing dependence on Qatari LNG creates systemic vulnerabilities that extend beyond price volatility to encompass transportation logistics and infrastructure constraints. LNG shipping represents a critical choke point in the supply chain, with recent geopolitical developments highlighting these vulnerabilities. Houthi attacks in the Red Sea and tensions around the Strait of Hormuz have forced operators to abandon traditional routes through the Suez Canal, diverting vessels around the Cape of Good Hope and adding weeks to journey times while increasing operational costs.³¹ These logistical challenges compound the market

³⁰ EIA, 'The Strait of Hormuz Is the World's Most Important Oil Transit Chokepoint' (*U.S. Energy Information Administration*, 2023) <<https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=61002#:~:text=In 2022%2C its oil flow averaged 21,about 21%25 of global petroleum liquids consumption.>> accessed 15 September 2025.

³¹ Fraser Carson, 'The Great LNG Shipping Reset: How Geopolitics Is Rewriting Maritime Energy Rules' (*Wood Mackenzie*, 2025) <<https://www.woodmac.com/news/opinion/great-lng-shipping-reset-how-geopolitics-is-rewriting-maritime-energy-rules/>> accessed 16 September 2025.

power of dominant suppliers like Qatar who can leverage their geographic advantage and shipping resources.

The LNG shipping industry itself is undergoing a significant transformation that may further concentrate market power. Approximately 180 steam-driven LNG carriers, representing nearly one-third of the operational fleet, will approach retirement within the next decade.³² These vessels have become commercially obsolete due to poor fuel efficiency and high emissions, particularly as environmental regulations accelerate this transformation. The EU Emissions Trading System now covers maritime CO₂ emissions, while the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) Net Zero Framework introduces the industry's first mechanism to price greenhouse gases (GHG) on a well-to-wake basis. By 2035, these penalties will increase costs by 90% for conventional fuel vessels and 60% for LNG-fuelled ships, potentially creating advantages for well-capitalized players with modern fleets.³³

5.5 Implications for Western Energy Security and Mediation Strategy

The concentration of LNG market power necessitates a recalibration of Western mediation strategies in the Middle East. Whereas historical mediation efforts focused primarily on securing oil flows, contemporary strategies must address a more complex landscape where gas markets increasingly influence geopolitical calculations.³⁴ This complexity is amplified by the different market structures between oil and LNG - while oil functions as a truly global commodity with relatively liquid markets, LNG remains characterized by long-term contracts, destination restrictions, and infrastructure dependencies that create regional market segments with distinct dynamics.

The emerging LNG market concentration has profound implications for conflict mediation frameworks. Western powers must recognize that their increasing dependence on Qatari LNG creates both opportunities and

³² *ibid.*

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ Rodrigo Pereira Botão, Hirdan Katarina de Medeiros Costa and Edmilson Moutinho Dos Santos, 'Global Gas and LNG Markets: Demand, Supply Dynamics, and Implications for the Future' (2023) 16 *Energies* 5223, 5231 et seq.

challenges for mediation efforts. On one hand, shared economic interests in regional stability could align incentives for conflict resolution. On the other hand, perceptions of biased mediation driven by energy security concerns could undermine the credibility of mediation efforts. This tension necessitates a more nuanced approach to energy-driven diplomacy that acknowledges the structural realities of LNG markets while maintaining commitment to impartial conflict resolution.

Table 3: Potential Market Scenarios and Implications for Mediation

Scenario	Market Characteristics ³⁵	Qatar's Market Power	Mediation Implications
Full Build-Out	Capacity > 700 MTPA by 2030; prices drop	Moderate	Reduced urgency for mediation; price stability
Selective Growth	Adds 120-150 MTPA; balanced market	High	Strategic mediation to ensure market stability
Stalled Supply	Adds 70-90 MTPA; supply constraint	Very high	Intensive Mediation required; high vulnerability

5.6 Navigating the New Energy Security Paradigm

In Sum, The emerging concentration of LNG market power represents a contemporary “Sword of Damocles” hanging over global energy security - a persistent vulnerability that necessitates sustained diplomatic

³⁵ Porsborg-Smith (n 24).

engagement and conflict mediation in the Middle East. While Western countries have reduced their dependence on Gulf oil, their growing exposure to Qatari LNG creates a new set of interdependencies that require careful management through both market mechanisms and diplomatic channels.³⁶

The historical parallels with oil market concentration are instructive but incomplete. LNG markets possess distinct characteristics - including infrastructure dependencies, contract structures, and transportation constraints - that create different vulnerability profiles than oil markets. These differences necessitate tailored approaches to energy security that combine strategic stockpiling, market diversification, infrastructure investment, and diplomatic engagement. Western powers must develop a more sophisticated understanding of LNG market dynamics and their intersection with regional security issues.

