

FOREIGN INFLUENCE AND ANTI-ISRAEL BIAS IN K-12 CLASSROOMS

AN INVESTIGATION OF BROWN UNIVERSITY'S CHOICES PROGRAM

2025



THE INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF
GLOBAL ANTISEMITISM & POLICY

The Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy (ISGAP) is committed to fighting antisemitism on the battlefield of ideas.

ISGAP is dedicated to scholarly research into the origins, processes, and manifestations of global antisemitism and of other forms of prejudice, including various forms of racism, as they relate to policy in an age of globalization.

On the basis of this examination of antisemitism and policy, ISGAP disseminates analytical and scholarly materials to help combat hatred and promote understanding.

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List of Abbreviations

| | |
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| CMES | Center for Middle East Studies (Brown University) |
| DOJ | Department of Justice |
| FARA | Foreign Agents Registration Act |
| ICS | Institute for Curriculum Services |
| IHRA | International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance |
| IRS | Internal Revenue Service (US) |
| MEOC | Middle East Outreach Council |
| MESA | Middle East Studies Association |
| QF | Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development |
| QFI | Qatar Foundation International, LLC |

Background

In July 2019, at the Department of Justice (DOJ) in Washington, DC, Dr. Charles Asher Small, Executive Director of the Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy (ISGAP), presented the findings of an ISGAP research project started in 2012, entitled “Follow the Money.” This ongoing research project examines illicit funding of US universities by foreign governments, foundations, and corporations that adhere to and promote anti-democratic and antisemitic ideologies, with connections to terrorism and terror financing.¹

The project revealed, for the first time, the existence of substantial Middle Eastern funding to US universities (primarily from Qatar) that had not been reported to the Department of Education, as required by law.² In fact, ISGAP’s research uncovered billions of dollars of unreported funds, which in turn led to the launch of a federal investigation in 2019.³

As part of its ongoing research, ISGAP has uncovered and established that foreign donations, from Qatar in particular, have contributed substantially to rising levels of antisemitic discourse and campus politics at US universities, as well as growing support for anti-democratic values within these institutions of higher education.⁴ Qatar has spent billions of dollars, and a large proportion of this has gone unreported to the Department of Education. For decades, Qatar has strategically positioned itself as an international funder of education, science, health, sports, arts and culture, communications, and development, despite being a small country

¹ Charles Asher Small and Michael Bass, *Volume Two: Examining Undocumented Foreign Funding of American Universities: Implications for Education and Rising Antisemitism* (ISGAP, 2020), <https://isgap.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/ISGAP-Report-Volume-II-3.pdf>.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ *Cornell University’s Ten Billion Dollar Sale: Soft Power, Qatar, the Muslim Brotherhood, and an Antisemitism Crisis on Campus* (ISGAP, 2024), https://isgap.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Cornell_Ten_Billion_Dollar.pdf; *Columbia University—From the Classroom to Campus Politics: The Normalization of Antisemitism, Anti-Democratic Politics, Marginalization, and Intimidation* (ISGAP, 2024), https://isgap.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Columbia_University_Report_2024_.pdf; *The Ongoing Failure to Report: Yale University, Qatar and Undisclosed Funding, Volume Two* (ISGAP, 2024), https://isgap.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Yale_Report_V4-1.pdf.

with fewer than 350,000 citizens.⁵ As part of this positioning, Qatar is currently the largest foreign donor to US universities.⁶ Despite its close ties to the United States and other Western countries, Qatar has also built an extensive network of Islamist partners dedicated to expanding its influence.⁷ It hosts, supports, and represents the Muslim Brotherhood; maintains ties with Iran; hosts the Taliban; has supported and maintained an office for Hamas and its exiled leadership; and has backed militias in Syria and Libya.⁸

Qatar Foundation International (QFI), LLC, is a US-based member of the Doha-based Qatar Foundation for Education, Science, and Community Development (QF).⁹ QFI was originally established in 2009 as a 501(c)(3) private foundation.¹⁰ Unlike a public charity, which receives a greater share of its support from the general public, such an entity is typically controlled by a family or a few individuals, with financial support coming from a small number of sources.¹¹ Indeed, QFI received \$2,962,765 from QF in 2010¹² and \$7,232,066 in 2011, and QF was the only source of contributions that QFI listed in its tax returns for those years.¹³ In 2012, QFI voluntarily terminated its private foundation status and transferred its remaining assets to QF,¹⁴ having reorganized as a Delaware LLC in 2011.¹⁵ QFI's broadly influential role in US education is best summed up by the State of Qatar's own marketing for QFI in its *Q Magazine*:

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- ⁵ *Networks of Hate: Qatari Paymasters, Soft Power, and the Manipulation of Democracy* (ISGAP, 2023), https://isgap.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Networks-of-Hate_5DEC.pdf; Testimony of Dr. Charles Asher Small before the United States House Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Oversight, July 23, 2024, <https://waysandmeans.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Small-Testimony.pdf>.
- ⁶ Sophie Shulman, "Tuition of terror: Qatari money flowed into U.S. universities—and now it's fueling violence," *CTech*, October 30, 2023, <https://www.calcalistech.com/ctechnews/article/jwhsqhrat>.
- ⁷ We refer here to the political ideology of Islamism and not the religion of Islam as practiced peacefully by Muslims worldwide.
- ⁸ David B. Roberts, *Reflecting on Qatar's "Islamist" Soft Power*, Policy Brief (The Brookings Institution, 2019), 1, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/FP_20190408_qatar_roberts.pdf.
- ⁹ "Qatar Foundation International," Qatar Foundation, n.d., <https://www.qf.org.qa/community/qatar-foundation-international>.
- ¹⁰ "Qatar Foundation International, LLC," Influence Watch, n.d., <https://www.influencewatch.org/for-profit/qatar-foundation-international-llc-qfi/>.
- ¹¹ "EO operational requirements: Private foundations and public charities," IRS, n.d., <https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/eo-operational-requirements-private-foundations-and-public-charities>.
- ¹² "Qatar Foundation International," Return of Private Foundation (Form 990-PF), 2009 (Schedule B, Part I), available at <https://pdf.guidestar.org/PDF/Images/2010/205/714/2010-205714317-0740bcd0-F.pdf>.
- ¹³ "Qatar Foundation International," Return of Private Foundation (Form 990-PF), 2010 (Schedule B, Part I), available at <https://pdf.guidestar.org/PDF/Images/2011/205/714/2011-205714317-083b6ef6-F.pdf>.
- ¹⁴ "Qatar Foundation International," Return of Private Foundation (Form 990-PF), 2011 (Statements 6, 7 and Certificate of Dissolution), available at <https://pdf.guidestar.org/PDF/Images/2012/205/714/2012-205714317-083b6edb-F.pdf>.
- ¹⁵ "File No. 4994688," State of Delaware Dept. of State, Division of Corporations, n.d., <https://icis.corp.delaware.gov/ecorp/entitysearch/NameSearch.aspx>.

“Qatar Foundation International (QFI), LLC, is a US-based member of Qatar Foundation (QF). QFI operates as both a grant-making organization, and a convener of thought leadership on issues related to global and international education, open education, and education technologies as they intersect with the three core QFI programmatic areas: Arabic language and Arab culture, STE{A}M (STEM plus the Arts), and Youth Engagement.”¹⁶

This report addresses Qatar’s influence on K-12 education in the United States through the Choices Program, which is housed at Brown University. The report provides evidence of a substantial collaboration between the Choices Program and QFI that seeks to integrate QFI’s presence into Choices Program workshops for secondary school educators and foster direct contact between those educators and a QFI representative whose job has been to influence pedagogical strategy on teaching about the Middle East. ISGAP’s investigation has also found that, as a result of the Choices Program’s ambiguous legal structure, Brown University may be in breach of foreign funding disclosure requirements under federal law.

¹⁶ “Qatar Foundation International: Creating Meaningful Connections to the Arab World,” *Q Magazine*, Issue 3, June 2017, filed with Supplemental Statement of Portland PR Inc., Dec. 6, 2017, available at <https://efile.fara.gov/docs/6064-Supplemental-Statement-20171206-9.pdf>.

Executive Summary

This report examines the Choices Program, a national education initiative for K-12 social studies curriculum housed at Brown University that combines licensed curriculum units, free online content, and professional education workshops to provide a range of resources for secondary school classrooms.¹⁷ The program, used by 8,000 schools in all fifty states, reaches over one million students. Our investigation reveals significant concerns regarding the program's ambiguous structure, lack of transparency, ideological content shifts, and external influences.

Organizational structure and transparency issues

The report starts by documenting the structure of the Choices Program. Our investigation has uncovered troubling discrepancies in how the Choices Program presents itself:

- While operating under Brown University's umbrella and reputation, the program describes itself both as "a self-funded organization affiliated with Brown University" and as a separate "non-profit organization" based at Brown University.
- Brown University enters into contracts "on behalf of" the Choices Program, suggesting a distinct legal structure with actors that are unknown to the schools that purchase the curriculum with no clear understanding of the true organizational structure.
- The program's financial structure and revenue streams remain opaque, with significant discrepancies between reported budgets and apparent revenue.

¹⁷ While its curricular materials are designed for secondary school classrooms, the Choices Program holds itself out as part of the broader K-12 educator community, for example by running workshops that include K-12 teachers and recommending resources for K-12 use. See, for example, "American Soldiers in American Wars: History and Memory," Choices Program, n.d., <https://www.choices.edu/institute-american-soldiers-in-american-wars/>; Choices Program's Facebook profile filtered for "K-12," <https://www.facebook.com/profile/100064415004965/search?q=k-12>. Thus our report includes references to both secondary school classrooms and general K-12 education and pedagogy.

Systematic content changes and ideological shifts that are reinforced by schools' lack of oversight or content control

The report next examines the Choices Program's shift in narrative with respect to Israel and the fact that its structure impedes meaningful oversight and review of the curriculum. In particular, we demonstrate that the Choices Program has over many years become increasingly anti-Israel and anti-democratic in its approach, reflecting a particular pedagogical change in strategy and application that either went unnoticed by the schools purchasing the curriculum or was not disclosed by Brown University. Analysis of program materials, particularly those concerning the Middle East, reveals concerning patterns:

- progressive delegitimization of Israel through content changes across editions;
- elimination of key historical context and balanced perspectives;
- downplaying of significant diplomatic achievements like the Abraham Accords;
- introduction of increasingly partisan theoretical frameworks;
- systematic changes in terminology and map presentations.

This content and ideological shift has been bolstered by the proprietary system put in place by the Choices Program, which raises additional concerns:

- schools lose the ability to track or review content changes;
- schools receive no notification clarifying curriculum modifications;
- restricted access prevents oversight by school boards and parents;
- the limited transparency of the program's privacy policies and third-party data sharing arrangements raises concerns about conflicts of interest and the potential exposure of students or teachers to external sources not approved by schools.

External influence and misrepresentation

Our investigation identified significant discrepancies between Brown University's public statements and documented evidence regarding external influence over the Choices Program, including:

- the understated relationship with QFI;
- the misrepresentation of the nature and extent of QFI's involvement in workshop content, teacher engagement, and curriculum distribution;
- the lack of transparency concerning donor influence on content development.

Key implications

This report raises serious concerns about:

1. potential violations of educational transparency requirements;
2. oversight failures by educational institutions adopting the curriculum;
3. compromised academic integrity through undisclosed external influences;
4. impact on student learning and perspective formation;
5. broader implications for K-12 educational content oversight.

