

CRISIS IN THE GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL

Challenges and Prospects

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Arab Center Washington DC
المركز العربي واشنطن دي سي

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Table of Contents

PREFACE	Page 3
Khalil E. Jahshan	
I. UNDERSTANDING THE GCC CRISIS	
The Crisis in Gulf Relations: Old Rivalries, New Ambitions	Page 7
Policy Analysis Unit, Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies – Doha, Qatar	
Why Qatar? Explaining Contentious Issues	Page 13
Imad K. Harb	
Absent Rationality in the GCC Crisis	Page 19
Imad K. Harb	
II. ANALYSIS OF THE 13 DEMANDS	
Saudi, UAE Demands to End Qatar Crisis: Commands, Diktats, and Ultimatums	Page 29
ACW Research and Analysis Unit	
Legal Analysis of the Demands Presented to Qatar	Page 35
George R.A. Doumar, Raj Patel, and Michael J. Smith	
III. GCC CRISIS AND CYBER WARFARE	
Stupendous Hubris... and Its Damage	Page 43
Imad K. Harb	
The GCC Crisis: Media, Hacks, and the Emergence of “Cyber Power”	Page 49
Tamara Kharroub	
IV. IMPACT ON ENERGY MARKETS	
Impact of the GCC Crisis on Global Energy Markets	Page 59
Joe Macaron	

Table of Contents

Cont.

V. REGIONAL REPERCUSSIONS OF THE GCC CRISIS

Turkey and the Gulf Crisis: Erdoğan’s Most Difficult Game? Page 65
Mustafa Gurbuz

The GCC in Turmoil: Repercussions of the Gulf Crisis on Iraq-GCC Relations Page 73
Abdulwahab Al-Qassab

An Economic Explanation for Egypt’s Alignment in the GCC Crisis Page 77
Imad K. Harb

VI. US ROLE IN THE GCC CRISIS

What’s at Stake for the United States in the GCC Crisis? Page 87
Joe Macaron

President Trump Failed His Gulf Test Page 93
Imad K. Harb

Qatar-US Memorandum of Understanding: A Game Changer Page 99
Imad K. Harb

APPENDICES

Appendix A Page 105
Timeline of the GCC Crisis

Appendix B Page 113
List of 13 Demands Presented to Qatar on June 21, 2017

Appendix C Page 115
The Six Principles Presented to Qatar on July 19, 2017

Appendix D Page 117
Excerpts of US Official Statements Regarding the Gulf Crisis

Appendix E Page 121
Map of Qatar and the Region

ABOUT US

ACW-Affiliated Authors in This Publication Page 123

About Arab Center Washington DC Page 127

PREFACE

On behalf of Arab Center Washington DC (ACW), I am delighted to offer you this compilation of articles and resources titled, *Crisis in the Gulf Cooperation Council: Challenges and Prospects*. The booklet includes 14 policy papers written by ACW analysts since the crisis began, as well as several pertinent background documents dealing with various aspects of the current Gulf crisis and the accusations leveled at Qatar by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Egypt, and other Arab countries. The crisis culminated in the severing of diplomatic and economic ties by these countries with Qatar on June 5, 2017.

Given the profound implications and significance of the situation in the Gulf for the entire region, ACW sought to produce objective and timely analyses to explain the historical and sociopolitical origins of the crisis and to clarify its political ramifications. The first section in the booklet offers background analysis of the regional rivalries and ambitions that contributed to the emergence of the crisis. The second provides political and legal assessments of the 13 demands presented to Qatar by its adversaries. The third section addresses the role of the media and the employment of cyber warfare throughout the ongoing conflict. The fourth section explains the impact on global energy markets in light of

the centrality of oil and gas to the regional economy. The fifth section deals with regional repercussions, including Turkey's policy in the Gulf, the impact of the crisis on Iraqi-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) relations, and Egypt's motivation and involvement. The collection concludes with papers focusing on the role of the United States and the impact of the crisis on US-GCC relations.

As an independent, nonprofit, and nonpartisan research center focused on the Arab world and on US-Arab relations, ACW remains committed to its core mission of identifying and advocating for peaceful solutions to regional conflicts. This remains true regarding the current dispute between Qatar and some of its GCC partners that opted to impose a diplomatic and economic siege on the Gulf country. The mediation efforts by Kuwait and the United States might better serve the parties involved to end the blockade and engage in direct negotiations to resolve their dispute diplomatically and focus on the serious challenges affecting their common security and stability.



KHALIL E. JAHSHAN
Executive Director
Arab Center Washington DC

I. UNDERSTANDING THE GCC CRISIS

The Crisis in Gulf Relations: Old Rivalries, New Ambitions

June 6, 2017

Policy Analysis Unit, Arab Center for
Research and Policy Studies

– Doha, Qatar

Why Qatar? Explaining Contentious Issues

July 6, 2017

Imad K. Harb

Absent Rationality in the GCC Crisis

July 5, 2017

Imad K. Harb



THE CRISIS IN GULF RELATIONS: OLD RIVALRIES, NEW AMBITIONS

Policy Analysis Unit, Arab Center
for Research and Policy Studies
– Doha, Qatar

INTRODUCTION

On the morning of Wednesday May 24, Qataris woke up to a sensationalist media vilification campaign led by Emirati and Saudi broadcasters and other media institutions, targeting the emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani. It later emerged that statements falsely attributed to the emir as part of the media campaign were entirely fabricated. Hackers who commandeered the website of the Qatar News Agency (QNA) on the night of May 23-24 had planted the misattributed statements, purportedly delivered by Sheikh Tamim during the latest graduation ceremony held for Qatari conscripts the previous day.¹ These allegations triggered a two-week-long, frenzied media campaign attack against Qatar by media based in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia. The extent of the vitriol, and the willingness to attack members of Qatar's ruling family, have completely overturned the established norms of Gulf interstate relations.

Following the same "shock and awe" tactics,

Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt all announced in the early hours of Monday, June 5, that they would sever all diplomatic and consular relations with Qatar. The parties also announced a full blockade of Qatar, covering its single land border, with Saudi Arabia, as well as the country's airspace and seaports. This extended to transit travel across the region, with all planes traveling to and from Qatar prevented from landing in Saudi, Emirati, or Egyptian airports. Qatari diplomats were given 48 hours to leave the blockading countries while other Qatari nationals were allowed two weeks to leave.

THE ROOTS OF THE CRISIS

Since 1995, Qatar's foreign policy has been defined by its dynamics and flexibility, giving the country the ability to balance relations with a variety of major players in the region and across the globe. Qatar was able to build robust relations with the United States—hosting one of the world's largest US military bases at Al Udeid, in the south of the country—while simultaneously strengthening ties with some of Washington's traditional foes. A series of international conferences and symposia which the country hosted and sponsored became a tool in the Qatari soft power repertoire. To this was added the Al Jazeera network, which precipitated the discussion of previously taboo topics across the entire Arab region. The broadcaster addressed

some of the most pressing, often ignored, topics in the Middle East. It screened Arab intellectuals and political activists from a wide array of political trends and currents who had been previously suppressed in their home countries. Domestically, too, Qatar bore witness to change, with increased openness that led to a wider role for women in the public space. This also included the liberalization of education as well as hosting satellite campuses of US universities. Additionally, the country offered a space to open-minded Muslim religious leaders to help formulate a renewed understanding of the Islamic faith. At the same time, a personal donation from the emir at that time, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa, made possible the construction of Christian churches in the country. Finally, for the past two decades Qatar has also been steadfast in supporting resistance to Israeli aggression in both Lebanon and the Gaza Strip. These changes pioneered by Qatar in its foreign and media policies have been a source of irritation for some of its neighbors in the region—especially Saudi Arabia—causing periodic crises in their relations.

Many of these Arab governments chose to blame the media—and, in particular, the Al Jazeera network hosted by Qatar—for the Arab Spring, instead of engaging in any serious introspection of their own conduct. The dignified, civilized model of protest which young Arabs presented in capitals

across the region won the admiration of the West and the wider world, leading even the United States to consider abandoning some of its most long-standing allies such as Hosni Mubarak in Egypt. This heightened the pressure felt in many Arab capitals. While most Arab governments were on the back foot, waiting to react to events on the ground, Doha and the Al Jazeera network were in their prime, playing a vibrant role across the region. A reversal of fortunes was quickly in the making, however.

A watershed moment for both the Arab Spring and Qatari foreign policy came in 2013. At that point, revolutionary momentum began to slow down due to the flaws of opposition movements, the mistakes made by Islamists who had come to power in Egypt, the violence of standing regimes, and military officers' ambitions to rule. The power of a counterrevolutionary surge was quickly visible on two fronts. In Egypt, support from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates allowed a junta to reverse the gains of the January 25, 2011 uprising that had removed Mubarak, while in Syria, Iranian backing allowed the Assad regime to launch a military counterattack against opposition groups. Counterrevolutionary forces were quick to blame Qatar for the frustrations they faced in pushing back the clock on the gains made by the Arab peoples during the Arab Spring.