Ultimately, the concentration of LNG market power reinforces rather than diminishes the necessity for conflict mediation in the Middle East. As Qatar consolidates its position as both energy superpower and mediation hub, Western powers must engage strategically to ensure that economic interests do not undermine conflict resolution efforts.

6. MIDDLE EAST MEDIATION AS ESSENTIAL PROCESS FOR GLOBAL ENERGY SECURITY

To prevent disruptions and a wider regional war, mediations became a vital tool for Western powers. As a rule, the objective of mediation is for a neutral third party to facilitate disputants come to agreement on their own, rather than imposing a solution. In this regard, mediators seek to assist disputants in finding a solution that is voluntary and sustainable, working with them together and sometimes separately. But the fact is that Western powers arguably possess a bias surrounding the conflicts and, consequently, do not fit in the concept of neutral third parties to directly act as a mediator in these increasingly complex conflicts. For instance,

³⁶ Commodity Insights and Market Intelligence (n 22).

because of its strong ties with Israel, the US is often seen as a biased mediator.³⁷ Even though statements from Western powers may appear neutral and with pure intentions of seeking peace, it is hard to separate from its power and economic interests.

This means that Western powers are pressed to act in partnership with a more diverse set of countries to achieve success in Middle East mediation. This is part of a broader trend in global peacemaking away from the United Nations and the group of traditional mediation countries - such as the United States, United Kingdom, Switzerland, Norway and Finland - that took the lead of international mediation for decades since World War II, toward a more diverse set of peacemakers in partnership with traditional mediators. On one hand, traditional mediators are searching for trusted third parties to convey communications with the other side, as when the US leans on Gulf states to communicate messages to Iran. On the other hand, states are increasingly seeking out peace-facilitation roles as an extension of their foreign policy, both for political status as well as national and regional security.³⁸

This trend puts a new group of countries - such as Qatar, Egypt, and Oman - as a better conduit between Western powers and Middle East disputants. Qatar and Oman have secretly mediated discussions for years between the US and Iran that resulted in a deal in 2023 involving the release of prisoners and the unfreezing of \$6 billion in Iranian oil revenue.³⁹ Also, since the Gaza war began in 2023, Qatar, along with Egypt, has emerged as a central mediator between Israel and Hamas, and channeling messages from US to Hamas. Qatar put ideas on the table,

³⁷ Anadolu Agency, 'Is the US a Suitable Actor for a Mediation Role in Gaza?' (*Middle East Monitor*, 2024) <<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20240822-is-the-us-a-suitable-actor-for-a-mediation-role-in-gaza/>> accessed 16 November 2025; Zhou Yiqi, 'Lessons for U.S. in Middle East Crisis' (*China- US Focus*, 2024) <<https://www.chinausfocus.com/peace-security/lessons-for-us-in-middle-east-crisis>> accessed 16 November 2025.

³⁸ Cecily Brewer, 'More States Are Vying to Mediate Conflict — What Does It Mean for Global Peace?' (*United States Institute of Peace*, 2024) <<https://www.usip.org/publications/2024/10/more-states-are-vying-mediate-conflict-what-does-it-mean-global-peace>> accessed 16 November 2025.

³⁹ Farnaz Fassihi and Michael D Shear, 'Inside the Deal to Free 5 American Prisoners in Iran' (*The New York Times*, 2023) <<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/09/21/us/politics/iran-prisoner-swap-biden-administration.html>> accessed 16 November 2025.

settled deadlines for replies, reminded both sides of the gravity of the situation, and intervened when it appeared that cease-first talks were stuck.⁴⁰ These events demonstrated that Western powers should explore the partnerships with this new group of countries to safeguard the global energy security.

The reliance on discretionary, politically driven mediation by Western states reveals a policy deficit in which energy security interests are acknowledged but not translated into binding mediation duties or structured preventive mechanisms within international energy and trade governance.