These findings suggest an urgent need for increased transparency, improved oversight mechanisms, and clearer guidelines for foreign influence in K-12 educational materials. The report concludes with specific policy recommendations to address these systemic issues.

The Choices Program's Structure and Reach

The Choices Program, which dates back to the late 1980s, was originally designed to develop curriculum for high school students in a variety of subject areas, with the specific purpose of encouraging students to think critically about differing policy alternatives and potential outcomes.¹⁸ In recent years, the program content has expanded to become a hybrid of: (1) purchased license-based K-12 curriculum covering a wide range of topical units; (2) free online content including *Teaching with the News* lessons and short video-based lessons; and (3) professional education workshops to help teachers integrate the program materials in their classrooms.¹⁹ The Choices Program claims to reach over a million students in more than 8,000 secondary schools in all fifty US states, as well as students in about 200 international schools.²⁰ According to Brown University's own estimates from six years ago, one third of US high schools use one or more of the Choices Program's titles (a figure that is now almost certainly higher).²¹ The institutional synergies of Brown University's Anenberg Institute have allowed the Choices Program to expand its reach by offering the program to schools in urban settings.²² Brown University now calls the Choices Program "a national education initiative" that "bridges the space between academia and secondary school classrooms," with "more than three decades of secondary education curriculum development experience [and] a national network of teachers."²³ Moreover, Brown University has marketed the Choices Program as a replacement for traditional textbooks in a more open and fluid social studies curriculum: "With many school districts moving away from

¹⁸ "History of the Choices Program," Choices Program, n.d., <https://www.choices.edu/about/history-choices-program/>.

¹⁹ "About the Choices Program," Choices Program, n.d., <https://www.choices.edu/about/>.

²⁰ Choices Program, n.d., <https://www.choices.edu>; "History of the Choices Program," Choices Program, n.d., <https://www.choices.edu/about/history-choices-program/>; "Choices Program," Brown Department of History, n.d., <https://history.brown.edu/community/choices-program>.

²¹ "Watson's Choices Program Teaches High School Students to Think Critically about Pressing Global Issues," Watson Institute for International & Public Affairs, January 16, 2018, <https://home.watson.brown.edu/news/2018-01-16/watsons-choices-program-teaches-high-school-students-think-critically-about>.

²² "Choices Program at Brown University," Annenberg Institute, Brown University, n.d., <https://annenberg.brown.edu/activities/choices-program-brown-university#:~:text=The%20Choices%20Program%20draws%20on,relevant%20to%20secondary%20school%20audiences>.

²³ "Choices Program," Brown Department of History, n.d., <https://history.brown.edu/community/choices-program>.

textbooks to develop their own courses drawing on a range of resources, Choices' materials are a perfect fit."²⁴

The license-based curriculum, which is comprised of student texts and teacher resource books,²⁵ includes primary source excerpts, images, maps, and vocabulary definitions to further student understanding.²⁶ The curriculum is available in digital or print format.²⁷ Not surprisingly, copies of the online-compatible digital editions are priced more attractively than the print editions and are marketed to offer schools more flexibility with their systems and access to updated content.²⁸ Site licenses provide further economies of scale for schools ordering digital editions.²⁹ The Choices Program changed the accessibility of the digital edition in 2021, retiring its system of downloadable PDF files and moving the curriculum onto a proprietary, password-protected platform (curriculum.choices.edu).³⁰ Schools that subscribe to the Choices Program accept subscription agreements and updates to those agreements as specified by the Choices Program.³¹

The Choices Program's *Teaching with the News* lessons provide access to occasional free lesson plans and guides so that teachers can "make headline news accessible to their students."³² These lessons are available on the choices.edu domain rather than the proprietary curriculum.choices.edu platform that would otherwise require a subscription. Similarly, videos released by the Choices Program are made available on the free choices.edu domain. In 2016, the Choices Program launched this free video portal to make its collection of "scholars" videos more accessible, with the goal of making a searchable video collection available from the Choices Program

²⁴ "Watson's Choices Program Teaches High School Students to Think Critically about Pressing Global Issues," Watson Institute for International & Public Affairs, January 16, 2018, <https://home.watson.brown.edu/news/2018-01-16/watsons-choices-program-teaches-high-school-students-think-critically-about>.

²⁵ In the digital format, the student text and teacher resource book are referred to as "parts." "Inside a Choices Curriculum Unit," Choices Program, n.d., <https://www.choices.edu/inside-a-unit/>.

²⁶ Ibid.; "Guiding Principles for Choices Curriculum Development," Choices Program, n.d., <https://www.choices.edu/about/guiding-principles/>; "Analyzing Maps," Choices Program, n.d., <https://www.choices.edu/analyzing-maps/>.

²⁷ "Pricing," Choices Program, n.d., <https://www.choices.edu/pricing/>.

²⁸ Ibid.; "Which Choices Program Curriculum Product Is Right for You?," Choices Program, n.d., <https://www.choices.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Choices-Program-Product-Comparison-Chart.pdf>.

²⁹ "Digital Editions," Choices Program, n.d., <https://www.choices.edu/digital-editions/>.

³⁰ "History of the Choices Program," Choices Program, n.d., <https://www.choices.edu/about/history-choices-program/>; "Ordering," Choices Program, n.d., <https://www.choices.edu/ordering/>; "Which Choices Program Curriculum Product Is Right for You?," Choices Program, n.d., <https://www.choices.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Choices-Program-Product-Comparison-Chart.pdf>; "Pricing," Choices Program, n.d., <https://www.choices.edu/pricing/>.

³¹ "Subscription Agreement," Choices Program, March 27, 2020, https://www.choices.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/ChoicesProgram_DigitalEditionsSubscriptionAgreement_03-37-2020_Ind.pdf.

³² "History of the Choices Program," Choices Program, n.d., <https://www.choices.edu/about/history-choices-program/>.

home page.³³ These video lessons are also embedded directly into the digital editions of the licensed units,³⁴ guiding teachers and students directly to the video lessons that the Choices Program considers relevant to each unit.

Choices Program professional development workshops were marketed to introduce the program materials to new audiences.³⁵ Since 2018, the Choices Program has annually offered 30 full-day workshops, an almost four-fold increase since 2015.³⁶ The Choices Program advertises its workshops on its webpage and its social media.³⁷

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ “Which Choices Program Curriculum Product Is Right for You?,” Choices Program, n.d., <https://www.choices.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Choices-Program-Product-Comparison-Chart.pdf>.

³⁵ “Watson’s Choices Program Teaches High School Students to Think Critically about Pressing Global Issues,” Watson Institute for International & Public Affairs, January 16, 2018, <https://home.watson.brown.edu/news/2018-01-16/watsons-choices-program-teaches-high-school-students-think-critically-about>.

³⁶ Ibid.; Choices Program, n.d., <https://www.choices.edu>.

³⁷ “Upcoming Events,” Choices Program, n.d., <https://www.choices.edu/professional-development/>; <https://www.choices.edu/professional-development/archive/>; “Past Events,” Choices Program, n.d., https://x.com/search?q=workshop%20brown%20%22choices%20program%22&src=typed_query.

The Choices Program's Finances and Ambiguous Legal Structure

Among Brown University's various financial records, information on the Choices Program appears in a single document. The recommended operating budget for Brown University published in 2019 by the University Resources Committee identified that the School of Professional Studies budgeted \$950,000 in revenue for the Choices Program in the 2018 fiscal year and \$1,124,000 in 2019.³⁸ Yet it would be virtually impossible for that figure to represent the total revenue of the program, as the contracts with school districts for the Choices Program curriculum are far more lucrative than these figures suggest. Milwaukee schools alone are currently invested in a five-year Choices Program subscription worth \$173,961, or \$2,899.35 per month.³⁹ Attempting to even conservatively extrapolate that figure to the 8,000 US schools and 200 international schools that the Choices Program claims to reach suggests that there are possibly tens of millions of dollars in sales revenue that the Choices Program obtains from its curriculum sales alone, in addition to the revenue from its workshops and donations and contributions from other sources. Brown University's tax filings, however, do not set forth the finances of the Choices Program. If all of the program's revenue belongs to Brown University, then it is well hidden from disclosure. If it is receiving sales revenue under the Choices Program or donations to the program from foreign entities, it is possible that Brown University, like various other universities, has failed to make the required disclosures under Section 117 of the Higher Education Act 1965.

But there is also a very real ambiguity, as evidenced by its own statements, as to whether Brown University is the party receiving Choices Program revenue. At first glance, the Choices Program appears to be part of Brown University's legal structure. The program has a long history of being affiliated with different departments and institutions within Brown University, including the Department of

³⁸ *University Resources Committee: Proposed 2019-2020 Operating Budget* (Brown University, 2019), 32–33, https://www.brown.edu/about/administration/provost/sites/provost/files/FY20_URC_Approved_Feb92019.pdf.

³⁹ *Minutes of the Board of School Directors, Milwaukee Wisconsin*, Milwaukee Public Schools, July 27, 2023, <https://mps.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/MPS-English/OBG/Clerk-Services/Proceedings/2023-24/03JUL23.pdf>.

History (currently),⁴⁰ the Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs (formerly the Thomas J. Watson Institute for International Studies),⁴¹ the Center for Foreign Policy Development,⁴² the School of Professional Studies,⁴³ and the Office of Continuing Education.⁴⁴ These relationships are identified in print in the Choices Program’s published curriculum.⁴⁵ Brown University appears to be the sole organization with which school districts purchasing the Choices Program’s licensed curricular materials enter into contract, and purchase orders are made payable to “Brown University–Choices Program.”⁴⁶ Brown University is the registrant of the Choices Program’s domain (choices.edu),⁴⁷ where teachers and students may access free *Teaching with the News* lessons and video content published by the Choices Program. Brown University also collects donations that can be directed to the Choices Program as an identified fund.⁴⁸ Based on the current assertion by the Choices Program that it is “a self-funded organization affiliated with the Department of History at Brown University,”⁴⁹ one might conclude that the program, like the history department and other schools within the university, is naturally part of the 501(c)(3) non-profit entity that is Brown University and that it is largely self-sustaining on the back of its sales to 8,000 US schools.

⁴⁰ “Choices Program,” Brown Department of History, n.d., <https://history.brown.edu/community/choices-program> (“The Choices Program is a national education initiative that *is part of* the Brown University Department of History” (emphasis added)); Choices Program, n.d., <https://www.choices.edu>; (“The Choices program is ... *affiliated with* the Department of History at Brown University (emphasis added)).

⁴¹ “History of the Choices Program,” Choices Program, n.d., <https://www.choices.edu/about/history-choices-program/>; <https://home.watson.brown.edu/about/history>.

⁴² “History,” Watson Institute for International & Public Affairs, n.d., <https://home.watson.brown.edu/about/history>.

⁴³ “Watson’s Choices Program Teaches High School Students to Think Critically about Pressing Global Issues,” Watson Institute for International & Public Affairs, January 16, 2018, <https://home.watson.brown.edu/news/2018-01-16/watsons-choices-program-teaches-high-school-students-think-critically-about>.

⁴⁴ “Choices Teachers Arrive for Summer Institutes,” Brown University, July 16, 2013, <https://news.brown.edu/articles/2013/07/choices>.

⁴⁵ Choices Program, *Responding to Terrorism: Challenges for Democracy* (7th ed., 2011) (“The Choices for the 21st Century Education Program is a program of the Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies and the Office of Continuing Education at Brown University”); Choices Program, *The Iranian Revolution* (4th ed., 2019) (“The Choices Program is a program of Brown University’s Department of History”).