Led by the UAE and Saudi Arabia, these

counterrevolutionary forces held Qatar responsible for foiling their plans to reverse the gains of the Arab Spring. The June 30, 2013 coup, which removed Egypt's first democratically elected president, exposed the rift between these two Gulf countries, together with Bahrain, and Qatar. The governments of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain withdrew their ambassadors from Qatar by the beginning of 2014, marking the crescendo of a crisis which lasted for a full seven months.

A CRISIS RENEWED

The prevailing circumstances at the time prevented the parties from achieving a final and complete resolution to the crisis of 2013-2014. The latest escalation against Doha, surfacing in mid-May 2017, allowed the other Gulf countries to rekindle that conflict. This is despite Qatari adherence to the Gulf consensus on a number of key regional issues—from the conflict in Yemen, to the Syrian crisis, to Iran and the battle against terrorism. The election of Donald Trump to the White House seems also to have emboldened voices antagonistic to Qatar in Riyadh and Abu Dhabi. In concert with other factors, domestic and foreign, the Trump presidency created the right environment for an alliance between the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and the Deputy Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, and for the leadership of those two countries to

relaunch their attack on Qatar. This came into focus with the summit in the Saudi capital that brought the new, visiting US president together with leaders from the Arab and wider Islamic world. At the time, Saudi Arabian communications sought to play down the extent of involvement from Qatar, likewise that of Jordan, in the summit while accentuating the role played by Egypt and the UAE. Indications of a deep-rooted crisis in relations rose to the surface within two days following the summit.

The intensity of the Emirati and Saudi media campaign continued unabated even in the face of stringent Qatari denials that the emir had even made those statements, and in the face of confirmations from several other countries that the QNA website was indeed hacked. That the facts on the ground did not affect the media campaign lends credence to the idea that Qatar was being targeted by a premeditated campaign. In fact, a media campaign orchestrated by the UAE and waged across US publications predated even the statements misattributed to Sheikh Tamim. As Qatar's foreign minister observed, in the five weeks preceding the hacking there were 13 separate opinion pieces attacking Qatar in the US media as well as a major conference focused on Qatar held in the US capital to which no Qatari representative was invited.²

One distinguishing feature of the latest media campaign against Qatar, as seen in the

Arabic language mouthpieces of the UAE and Saudi governments, is the willingness of the attackers to engage in personal, ad hominem attacks on members of the Qatari ruling family and even to cast doubt on the ruling Al Thani's legitimacy to govern. This is entirely unprecedented in relations between the Gulf States, where previous conflicts have tended to avoid involving individual members of the ruling families. Previously, such a move would have been viewed as destabilizing to the foundations of hereditary rule that characterizes all members of the GCC.

The latest attack on Qatar has undertaken, at its core, a number of accusations regarding Qatari foreign affairs which have no basis in reality, and they vanish entirely when brought under the slightest scrutiny. Chief among these are the suggestions that Qatar is a state sponsor of terrorism, that it is working to strengthen its relationship with Iran, or that it destabilizes its neighbors and allies in the Gulf Cooperation Council. These baseless accusations are discredited by the fact that none other than President Donald Trump, when meeting Sheikh Tamim at the Riyadh Summit, praised Qatar for its role in the war against terrorism. In terms of a Qatari relationship with Iran, the fact is that Doha has paid a higher price than any other Gulf country for the breakdown of its relations with Tehran. This includes not only the ran-

soms paid to free Qatari citizens who were captured in Iraq, but also the political capital it lost through cutting ties with Iran. Meanwhile, the UAE was busy expanding its strong economic ties to Tehran, with 80 percent of Iranian trade passing through the Emirates, a long-standing and vital transit port for goods bound for Iran.

An illustration of these ties was painted by the Iranian ambassador to Abu Dhabi, speaking in Tehran to an Emirati trade delegation in June, 2014.³ Mohammed Ali Fayyad pointed out how trade between Iran and the UAE, while fluctuating between 2010 and 2013, skyrocketed in 2014, making the Emirates Iran's most important trading partner ahead of China, India, South Korea, and Turkey.⁴ This has not stopped the UAE from adopting the most outwardly belligerent tone with respect to Iran.

The campaign against Qatar has also alleged that Doha supports the Muslim Brotherhood. Qatar has repeatedly made clear that it has never been a sponsor of the Brotherhood, an organization with which it has its differences. Nonetheless, Doha refuses to brand the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization, a move which it sees as both inaccurate and counter-productive to the battle against genuine terrorist organizations.

The insinuation that Qatar is a state sponsor of terrorism is easily discredited by the

country's strong participation in the war on terror. Today, accusations that Qatar supports terrorism can only be used to mean one thing, namely, that the country should no longer host Hamas. Indeed, people would do well to remember that Saudi Arabia was only very recently the target of a campaign that sought to make Riyadh culpable for the September 11, 2001 attacks, led by the same groups who are today victimizing Qatar.

CONCLUSION

Whatever surreptitious motives are declared, the present-day attack against Qatar clearly has one aim in mind: it is an attempt by the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia to bring Qatar in line with their foreign policy agenda. This is particularly true with regards to the relationship with the present regime in Egypt, which is seen in both Riyadh and Abu Dhabi as a floodgate against the winds of change sweeping through the region. One final salient point is the support of the Israel lobby in Washington. The extent of coordination with the Israelis has been brought to light by newly released correspondence between Yousef al-Otaiba, Abu Dhabi's ambassador to Washington, and members of known pro-Israeli groups, who appear to share the goal

of demonizing Qatar.

Qatar cannot be expected to surrender its foreign policy in such a threatening environment and in the midst of a blockade based on media fabrications. Any exit from the crisis requires a dialogue between the two sides, one in which a mutual understanding is achieved not by way of threats and capitulations.

Any outcomes of this attack on Qatar will ultimately rely on the position in Washington. Although it is difficult to imagine that the three Gulf States, in addition to Egypt, took these measures against their neighbor without consulting the United States, Washington has so far appeared only on the sidelines of this crisis. US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, commenting during a visit to Australia, said only that the US was encouraging the sides to the conflict to settle their differences and stressed that the Gulf Cooperation Council must maintain its unity. Likewise, it seems that Washington will continue to oppose any attempt to disrupt the regional balance that it is keen to maintain in the Gulf region. This is especially so given that Qatar retains its largest military base in the Middle East, and Washington may be wary of pushing Hamas back into the arms of Iran.

1) Qatar has had universal conscription for males since 2015.

2) See statement by the Qatari foreign minister, Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, published as part of a joint press conference with the foreign minister of Somalia, May 25, 2017: [https://www.mofa.gov.qa/en/all-mofa-news/details/2017/05/25/foreign-minister-'qatar-will-address-the-media-campaign-targeting-it'](https://www.mofa.gov.qa/en/all-mofa-news/details/2017/05/25/foreign-minister-'qatar-will-address-the-media-campaign-targeting-it)

3) See, "UAE-Iran Trade Volume Reaches \$15.7 billion in 2013," Al Alam (Tehran), June 1, 2014, available online (link in Arabic): <http://www.alalam.ir/news/1599121>

4) See, "The Truth Behind Emirati-Iranian Trade Links," Al Arab (London), January 31, 2016, available online (link in Arabic): <http://www.alarab.co.uk/?id=71991>

WHY QATAR? EXPLAINING CONTENTIOUS ISSUES

Imad K. Harb

Three of the countries comprising the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) – Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates – have just severed diplomatic relations with the State of Qatar, a partner in the council. Such a drastic measure followed tense relations over the last couple of weeks that took the form of a media campaign mostly fought against Doha after the fabrication of statements attributed to its ruler, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, in which he purportedly affirmed “unacceptable” positions regarding Iran, Palestinian Hamas, Lebanese Hezbollah, terrorism and responsibility for it, and Qatari-American relations.

The disinformation campaign and the latest severance of diplomatic relations are serious developments in the life of the council and represent indications of deeper troubles within the entente. More importantly, these developments threaten the Gulf countries’ unity at a time of great turmoil and uncertainty in the Middle East and increased Iranian influence and activism in the region. Indeed, the best option at this time is for all members of the GCC to step back from causing further damage to their alliance, evaluate what binds them politically, economically, socially, and culturally, and pursue negotiations and compromises that

help them face their common challenges.

MAJOR CONTENTIOUS ISSUES

Over the last two decades, Qatar has steered a somewhat independent course in foreign policy from other members of the council. This is not different from the Sultanate of Oman’s autonomous approach to regional politics, but Qatar’s has different circumstances. Still, any deviations from accepted GCC policies have unfortunately caused some tension between it and other members, specifically the three that took the latest drastic action.

THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

The first issue that has strained relations between Qatar and Saudi Arabia and the UAE is one linked to its relations with the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) and to its hosting of some of the organization’s figures in Doha for decades. Their presence in the country, however, should not be strange to other GCC states. In the 1950s and 1960s, Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf sheikdoms hosted thousands of MB members escaping persecution, mainly by the nationalist regime of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser but also by the other secular regimes in Syria and Iraq. While there, these exiled MB supporters were instrumental in establishing the Gulf states’ educational systems and influenced their social development. Today, while Saudi Arabia and the UAE have designated the MB as a terrorist organization,¹ Kuwait and Bahrain

still allow their Brotherhood branches to operate legally, raise funds, and participate in the political process.² Indeed, about half of Kuwait's 24 opposition members of parliament are either Islamists or Salafists,³ and these parties have three representatives in Bahrain's lower house.⁴ This context makes criticism of Qatar illogical and suggests that there are other reasons that prompted the severing of relations.

Most important among these reasons is the fact that the best organized and influential group to exploit the changes brought about by the "Arab Spring" was the Muslim Brotherhood. In Egypt, arguably the most consequential Arab state where the developments of 2011 succeeded in changing the regime and toppling President Hosni Mubarak, only the MB was able to organize itself and succeed in assuming power, on both the parliamentary and presidential levels. Qatar perceived this outcome as a democratic translation of the will of the Egyptian people. At the same time, President Mohamed Morsi's ascent to power was worrisome to other Gulf rulers and political elites who were not quite convinced that they could deal with the new Egypt and feared that the organization could steer Arab politics in a direction anathema to Gulf interests.

That anti-Qatar Gulf states could not cope with the idea of a governing Muslim Brotherhood cannot be helped, given political and elite preferences. But it could be argued that the critics should have been

more circumspect in conflating the MB and the extremist Islamist organizations that arose since the 1970s. By not differentiating between the two, they reinforced the views of rightist and neoconservative politicians and commentators in the United States who remain consumed with fighting what they call "Islamic terrorism." Indeed, one might be tempted to excuse the Americans involved in attacking Qatar since they really do not understand the differences between Islam and Islamism and, in reality, confuse the two—as was apparent in President Donald Trump's address to Muslim leaders in Saudi Arabia.

By the same token, it is hard to excuse GCC countries that criticize Qatar for its MB position because they should know better. The mainstream Muslim Brotherhood is the moderate heir of the original organization established by Hassan al-Banna in 1928. Although it has experienced many changes and had a number of leaders, it is historically not guilty of being responsible for spawning violent Islamist organizations whose ideological underpinning was the thinking and writings of Sayyid Qutb. Qutb was an Egyptian Islamist activist who opposed the nationalist secularism of the Nasser regime and, instead, preached the establishment of an Islamic state governed by the laws of Sharia. In the end, he was imprisoned and hanged by Egyptian security forces in 1966. Organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliates, however, should not be blamed for creating al-Qaeda and the so-called Islamic State. Nonetheless,

in the service of political ends, some GCC rulers, politicians, and publics at large link the two Islamic orientations and unfairly blame Qatar for “helping the extremists.”

STRATEGIC HEDGING

Since the 1990s, Qatar has followed the principle of “strategic hedging” in its foreign policy, seeking good relations with many countries in order to exercise an independence not often possible for small states. In addition to being an active member of the GCC, it has befriended the United States and hosts Al Udeid Air Base; it has good relations with Turkey; it is not too harsh on Iran, although it criticizes the latter’s overreach; and it has found a role for itself in Arab politics such as in Yemen, Libya, Syria, Sudan, and Tunisia. In Lebanon, Qatar brokered a political peace between Lebanese factions in 2008. Over the last two decades, it has generally sought to distribute its eggs among many baskets; otherwise, it fears it would be obliged to toe the line drawn by larger and more powerful members of the GCC like Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

In the present confluence of developments and events, Qatar is asked to stake an anti-Iranian claim that the country does not consider to be in its best interest. Its leadership sees that escalating the situation with Iran—which Qatar understands to be involved in many Arab affairs—will only exacerbate the sectarian divide in the Middle East and may result in unforeseen

and unfortunate outcomes everyone will regret. It also understands that the revival of neoconservative circles in the United States, which are exploiting the disarray of the Trump Administration, may inevitably lead to a confrontation with Iran. For this reason, the Qatari leadership sees that it needs to assert its independence in its foreign policy—not specifically to oppose collective Gulf action but to avoid the malfeasance of American circles that have no qualms about plunging others in bloody morasses. It also goes without saying that Qatar, or any other state for that matter, should not simply have to abide by the diktat of other states that may have different preferences and interests.

THE HAMAS FACTOR

It is hard to see how the presence of the leadership of the Palestinian Hamas organization represents a clear and present danger for the GCC. While it is not broadly loved by some Arab governments, Hamas is only seen as a terrorist organization by Egypt, which considers it part of the Muslim Brotherhood. Last month, Hamas dissociated itself from the MB and took an important step toward normalization with the general Arab and international position on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict when it modified its charter and accepted the establishment of a Palestinian state on the June 4, 1967 borders. In essence, it joined the Palestinian Authority in fully accepting the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002 that was, and remains, the position of the Arab League. That initiative was proposed by Saudi Arabia and has been

affirmed by every Arab summit meeting since.

It is also hard to think that the problem with Hamas is one that should concern the GCC states to the magnitude shown by Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. One can understand their worry about Iranian-supported Hezbollah, which they already named a terrorist organization because of its activities in Syria, Yemen, and Lebanon, and their concern regarding Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah's attacks on the Gulf countries as enemies of his "axis of resistance." But Hamas has not shown any animosity toward the Gulf countries and, in fact, has distanced itself from any Iranian assistance after the Islamic Republic's support for the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Asad. Further, aside from hosting the Hamas leadership after its exile from Damascus, Qatar does not help the organization militarily; on the contrary, it provides humanitarian assistance to the people of the Gaza Strip, where Hamas rules.

It is clear that bashing Hamas and Qatar serves the interests of opponents of both GCC collective action and Palestinians' national right to an independent state. These are the actors who are currently orchestrating the American angle of the attacks on Qatar. It is folly to believe that critics of Qatar have the interests of Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE at heart. Only last year, they and many others were cheering when both houses of the American

Congress voted to override President Barack Obama's veto of the Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act (JASTA) that specifically targeted Saudi Arabia. A decade ago, American politicians and opinion shapers forced the cancellation of an agreement with Dubai Ports World (owned by the Emirate of Dubai in the UAE) to manage six major American ports because it supposedly compromised American security.

Moreover, while attacking Hamas is a safe tactic in the American capital and may gain traction considering the dominance of the pro-Israel lobby, those involved do not spare the Palestinian Authority or its president, Mahmoud Abbas. The view in the United States is that the PA is not doing enough to "fight incitement against Israel" and Abbas is seen as an ineffectual leader who cannot deliver what Israel wants of order and stability in the Palestinian territories. Indeed, Hamas in this case is incidental to an ingrained orientation toward the Palestinian cause, no matter where the organization could find a safe place.

CONCLUSION

This confluence of many factors was an important foundation on which an attack on Qatar rested. The timing was opportune after President Trump visited Saudi Arabia and met with many leaders of the Muslim world. Some analysts have even suggested that the administration may have had something to do with the flare-up. President

Trump's own tweets on June 6, 2017, accused Qatar of having a role in "funding of Radical Ideology."⁵ But the statements by the Defense Department and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and tweets by the American ambassador in Doha Dana Shell Smith extolling the relationship with Qatar point to a different conclusion. In addition, on June 7 CNN reported that "US investigators believe Russian hackers breached Qatar's state news agency and planted a fake news report" that was the opening salvo in the current crisis.

The timing may serve to distract from the investigations into the Trump Administration's relations with Russia prior to the election. On the American side, those involved in the attacks on Qatar are Trump loyalists (such as the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, whose leadership

belongs to the neoconservative camp) who are looking to create conditions to exacerbate tensions with Iran. Unfortunately, these individuals and organizations can always rely on the absence of conflict management and resolution mechanisms in the institutions of the GCC to try to sow the seeds of conflict among members of the alliance.

In the end, however, verbally assaulting Qatar and later severing diplomatic relations with this GCC member are no cure for any purported tensions with Doha. What should concern all members of the GCC today is working together not only to simply iron out differences but to provide an agenda for successful collective action at all levels and in all fields in the service of the security, progress, and prosperity of the people of the Arabian Gulf—and Arabs everywhere.

1) Rania El Gamal, "UAE Lists Muslim Brotherhood as Terrorist Group," *Reuters*, November 15, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-emirates-politics-brotherhood-idUSKCN0IZ0OM20141115>.