7. THE MEDIATOR'S DILEMMA: NEUTRALITY VS. NATIONAL INTEREST

The evolving landscape of Middle Eastern conflict mediation presents a fundamental paradox for Gulf states, particularly Qatar, as they increasingly assume intermediary roles while maintaining substantial economic leverage through energy exports. This tension between the theoretical ideal of mediator neutrality and the practical realities of national interest represents a critical challenge for contemporary conflict resolution efforts and deserves thorough examination within the context of global energy security.

7.1 Theoretical Foundations of Neutrality in Mediation

Traditional mediation theory posits neutrality as a cornerstone principle, envisioning mediators as impartial facilitators who assist disputing parties in reaching voluntary agreements without advancing their own substantive interests.⁴¹ This conventional understanding emphasizes three

⁴⁰ Adam Rasgon and Julian E Barnes, 'The Road to a Gaza Cease-Fire Runs Through Qatar' (*The New York Times*, 2024) <<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/09/06/world/middleeast/qatar-hamas-israel-ceasefire-negotiations.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share&referringSource=articleShare&sgrp=c-cb,>> accessed 16 November 2025.

⁴¹ Diego Stöcklin, 'Redefining the Neutral Intermediary Role: Balancing Theoretical Ideas with Practical Realities through the ICRC's Experience in Yemen' (2024) 106 *International Review of the Red Cross* 1065, 1066–1076 <<https://international->

distinct aspects of neutrality: impartiality (freedom from bias), equidistance (equal consideration of all sides), and discursive neutrality (reframing issues without taking positions).⁴² However, scholarly discourse has increasingly recognized the limitations of this idealized concept, with many practitioners acknowledging that complete neutrality is both theoretically questionable and practically unattainable.⁴³

The evolution of mediation philosophy has shifted toward more nuanced concepts such as “principled neutrality”, which acknowledges that mediators may actively address power imbalances and work toward equitable solutions without sacrificing perceived impartiality.⁴⁴ This theoretical evolution is particularly relevant for state actors like Qatar, whose mediation efforts inevitably intersect with their national economic and security interests. As noted in analyses of mediation practice, “Mediators are not human Switzerlands”⁴⁵ - they inevitably possess opinions, interests, and perspectives that influence their approach to conflict resolution.

The absence of formalised transparency, accountability, and conflict-of-interest safeguards within existing mediation frameworks weakens the perceived legitimacy of energy-sensitive mediation processes, particularly where mediators possess structural economic leverage.

7.2 The Perception Challenge for Gulf Mediators

For Gulf states acting as mediators, the central dilemma emerges from their dual identity as both energy superpowers and conflict intermediaries. Qatar's position as the world's dominant LNG exporter - controlling

[review.icrc.org/sites/default/files/reviews-pdf/2025-03/redefining-the-neutral-intermediary-role-927.pdf](https://www.icrc.org/sites/default/files/reviews-pdf/2025-03/redefining-the-neutral-intermediary-role-927.pdf).

⁴² Victoria Pynchon, ‘Negotiating Politics: Mediators and Neutrality’ (*Mediate*, 2008) <<https://mediate.com/negotiating-politics-mediators-and-neutrality/>> accessed 17 September 2025.

⁴³ Jeanne Kempthorne, ‘Just How Important Is Neutrality in Mediation?’ (2018) 25 *Massachusetts Lawyers Journal* 28, 28 <https://massbar.org/docs/default-source/publications-document-library/lawyers-journal/2018/marchapril2018.pdf?sfvrsn=976a08b6_4>.

⁴⁴ Stöcklin (n 42) 1075.

⁴⁵ Pynchon (n 43).

approximately 25% of global LNG supply and poised to expand its capacity to 142 mtpa by 2030 - creates inherent perceptions of potential bias when mediating conflicts that affect energy markets or transportation routes.⁴⁶ This challenge mirrors historical concerns about American mediation credibility given its strategic relationship with Israel, which led Columbia University professor Rashid Khalidi to argue that “It is time to get away from the idea that Israel’s most fervently partisan supporter and supplier of money and arms can be a mediator”.⁴⁷

The perception challenge is particularly acute in conflicts involving energy security considerations, such as tensions around the Strait of Hormuz - through which approximately 21% of global petroleum liquids consumption passes (as mentioned above) - or attacks on shipping lanes by non-state actors.⁴⁸ In such contexts, Qatar’s economic interests in maintaining stable energy exports potentially conflict with its mediation role, creating skepticism about its motivations and neutrality. As we have noted, trustworthiness - not absolute neutrality - is the essential criterion for effective mediation, and this trust depends on consistent demonstration of fair dealing and transparency throughout the process.