⁴⁶ “Subscription Agreement,” Choices Program, March 27, 2020, https://www.choices.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/ChoicesProgram_DigitalEditionsSubscriptionAgreement_03-37-2020_Ind.pdf; “Order Form,” Choices Program, n.d., https://www.choices.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Order-Form_07.2024-2.pdf.

⁴⁷ Choices.edu whois information, <https://who.is/whois/choices.edu>.

⁴⁸ By using the “Search for a Fund” feature, donors can designate the Choices Program. “Make a Gift,” Brown Alumni & Friends, n.d., <https://bbis.advancement.brown.edu/BBPhenix/give-now?did=b4034c17-dd78-4543-9f39-04f46fd4cfa2>. Moreover, the Choices Program has annually promoted Giving Tuesday donations toward its fund. Choices Program’s Facebook profile filtered for “donation,” Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/profile/100064415004965/search/?q=donation>.

⁴⁹ “About the Choices Program,” Choices Program, n.d., <https://www.choices.edu/about/>.

On the other hand, that conclusion may be inaccurate, as the Choices Program’s assertion on its website that it is “a self-funded organization” that is part of the history department is contradicted by other statements according to which it is organized as a *distinct* non-profit organization. In 2016, a Brown news release described the Choices Program as an “education initiative and non-profit organization affiliated with the Watson Institute,”⁵⁰ a description that tracks with the program’s decision to categorize itself on social media as a “charity organization”⁵¹ rather than an educational one like Brown.⁵² The Choices Program’s Facebook solicitations for Giving Tuesday donations repeatedly identify the program not merely as a self-funded organization but as a “non-profit organization.”⁵³ The Google Ads Transparency Center further reveals that, as a verified Google advertiser, Brown University placed a series of Google Ads in which it presented the Choices Program as a “non-profit *at* Brown University” or alternatively “a non-profit *based at* Brown University” (emphasis added).⁵⁴ This is illustrated by Figure 1 on the next page.

These explicit representations by Brown University, according to which the Choices Program is a separately identifiable non-profit entity, are actually consistent with the contract that schools must enter into to purchase the Choices Program curriculum. While school districts may be making their payments to “Brown University–Choices Program,”⁵⁵ they are assenting to a [subscription agreement](#) in which the counterparty to the agreement is “Brown University, *on behalf of* its Choices Program”⁵⁶—a peculiar contractual designation in that it would typically signify authority to sign for another legal person or entity whose interests are governed by that agreement.

⁵⁰ “A History of Change: The Choices Program Offers New Curriculum on Brazil,” Watson Institute for International & Public Affairs, July 26, 2016, <https://home.watson.brown.edu/news/2016-07-26/history-change-choices-program-offers-new-curriculum-brazil>. In 2018, the Choices Program moved out of Brown’s Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs and into the Department of History. “History of the Choices Program,” Choices Program, n.d., <https://www.choices.edu/about/history-choices-program/>.

⁵¹ Choices Program, “About,” Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/choicesprogram/about>.

⁵² Brown University, “About,” Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/BrownUniversity/about>.

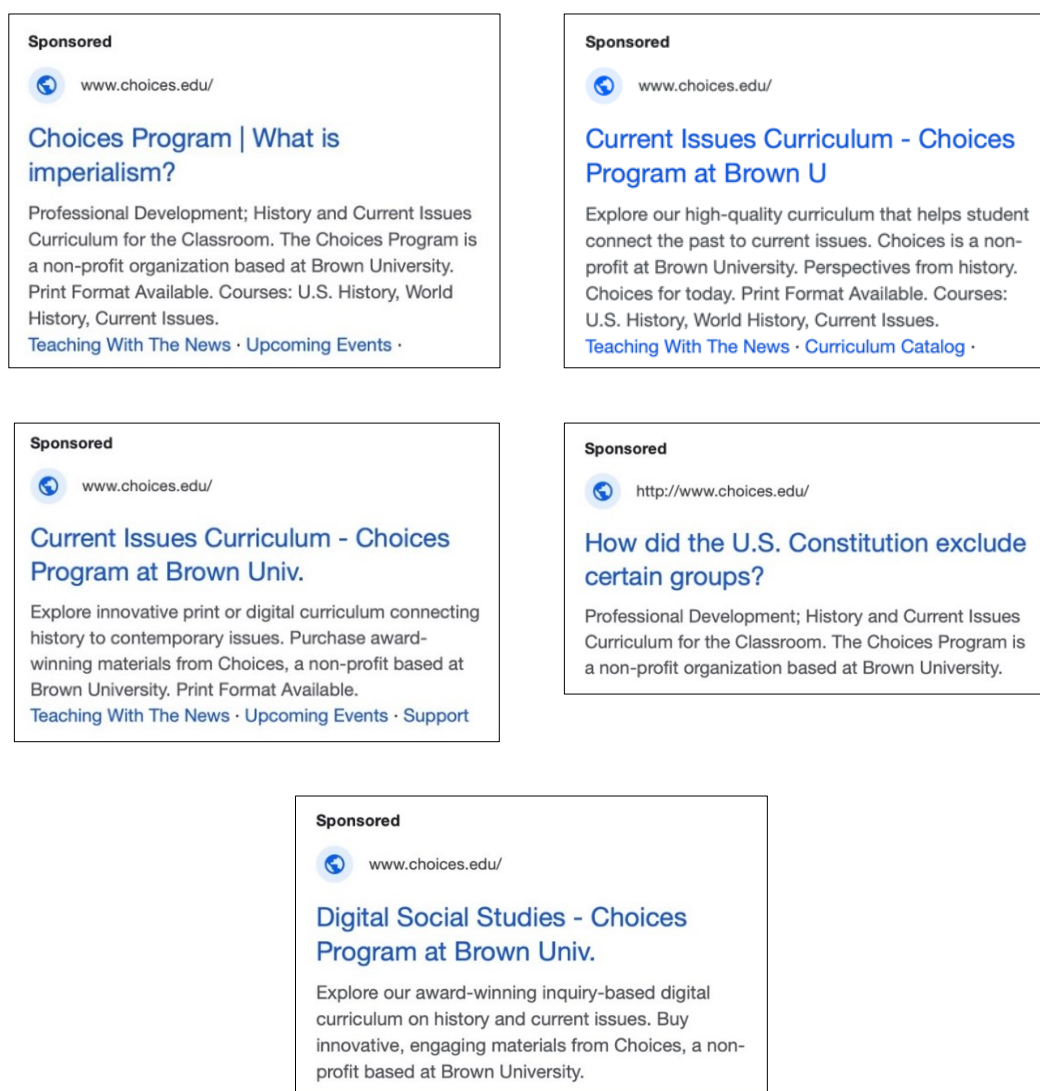
⁵³ Choices Program’s Facebook profile filtered for “donation,” Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/profile/100064415004965/search/?q=donation>.

⁵⁴ “Brown University,” Google Ads Transparency Center, n.d., <https://adstransparency.google.com/advertiser/AR14003303434778836993?origin=ata®ion=US>.

⁵⁵ “Ordering,” Choices Program, n.d., <https://www.choices.edu/ordering/>.

⁵⁶ “Subscription Agreement,” Choices Program, March 27, 2020, Preamble (emphasis added), https://www.choices.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/ChoicesProgram_DigitalEditionsSubscriptionAgreement_03-37-2020_Ind.pdf.

Figure 1: Examples of paid advertisements to drive users performing Google searches to the Choices Program website



Given these representations, the alternative conclusion is that the Choices Program is *not* the same thing as Brown University. To be clear, a university can have affiliated charitable organizations within its larger structure. Depending on the control and economic interest of the university, it can, and sometimes must, consolidate the financials of such affiliated organizations within its tax filings.⁵⁷ Whether it has done so should be clear in the schedules and disclosures of its tax filings. While Brown University has several charitable organizations whose financials it consolidates within its own financials, the Choices Program is not one

⁵⁷ "The NFP Reporting Entity," PwC, May 27, 2020, https://viewpoint.pwc.com/dt/us/en/pwc/accounting_guides/not-for-profit-entities/Not-for-profit-entities/Nfp05_1/Reporting_entity_3.html#pwc-topic.dita_3c7717ef-a295-4d69-b234-7ec16ae4f103.

of them,⁵⁸ nor is it mentioned in any related party note disclosure. However, a cryptic explanation in Brown University’s returns about the millions of dollars of escrow or custodial account liability it has disclosed annually may be relevant to the Choices Program’s financial arrangements.⁵⁹

Figure 2: Disclosure of Brown University concerning escrow or custodial account liability

| Return Reference | Explanation |
|------------------------------|--|
| SCHEDULE D, PART IV, LINE 2B | THE UNIVERSITY ACTS AS THE FISCAL AGENT FOR FUNDS RELATED TO UNIVERSITY AFFILIATED PROGRAMS. THE UNIVERSITY DOES NOT OWN THE FUNDS ASSOCIATED WITH THESE PROGRAMS. |

Brown University’s tax returns and audited financial statements do not disclose the identity of these “university-affiliated programs” or the size of the transactions flowing through that liability between the beginning and end of the fiscal year.

If the Choices Program is indeed a distinct non-profit entity, its financials remain a mystery. “Choices,” “The Choices Program,” and “Choices for the 21st Century Education Program”—the different names for the program that have appeared in published Choices Program curriculum and marketing materials over the last few decades—do not appear to be legal names registered with the US Internal Revenue Service (IRS) that are connected to the Choices Program at Brown University but could be the organization’s “doing business as” monikers. The ambiguity of the Choices Program’s legal structure is particularly significant when it comes to Section 117 of the Higher Education Act 1965, which requires institutions of higher education to disclose to the Secretary of Education gifts from any foreign source and contracts with any foreign entity with an aggregate value of \$250,000 or more.⁶⁰ If the Choices Program is a distinct non-profit entity, this raises the question whether Brown University has purposefully evaded its disclosure requirements by manipulating its corporate structure to maintain a sense of “plausible deniability,” saying in essence that the Choices Program as a distinct charity (yet one that remains “affiliated with” Brown University) is not an institution of higher education subject to disclosure requirements under the Higher Education Act. Any assertion that Brown University is somehow immune from reporting the foreign entanglements of this charity would defy reason, given that the Choices Program is

⁵⁸ For example, Brown University has consolidated its tax returns to include the financials of the John Nicholas Brown Center for the Study of American Civilization, Brown Faculty Club, Farview Incorporated, and Karing. “Brown University,” Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax (Form 990), 2018 (Schedule O), available at https://apps.irs.gov/pub/epostcard/cor/050258809_201906_990_2021012717664030.pdf.

⁵⁹ Ibid., Schedule D, Part XIII: Supplemental Information (required description pertaining to Schedule D, Part IV, line 2b).

⁶⁰ Section 117 of the Higher Education Act of 1965, codified at 20 U.S.C. § 1011f.

wholly dependent upon Brown University: it is housed there, has deep relationships there, and fully relies upon the university to do its marketing, run its website, enter into contracts for it, fundraise for it, and generally carry out its business.