2) Giorgio Cafiero, "What Bahrain's Opposition Crackdown Means for Country's Brotherhood," *Al-Monitor*, June 27, 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/06/bahrain-crackdown-wefaq-shiite-opposition-muslim-brotherhood.html>.

3) "Kuwait's Islamist-Dominated Opposition Wins Near-Majority in Snap Elections," *DW*, November 11, 2016, <http://www.dw.com/en/kuwaits-islamist-dominated-opposition-wins-near-majority-in-snap-elections/a-36540834>.

4) Justin Gengler, "Electoral Rules (and Threats) Cure Bahrain's Sectarian Parliament," *The Washington Post*, December 1, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2014/12/01/electoral-rules-and-threats-cure-bahrain-s-sectarian-parliament/?utm_term=.115ef3fa63d7.

5) Karen DeYoung, Kareem Fahim, and Sudarsan Raghavan, "Trump Jumps into Worsening Dispute Between Qatar and Powerful Arab Bloc," *The Washington Post*, June 6, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/turkey-and-kuwait-move-to-mediate-middle-east-rift-over-qatar/2017/06/06/3fc3b070-4a8a-11e7-a186-60c031eab644_story.html?hpid=hp_rhp-top-table-main_qatar-1010a%3Ahomepage%2Fstory&utm_term=.925be63dfba6.

ABSENT RATIONALITY IN THE GCC CRISIS

Imad K. Harb

Rational decision-making normally begins with accurate information that supports policy choices. After careful consideration of costs and benefits, policymakers arrive at a decision that best reflects reality and establishes and safeguards interests. Political actors usually seek decisions that are nearly guaranteed to assure a good return on their policy orientation, keeping in mind that competitors' preferences—by applying the same model—are either fully or partially satisfied when they make corresponding decisions. In other words, a rational actor makes demands that are expected to cajole, or even force, policy changes without appearing to blatantly disregard the basics of reciprocal behavior of counterparts equally invested in the issue at stake.

Thus, everything being equal, objectives and preferred outcomes are carefully calibrated to achieve optimal results in both directions; the initiator of policy choices should not expect to fully succeed, nor should the opponent be made to completely succumb. Indeed, the initiator never assumes full success, especially if the responder acts rationally and exploits resources and powers optimally. Without a balance between policy demands and the realities of their implementation, the initiator is faced with potentially unpleasant alternatives: an

accusation of irrationality; a likelihood of escalation that may not lead anywhere; or backing down and abandoning objectives—all unwelcome outcomes risking loss of prestige and credibility.

In the present Gulf crisis, developments since last May have shown a careless disregard on the part of the Saudi Arabia-United Arab Emirates-Bahrain entente of the basic tenets of rational decision-making and brinkmanship. Their expectations of a Qatari change in policy and behavior—buttressed by a list of ill-considered demands on Doha—are not rational or even achievable without the complete subjugation of the small peninsular nation to its neighbors.¹ Qatar has been asked to shed whatever independence, sovereignty, and freedom of action it has secured over decades in return for nothing but a dependent relationship that places its domestic and foreign policies under the control of its larger neighbors.

RECKLESSNESS BEGETS DANGERS

Absolute and unchecked political power underlies this anti-Qatar approach, resulting in a series of reckless actions that defy rational explanations. According to the list of demands Kuwait submitted on behalf of the anti-Qatar coalition, Doha, among other things, must sever all diplomatic relations with Iran, suspend all military agreements with Turkey, and shutter a Turkish base on Qatari soil.² It is also expected to cease any relations with the Muslim Brotherhood and violent extremist groups (all lumped

together), expel individuals who are unacceptable to the complainants, and hand over “fugitives” it “harbors” to Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. In a direct attack on freedom of speech and the press, it must also shut down the pan-Arab Al Jazeera television station and some news outlets it sponsors and funds. Finally, Doha is supposed to accept an inspection and verification plan that would allow the complainants to supervise, monthly, its adherence to their demands, as if Qatar were a rogue state unworthy of trust.

Any examination of the demands and their language points to at least two important flaws. The first is the fact that they were not made to satisfy known international norms of behavior but merely to mollify US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson’s insistence that the anti-Qatar coalition make “reasonable and actionable” demands.³ The second is that the demands appear so extreme that no state, no matter how “guilty” or weak, would agree to accept them. Indeed, the nature of the demands and the imprudent insistence on their implementation in toto expose the initiators as uninterested in a reasonable, rational, and acceptable resolution of the crisis—i.e., they made their demands in a way that would assure their rejection.⁴ More poignantly, Saudi Arabia’s insistence that the demands are “non-negotiable” further complicates the issue and places the Gulf on a course of progressively more tension and the possibility of armed conflict.⁵

So far, this reckless anti-Qatar approach has

not produced the presupposed response from Qatar. Nor is it expected to do so. In fact, Doha has shown caution, poise, adroitness, and a continuing readiness to negotiate all the issues that purportedly led to the current dispute. Most importantly, and cognizant of the dangers of retaliation, Qatar has so far avoided the pitfalls of reacting angrily to accusations levied against it, in the process showing an uncanny diplomatic skill and maneuverability that have earned it broad esteem.

These pages have previously dealt with the issue of the Muslim Brotherhood at the heart of the anti-Qatar coalition’s grievance with Doha.⁶ Further analyses have looked at other developments.⁷ The present investigation will focus on two irrational demands that have far-reaching regional impacts: those dealing with severing relations with Iran and with ending Qatar’s military relations with Turkey.

THE QUESTION OF IRAN

Qatar is asked to sever all diplomatic relations with Iran and expel supposedly resident members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) from its capital. Believers in Qatari malfeasance go back in history to when the former ruler, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, visited Beirut following the brutal 2006 Israeli war on Lebanon to announce Qatar’s intention to help rebuild the country. Pictures of the emir with captions of “Thank you Qatar” adorned Hezbollah

areas in Lebanon for years afterward. Sheikh Hamad also invited former Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad—never trusted by Gulf leaders—to attend the GCC’s 28th Summit in 2007 in Doha. In addition, Qatar remained committed to an open relationship with Iran—a relationship that, for instance, facilitated the end of Lebanon’s political crisis in 2008.

But reviewing history selectively can be both regressive and misguided. Qatar’s relationship with Iran ran aground long ago, after the start of Syria’s civil war in 2011. Doha supported the anti-Asad coalition of Syrian forces committed to regime change in Damascus—a policy that remains in overall accord with at least Bahraini and Saudi Arabian orientations and anathema to Iranian preferences. Since the ascension of the current ruler, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, in 2013, Qatar has been well in line with Saudi preferences in Syria regarding a political transition, except for its support of some elements of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood who also worked for Syria’s deliverance from Asad’s rule, but who remain unwelcome by some Gulf countries. It is noteworthy that according to Hezbollah, all GCC states—Qatar included—are now equally guilty of “fomenting terrorism” in Syria; indeed, “Thank you Qatar” banners have long ago disappeared from Beirut streets.

Moreover, when Iranian mobs attacked the Saudi Arabian diplomatic missions in Iran in 2016, Qatar withdrew its diplomatic

mission from Tehran in protest. During the Iranian nuclear crisis, Qatar joined the GCC states in proposing a negotiated settlement and supported the GCC position that endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. Qatar also twice participated in GCC summit meetings with former American President Barack Obama to conduct negotiations within the US-GCC strategic dialogue. In other words, Qatar has adhered to general GCC principles and policy orientations. It has also remained keen to apply a principle of strategic hedging that allows it, as a small state, to chart a semi-independent foreign policy.

It is indeed hard to see rationality in the anti-Qatar coalition’s demands regarding Iran. If the GCC is committed to a peaceful, albeit cool, relationship with Iran—and it is—why is Qatar singled out for using a conciliatory tone with the Islamic Republic, with which it shares the South Pars/North Dome field, the largest natural gas reservoir in the world? Iran doubtless represents a challenge to all GCC states, including Qatar; but doesn’t blockading Qatar and severing all relations with the state risk pushing it into a better association with Iran? Why should Qatar sever its economic relations with Iran, which are minimal, while the UAE benefits from the bulk of the \$37 billion of imports Iran gets from and through the GCC?⁸ Dubai—a constituent UAE emirate—is Iran’s major trading partner in the Gulf and hosts tens of thousands of expatriate Iranians; yet, no mention is made of suspending any relations between the glitzy emirate and the mullahs’

capital.