7.3 Strategic Bias and Energy Leverage

Paradoxically, the same energy resources that complicate perceptions of neutrality also provide Gulf mediators with unique leverage and capacity to facilitate negotiations. Qatar’s economic strength, derived from its LNG exports, enables it to maintain diplomatic channels with diverse actors - including Iran, Hamas, and various Western powers - that might be unavailable to more traditionally neutral mediators like Switzerland or Norway.⁴⁹ This access has proven valuable in recent mediation efforts,

⁴⁶ PwC (n 23); Reuters, ‘Qatar’s New LNG Expansion Plans to Squeeze out US, Other Rivals’ (*Reuters*, 2024) <[https://www.naturalgasworld.com/qatars-latest-lng-expansion-plans-to-squeeze-out-us-other-rivals-109923#:~:text=Summary,export approvals%20C market experts say.](https://www.naturalgasworld.com/qatars-latest-lng-expansion-plans-to-squeeze-out-us-other-rivals-109923#:~:text=Summary,export%20approvals%20C%20market%20experts%20say.)> accessed 17 September 2025.

⁴⁷ Kempthorne (n 44) 28.

⁴⁸ U.S. Energy Information Administration (n 18).

⁴⁹ Stöcklin (n 42) 1074.

such as the 2023 prisoner exchange between the United States and Iran and the ongoing negotiations between Israel and Hamas.⁵⁰

The strategic use of energy resources as implicit leverage in mediation creates what might be termed “energy-linked diplomacy” - where mediation success and energy relationships become implicitly intertwined. For instance, Qatar’s role as a mediator potentially enhances its attractiveness as an energy partner for Western powers seeking to diversify their energy supplies away from Russia, creating mutual dependencies that extend beyond the immediate conflict resolution context.⁵¹ This interdependence illustrates the complex interplay between energy security and diplomatic influence in contemporary international relations.

Table 2: Dimensions of the Mediator’s Dilemma in Gulf Energy Diplomacy

Dimension	Traditional Mediation Theory	Gulf Mediator Reality	Implications for Credibility
Economic Interests	No substantive stake in outcome	Significant energy interests in regional stability	Potential perception of bias toward outcomes ensuring energy flow
Relationship with Parties	Equidistant from all conflict participants	Varied relationships based on energy ties and historical factors	Challenge in maintaining balanced access and influence

⁵⁰ Kempthorne (n 44) 28.

⁵¹ PwC (n 23); Yergin and Jowdy (n 7).

Strategic Objectives	Focus solely on conflict resolution	Multiple objectives including market stability and political influence	Risk of mediation being instrumentalized for other goals
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Leverage Application	Derived solely from mediation process	Additional leverage through energy relationships and resources	Potential power imbalances in facilitation
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7.4 Case Examples and Applications

The practical manifestations of this dilemma are evident in recent mediation efforts. Qatar’s facilitation of communications between the United States and Iran occurred alongside significant LNG trade relationships with both parties, either existing or potential. Similarly, Qatar’s mediation between Israel and Hamas unfolds against the backdrop of its broader energy relationships with European powers that depend on Qatari LNG to replace diminished Russian supplies.⁵²

These cases illustrate the complex interplay between energy interests and mediation efforts. Rather than following the traditional model of the “village elder” mediator whose authority derives from perceived wisdom and impartiality, Gulf mediators operate from a position of substantial material interest and strategic calculation. This approach aligns with what some mediation scholars term “muscular mediation”, where mediators

⁵² Porsborg-Smith (n 24).

actively leverage their influence and resources to shape outcomes rather than merely facilitating dialogue.⁵³

The experience of other international mediators suggests that perceived neutrality remains essential for long-term mediation effectiveness. Analyses of American mediation in the Middle East conclude that while the United States was never truly neutral, its perceived bias toward Israel ultimately compromised its “stature as a disinterested neutral - it was never that - but as a trustworthy participant in the peacemaking process” after specific actions demonstrated unequivocal partisanship.⁵⁴ This will underscore the importance of maintaining at least the perception of balanced engagement, even for mediators with substantial national interests at stake.