Equally problematic is that, if the Choices Program is its own legal entity, then the makeup of its leadership remains a mystery to the myriad of K-12 school districts left ignorant of the true identity of the Choices Program—including who sits on its board—and what level of control Brown University has over it. School districts receiving or considering Choices Program materials repeatedly see the following logo:⁶¹

Figure 3: Choices Program logo



Having also been told that the Choices Program is part of Brown University’s history department, these school districts may be far less alert to contractual language suggesting that Brown University is the agent of another interested party, and they may have foregone the same level of diligence reserved for typical vendors because of Brown University’s reputation and credibility. This raises a host of problems for the trustees of boards of education bound by fiduciary duties and a legal responsibility for curriculum and contract approvals, as they cannot effectively carry out their duties if they are prevented from identifying all the parties behind their contracts. School district administrators recommending the Choices Program to their boards of education on the inherent credibility and strength of a program “owned by” an elite university, may be equally misled. The [subscription agreement](#) never states that Brown University actually *owns* any of the content that it licenses to schools via the Choices Program subscription, but rather represents that Brown University has the rights and has obtained permission from unnamed third parties to license it:

“Brown warrants that it has the right to license the rights granted under this Agreement to use the Digital Editions, that it has obtained any and all

⁶¹ Another peculiarity of the Choices Program is that Brown University, for all of its intellectual property protections, does not appear to have registered this logo for trademark protection, nor has it registered its copyrights for the Choices Program’s published materials since the early 1990s.

necessary permissions from third parties to license the Digital Editions, and that use of the Digital Editions by Subscriber in accordance with the terms of this Agreement shall not infringe the copyright of any third party.”⁶²

This is not the only instance of unnamed third parties in the Choices Program. School districts assenting to the [subscription agreement](#) have granted permission under the agreement’s privacy policy for third parties (which Brown University similarly does not identify) to use their data “to help run the Digital Editions.”⁶³ The uncertainty of precisely who owns the content of the Choices Program and who has access to the data of teachers and students using the proprietary Choices Program platform is an issue that should immediately raise several red flags for schools, educators, and parents across this country.

Educational transparency and the legal requirements of the Higher Education Act require that Brown University clarify the precise corporate structure of the Choices Program and meet its disclosure obligations with respect to the foreign money involved in the program.

⁶² “Subscription Agreement,” Choices Program, March 27, 2020, ¶ 7, https://www.choices.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/ChoicesProgram_DigitalEditionsSubscriptionAgreement_03-37-2020_Ind.pdf.

⁶³ Ibid. Addendum B: Privacy Policy, ¶ 2.

The Choices Program's Shifting Narrative against Israel

When it comes to Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Choices Program has decidedly shifted the narrative over time, a shift that likely went undetected by school districts renewing their subscriptions.⁶⁴ This shift appears to be most prevalent in two Choices Programs units—one on US foreign policy in the Middle East and the other on Iran, both of which were presented at a QFI-sponsored Choices Program workshop in 2019.⁶⁵

The Changes Made to the Unit on the Middle East

The 2011 edition of the unit *The Middle East in Transition: Questions for U.S. Policy* begins with a recognition that the Middle East is the birthplace of three of the world's major religions and an acknowledgement of the historic Jewish ties to the land that is now Israel (as well as Christian and Muslim ties to the land).⁶⁶ In a section discussing the birth of Israel, the unit recognizes that Zionism—the nationalist movement to create a homeland for the Jewish people—focused on a “a

⁶⁴ Extensive reviews of the Choices Program's units on the Middle East have previously exposed the bias, misstatements, and omissions of fact in the curriculum and associated video content. The Institute for Curriculum Services (ICS) performed a review of various Choices Program units as they existed in Louisiana secondary schools in 2017. *Instructional Materials Evaluation Review for Alignment in Social Studies Grades K-12*, Department of Education, September 29, 2017, Appendix II, available at [https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/curricular-resources/the-choices-program-brown-university-ss-grades-9-12-\(integrated-supplemental\).pdf?sfvrsn=4](https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/curricular-resources/the-choices-program-brown-university-ss-grades-9-12-(integrated-supplemental).pdf?sfvrsn=4). The Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting and Analysis (CAMERA) published companion reports on Brown University last year, one of which focused on the 2022 version of the unit titled *The Middle East: Questions for U.S. Policy. Anti-Israel Extremism and Corrupt Scholarship at Brown University: How Middle East and Palestinian Studies Fuel Antisemitism*, CAMERA, n.d., <https://www.camera.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Brown-Report-with-Cover-Page.pdf>; see also *Brown University's Choices Curriculum: Platform for an Antizionist Narrative*, CAMERA, n.d., <https://www.camera.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/CAMERA-Report-Brown-Universitys-Choices-Curriculum-Platform-for-Anti-Zionist-Narrative.pdf>. ISGAP's report does not attempt to repeat or supplant the in-depth analysis of ICS or CAMERA, but instead seeks to illuminate the specific changes in language in certain units from edition to edition.

⁶⁵ “Teaching about Contested International Issues,” Draft agenda as of May, 2019, Choices Program, https://www.choices.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Wyoming-PD_DRAFT-outline-2.pdf.

⁶⁶ *The Middle East in Transition: Questions for U.S. Policy*, 1st ed. (Choices Program, 2011).

significant region in Jewish history” and discusses primary sources, such as the Balfour Declaration.⁶⁷ The lenses of foreign policy applied in the lesson include regional stability, economic interests, and democracy. “State” is defined in the Issues Toolbox to mean “an entity that has a defined territory and a permanent population under the control of its own government” and “sovereignty” is defined as “[t]he absolute right of a state to govern itself,” recognizing that “[t]he UN Charter prohibits external interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign state without the state’s consent.”⁶⁸ The maps used in the 2011 edition show Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, though the failure of other countries to recognize Jerusalem as Israel’s capital is noted.⁶⁹ While the unit discusses various aspects of US policy on Middle East relationships aside from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, five pages are dedicated to the discussion of the conflict, its history, efforts at peace, and unresolved issues from various perspectives.

The 2015 edition of the unit on *The Middle East in Transition: Questions for U.S. Policy* introduces a [new contributor](#) named Beshara Doumani,⁷⁰ the founding director of Brown University’s Center for Middle East Studies (CMES) and the founder of New Directions for Palestinian Studies, a CMES initiative since 2012⁷¹ that was designed to “bring together emerging and established scholars” to “shape the agenda of knowledge production on Palestine and Palestinians” and remain “dedicated to decolonizing and globalizing this field of study.”⁷² Doumani, who in 2020 was named the first endowed chair in Palestinian studies at Brown University (a position created by nine donors, five of whom Brown University has not publicly disclosed),⁷³ became president of Birzeit University in 2021 before returning to Brown University in the fall of 2023.⁷⁴ Domani quite literally explained how his New

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ *The Middle East in Transition: Questions for U.S. Policy* (Choices Program, 2015).

⁷¹ “Beshara Doumani,” Department of History, Brown University, n.d., <https://history.brown.edu/people/beshara-doumani>.

⁷² “About,” Palestinian Studies, Brown University Center for Middle East Studies, n.d., <https://palestinianstudies.org/about>.

⁷³ “Alumni, Parents, and Friends Establish the Mahmoud Darwish Professorship in Palestinian Studies,” Brown Alumni & Friends, July 14, 2020, <https://alumni-friends.brown.edu/news/2020-07-14/alumni-parents-and-friends-establish-mahmoud-darwish-professorship-palestinian>. Brown University has never publicly disclosed five of the nine donors for this endowed chair position, raising concerns about transparency, potential conflicts of interest, and ideological motivations. The four disclosed donors include E. Paul Sorenson (an American businessman and philanthropist of various academic institutions), Basem Salfiti (a Palestinian-American businessman and investor with ties to Middle Eastern educational initiatives), Rasha Abu Ghazaleh Farouki (a member of prominent family with business interests across the Middle East and philanthropic activities in education), and the Munib and Angela Masri Foundation (a Nablus-based foundation established by a Palestinian industrialist known as the “Patriarch of Palestine” due to his significant political influence in the region and his history of supporting Palestinian causes and educational initiatives).

⁷⁴ “Beshara B Doumani,” Researchers@Brown, n.d., <https://vivo.brown.edu/display/bdoumani>.

Directions initiative would take root in curriculum such as the Choices Program at a 2016 conference where he asserted that the only academic theories worth pursuing are those that are premised on Israel as a “settler-colonial project” so that they are politically consequential:

“... I think it’s important to explain that this is not a debate. And it’s not meant to be a debate. Certainly the idea is not to have a CNN-style this is your story, this is my story, let’s recognize the humanity of each other and then find some sort of a solution that we both can live with. Because this is really a critical conversation ... the departure point is not the punches and counterpunches of public discourse and nationalist narratives, but rather an issue of intellectual political consequence using academic standards of knowledge as the baseline. So what we do share in common—many of us here—is that Israel cannot be understood properly unless the features of it as a settler colonial project are understood. If most academics looking at that history think that this is an attractive, and maybe even dominant framework for understanding the conflict, then we start from there and then we go on to a debate: well, what does that mean and what can we think about in terms of the future?”⁷⁵

The 2015 edition of the unit on *The Middle East in Transition: Questions for U.S. Policy* which acknowledged Doumani as a contributing scholar, was rewritten to adapt his approach to secondary school classrooms. It begins to paint the Middle East as Muslim, with Jews cast as the outsiders, citing in the introduction “diverse” religions and cultures but then only mentioning Christian minority populations in addition to Muslims.⁷⁶ The lenses of the unit begin to shift away from those used in foreign policy analysis, as students are provided with definitions of “colonialism,” “imperialism,” and “nationalism.”⁷⁷ While the definition of “state” and “sovereign” remain unchanged in the Issues Toolbox from the prior edition, the maps begin to metamorphosize. In the student text, the [map](#) shows Tel Aviv as the capital of Israel, while in the teacher resource book, [maps](#) showing Jerusalem as the capital remain.⁷⁸ When the 2015 edition discusses the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is done from a decidedly less foreign policy-based perspective (though that is in the name of the unit), frontloading Palestinian grievances and ultimately

⁷⁵ “Suffocating Embrace? The Futures of Palestinians in Israel,” March 3, 2016, posted March 29, 2016, by Middle East Studies/Brown University, YouTube, 1:38:20–2:05:39, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QAuPlej4Wn8>; David Litman, “Brown University’s Middle East Studies Faculty: Profiles in Extremist Anti-Israel Bias,” CAMERA, January 25, 2024, <https://www.camera.org/article/brown-universitys-middle-east-studies-faculty-profiles-in-extremist-anti-israel-bias/>.

⁷⁶ *The Middle East in Transition: Questions for U.S. Policy* (Choices Program, 2015).

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

ending with a callout box on a one-state solution.⁷⁹ Even the change in title of this section is telling: while in 2011 it was called “Resolving the Arab-Israeli Conflict,” in 2015 it becomes “Israel and the Palestinians.”⁸⁰

The 2017 edition of *The Middle East in Transition: Questions for U.S. Policy* goes even further, setting up Muslims to be interpreted as the region’s indigenous population, including a lengthy discussion of the roots and belief systems of Islam.⁸¹ In defining the Christian minority as Arabs, the edition further casts Jews as outsiders and colonialists. The definitions of colonialism, imperialism, and nationalism are repeated, with the introduction of a new definition of “state” to mean “a country with a government that is recognized by its citizens and other countries.”⁸² Not surprisingly, the 2017 edition completes its transition of the capital of Israel to Tel Aviv, inserting a starred [map quiz](#) in the teacher resource book to reinforce that understanding among students.⁸³ The section on the *Creation of Israel* and the related primary sources, such as the Balfour Declaration, are eliminated, instead moving the discussion about Israel’s creation to a few brief paragraphs within the section titled “Israel and the Palestinian Territories,”⁸⁴ further reinforcing the narrative promoted by Doumani that Israel was illegitimately created out of land belonging to others.