Militarily speaking, it is difficult to see the rationality of the anti-Qatar stance by Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. Qatar represents a critical node of GCC security and, in addition to hosting the American Al Udeid Air Base, possesses the US-made Patriot PAC-3 air defense system that is crucial for defending Qatari and GCC territories against Iranian missiles. How and why can Saudi Arabia, for instance, be assured of fully defending its eastern flank against such missiles if Qatar's military establishment believes that Riyadh brooks ill will toward its leaders? By the same token, is Abu Dhabi any safer now, when Doha may not perceive that it is in its own interest to prevent Iran from targeting Emirati oil platforms in Gulf waters? If GCC military coordination, cooperation, and interoperability were problematic in the past, how may they be served now that Qatar's armed forces have severed operations with the GCC's Peninsula Shield Command? Finally, what is the rationality of the calculation that Qatar would abandon its independent foreign policy toward Iran while it is subjected to a blockade by its Arab sisters in the GCC, one that deprives it of foodstuffs and necessities for the wellbeing of its citizens and millions of expatriate workers?

THE QUESTION OF THE RELATIONSHIP WITH TURKEY

Political rationality is also under assault

in the demand regarding Qatar's relations with Turkey. Although close Qatari-Turkish relations may have never appealed to the anti-Qatar coalition, it remains surprising that the alliance would fathom pushing Doha to end its military cooperation with Ankara and shut down the Turkish base being built on Qatari soil. The fact that Qatar and Turkey have similar views of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), coupled with Qatar's ability to use strategic hedging to protect itself as a small state, have raised alarms in the coalition's capitals that Doha may have secured too much independence for itself vis-à-vis other more powerful states in the GCC.

To Qatar, this demand naturally amounts to an insult to its sovereignty and independent decision-making. Not only is it being asked to relinquish its ability to decide freely in matters pertaining to hosting MB leaders, for instance, and allowing Al Jazeera to broadcast uncensored, but it is also being blackmailed to give up its internationally recognized right to associate with states or governments of its own choosing. This, like other demands, is the most unlikely one to be realized. In fact, and despite its desire to keep its relations intact with the anti-Qatar entente in the GCC, Turkey has announced its commitment to Qatar's security and has dispatched military forces to the nation after the Turkish parliament allowed their deployment in a vote on June 8.⁹

In essence, if the anti-Qatar alliance insists on its demand in this regard, it will be hard-

pressed to find an acceptable course of action. Its choice arguably oscillates between two equally difficult and dangerous alternatives. The first could be to threaten sanctions on Turkey as a negative inducement, in the hope that Ankara would be more cautious in throwing its lot behind Doha. The other is to declare all-out war on Qatar, a choice that would be utter folly considering the Saudi-led coalition's prolonged involvement in Yemen and international, especially American, responses. Needless to say, neither of these is desirable or indeed achievable, given the damage they would conceivably cause to GCC security opposite a strident Iran.

To Turkey, this demand represents a direct assault on its intention to be a necessary ally for the countries of its "near abroad." As Turkey sees its options shrinking in Syria with Iran's prospects improving daily, it is likely to double down on aiding Qatar as a willing partner. Furthermore, Ankara understands the GCC's security qualms and knows that whatever the anti-Qatar alliance may threaten is arguably a bluff, given the Iranian challenge. While lack of rational calculations may blind Saudi Arabia and its allies to the dangers attendant in the demand presented to Qatar, Turkey will always count on itself as a good guarantee against the Iranian danger, one that the GCC countries cannot ignore.

To both Qatar and Turkey, the demand to sever their military ties is disingenuous since every GCC country hosts foreign

soldiers, especially American troops. Indeed, the UAE hosts contingents from the United States, France, and South Korea that maintain bases on its shores. It has Colombian mercenaries whom it is accused of deploying in Yemen since the start of the Saudi-led coalition's intervention to defeat the Houthi-Saleh alliance against Yemen's legitimate authorities.¹⁰ Bahrain hosts the American Fifth Fleet; Kuwait has at least three US bases; Oman allows US aircraft access to its bases; and Saudi Arabia permits secret drone bases for operations against al-Qaeda in Yemen. Qatar hosts more than 10,000 US soldiers at Al Udeid Air Base and regards Turkish troops as fellow Muslims whose government has sent them to help secure a fellow Sunni Muslim nation.

THE FOLLY OF NOT LOOKING IN THE MIRROR

At least in geostrategic terms, what has so far transpired of ill-advised, short-sighted, and unreasonable policy prescriptions and demands by the anti-Qatar alliance points to an unfortunate paucity of rational thinking that compares costs and benefits and weighs alternatives. What makes this increasingly dangerous is the logical conclusion that, unable to back down and therefore lose credibility, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE may see escalation as a necessary way out of the crisis. Doing so, however, is only postponing the reckoning that the threesome must face: to lift the blockade on Qatar, refrain from interfering in its affairs, and accept negotiations with an open mind

to reaffirm GCC unity. The alternative is to allow brinkmanship to continue to undo decades of progress during which the GCC became the most cohesive Arab alliance.

Indeed, it behooves all members of the anti-Qatar entente to have an honest look in the mirror, one that is likely to be instructive in the following ways. First, rational actors cannot demand policy changes from others which they themselves would reject; otherwise, they risk being accused of being irrational, having to escalate the situation, or backing down. Second, responsible policymakers should not take a sister country's population hostage and impose a siege to force its leadership into submission. Third, strategic thinkers would do well to remember to hold on to like-minded allies – as Qatar has been, as an active member of the GCC – when challenges abound and dangers threaten everyone. Fourth, continuing on the same path that has so

far led to nothing but more tension and the possibility of armed conflict is exactly what the feared Islamic Republic of Iran wants and desires.

Finally, it would indeed be instructive for the anti-Qatar coalition's leaders to critically ask themselves a rather basic question: what happened in the interregnum between the visit of Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz to Doha in December 2016 and now that made the current crisis necessary? He was well received by adoring crowds and even danced the traditional Qatari *ardha*, as if he had no concerns about Doha's policies and behavior.¹¹ The answer to such a question is pivotal now that the original contentions about Qatar's collusion with Iran, support of Hamas as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, extolling of Hezbollah, and disparaging GCC rulers have all been proven to be unsupported and ill-advised.

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II. ANALYSIS OF THE 13 DEMANDS

Saudi, UAE Demands to End Qatar Crisis: Commands, Diktats, and Ultimatums

June 23, 2017

ACW Research and Analysis Unit

Legal Analysis of the Demands Presented to Qatar

June 26, 2017

George R.A. Doumar, Raj Patel, and Michael J. Smith



SAUDI, UAE DEMANDS TO END QATAR CRISIS: COMMANDS, DIKTATS, AND ULTIMATUMS

ACW Research and Analysis Unit

On June 5, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Egypt, Yemen, and other countries severed diplomatic and economic ties with Qatar, essentially instating a blockade against it. After over two weeks of mediation efforts by Kuwait and the United States, the Saudi-led coalition presented Qatar a list of 13 demands that included the following: scaling down diplomatic ties with Iran; shutting down the Turkish military base in Qatar; severing ties and funding to “terrorist” organizations and individuals; handing over dissidents from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, and Bahrain who reside in Qatar and freezing their assets; ending interference in those countries’ affairs; shutting down the Al Jazeera news network and other media outlets; aligning Qatar’s policies with those of other Gulf and Arab nations; paying reparations and compensations; agreeing to the demands within ten days; and consenting to monthly audits.

The list came after the US Department of State publicly expressed its frustration with the Saudi-led coalition’s response to its mediation efforts and called for “reasonable and actionable” demands and evidence for the accusations.

Are the demands leveled at Qatar “reasonable” and “actionable,” and was evidence provided? What are the likely intentions behind the final list? And what are the implications of this move for regional and international political dynamics? Analysts at Arab Center Washington DC provide an assessment and analysis of this list of demands on the State of Qatar.

CHOOSING BETWEEN SAUDI ARABIA AND IRAN

Joe Macaron

Topping the list of demands by Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt is Qatar’s relationship with Iran. Specifically, these demands have three components: 1) closing the Iranian diplomatic mission in Doha; 2) expelling members of Iran’s Revolutionary Guard and cutting off military and intelligence cooperation with Tehran; and 3) ensuring that trade and commerce with Iran comply with US and international sanctions without jeopardizing GCC security. Doha has been walking on a thin rope since Saudi-Iranian relations further deteriorated in January 2016. Qatar’s geographical predicament has always been to live, on the one hand, with the physical border and traditional ties with GCC neighbors Saudi Arabia and the UAE, and on the other hand, to keep peace with a traditional foe—Iran—across the Gulf, with which it shares the world’s largest gas field. However, with the Saudi border closed since June 5, Qatar’s path to survival must go through Iran. Demanding that Doha give up that route

without offering a face-saving exit will certainly not help mediation efforts.