7.5 Toward a Framework for Credible Mediation

For Gulf mediators navigating this dilemma, several strategies emerge from both mediation theory and practical experience. First, transparency about interests and limitations - rather than pretense of complete neutrality - may enhance credibility more effectively than unrealistic claims of impartiality. As mediation scholar Lawrence Susskind argues, maintaining credibility requires “absolute diligence” in managing perceptions and avoiding actions that demonstrate overt partisanship.⁵⁵

Second, compartmentalization of mediation and energy relationships helps reduce direct linkage between conflict resolution and economic interests. By maintaining consistent energy supply relationships regardless of mediation outcomes, Gulf states can diminish perceptions that their mediation efforts are directly tied to energy negotiations.

Third, partnership with traditional mediators and international organizations can provide complementary capabilities, with Western powers offering technical expertise and Gulf mediators providing regional

⁵³ CAMELIA BENAMARA, ‘The Evolving Role of International Mediators in Complex Peace Processes: A Multidimensional Analysis of Strategies, Challenges, and Outcomes in the 21st Century’ (UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI PADOVA 2024).

⁵⁴ Kempthorne (n 44) 28.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*

access and influence.⁵⁶ This collaborative approach acknowledges the reality of mixed-motivation mediation while leveraging the respective strengths of different mediator types.

In sum, the mediator's dilemma between neutrality and national interest represents neither an insurmountable barrier nor an abstract theoretical concern, it is a practical reality that Gulf mediators must navigate through conscious strategy and consistent practice. Their effectiveness will depend less on achieving perfect neutrality than on demonstrating trustworthy mediation practices while transparently managing their substantial energy interests. For Western powers dependent on Gulf energy, this suggests the need for realistic expectations about mediator neutrality and a willingness to engage with partially interested mediators who nonetheless provide unique access and leverage. The perfect mediator - completely neutral and without conflicting interests - rarely exists in reality, particularly in conflicts intertwined with global energy security concerns.

8. ENERGY TRANSITION, CRITICAL MINERALS, AND THE LEGAL GAPS THAT SHAPE GLOBAL SECURITY OBLIGATIONS

Western powers may also benefit from Middle East mediation in long-term concerns about the energy transition. The more renewable energy deployment expands, the more too does demand for critical minerals. Clean energy technologies differ from fossil fuel-powered energy systems in the materials they require to build. Critical minerals such as copper, lithium, nickel, cobalt and rare earth elements are essential components in many of clean energy technologies – from wind turbines and electricity networks to electric vehicles. In addition to that, concerns about price volatility, security of supply, and geopolitics do not disappear in an electrified, renewables-rich energy system.⁵⁷ Thus, similar to today's discussions, future disruptions in critical minerals supply chains involving

⁵⁶ Stöcklin (n 42) 1080 et seq.

⁵⁷ IEA, 'A New Frontier for Global Energy Security- Critical Minerals' (*International Energy Agency*, 2024) <<https://www.iea.org/topics/critical-minerals>> accessed 16 November 2025.

the Middle East could also create risks for global energy security, and mediation would remain a valuable tool to avoid escalating conflicts.

Despite the frameworks discussed, significant challenges remain in establishing clear legal obligations for Western powers. One of the primary issues is the ambiguity of international trade law. While agreements like General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) emphasize the importance of stability, they do not explicitly mandate conflict mediation.⁵⁸ The security exceptions under GATT, often invoked during crises, highlight the discretionary nature of these provisions.⁵⁹ For example, US sanctions on Iran are justified as protecting national security but also reflect broader geopolitical aims.⁶⁰

Geopolitical realities further complicate the enforcement of legal obligations. Power asymmetries within the international system often allow Western states to prioritize strategic alliances over formal commitments to conflict mediation.⁶¹ This inconsistency is evident in the selective responses of Western powers to Middle Eastern crises. While the US and Europe have been deeply involved in some conflicts, such as Iraq, they have taken a more passive stance in others, like the Syrian civil war.⁶² These variations highlight the tension between legal principles and political considerations.

Existing mediation and energy governance approaches remain insufficiently integrated with sustainable development objectives, as they prioritise short-term crisis containment over the long-term stability required to support energy transition investments and secure critical-mineral supply chains.

⁵⁸ GATT, art. XXI.

⁵⁹ Brandon J Murrill, 'The 'National Security Exception' and the World Trade Organization' [2018] Congressional Research Service 2.

⁶⁰ Clayton Thomas, 'U.S. Sanctions on Iran' (CRS, 2025) <<https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IF12452>> accessed 16 November 2025.