The 2017 edition also effectively peddles Holocaust revisionism, ignoring the intentionality of the Holocaust toward Jews – as clearly evident from its systematic and bureaucratic mechanisms – at the precise moment that the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism, which rejects such obfuscations as antisemitic, was being adopted around the world and implemented by the US Department of State.⁸⁵ The 2017 edition also began to promote a relativism of numbers, a tool that historian Deborah Lipstadt has

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ *The Middle East: Questions for U.S. Policy*, 1st ed. (Choices Program, 2017).

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ These maps and the map quiz were used both in the 2017 and 2022 editions of this unit and in the QFI-funded workshops co-sponsored with the Choices Program discussed below. “Slideshow of Maps Used in The Middle East: Questions for U.S. Policy,” Choices Program, <https://www.choices.edu/curriculum-unit/middle-east-transition-questions-u-s-policy/>; *The Middle East: Questions for U.S. Policy*, 1st ed. (Choices Program, 2017); *The Middle East: Questions for U.S. Policy*, 2nd ed. (Choices Program, 2022).

⁸⁴ *The Middle East: Questions for U.S. Policy*, 1st ed. (Choices Program, 2017).

⁸⁵ Ibid. (“During World War II, Nazi leader Adolf Hitler sought to exterminate all of the Jews of Europe, whom the Nazis considered inferior. In six years, the Nazis murdered 12 million civilians (including six million Jews) in a genocide known as the Holocaust.”); “Defining Antisemitism,” US Department of State, <https://www.state.gov/defining-antisemitism/> (recognizing that contemporary examples of antisemitism in places such as schools can include “[d]enying the fact, scope, mechanisms ... or intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people at the hands of Nationalist Socialist Germany and its supporters and accomplices”).

identified as soft Holocaust denial.⁸⁶ This is particularly problematic for schools that purchased this curriculum in states that mandate Holocaust education.⁸⁷ Unsurprisingly, Doumani rejected the IHRA definition of antisemitism,⁸⁸ which is not discussed in any Choices materials or videos, despite its implementation by the US Department of Education in 2018. It would obviously not have been possible to both include the IHRA definition in the curriculum and promote Doumani's pedagogy that requires Israel's delegitimization, which violates IHRA principles. The Choices Program thus apparently opted to dispense with any discussion or consideration of IHRA whatsoever, instead disseminating Doumani's approach to secondary schools nationwide.

Around the time of the launch of the 2017 edition, the Choices Program uploaded many new videos to its website to bolster its lesson on the Middle East. These videos, which are embedded in the Choices Program's digital editions⁸⁹ (thereby suggesting that they are relevant – or even critical – to teachers' and students' understanding of the unit in question), are noteworthy in that they uniformly delegitimize Israel. True to the Choices Program's stated intention to make its homepage a searchable database, one need only type "Israel" into the search bar on [choices.edu](https://www.choices.edu) to uncover a trove of videos identifying Israel as a settler-oppressor, an apartheid state, and a country where a two-state solution is not even deemed a viable alternative. The videos are designed as short, easily digestible clips with academics often sitting in front of an impressive looking library. They have the guise of an interview without the rigor of one: each speaker answers a question that is posed on the screen, but there is no interviewer to ask follow-up questions, engage in a dialogue, or challenge the response or its underpinnings.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ *Instructional Materials Evaluation Review for Alignment in Social Studies Grades K-12*, Department of Education, September 29, 2017, Appendix II, available at [https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/curricular-resources/the-choices-program-brown-university-ss-grades-9-12-\(integrated-supplemental\).pdf?sfvrsn=4](https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/curricular-resources/the-choices-program-brown-university-ss-grades-9-12-(integrated-supplemental).pdf?sfvrsn=4).

⁸⁷ Alyssa Weiner, "Moving Toward Never Again: State of Holocaust Education in the United States" (American Jewish Committee, January 2022), https://www.ajc.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2022-03/MovingTowardsNeverAgain_v4.pdf.

⁸⁸ "Palestinian rights and the IHRA definition of antisemitism," Letter, *The Guardian*, November 29, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2020/nov/29/palestinian-rights-and-the-ihra-definition-of-antisemitism>.

⁸⁹ "Which Choices Program Curriculum Product Is Right for You?," Choices Program, n.d., <https://www.choices.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Choices-Program-Product-Comparison-Chart.pdf>; "Brown University's Choices Curriculum: Platform for an Antizionist Narrative," CAMERA, n.d., <https://www.camera.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/CAMERA-Report-Brown-Universitys-Choices-Curriculum-Platform-for-Anti-Zionist-Narrative.pdf>.

⁹⁰ For example, a prolific contributor to the videos on the Middle East is Adi Ophir. In a video that asks for his quick message to high school students on the conflict in the Middle East, Ophir and the Choices Program take the position that the Jews have brainwashed the media (featuring a protestor with a sign bearing that message) and state, "The role of the media and the role of Jewish organizations in the Jewish community in obscuring and in covering up the real situation in Palestine is huge. "What would you say to high school students studying the Middle East conflict?," Choices Program, October 26, 2021, <https://www.choices.edu>.

There is no indication that Brown University ever communicated Doumani's new pedagogical strategy to the thousands of schools with which it contracted under the Choices Program. Nor is there any reason to believe that the "academic freedom" that ostensibly exists in university settings to present a counterpoint to Professor Doumani's views would naturally carry over to the K-12 setting. School districts have been buying the Choices Program curriculum without realizing how far to the extreme it has migrated and that that they might need to "balance" it with other content.

As for how the Choices Program reconciles such different schools of thought in the same lesson over time, its answer is that historiography changes to become "up-to-date" and to "[tell] an inclusive, responsible history,"⁹¹ carefully avoiding mention of any attempt to tell a complete or accurate history.⁹² Indeed, beginning with the 2017 edition of *The Middle East: Questions for U.S. Policy*, the Choices program explicitly disclaims any attempt to tell a complete or balanced history:

"This text is not comprehensive. Instead you will read about selected parts of the history of the Middle East and U.S. policy in the region."⁹³

That disclaimer stands in stark contrast to the Choices Program's self-promotion as a "national education initiative" that brings academia into secondary school classrooms, based on over three decades of experience with curriculum

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- [edu/video/what-would-you-say-to-high-school-students-studying-the-israeli-palestinian-conflict/](https://www.choices.edu/video/what-would-you-say-to-high-school-students-studying-the-israeli-palestinian-conflict/). Months before he recorded this video, Ophir participated in a webinar organized by the Palestinian Studies division of CMES in which he promoted blood libels and comparisons to Nazi Germany that are considered antisemitic under the IHRA definition, stating that he and others "pray with all their hearts for the end of Jewish supremacy in Palestine" and that Israelis are "living in the midst of a Jewish mob, thirsty for Palestinian blood, a Kristallnacht mob." "A Third Intifada? Palestinians and the Struggle for Jerusalem," May 20, 2021, posted on May 21, 2021, by Watson Institute for International & Public Affairs/Brown University, YouTube, 33:39–34:19, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UuBLIOLR5JI>; "Brown University's Choices Curriculum: Platform for an Antizionist Narrative," CAMERA, n.d., <https://www.camera.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/CAMERA-Report-Brown-Universitys-Choices-Curriculum-Platform-for-Anti-Zionist-Narrative.pdf>; "Adi Ophir," Choices Program, n.d., <https://www.choices.edu/scholar/adi-ophir/>.
- ⁹¹ Another contributor to the Middle East unit since 2015, Nina Tannenwald, called a state law providing that the government would not contract with any business engaging in a discriminatory boycott of a country a "loyalty oath" to Israel, playing into the very antisemitic, conspiratorial tropes and examples of antisemitism rejected by the IHRA definition. Nina Tannenwald, "Rhode Island Adopts a Loyalty Oath to Israel," GoLocalProv, August 9, 2016, <https://www.golocalprov.com/news/rhode-island-adopts-a-loyalty-oath-to-israel>. Not surprisingly, she then advocated against the IHRA definition of antisemitism by claiming it is about silencing criticism of Israel even though its definition specifically excludes legitimate criticism of Israel. "Letter in Solidarity with the Palestinian Liberation Struggle," First shared on May 15, 2021; revised on May 17, 2021, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1OKPkII7tI061zumkOOKxjRSHJzB-4ifXotgqn4WIDT0/edit>; David Litman, "Brown University's Middle East Studies Faculty: Profiles in Extremist Anti-Israel Bias," CAMERA, January 25, 2024, <https://www.camera.org/article/brown-universitys-middle-east-studies-faculty-profiles-in-extremist-anti-israel-bias/>.
- ⁹² "About the Choices Program," Choices Program, n.d., <https://www.choices.edu/about/>.
- ⁹³ *The Middle East: Questions for U.S. Policy*, 1st ed. (Choices Program, 2017).

development, and constitutes a “perfect fit” for schools looking to move away from traditional textbooks.⁹⁴ Yet the perceived cachet of connecting secondary school curriculum and teacher training to an elite Ivy League university, not to mention the appeal of the personal and professional connections forged, must be taken into account when considering how thousands of schools have erroneously placed their faith in the Choices Program and have failed to ask the most basic of follow-up questions.

Perhaps the most glaring shift in the discourse is the one accomplished by omission in the next edition of the unit in 2022 (which is the most current version),⁹⁵ namely with regard to the Abraham Accords and the United States’ historic foreign policy role in carving a path to normalized relations via treaties between Israel and Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Morocco and Sudan. No videos analyzing the development of the Abraham Accords, their importance in US foreign policy, or their impact on peace in the Middle East can be found on the Choices Program video portal. No *Teaching with the News* lesson on the Abraham Accords was produced for teachers to use in their classrooms or submitted to the National Council for the Social Studies, where the Choices Program has historically advertised new lesson plan content to K-12 educators.⁹⁶ No primary source materials are included to show even excerpts of these bilateral treaties signed by heads of state.⁹⁷ No mention is made of the Biden administration’s pursuit of a similar agreement with Saudi Arabia, a pursuit that, as former Secretary of State Antony Blinken has noted, would have brought him to Saudi Arabia in October 2023 to close the remaining gaps in the arrangement but for Hamas’s October 7 attack on Israel, which was designed to derail that agreement:

⁹⁴ “Choices Program,” Brown Department of History, n.d., <https://history.brown.edu/community/choices-program>; “Watson’s Choices Program Teaches High School Students to Think Critically about Pressing Global Issues,” Watson Institute for International & Public Affairs, January 16, 2018, <https://home.watson.brown.edu/news/2018-01-16/watsons-choices-program-teaches-high-school-students-think-critically-about>.

⁹⁵ *The Middle East: Questions for U.S. Policy*, 2nd ed. (Choices Program, 2022).

⁹⁶ Susan Graseck, “Explore the Past to Understand the Present and Shape the Future,” *Social Education* 72, no. 7 (2008): 367–70, <https://www.socialstudies.org/explore-past-understand-present-and-shape-future>.

⁹⁷ “The Abraham Accords Declaration,” US Department of State, n.d., <https://2017-2021.state.gov/the-abraham-accords/>; Abraham Accords: Declaration of Peace Cooperation and Constructive Diplomatic and Friendly Relations Announced by the State of Israel and the Kingdom of Bahrain, US Department of State, September 15, 2020, https://2017-2021.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Bahrain_Israel-Agreement-signed-FINAL-15-Sept-2020-508.pdf; Abraham Accords Peace Agreement: Treaty of Peace, Diplomatic Relations and Full Normalization between the United Arab Emirates and the State of Israel, US Department of State, September 15, 2020, https://2017-2021.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/UAE_Israel-treaty-signed-FINAL-15-Sept-2020-508.pdf; Joint Declaration (issued by the Kingdom of Morocco, the United States of America and the State of Israel), US Department of State, December 22, 2020, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Joint-Declaration-US-Morocco-Israel.pdf>; The Abraham Accords Declaration (Republic of Sudan), US Department of State, n.d., <https://2017-2021.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Sudan-AA.pdf>.