Diplomatic and trade ties between GCC countries and Iran are not new. Tehran has a diplomatic mission in both Kuwait and Oman, with the new Iranian ambassador arriving just last month to Muscat. The extent of trade between Iran and most of the GCC countries is significant, most notably with the UAE. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) forecasted that the UAE's economy would gain \$13 billion from lifting international sanctions on Iran as a result of the nuclear deal. While the talks are not yet substantiated about the presence of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard in Qatar, where the United States has over 11,000 military personnel, there is indeed an open channel between Qatari and Iranian officials in places like Syria, where ceasefires are often coordinated. Demanding that Qatar give up that open channel is tantamount to asking Qatar to end its complex regional role and its independent foreign policy. In this list of demands, Doha is presented with a choice between surrendering or pivoting all the way to Iran. There should be a third way.

IMPACT OF INTERFERENCE IN TURKISH-QATARI RELATIONS

Mustafa Gurbuz

The demand to shut down the Turkish military base in Qatar reflects the strained relations between the new Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, Mohammed bin Salman,

and Ankara. Turkey had cultivated strong relations with the now-sidelined Prince Mohammed bin Nayef, and in the past two years, Erdoğan's multiple invitations to bin Salman to visit Ankara were rejected. The demand also reveals bin Salman's willingness to impose economic sanctions on Turkey as Riyadh knows well that Erdoğan would not give in and may even increase Ankara's support for Doha. As expected, Turkish officials were swift to declare that any demand for Turkey's closure of its military base would represent unjustified interference in Turkish-Qatari relations.

Such escalation will hurt both Turkey and Saudi Arabia in the long-term as the two regional powers have shared common interests in Syria and Iraq, especially since the beginning of the Syrian civil war. The major beneficiary of the row is Iran. Turkish-Saudi cooperation was perceived as essential to curb Iranian influence in Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan. Now, however, reports by Turkish media regarding alleged Saudi plans to support Kurdish groups in Syria indicate the growing level of mistrust between Ankara and Riyadh. Worried that its financial relations with the GCC might be endangered, Turkey sought to defuse tensions in the Gulf. Yet, Mohammed bin Salman's ambitions may push Ankara to pursue more assertive policies instead.

ALLEGATIONS OF SUPPORTING AND FINANCING TERRORISM

Radwan Ziadeh

The vehement accusation that Qatar supports “terrorist, sectarian and ideological organizations” takes us back to the endless and ubiquitous argument throughout the Arab world regarding the very definition of “terrorism.” Defining terrorism in accordance with international law is a complicated process characterized by long political debates about the differences between “resistance groups” and “terrorist groups.” As a result, authoritarian states in the Middle East use the term to marginalize and eliminate their political opponents both politically and physically. Such is the case of Egypt today, where the military regime argues that the Muslim Brotherhood is a terrorist organization despite the fact that it is not designated as one by the United Nations, the United States, or the United Kingdom. Without internationally recognized designations, the list of “terrorist organizations” provided by Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt cannot be considered a legitimate condition for settling this crisis.

In addition, Qatar has been part of the international coalition against ISIL in Syria. It also took a significant role in tracking the financing of terrorist organization like ISIL and the Nusra Front (an al-Qaeda-linked group in Syria), as many US officials have publicly acknowledged. In fact, Qatar does not host any individuals on the US terror

list, which is likely why the list of demands did not name individuals. To be sure, Qatar received five individuals handed by the US government at the request of the Obama Administration to assist in closing the Guantanamo Bay prison. Finally, the claims against Qatar of supporting and financing terrorism have not been supported by evidence and will not stand in court if Qatar were to go the International Court of Justice to dispute such allegations.

OMITTING HAMAS FROM THE DEMANDS TO AVOID AN ARAB PUBLIC BACKLASH

Yousef Munayyer

One interesting omission from the reported list of demands put forward by the states blockading Qatar was any mention of Hamas, the Palestinian group that currently administers the Gaza Strip and has routinely clashed with Israel. While the United Arab Emirates has designated Hamas a terror organization, Saudi Arabia had not taken such position. Thus, it was notable when Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir stated in press conferences in recent weeks that Qatar had to stop supporting terror organizations including Hamas. However, the official list of demands presented to Qatar excludes Hamas, although it includes several other organizations by name.

It is hard to tell what could be behind this lack of clarity in the position of the blockading countries. It could simply be that once they were prepared to publish a list

of demands, they became fearful of public reactions to steps that would seem too convenient for Israel. Public opinion has demonstrably shown that Arab publics oppose normalization with Israel, and demanding Qatar end support for Hamas, especially as Gaza struggles under siege, would put these regimes on record appearing to further Zionist objectives. But given the fact that it is the UAE that had the strongest anti-Hamas position of the group, recent developments between Gaza and Egypt may have also led to this omission. Exiled Palestinian politician Mohammad Dahlan, who is supported by the upper echelons of the UAE, has been trying to find a path back into Palestinian politics for some time. With the West Bank path closed to him due to Fatah's opposition, his recent flirtation with Hamas in Egypt might offer him a Gaza pathway back into Palestinian politics, where he hopes to challenge Mahmoud Abbas.

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS SHOULD BE A RED LINE

Tamara Kharroub

The list of demands, once again, target the Al Jazeera news network. The Saudi-led coalition demands that Qatar shut down Al Jazeera and all its affiliates, as well as all other news outlets "funded directly or indirectly by Qatar." According to the list, this includes, but is not limited to, Arabi21, Rassd, Al-Araby Al-Jadeed (The New Arab), Mekameleen, Middle East Eye, and others. This targeting of media organizations and

the request to suppress information and expression is a clear attack on the freedom of the press, in direct violation of human rights principles and international law. In fact, organizations like Human Rights Watch and Reporters Without Borders have condemned such demands as violations of the freedom of expression.

The campaign to isolate Qatar is believed to be primarily driven by the Saudi-led agenda of targeting any press that is critical of authoritarian regimes and repressive policies. This stands against widely respected universal democratic principles and freedoms of the press, opinion, and speech. Whether one agrees with Al Jazeera's approach or its reporting, the media giant has proven to be one of the few news outlets in the region that provide professional journalism, alternative viewpoints, and relative objectivity, in an increasingly restrictive Arab media environment. The demand to shut down media and press outlets violates the Arab public's right to information. Violations of these basic rights and freedoms should be a red line. After all, governments do not have the right to shut down media organizations or silence speech they deem critical of their policies.

CITIZENS SUFFER A HUMANITARIAN TOLL

Abdulwahab Al-Qassab

The list of demands presented by the Saudi-led coalition includes requests to hand over nationals of Saudi Arabia, the UAE,

Bahrain, and Egypt who reside in Qatar and whose respective countries perceive them as “terrorist figures, fugitives and wanted individuals,” in addition to freezing their assets and providing information to their governments. This demand threatens the human rights of these individuals who have already been drastically affected by the blockade. Mixed families of Qataris and members from the four besieging countries, for example, have fallen victim to the arbitrary siege. It is believed that thousands of families will be negatively affected by those demands. As of June 20, more than 1,750 complaints were received by the National Human Rights Committee of Qatar pertaining to various issues such as restriction of movement, family reunification, student education, and violation of private property rights.

As for the several hundred thousand Egyptians in Qatar, a number close to the population of Qatari nationals, the official Egyptian position has put the future and lives of this large community in peril. Although the Qatari government expressed its intention not to deport any of the citizens of the four countries, the fact remains that the demands of their governments seriously affect the human rights of many of the people concerned—these are individuals who went to Qatar in the first place to protect their lives and the lives of their families, which had been threatened in their countries of origin. A look at the 13 demands presented to Qatar reveals the Saudi-led intentions to avoid a just and workable solution that

respects fundamental human rights and humanitarian law.

HOW THE SAUDI BLOC'S DEMANDS IMPACT STATE SOVEREIGNTY

Marcus Montgomery

The Saudi-led bloc's demands are an outright assault against state sovereignty. The demands that specifically include issues of sovereignty center on Qatar's alleged interference in its neighbors' internal affairs and cooperation with opposition groups within those countries. Additionally, the Saudis, Egyptians, Emiratis, and Bahrainis expect Qatar to pay reparations for damages and to align unequivocally with the political, military, economic, and social policies of the rest of the Gulf and Arab nations.

In perhaps the most glaring example of the abrogation of Qatari sovereignty, the leaders of the siege expect Doha to agree to the list of demands in 10 days and submit to further compliance audits over the following decade, including monthly audits in the first year. Undoubtedly, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, and Bahrain are intent on destroying any semblance of autonomy in Qatar by expecting it to comply with the group's ultimatum. Qatar will most likely refuse to be coerced into allowing Saudi Arabia to dictate its sovereign affairs and policies. Whatever Qatar decides, these countries clearly feel emboldened by the new US position that the Sunni Arab countries are a monolith united against Iran and are bent on whipping dissenters into line.