⁶¹ Amitav Acharya, *The End of American World Order*, vol 6 (Polity press Cambridge 2014).

⁶² Bruce Patsner, 'The Three Trillion Dollar War: The True Cost of the Iraq Conflict' (2008) 11 DePaul J. Health Care L. 359.

9. THE LEGAL AND DIPLOMATIC FRAMEWORK GOVERNING TRADE AND MEDIATION

The WTO's General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, which governs the international exchange of goods, including energy resources, is based on the principles of free trade, non-discrimination, and supply chain security. Article V of the GATT emphasizes the freedom of transit, ensuring unimpeded trade across borders, while Articles XX and XXI allow exceptions for national security concerns.⁶³

The WTO provides a platform for addressing trade disputes but does not directly engage in geopolitical conflict mediation. Energy-related disputes could arise if conflicts in the Gulf lead to trade disruptions, such as arbitrary export restrictions or discriminatory pricing. Under WTO rules, member states can bring cases related to unfair trade practices, even in the energy sector. For example, if a Gulf state imposes export restrictions during a conflict, affected countries might claim violations of GATT's principles of non-discrimination.⁶⁴

However, the WTO framework has significant limitations when it comes to conflict resolution. The organization focuses on trade law rather than geopolitical disputes. This limitation is evident in cases like the 2017 Qatar-Gulf diplomatic crisis, where WTO proceedings addressed trade blockades but did not resolve the underlying political dispute.⁶⁵ This case illustrates how trade law mechanisms can address some economic consequences of conflicts but cannot substitute for proper diplomatic and conflict resolution processes.

Beyond global trade legislation, Western powers have bilateral agreements with Gulf states to safeguard energy security. For example, the EU-GCC

⁶³ David Palmeter and Petros C Mavroidis, 'The WTO Legal System: Sources of Law' (1998) 92 *American Journal of International Law* 398.

⁶⁴ World Trade Organization (WTO), *The Results of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations: The Legal Texts* (Cambridge University Press 1999) 354–367.

⁶⁵ World Trade Organization (WTO), 'Qatar - Certain Measures Concerning Goods from the United Arab Emirates' (WTO- *Dispute DS576*, 2019) <https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/dispu_e/cases_e/ds576_e.htm> accessed 16 November 2025.

Cooperation Agreement (1988) encourages economic and political cooperation, including efforts to protect energy supplies during crises.⁶⁶ Similarly, the US has strategic partnerships with Gulf states, as seen by agreements such as the 2005 U.S.-Bahrain Free trading Agreement, which contains provisions for energy trading.⁶⁷ While these agreements promote energy continuity, they do not specifically require conflict resolution.⁶⁸ Instead, they use diplomatic channels and shared interests to manage possible problems.⁶⁹

The UN Charter also provides a crucial legal framework for conflict mediation.⁷⁰ Article 33 mandates that parties to a dispute seek peaceful resolution through negotiation, mediation, or judicial settlement. When such disputes threaten international peace and security, as Middle Eastern conflicts often do, the Security Council has the authority to intervene. Given that Western powers hold significant influence within the Security Council, their involvement in conflict mediation can be interpreted as both a legal obligation and a strategic necessity.⁷¹

Customary international law further reinforces these principles through the concept of “due diligence.”⁷² This principle obligates states to ensure that their actions - or inactions - do not harm other states. When viewed through the lens of energy dependency, due diligence could extend to mediating conflicts that threaten the flow of oil and gas from the Gulf. Legal precedents, such as the *Corfu Channel Case* before the International

⁶⁶ European Comm, ‘EU Trade Relations with the Gulf Region. Facts, Figures and Latest Developments’ (*EU*, 2024) <https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/gulf-region_en#:~:text=1988's> EU-GCC Cooperation Agreement, and a Joint Cooperation Committee accessed 16 November 2025.

⁶⁷ Congressional Research Service, ‘U.S.-Bahrain Free Trade Agreement’ (2007).

⁶⁸ Mitsuo Matsushita and others, *The World Trade Organization: Law, Practice, and Policy* (Oxford University Press 2015) 131; Ernst-Ulrich Petersmann, ‘International Economic Law in the 21st Century: Need for Stronger “Democratic Ownership” and Cosmopolitan Reforms’ [2011] *Polish Yearbook of International Law* 9, 9–46.

⁶⁹ Jeffrey Martini and others, *The Outlook for Arab Gulf Cooperation* (Rand Corporation 2016).