“Now, the timing of Hamas’s attack was no accident. Israel’s growing integration in the region—the prospect of normalization with Saudi Arabia—posed an existential threat to Hamas’s power, its ambitions to dominate the Palestinian political landscape, its *raison d’être*, which is the rejection of two states and the destruction of Israel. As notes recovered from meetings of Hamas’s top officials would later reveal, Hamas sought to spark a regional war that would derail this agreement—knowing that doing so would inflict immense suffering on civilians on all sides, including the Palestinian people, whose interest they claim to represent.”⁹⁸

Where prior editions of Choices Program units explored “options” (also referred to as “futures” in early units)—critical thinking about outcomes that might differ depending on the focus or weight put on different interests—no policy options are presented at the end of the Middle East unit that might, for example, build upon both administrations’ support of the Abraham Accords to pursue a joint path toward peace across the Middle East. In fact, unlike previous editions, the current 2022 edition of the *Middle East: Questions for U.S. Policy*, does not discuss *any* policy options whatsoever in its printed student text or its accessory Teacher Resource Book. It is as though the Choices Program is purposefully reluctant for teachers and students to analyze, grapple with, and debate policy options that are predicated on real-life examples of the recognition of Israel’s right to exist as a basis for foreign policy and international peace efforts, though it would appear to be the very option that demands classroom instruction and discussion. What a million children and their teachers are left with, across 8,000 schools in all fifty states, is a Middle East lesson that refuses to call the Abraham Accords by their name, or even categorize them as bilateral treaties, thus encouraging those children and teachers to simply ignore the reality of a central paradigm shift in Middle East diplomacy. It asks them, contradictorily, to pretend that the Middle East is monolithically about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and purportedly unrelenting Palestinian victimhood, while ignoring how diplomatic developments among other countries in the region might create long-term positive impacts on the resolution of that conflict. The Choices Program quite simply dismisses the Accords on the basis that they yielded nothing for Palestinians in the short term:

⁹⁸ Antony Blinken, “The Biden administration’s vision for postwar Gaza,” *New Atlanticist*, January 14, 2025, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/the-biden-administrations-vision-for-postwar-gaza/>.

“The Trump Administration also encouraged the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco to normalize their relations with Israel. (These countries had previously refused to recognize Israel because of longstanding historical issues, including Israel’s treatment of Palestinians). Although President Joe Biden has reinstated U.S. funding to U.N. programs that assist Palestinians, there have been no major public U.S. diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis.”⁹⁹

The Choices Program’s blatant omissions regarding the Abraham Accords can simply not be reconciled with its promotion of “critical and creative thinking,” “comfort with complexity,” “multiple perspectives,” and efforts aimed at “cultivating a deep understanding of historical and current events [to] encourag[e] them to develop their own informed opinions.”¹⁰⁰ If the Choices Program is, as it describes itself, a “national educational initiative” for secondary school education, it is one that appears to have made a concerted effort to nationally foster an increasingly anti-Israel narrative among a generation of teachers and students. The key shifts in the narrative are summarized in Table 1 on the next page.

The Changes Made to the Unit on Iran

The Choices Program unit on Iran, which has remained largely similar over four editions, has nevertheless undergone subtle but meaningful edits in two areas. First, the Choices Program has downgraded Hamas and Hezbollah from “labelled terrorist organizations” in the 2008 edition to organizations that are merely “considered” terrorist organizations by the United States from the 2009 edition onward.¹⁰¹ Second, the Choices Program has whitewashed and ultimately eliminated references to Iran’s historical threats against Israel’s very existence and how this threat has informed international perceptions of Iran’s nuclear program and its

⁹⁹ *The Middle East: Questions for U.S. Policy*, 2nd ed. (Choices Program, 2022). The one Choices Program video that mentions the Abraham Accords at all is not about the Middle East in general but is narrowly focused on the single-minded delegitimization of Israel, with Adi Ophir criticizing Israel’s purported system of apartheid and commenting that “the backing that all American governments have given to Israel, and especially the Trump administration, brought some countries, including Arab countries, to say ‘We need America more than we need the Palestinians’ [and] even make peace agreements with Israel.” “How have international and regional responses to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict changed in recent years?,” Choices Program, October 26, 2021, <https://www.choices.edu/video/how-have-international-and-regional-responses-to-the-israeli-palestinian-conflict-changed-in-recent-years/>.

¹⁰⁰ “Guiding Principles for Choices Curriculum Development,” Choices Program, n.d., <https://www.choices.edu/about/guiding-principles/>.

¹⁰¹ *Iran through the Looking Glass: History, Reform, and Revolution*, 1st ed. (Choices Program, 2008); *Iran through the Looking Glass: History, Reform, and Revolution*, 2nd ed. (Choices Program, 2009); *Iran through the Looking Glass: History, Reform, and Revolution*, 3rd ed. (Choices Program, 2012); *The Iranian Revolution*, 4th ed. (Choices Program, 2019).

Table 1: Key changes in Choices Program content within the unit on the Middle East (2001-2022)

| Topic | 2001–2011 | 2015 | 2017–2022 |
|---|--|--|---|
| Core terminology | Focus on state, sovereignty, diplomatic relations | Shift to colonialism, imperialism, nationalism | Continued emphasis on colonial framework, bolstered with video content |
| Israel’s creation and recognition by Arab states | “Story starts in late 1800s”; includes Balfour Declaration | Limited to brief mention of Zionist movement | Creation of Israel removed from table of contents, primary sources supporting Israel’s creation and recognition are omitted |
| Capital of Israel | Jerusalem (with note about recognition issues) | Inconsistent: Tel Aviv in student text, Jerusalem in teacher materials | Tel Aviv only |
| Religious context | Equal treatment of three major religions, detailed discussion of Jewish ties to region | Emphasis shifts to Islamic civilization and achievements | Muslims presented as indigenous, Jews portrayed as outsiders |
| Analytical framework | Regional stability, economic interests, democracy | Colonialism, imperialism, nationalism | Redefinition of “state” emphasizing recognition requirements |
| Holocaust discussion | Direct focus on Jewish persecution and extermination | | Equates Jewish victims with other casualties, shifts focus from Jewish persecution |

intent. In the 2008 edition of the Iran unit, the Choices Program informed students that President Ahmadinejad’s “assertion that Israel should be ‘wiped off the map’ has increased international anxiety about Iran’s intentions.”¹⁰² Beginning with the 2009 edition and continuing with the 2012 edition, the Choices Program amended the unit to only reference Ahmadinejad’s “hostile language toward Israel” as a reason for increased international anxiety.¹⁰³

The edits that were made to the Iran unit starting with the 2009 edition are particularly telling given that, only a few months earlier, the Choices Program

¹⁰² *Iran Through the Looking Glass: History, Reform, and Revolution*, 1st ed. (Choices Program, 2008).

¹⁰³ *Iran Through the Looking Glass: History, Reform, and Revolution*, 2nd ed. (Choices Program, 2009); *Iran Through the Looking Glass: History, Reform, and Revolution*, 3rd ed. (Choices Program, 2012).

marketed itself to educators across the country with a *Teaching with the News* resource lesson on US policy alternatives toward Iran that was published in *Social Education*, the flagship journal of the National Council for the Social Studies in which the Choices Program routinely advertises to educators across the country.¹⁰⁴ In this lesson, the Choices Program not only explicitly recognized Iran’s threat to “wipe Israel off the map” but also acknowledged the perceived threat that “[a]s a state sponsor of terror, Iran also may pass nuclear weapons on to groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas.”¹⁰⁵ The lesson also stated that the Iran curriculum unit provided the foundation for this particular *Teaching with the News* lesson.¹⁰⁶ Yet the foundational unit that was waiting to be released in a new edition that same year included edits that specifically underplayed concerns regarding Israel’s security, removing the historical context of Iran’s threats to destroy Israel and never mentioning its role as a state sponsor of terrorist attacks outside its borders.

The 2019 (and current) version of the Iran unit went even further in recasting the narrative, erasing all mention of Iran’s threats or even hostile language toward Israel and redefining Hezbollah as a “militant group” to whom “[t]he Iranian government also provides support.”¹⁰⁷ Beyond this small shift in language, this change needs to be understood in the context of the flurry of video lessons that the Choices Program began uploading from 2017 onward. Many of the videos on Iran are from Choices Program contributor Narges Bajoghli, who has promoted the idea that, rather than Hezbollah being Iran’s proxy, Iran and Hezbollah have created an “axis of resistance” in a justifiable effort to drive the United States and its war on terror out of the Middle East and respond to Israeli colonialism.¹⁰⁸

Thus, it is unsurprising that the 2019 edition of the Iran unit erased all mention of Iran’s decades-old existential threat toward Israel, as the new academics behind the discourse premised their theories on Israel’s alleged illegitimacy. However, the Choices Program did not inform the schools subscribing to the curriculum about this shift in perspective. It also failed to inform schools that it would be introducing a new lexicon that normalized terrorist organizations and their state sponsors, essentially conditioning students to swallow similar messages from other sources,

¹⁰⁴ “The Choices Program,” *Social Education* 77, no. 1 (2013): 5, <https://www.socialstudies.org/social-education/77/1/facing-issues>.

¹⁰⁵ Choices for the 21st Century Education Program, Brown University, “The U.S. and Iran: Confronting Policy Alternatives,” *Social Education* 73, no. 5 (2009): 220–27, <https://www.socialstudies.org/social-education/73/5/us-and-iran-confronting-policy-alternatives>.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, at 227.

¹⁰⁷ *The Iranian Revolution*, 4th ed. (Choices Program, 2019).

¹⁰⁸ “Narges Bajoghli,” Choices Program, n.d., <https://www.choices.edu/scholar/narges-bajoghli/>; “U.S. & Israel vs. Axis of Resistance: Biden Strikes New Targets in Middle East as Gaza War Continues,” *Democracy Now!*, February 5, 2024, https://www.democracynow.org/2024/2/5/narges_bajoghli_middle_east_regional_war.

including social media. The pro-terror and anti-democratic behavior and messages exhibited by young people across US cities and college campuses since October 7, 2023, can be partially explained by such purposeful shifts in secondary school pedagogy.

How the Choices Program Shields Curriculum Changes from Teachers, Administrators, School Boards, and Parents

For schools subscribing to the Choices Program, the ability to recognize both subtle and more substantial changes from one edition of a unit to another has proved to be a difficult if not impossible task. By moving the digital edition away from downloadable files and onto its proprietary platform, the Choices Program has effectively erased any historical record of prior curricular content for review and comparison. The [subscription agreement](#) reinforces this dynamic, reminding subscribers that content may be added, modified, or deleted from time to time,¹⁰⁹ but never requiring Brown University to notify the subscriber of changes that fall short of retiring an entire unit.¹¹⁰ The agreement further precludes the disclosure of login credentials to other parties for any purpose whatsoever.¹¹¹ It also reinforces the idea that students must not share class URL and other materials,¹¹² implying that schools should take steps to shield Choices Program content even from the legal guardians of such minors. While the digital edition may offer attractive flexibility to schools, the reality is that it has the capacity to virtually eliminate any paper trail of edits to the Choices lessons, making it impossible to flag changes for teachers, school district administrators, board of education trustees, and parents. Meaningful oversight and review of the curricular content does not exist in the same way as it would with a textbook, creating a dangerous opportunity for the manipulation of an educational narrative impacting thousands of schools and a generation of students and teachers.