THE FUTURE OF THE GCC

Imad K. Harb

If one looks at the relations exercised by other countries in the GCC, some of the demands presented to Qatar are contradictory. For example, all the other GCC states have relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, with different levels of cordiality. Oman, for instance, has better relations with Iran than all the GCC states, but Saudi Arabia and its allies are not demanding the same from Muscat. In a sense, this demand, and the concomitant one that IRGC personnel be expelled from Doha, is simply a ruse since if Qatar could not fulfill it, then it will likely be accused of colluding with Tehran. Besides, if Qatar were to downgrade such relations (which are not that warm anyway, compared with Oman's or Dubai's, and Qatar does not host IRGC personnel), it will then deprive itself of a potential card to play in negotiations for an end to the crisis. Another aspect is that

Iran today can provide necessary supplies during the current blockade and Doha would do well to keep that lifeline open.

As for the future of the GCC, it is hard to keep assuming that the 36-year-old regional alliance will survive this crisis. The demands and the developments since the beginning of this affair point to a Saudi Arabian plan to finally do away with the old alliance. With Oman seemingly outside of the fray and Kuwait trying to be neutral, Saudi Arabia appears to be looking for a "useful GCC"—i.e., one that can be fully malleable to its wishes. But the problem with such thinking is that if this comes to pass, there would be no impediments on the road to a full military conflagration with Iran. Such a scenario is now more possible than ever given the virulence of rhetoric and the riskiness characteristic of the current Saudi leadership that Mohammed bin Salman seems to be shaping under his father's tutelage.

LEGAL ANALYSIS OF THE DEMANDS PRESENTED TO QATAR

George R.A. Doumar, Raj Patel,
and Michael J. Smith
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I. INTRODUCTION

On June 23, 2017, Kuwait, acting as a mediator, presented Qatar with a thirteen-point list of demands on behalf of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, and Egypt. The demands were the purported price for lifting a trade and diplomatic embargo imposed by these countries on Qatar on June 5, 2017. According to the terms presented, in order for the embargo to be lifted, these demands must be met within ten days. Our analysis reviews the legal basis, or lack thereof, for these demands.

II. ANALYSIS

DEMAND 1: CURB DIPLOMATIC TIES WITH IRAN

The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961), to which Saudi Arabia is a party, provides that each receiving and sending state control their diplomatic relations by “mutual consent.” *See* Article 2. A sending state and receiving state each are empowered to control and accredit foreign diplomats as they see fit. *See* Articles 5, 9. Any request to curb ties with Iran has no basis under international law.

DEMANDS 3, 4, & 5: SEVER ALL TIES TO “TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS”

And stop all means of funding for individuals, groups, or organizations that have been designated terrorists.

Qatar employs a framework to combat terrorism both within its borders and globally, specifically in regards to preventing financing for terrorism. Each nation has its own such designated lists and the lists of certain countries are different.

Qatar is a member of the Middle East North Africa Financial Action Task Force, a Financial Action Task Force (FATF)-style regional body. The Government of Qatar routinely engages with international interlocutors on terrorist financing and has taken steps to improve oversight of foreign charities that receive contributions from Qatari institutions and to work with the banking sector to identify suspicious transactions.

Qatar’s Combating Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing Law of 2010 requires Qatar’s Public Prosecutor to freeze the funds of terrorist organizations designated by the UN Security Council, and the government distributes lists of UN-designated terrorist entities and individuals to financial institutions. Formally, Qatar’s Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs monitors and licenses nongovernmental charitable organizations and requires that Qatari organizations’ foreign partners submit to a vetting and licensing process before

receiving Qatari funds. The Qatari government in the past has ordered Qatari institutions to cut ties with certain foreign charities over concerns about their activities.¹

DEMANDS 6 & 11:

SHUT DOWN AL JAZEERA AND NEWS OUTLETS THAT QATAR FUNDS

By demanding that Qatar shut down Al Jazeera, as well as other news outlets that it funds directly or indirectly, the Saudi government has defied international law as codified by the UN General Assembly. In UN Resolution A/Res/36/103 (1981), the UN declared that a State has the right to non-interference from other States in its internal and external affairs, which includes “the right of States and peoples to have free access to information and to develop fully, without interference, their system of information and mass media and to use their information media in order to promote their political, social, economic and cultural interests and aspirations” UN Resolution A/Res/36/103 (9 December 1981).

More recently, in September 2016, the United Nations Human Rights Council passed Resolution HRC 33/33/L.6 regarding the safety of journalists. This resolution condemns all attacks and violence against journalists, which includes “intimidation, threats and harassment, including through attacks on or the forced closure of their offices and media outlets, in both conflict and non-conflict situations.” The resolution

also urges States “to ensure accountability through the conduct of impartial, thorough, independent, and effective investigations into all alleged violence, threats and attacks against journalists and media workers falling within their jurisdiction.” The Resolution further calls upon States “to create and maintain, in law and in practice, a safe and enabling environment for journalists to perform their work independently and without undue interference.”

The United Nations has also declared May 3rd as “World Press Freedom Day” and on that day last month, António Guterres, the UN Secretary-General said, “On World Press Freedom Day, I call for an end to all crackdowns against journalists – because a free press advances peace and justice for all.”

Accordingly, Qatar, under customary international law and the dictates of the United Nations, must respect press outlets, and cannot summarily shut down such institutions.

DEMAND 2:

TERMINATE TURKISH MILITARY PRESENCE

On or around June 6, 2017, the Pentagon renewed its praise of Qatar for hosting a vital US air base and for its “enduring commitment to regional security.”² More than 11,000 US and coalition forces are deployed to or assigned to Al Udeid Air Base, from which more than 100 aircraft

operate under a status of forces agreement. Of those 11,000, nearly 1,000 work in a combined air operations center that helps oversee missions for campaigns in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan.

Similarly, Turkey, a NATO member, and Qatar have entered a status of forces agreement, whereby Turkish troops will be stationed in Qatar. At present, there are less than 100 Turkish troops in Qatar. Turkey's military presence in Qatar, like the United States' military presence, depends on an agreement entered into by mutual consent relying on their sovereign rights.

Qatar cannot unilaterally cancel its binding agreements under international law, whether with Turkey, the United States or other countries.

**DEMAND 7:
END INTERFERENCE IN SOVEREIGN
COUNTRIES' INTERNAL AFFAIRS.**

Stop granting citizenship to wanted nationals from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt and Bahrain. Revoke Qatari citizenship for existing nationals where such citizenship violates those countries' laws.

Article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states "[e]veryone has the right to a nationality" and that "[n]o one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality." The UDHR represents customary international law.

Qatar's constitution echoes the foregoing,

and permits individuals, specifically political refugees, to seek asylum in Qatar. Qatar's constitution, Part. 3, Article 58 states that "extradition of political refugees is prohibited; and the laws shall determine conditions of granting political asylum." Furthermore, the Arab Charter on Human Rights, Article 23, states that "every citizen shall have the right to seek political asylum in other countries in order to escape persecution. This right shall not be enjoyed by persons facing prosecution for an offence under the ordinary law. Political refugees shall not be extraditable."

The 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Optional Protocol also prohibit forcible repatriation without due process.

Without due process, Qatari citizens (or foreign citizens with residence rights in Qatar) cannot be divested of their citizenship, both under international law and the Qatari constitution.

**DEMAND 10:
STOP ALL CONTACTS WITH THE
POLITICAL OPPOSITION IN SAUDI
ARABIA, THE UAE, EGYPT AND
BAHRAIN**

Qatar is a sovereign country with the rights and responsibilities, as a body politic, to engage in international relations with other communities, as set forth in the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961). Saudi Arabia's remedies thereunder include declaring a particular diplomat persona non-grata. See Article 9. There is no basis for such

a broad request of ceasing all contacts with the political opposition in four countries under international law.

If Saudi Arabia perceived a threat from a sovereign state, its recourse under international law is to raise a complaint at the United Nations. Articles 33-35 of the UN Charter require negotiation of disputes, and require states to pursue mediation and then bring a dispute to the Security Council if needed.

The United Nations *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 16 December 1966, confirms that free human beings enjoying freedom from fear and want “can only be achieved if conditions are created whereby everyone may enjoy his economic, social and cultural rights, as well as his civil and political rights.”

Qatar, as a sovereign nation, cannot simply cease all contacts with political dissidents, without itself being in violation of international norms. Saudi Arabia’s directive also violates international law as reflected in the documents cited above.

Although Saudi Arabia has no authority to prohibit Qatar, a sovereign nation, from talking to different persons, Saudi Arabia has full authority under the Vienna convention on Diplomatic Relations to expel Qatari diplomats, and also potentially seek extradition under legal procedures against persons who have committed

crimes.