⁷⁰ UN Charter, arts. 33–37.

⁷¹ Council Foreign Relations, ‘The UN Security Council’ (*CFR*, 2025) <<https://www.cfr.org/background/un-security-council>> accessed 16 November 2025.

⁷² James Crawford, *Brownlie's Principles of Public International Law* (9th Editio, Oxford University Press 2019).

Court of Justice, highlight the responsibility of states to prevent harm that disrupts international commerce. (*Corfu Channel*, 1949) These legal foundations suggest that Western powers, by virtue of their dependence on Gulf energy, have at least an indirect obligation to engage in conflict resolution.

Although international trade and energy governance regimes recognise security risks and the importance of supply continuity, they lack enforceable mechanisms that operationally link conflict mediation to trade and transit stability, resulting in a structural enforcement gap when regional conflicts threaten global energy flows.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSION

To address the absence of preventive mechanisms in existing energy governance frameworks, energy trade and cooperation agreements should incorporate tailored conflict-mediation clauses that are triggered when regional instability poses material risks to production, transit, or market stability. Such clauses need not displace existing dispute-settlement mechanisms but should operate as early-stage, non-adversarial tools aimed at preventing escalation before supply disruptions occur.

The effectiveness of mediation in energy-sensitive conflicts would be strengthened by formally linking mediation efforts to international trade and energy governance processes, particularly within existing institutional settings such as the WTO, UN political affairs mechanisms, and energy cooperation platforms. This would reduce reliance on ad hoc diplomacy and enhance predictability and legitimacy in responses to conflict-induced energy insecurity.

Given the growing role of energy-exporting states as mediators, there is a need to develop soft-law standards or codes of conduct that introduce transparency, disclosure, and conflict-of-interest safeguards in energy-sensitive mediation processes. Such measures would enhance trust and legitimacy without imposing unrealistic neutrality requirements on mediators operating within complex geopolitical and market environments.

Institutional capacity to manage the energy–conflict nexus should be enhanced through improved coordination mandates among existing international and regional bodies, rather than through the creation of new institutions. Clarifying roles and strengthening information-sharing between trade, energy, and peacebuilding institutions would help operationalise mediation obligations linked to trade and transit stability.

Finally, mediation in energy-sensitive conflicts should be recognised as a public good that warrants sustained budgetary and capacity investment, particularly for monitoring strategic chokepoints, training specialised mediators, and integrating mediation into long-term energy transition and critical-mineral supply planning. Without such investment, legal and policy reforms risk remaining aspirational rather than effective.

This article has demonstrated that contemporary energy insecurity linked to Middle Eastern conflicts is not merely a function of geopolitical volatility, but the result of identifiable legal and institutional shortcomings in how international mediation is conceptualised and operationalised within energy governance. By tracing these gaps - ranging from the absence of preventive mediation obligations in energy agreements, to enforcement deficits in trade and energy regimes, and sustainability blind spots in conflict management - the analysis shows why existing approaches remain structurally insufficient. The policy pathways advanced in response to these failures do not call for institutional proliferation, but for targeted legal embedding, enhanced coordination, and sustained capacity investment that recognise mediation as an essential component of energy security and sustainable development. As global energy systems transition toward greater reliance on LNG and critical minerals, the ability of legal frameworks to anticipate, manage, and de-escalate energy-sensitive conflicts will increasingly determine not only market stability, but the credibility of international commitments to sustainable development itself.

All in all, global energy security may not be treated separately from Gulf energy. While international trade law and principles of state responsibility provide a basis for conflict mediation, these obligations remain largely implicit and are often shaped by strategic interests. Case studies of Western involvement in the Middle East highlight both the potential and

limitations of legal frameworks in addressing regional instability. To ensure more consistent and effective mediation, legal frameworks must be strengthened to explicitly link energy dependency with conflict resolution obligations. Enhancing trade agreements and empowering multilateral institutions will be critical in achieving this goal. The reliance of Western powers on Gulf energy is still a reality despite the oil and gas supply growth in the Americas. To prevent disruptions of the energy market in the event of Middle East crises, Western powers should intensify mediations in partnership with countries that hold regional credentials to achieve success. With support and collaboration from traditional mediators, Qatar is ready, together with other Arab countries, to consolidate its position as a mediator that seeks peace and global energy security both in the age of oil and in the upcoming era of critical minerals.