¹⁰⁹ “Subscription Agreement,” Choices Program, March 27, 2020, ¶ 4(d), https://www.choices.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/ChoicesProgram_DigitalEditionsSubscriptionAgreement_03-37-2020_Ind.pdf.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., at ¶¶ 4(d), 6.

¹¹¹ Ibid., Addendum A: Terms of Use, ¶ 4.

¹¹² Ibid., Addendum A: Terms of Use, ¶ 6.

Outside Influence over the Choices Program and Brown University’s Misstatements about QFI’s Role

In a self-published news release from December 2023, Brown University confronted a few contemporaneous reports about the connection between the Choices Program and QFI.¹¹³ Brown denied that the Choices Program was subject to outside influence, quoting unidentified “Brown leaders” as asserting that “[t]here are no political or editorial interventions into our work, and we would reject any funding that attempted to impose restrictions or conditions on our materials.”¹¹⁴ However, Brown University did not go so far as to say that outside actors have never guided the direction of content. Nor can it, as the Choices Program’s active solicitation history for donations reveals that donors have had the capacity to establish newly endowed content (as illustrated by Figure 4 on the next page).¹¹⁵

Brown University’s self-published “rebuttal” of the connection between QFI and the Choices Program also sidesteps the issue of whether Qatar has contributed funds to Brown University or the Choices Program as a donor, as a purchaser of Choices Program materials, or as a contracting party for other goods and services: it merely

¹¹³ “Brown confronts false characterizations of its Choices Program school curriculum,” News from Brown, December 21, 2023, <https://www.brown.edu/news/2023-12-21/choices>; Frannie Block, “How U.S. Public Schools Teach Antisemitism,” *The Free Press*, December 19, 2023, <https://www.thefp.com/p/how-us-public-schools-teach-antisemitism>; “Antisemitism rampant in U.S. public schools, report finds,” MSNBC, December 20, 2023, <https://www.msnbc.com/morning-joe/watch/antisemitism-rampant-in-u-s-public-schools-report-finds-200644165602>.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ “Make a Gift,” Brown Alumni & Friends, n.d., <https://bbis.advancement.brown.edu/BBPhenix/choices> (also at <https://web.archive.org/web/20201025075607/https://bbis.advancement.brown.edu/BBPhenix/choices>). This form was linked within the Choices Program 2019 Facebook solicitation for Giving Tuesday donations, <https://www.facebook.com/profile/100064415004965/search/?q=giving%20tuesday>. Subsequent social media solicitations for Giving Tuesday brought up a different donation form that committed the donor’s gift to the Choices Program without the explicit mention of endowed content, though Brown University has consistently sought larger contributions that could contribute to new content. “Program Needs and Giving Levels,” Choices Program, n.d., <https://web.archive.org/web/20070711091123/http://www.choices.edu/about/levels.php>; “Contribute to the Choices Program,” Choices Program, n.d., <https://web.archive.org/web/20070706203924/http://www.choices.edu/about/contribute.php>; “Contribute,” Choices Program, n.d., <https://web.archive.org/web/20070701074625/https://gifts.development.brown.edu/choices/>.

denies that QFI has done so.¹¹⁶ Moreover, as indicated in a report on QFI funding of several universities and academic programs, QFI itself had purportedly touted its funding or grant connections with Brown University. However, the page where that information once existed appears to have later been scrubbed from QFI’s website.¹¹⁷

Figure 4: Choices Program donation portal

As for QFI’s involvement with the Choices Program, Brown University asserts that QFI’s involvement was limited to two specific areas:

1. “QFI [...] co-sponsored a Choices program workshop for Wyoming teachers, along with the Wyoming Geographic Alliance, in 2019. QFI had no input or editorial control over the workshop or the content in the curriculum units.”
2. “QFI purchased and distributed a selection of existing choices curriculum units to 75 teachers whose districts didn’t have funding to buy them.”¹¹⁸

Brown University’s characterizations are false and grossly understate QFI’s involvement, as well as Brown University’s role in fostering direct relationships between secondary school educators and QFI. QFI was intimately involved in the 2019 Wyoming workshop for secondary school educators that it co-sponsored with the Choices Program and the Wyoming Geographic Alliance. QFI invited teachers

¹¹⁶ “Brown confronts false characterizations of its Choices Program school curriculum,” News from Brown, December 21, 2023, <https://www.brown.edu/news/2023-12-21/choices>.

¹¹⁷ “Qatar Foundation International, LLC,” Influence Watch, n.d., <https://www.influencewatch.org/for-profit/qatar-foundation-international-llc-qfi/> (hyperlinking to <https://www.qfi.org/timeline/>).

¹¹⁸ “Brown confronts false characterizations of its Choices Program school curriculum,” News from Brown, December 21, 2023, <https://www.brown.edu/news/2023-12-21/choices>.

from all over the country to learn about the Middle East, subsidized the registration costs for all attendees, sponsored the travel costs of the non-local teachers, told those teachers that they would be receiving QFI's own teaching materials, and was present on site at the conference for two days with allotted speaking time as well as specific time to distribute QFI's teaching resource materials.

QFI Senior Program Officer Craig Cangemi, who was simultaneously the President of the Middle East Outreach Council¹¹⁹ (MEOC), of which QFI is a member,¹²⁰ distributed to a national listserv of educators and institutions called the MEOC Member Forum [a message](#) advertising the Wyoming workshop, telling the recipients to get in touch with him (not Brown) if they had any questions and attaching a flyer for the workshop that clearly identified QFI's involvement in content:

“Participants will discuss ways to adapt these [Choices Program] units to specific classroom goals. *QFI will present its teaching materials* on the history and culture of the Arab World.”¹²¹

Similar versions of this flyer were distributed by the Wyoming Department of Education¹²² and by the Choices Program.¹²³ If there were any doubt about whose teaching materials QFI would be presenting, the flyers go on to describe what specific materials are included in the workshop: “Choices curriculum units, all QFI materials, lunches, and a certificate of completion.”¹²⁴ All three versions of the flyer invited educators to apply for funding by contacting Cangemi, either by giving his @qfi email or, in the case of the Choices Program's flyer, by hyperlinking to it directly.

The Choices Program additionally advertised this workshop through its social media, tagging QFI and thanking it for its generosity.¹²⁵ The Choices Program

¹¹⁹ “Partner Organizations,” Middle East Studies Association, n.d., <https://mesana.org/partner-organizations/middle-east-outreach-council-meoc> (describing MEOC as a national network of educators disseminating “apolitical and nonpartisan” information about the Middle East and identifying it as a partner organization of the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) and Cangemi as MEOC's president).

¹²⁰ “Institutional Members,” Middle East Outreach Council, n.d., <http://www.meoc.us/institutional-members.html>.

¹²¹ C. Cangemi, email message to forum@meoc.us with attached flyer, June 5, 2019 (emphasis added); “Teaching about Contested International Issues,” Choices Program, <https://www.choices.edu/event/teaching-contested-international-issues/>.

¹²² “Teaching about Contested International Issues,” Wyoming Department of Education, <https://edu.wyoming.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Choices-casper-wy-2019-1.pdf>.

¹²³ “Teaching about Contested International Issues,” Choices Program, <https://www.choices.edu/event/teaching-contested-international-issues/>.

¹²⁴ Ibid.; “Teaching about Contested International Issues,” Wyoming Department of Education, <https://edu.wyoming.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Choices-casper-wy-2019-1.pdf>.

¹²⁵ Choices Program, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/profile/100064415004965/search/?q=qatar>.

calendared this workshop as a Facebook event, increasing its visibility to the public and confirming two days' worth of content from QFI: "Join the Choices Program and QFI for two days of content presentations, hands-on activities and resource reviews."¹²⁶ The draft agenda for the workshop, linked by the Choices Program to its flyer, indeed shows that Cangemi would be at the workshop, along with the Director of Sales and Professional Development of the Choices Program and a representative of the Wyoming Geographic Alliance—all three were slotted to take part in the 8:30 am introductory remarks on both days of the program.¹²⁷ However, this draft is not entirely representative of the final agenda. Less than a week before the start of the workshop, the Choices Program's Director of Sales and Professional Development confirmed in an [email exchange](#) with the Wyoming Geographic Alliance representative that QFI was to be allotted specific time to present its resources (distinct from the time allotted for the presentation of the Wyoming Geographic Alliance's resources) on the first day of the workshop.¹²⁸ The two days of resource reviews that the Choices Program advertised as a key part of the Facebook event it promoted were thus very much devoted to the resources of QFI. Thus, contrary to Brown University's assertion that QFI had no input or editorial control, the plan for the workshop was for QFI's program director to be in attendance for two days, present on both days, have dedicated time to present QFI's own teaching resources, and be present for participants to discuss how to adapt materials to classroom goals.

Brown University's assertions about QFI's involvement in the workshop are also misleading in that they seemingly isolate QFI's involvement to a singular professional development event, entirely ignoring that Cangemi's involvement with the Choices Program was contemporaneous with his and QFI's deep involvement in promoting QFI's influence over K-12 curricular content and pedagogical strategies elsewhere. Cangemi's biography, included in the [agenda](#) for QFI's five-day summer institute at Duke University—titled "Dimensions of the Middle East"—that took place in the same year as the Choices Program's Wyoming workshop, emphasizes this point.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ "Teaching about the Middle East Region," Event by Choices Program, Facebook, https://www.facebook.com/events/the-choices-program/teaching-about-the-middle-east-region/1990777547643652/?locale=gl_ES&rdr&ref=110.

¹²⁷ "Teaching about Contested International Issues," Draft agenda as of May, 2019, Choices Program, https://www.choices.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Wyoming-PD_DRAFT-outline-2.pdf. This draft agenda also shows that, in addition to the two units identified in the flyer (*The Middle East: Questions for U.S. Policy* and *Nigeria: History, Identity, and Change*), the workshop would also present the Choices Program units on Iran, Turkey, the United States in Afghanistan and the US Invasion of Iraq.

¹²⁸ M. Stephens, email message to G. Wagner, June 11, 2019.

¹²⁹ Agenda for the 2019 Duke Summer Institute, available at <https://isgap.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Duke-20019-Agenda-and-speaker-bios.pdf>.

Figure 5: Craig Cangemi's biography

Craig Cangemi

Craig Cangemi is a Senior Program Officer at Qatar Foundation International (QFI) who oversees its Arab Societies and Cultures Program. In this role, he develops and implements professional development and grant opportunities for primary and secondary educators throughout the United States to develop a better understanding of the Middle East and Arab world and to provide effective strategies for teaching about the region in the classroom. Craig joined QFI in 2015. Prior to his work at QFI, he briefly served as a federal management consultant after three years of managing a diverse portfolio of research and development grants in the Middle East on behalf of the US Department of State and US Department of Energy at CRDF Global. In addition to his current role at QFI, Craig also currently serves as the President of the Middle East Outreach Council, a national network of educators dedicated to disseminating apolitical and nonpartisan information, resources and activities that further the understanding about the Middle East, including the Arab world. Craig is a graduate of Davidson College in Davidson, NC where he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science with a concentration in Arabic Studies.

