Globalization is impacting many aspects of life in Qatar and Qatari nationals must increasingly cope with forces generated by economic, cultural, political, and social changes in their country. Because of borrowing, large scale migration, new computer technology, and multinational corporations, many cultural traits and practices in Qatar have been altered. The widespread existence of fast foods, cell phones, the internet, Western movies and TV shows, global electronic and print media, giant shopping malls, and latest fashion designs are some excellent examples of direct and indirect diffusion and exchange of products and cultural features between Qatar and the western world. Despite the continuing positive social and economic outcomes of modernization and development, the inevitable ongoing powerful economic and social changes in Qatar have put the country at a crossroad and created formidable cultural challenges for Qatari nationals. On the one hand, the social and economic consequences of Qatar’s development and modernization by 2030 will increase the mutual dependence between Qatar and the expanding global economy and strengthen the continuing cultural contact and interconnection between Qatar and the global culture. On the other hand, in conjunction with the rapid economic and social changes, the country must also commit to making its future path of development compatible with cultural and religious traditions of an Arab and Islamic nation in Qatar. The crucial challenge between continuing the move toward socio-economic development and preserving the Arab-Islamic tradition in Qatar as stated in the Qatar National Vision 2030: “Qatar’s very rapid economic and population growth have created intense strains between the old and new in almost every aspect of life. Modern work patterns and pressures of competitiveness sometimes clash with traditional relationships based on trust and personal ties, and create strains for family life. Moreover, the greater freedoms and wider choices that accompany economic and social progress pose a challenge to deep-rooted social values highly cherished by society.” (Qatar National Vision 2030, 2008:4). To minimize the anticipated “intense strain” between the old and new aspects of life and to avoid the clash between traditional cultural values and the emerging modern patterns of social life in Qatar it is crucial for government officials, especially the policy makers in Qatar to understand the perception of Qatari men and women about the ongoing changes and their outcomes and its impact on their culture, religion,
family, and social life. Therefore, as an anthropologist I propose to explore the following critical issues that is related to the social and cultural consequences of modernization of Qatar by 2030:

How will the new generation of Qatari nationals internalize the economic, environmental, human, and social developments envisioned by QNV 2030?

Do Qatari nationals find the current economic, social, and cultural changes consistent with core values of their culture or do they feel threatened by these changes?

What strategies, if any, Qatari nationals have devised to deal with threats to their cultural and religious identity?

How do Qataris perceive and feel about the ongoing large-scale social and economic changes and interpret their manifestations and outcomes?

Do they contest or embrace these changes?

Will the socio-economic changes in Qatar sculpt and drive cultural norms and impact cultural practices in Qatar, or the traditional family structure, religious beliefs, and will cultural assumptions direct the process of social change in Qatar?

What will be the impact of the QNV 2030 changes on the national psyche and cultural identity of Qatari citizens?

Will Qatari citizens form a new identity and transform their old religious and cultural identity, maintain the traditional religio-cultural identity, or find a balance between the old and a new one?

This project will offer several significant applied and practical outcomes and benefits for government leaders and policy makers in Qatar. In addition to exploring the perceptions of Qatari nationals toward social and economic change and their consequences for Qatari culture, this project provides an excellent opportunity to identify and assess the: intended and unintended changes in attitudes and behaviors of Qatari men and women regarding marriage, family, work, education, and related social patterns as well as values, ideas, symbols, and judgments, new cultural adaptive kits that are likely to emerge, degree of consistency between the new emerging cultural patterns of behavior and changes in attitudes and behaviors with cultural traditions and social values of Qatari men and women, different mechanisms through which Qatari people combine modern life with local traditions and cultural values, and different meanings that different individuals and groups (e.g., ethnic, gender, class, and age) attach to the ongoing cultural and social changes in Qatar. Furthermore, this project on the impact of social and economic change on Qatari culture and society will provide government officials in Qatar with a new perspective so they can understand the link between the private lives of their citizens and the larger social and cultural issues, and the impact of social change on communities and social institutions in Qatar. This new perspective will enable government and business leaders in Qatar to: chart economic and social progress more effectively and with a clearer vision, assess the life chances of their citizens in a new globalized Qatar, face future problems successfully, and build a stronger bridge between the present and the future through Qatar National Vision 2030. Finally, this project will enhance our understanding of the social and cultural consequence of globalization for Islamic societies in general and GCC in particular. It will help social scientists to understand the unique socio-cultural characteristics of Islamic countries in the Gulf region in their confrontation with the West and global forces. Moreover, it will add to our knowledge about the perception of Muslim Arabs in the Gulf region about the powerful technological, political, and social changes that are taking place in this region. The findings of this project will help social scientists to explain whether Qatari nationals find these changes incompatible with their cultural traditions and resist against them, or find them compatible with the cultural fabric of their society and embrace them.