The biography's emphasis on QFI's critical role in professionally developing primary and secondary educators and implementing effective classroom teaching strategies about the Middle East is a stark departure from what Qatar now insists in its most recent Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) filing to the DOJ concerning QFI's limited and exclusive involvement in language programs:

"Qatar Foundation International is a grant-making organization that provides financial assistance to K-12 schools that apply for assistance in teaching the Arabic language. Beyond that, QFI has no role in setting or influencing classroom content or management."¹³⁰

Qatar's insistence that QFI does not influence classroom content or management looks very much like Brown University's statements. However, both are belied by Cangemi's biography and the pro-Qatari, anti-Israel, and antisemitic resources and teaching materials Cangemi was already reported to have used in 2018 at a similar Arizona workshop for public school teachers.¹³¹ Moreover, this dual positioning of QFI's representative leading MEOC while also directing educational initiatives raises significant concerns about potential conflicts of interest and the true nature of QFI's involvement in shaping US educational content about the Middle East.

The financial aspects of the Wyoming workshop should not be ignored, though Brown has remained silent on this issue. The Duke Summer Institute is reported to

¹³⁰ "The State of Qatar," Briefing Pack, US Department of Justice, June 5, 2024, <https://efile.fara.gov/docs/5931-Informational-Materials-20240605-20.pdf>.

¹³¹ Oren Litwin, "Islamist Qatar Buys American Teachers," *National Review*, March 2, 2018, <https://www.nationalreview.com/2018/03/qatar-educational-foundation-spreads-islamist-propaganda-to-us-schools/>.

have cost \$111,000 and catered to forty teachers.¹³² Using that as a benchmark to estimate the Wyoming conference and assuming similar attendance, we would assess the cost of that two-day workshop at \$50,000 (in addition to the thousands of dollars of travel stipends awarded by QFI to teachers attending the workshop from outside the Casper, Wyoming area).

If Brown University minimized QFI's central role in the Wyoming workshop, it wholly ignored the fact that the two-day workshop featuring QFI was essentially repeated two months later in August 2019, this time on Brown University's own campus. In an apparently over-subscribed workshop, Brown again advertised that "QFI will present its materials for teaching about Arab World history and culture" and that participants would then discuss how to adapt these materials to classroom goals.¹³³ That Brown failed to even address this event in its press release is a glaring omission and raises serious questions about the extent of QFI's relationship with Brown University and the depth of its involvement in the Choices Program and K-12 pedagogy.

Brown University's statements regarding QFI's involvement in purchasing curriculum units for seventy-five teachers who lacked funding severely minimize QFI's actual involvement with regard to these curriculum "awards." During the height of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, when teachers were particularly hungry for digital content, the Choices Program repeatedly advertised (eight times on its Facebook page alone) a curriculum award funded by QFI for seventh to twelfth-grade teachers to provide them with free Choices Program units on the Middle East (including *The Middle East: Questions for U.S. Policy*).¹³⁴ The electronic flyer for the program released by the Choices Program linked directly to QFI's website via an "Apply Here" button.¹³⁵ QFI has since scrubbed the information from that linked URL on its website.¹³⁶ However, an archived version of the flyer as it appeared on QFI's website is available [here](https://web.archive.org/web/20200930211546/https://www.qfi.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/QFI-Brown-Spring-2020-Program-Announcement-.pdf).¹³⁷

¹³² Sloan Rachmuth, "Using U.S., Qatari Funding, Duke University Teaches K-12 Teachers Biased Info about Islam," *The Federalist*, July 8, 2019, <https://thefederalist.com/2019/07/08/using-u-s-qatari-funding-duke-university-teaches-k-12-teachers-biased-info-islam/>.

¹³³ "Introductory Workshop: Teaching about the Middle East Region," Choices Program, n.d., <https://www.choices.edu/event/teaching-middle-east-region/>.

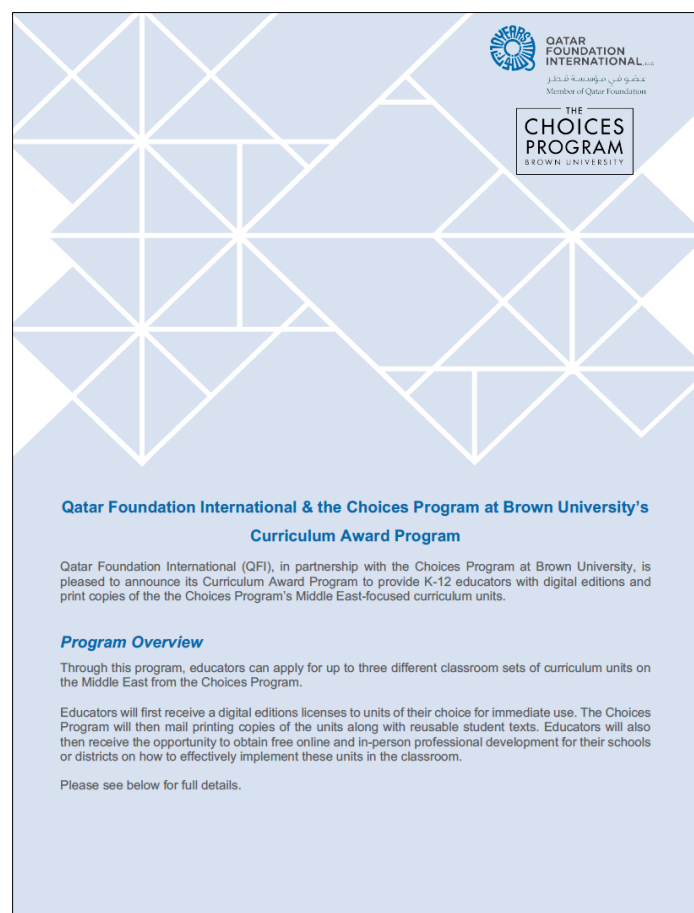
¹³⁴ Choices Program, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/profile/100064415004965/search/?q=qatar>.

¹³⁵ "Curriculum Award Program," Choices Program, n.d., <https://mailchi.mp/brown/curriculum-award-program>.

¹³⁶ QFI webpage previously containing QFI/Choices Program Curriculum Award information, <https://www.qfi.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/QFI-Brown-Spring-2020-Program-Announcement.pdf>.

¹³⁷ Also available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20200930211546/https://www.qfi.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/QFI-Brown-Spring-2020-Program-Announcement-.pdf>.

Figure 6: QFI flyer advertising a curriculum award funded by QFI for seventh to twelfth-grade teachers to provide them with free Choices Program units on the Middle East



The full flyer shows that in QFI’s view its relationship with the Choices Program was a “partnership” and not merely a sponsorship. It also shows that, once Brown University led educators to QFI by linking them to QFI’s website, QFI would cast a wider net, looking to capture the interest of all K-12 educators rather than only those in Grades 7–12.¹³⁸ Further, contrary to Brown’s assertions that QFI was merely supplying units to seventy-five teachers on the basis of need, the curriculum awards went well beyond that, extending five-year licenses¹³⁹ that QFI said were “open to all current teachers”¹⁴⁰ rather than just to those who demonstrated need.¹⁴¹ Even

¹³⁸ Ibid.; “Curriculum Award Program,” Choices Program, n.d., <https://mailchi.mp/brown/curriculum-award-program>.

¹³⁹ Choices Program, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/profile/100064415004965/search/?q=qatar>.

¹⁴⁰ “Curriculum Award Program,” Choices Program, n.d., <https://mailchi.mp/brown/curriculum-award-program>.

¹⁴¹ QFI/Choices Program Curriculum Award Program flyer, available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20200930211546/https://www.qfi.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/QFI-Brown-Spring-2020-Program-Announcement-.pdf>. The only limitation based on need was with regard to the number of print units distributed to a teacher *after* the digital license award, which was not so restricted.

assuming that the QFI-sponsored curriculum awards were granted to only seventy-five teachers, the financial impact of these awards to Brown University was substantial, ranging from approximately \$215,000 (for the three print units advertised)¹⁴² to \$328,000 (for the five-year digital licenses for the two units advertised).¹⁴³ The free online and in-person professional development that was advertised in the flyer as part of the curriculum award ranged from \$300 to \$3,500 per session in value.¹⁴⁴

As evident from the QFI flyer, QFI was much more than a mere funding source for the curriculum awards. The Choices Program pushed QFI directly into K-12 schools, both in person and digitally, to provide instruction to teachers on “how to effectively implement these units into your existing coursework.”¹⁴⁵ Moreover, the digital workshop recordings would live on QFI’s site, not the Choices Program site, ensuring that educators returned to QFI over and over again.¹⁴⁶ QFI’s curriculum award flyer is similar to the one QFI used for the Duke Summer Institute, which took place only a few month earlier. In that [flyer](#), which is no longer available on Duke’s website, QFI extracted a *quid pro quo*: it required teachers receiving QFI grants covering the all-expense paid trip to the Summer Institute to follow up by submitting to QFI the lesson plans they designed as a result of their workshop attendance.¹⁴⁷ Whether QFI extracted a similar commitment from recipients of the Choices Program curriculum award or provided recipients with additional QFI materials is unclear but remains a distinct possibility. What is clear is that QFI and the Choices Program enjoyed a symbiotic relationship, seizing upon the opportunity presented by Covid-19 and the desire of teachers for online resources in a new age of online and hybrid learning to scale the exposure of the Choices Program units on the Middle East. QFI supported these efforts by actively encouraging more teachers to move onto QFI’s website, into direct contact with QFI, and onto the Choices Program’s digital platform for years at a time.

¹⁴² “World History Series,” Choices Program, n.d., <https://www.choices.edu/product-category/world-history-series/>; “Curriculum Award Program,” Choices Program, n.d., <https://mailchi.mp/brown/curriculum-award-program>.

¹⁴³ “World History Series,” Choices Program, n.d., <https://www.choices.edu/product-category/world-history-series/>; Choices Program, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/profile/100064415004965/search/?q=qatar>.

¹⁴⁴ “Bring Choices to Your District for a Workshop,” Choices Program, n.d., <https://www.choices.edu/professional-development/bring-choices-district-workshop/>.

¹⁴⁵ QFI/Choices Program Curriculum Award Program flyer, available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20200930211546/https://www.qfi.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/QFI-Brown-Spring-2020-Program-Announcement-.pdf>.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Flyer for 2019 Duke Summer Institute, available at <https://web.archive.org/web/20200123133313/https://islamicstudies.duke.edu/sites/default/files/atoms/files/2019%20Summer%20Institute%20Flyer%20Dimensions%20of%20the%20Middle%20East.pdf>.

Policy Recommendations

To counter the detrimental influence of the Choices Program and Qatar/QFI on US secondary education, the following measures should be implemented:

1. Prohibit any further direct Qatari/QFI funding of US secondary schools and teachers. Require full disclosure under the Foreign Agents Registration Act of any Qatar-linked funds (and other foreign funds originating from anti-democratic sources) already received by US secondary schools or K-12 educators.
2. Open a Federal Government investigation into the Choices Program to determine its ownership structure, its affiliations, contractual relationships, foreign sales, contributions, and donations. The investigation should explore the QFI resource materials used as part of the Choices Program workshop and explore the impact of donors' funding or sponsorship of the Choices Program on curricular content changes and professional education.
3. Add a provision to Section 117 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 that mandates disclosure by all entities that operate within or at an institution of higher education.
4. Require transparency in the sale of social studies curriculum to secondary schools with respect to the funding sources behind such curriculum, the changes made to curricular materials, and the identity of all parties that are permitted to access school or student data.
5. Require transparency with respect to the professional education of teachers to help minimize the potential for influence and manipulation over classroom content and pedagogy.
6. Require transparency on the part of schools by granting parents and legal guardians access to the same curricular resources their children are able to access.