**DEMAND 8:
PAY REPARATIONS AND
COMPENSATION FOR LOSS OF LIFE
AND OTHER, FINANCIAL LOSSES
CAUSED BY QATAR’S POLICIES**

Qatar is a sovereign country and subject to the rights and privileges afforded to States, including sovereign immunity. Article 5 of the United Nations Convention on Jurisdictional Immunity of States and Their Property (“UN Jurisdictional Immunity Convention”) states that: “A State enjoys immunity, in respect of itself and its property, from the jurisdiction of the courts of another State.” Article 6 states that “A State shall give effect to State immunity under article 5 by refraining from exercising jurisdiction in a proceeding before its courts against another State and to that end shall ensure that its courts determine on their own initiative that the immunity of that other State under article 5 is respected.”

Article 12 of the UN Jurisdictional Immunity Convention allows any State to claim immunity from jurisdiction before a court of another State in a proceeding which relates to pecuniary compensation for death or injury to the person, or damage to or loss of tangible property, caused by an act or omission which is alleged to be attributable to the State, **UNLESS** the act or omission occurred in whole or in part in the territory of that other State **AND** if the author of the act or omission was present in that territory at the time of the act or omission.

Saudi Arabia, under the UN Charter, may seek authority from the UN Security Council to seek compensation, for example as a result of an armed attack or other transgression, but there is no authority under international or any other law to seek compensation for “policies.”

DEMAND 13: CONSENT TO AUDITS

Again, Qatar is a sovereign country and subject to the rights and privileges afforded to States, including sovereign immunity. Article 5 of the United Nations Convention on Jurisdictional Immunity of States and Their Property (“UN Jurisdictional Immunity Convention”) states that: “A State enjoys immunity, in respect of itself and its property, from the jurisdiction of the courts of another State.” There is no basis for auditing another state under any international convention. Unlike some member states of the GCC, Qatar published an Open Data Policy in November 2014. This policy confirms the commitment of the Qatari government to Open Government, and specifies that “The Open Data Policy will institute specific actions to ensure all of [Qatar’s] Government Agencies will take steps to expand public access to government data by making it available online unless restricted by law, policy, regulations or contract.” Further auditing or disclosure is illegal, as well as unnecessary.

DEMAND 9: ALIGN ITSELF WITH THE OTHER GULF AND ARAB COUNTRIES MILITARILY, POLITICALLY, SOCIALLY AND ECONOMICALLY

Article 2 of the UN Charter confirms that “[n]othing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state or shall require the Members to submit such matters to settlement under the present Charter; but this principle shall not prejudice the application of enforcement measures under Chapter VII.” *See* Article 2, Section 7 of the UN Charter.

Qatar, as a sovereign nation, has the right to set its own military, political, social, and economic agenda, free from interference by every other country. While no international law forbids one country from requesting another to align with its national agenda, such an alliance is inappropriate if a product of force.

Pursuant to the Cato Institute’s Human Freedom Index, for example, Qatar is one of the GCC’s leaders in supporting its constituents’ personal and economic freedoms.³ Qatar should not be forced to copy the less tolerant political, social, and economic agendas of other Gulf states.

Also, the Gulf Cooperation Council (“GCC”), through its Supreme Council and Ministerial Council, has a regular mechanism to address disputes between mem-

bers and goals of the GCC. Article 10 of the GCC Charter calls for the creation of “The Commission for the Settlement of Disputes,” which is attached to the Supreme Council. At the least, in addition to all other points noted above, Saudi Arabia should utilize the GCC framework.

DEMAND 12:

**AGREE TO ALL THE DEMANDS
WITHIN TEN (10) DAYS OF IT BEING
SUBMITTED TO QATAR, OR THE LIST
BECOMES INVALID**

Even if the Qatari government were inclined to accede to the demands set forth on this list, a ten-day period in which to comply is impossible given the complexities inherent in and due process required for what would be a major shift in its domestic legal

standards and international policy.

III. CONCLUSION

A preliminary analysis of this list demonstrates that there is no legal basis for the demands that have been presented on behalf of Saudi Arabia. On the contrary, compliance with the list of demands would require the Qatari government to violate basic due process rights and act in contravention of UN resolutions and customary international law, and would also significantly infringe on Qatar’s sovereign rights as an independent nation. The manner in which the demands were issued also bypasses the GCC Charter, as well as the UN charter, both of which provide specific procedures to address disputes between member nations.

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III. GCC CRISIS AND CYBER WARFARE

Stupendous Hubris... and Its Damage

July 18, 2017

Imad K. Harb

The GCC Crisis: Media, Hacks, and the Emergence of “Cyber Power”

July 25, 2017

Tamara Kharroub



STUPENDOUS HUBRIS... AND ITS DAMAGE

Imad K. Harb

The *Washington Post's* revelation that the United Arab Emirates was behind the hacking of the Qatar News Agency (QNA) to spread false quotes from Qatar's ruler Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani is nothing short of stunning.¹ According to the story, American intelligence agencies became aware that members of the UAE government had indeed discussed the conspiracy and its implementation one day before it took place, although it is still "unclear whether the UAE carried out the hacks itself or contracted to have them done." Those attacks set in motion an apparently orchestrated chain of events in which Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Egypt became immediate and active participants, and have since developed into a strategic crisis for the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) when the four countries severed their diplomatic relations with Doha and imposed a land, sea, and air blockade on the Qatari peninsula.

In a statement, UAE Ambassador to the United States Yousef Al Otaiba immediately denied any knowledge of his government of the hacks and instead repeated the by-now known accusations of Qatar's malfeasance. "What is true," his statement read, "is Qatar's behavior. Funding, supporting, and enabling extremists from the

Taliban to Hamas and Qadhafi. Inciting violence, encouraging radicalization, and undermining the stability of its neighbors." Other grievances from the beginning of the crisis included colluding with Iran, which the emir allegedly called an "Islamic power" towards which "there is no wisdom in harboring hostility." Demands from Doha in late June also included scaling back military relations with Turkey and closing a Turkish base on Qatari soil.

What was damning in the *Post* report was that the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the Federal Bureau of Investigations refused to comment on the story; in other words, that it was not untrue. It should be known that the FBI was called in by Qatar when the first hacks occurred and the agency helped in findings Qatar has not yet revealed publicly, although Qatar's Attorney General Ali bin Ftais al-Marri revealed in June that "Qatar has evidence that certain iPhones originating from countries laying siege to Qatar were used in the hack."²

POTENTIAL DANGEROUS DAMAGES

At different levels, this revelation stands the entire affair on a new footing, now that tangible information has been made public and confirms the Qatari government's original denials of the first fake statements on QNA and Qatari television. It also confirms different aspects of what was found in the leaked emails of Ambassador Otaiba in early June. But what is indeed stupendous

about the revelation is the fact that the hacks were done as if they would never be discovered and without consideration of their detrimental impacts on the GCC states individually and collectively. What may at least partly justify this level of abandon is the conspirators' wrong assumption that the pressure on Qatar will quickly 'bring it around' to seeing things differently and the whole affair would just end.

First, the UAE's involvement in the hacking—which does not deny the possibility of collusion from other anti-Qatar countries—puts the supposed shining example of modernity in the Gulf and its future role under unwanted and unwarranted scrutiny. In fact, the credibility of the UAE government is at risk since the influential Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan remains one of the leading figures in the anti-Qatar campaign. UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdallah bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash have also been at the heart of the anti-Qatar diplomatic campaign. The UAE (and Bahrain) even criminalized showing any sympathy to Qatar.³ It thus must be awkward for foreign dignitaries trying to help mediate the crisis (the latest of whom was French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian visiting Abu Dhabi) to read what was revealed in the *Post* story about the UAE's role in the crisis.⁴

The UAE hopes to be amongst the region's and the world's movers and shakers

in diplomacy, military affairs, and the environmental realm (it hosts the International Renewable Energy Agency, IRENA).⁵ It hosts American, French, and South Korean bases and plays an important role in international finance and investment. It has signed the Individual Partnership and Cooperation Program with NATO to be a "partner in projecting international security and stability."⁶ The list of hopes and ambitions includes much more. It is thus essential for the UAE to maintain a reputation for transparent honesty and the hack did not help. It is one thing to try to influence the behavior of a neighboring state—indeed a fellow member of the GCC—but quite another to hack that state's official media organs to compromise its reputation, peace, and stability.

Second, now that the hacks have been revealed, it is obvious that Saudi Arabia will be accused of collusion. This may not be too far off the mark since within minutes of the publication of the fake statements by Qatar's Emir, Saudi Arabian television stations and individuals were summoned into action against Doha and its leadership. No Qatari denials were brooked or even considered. The Saudi Arabian government machinery also kicked into action and Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir—long a victim of virulent attacks himself while ambassador in Washington—led the diplomatic battle ostracizing Qatar and leading to severing diplomatic relations. With the UAE and Bahrain, Saudi Arabia expelled Qatari diplomats and citizens and even

closed Qatar's only land border through which 40 percent of food stuffs and necessities cross, forcing Doha to rely on supplies from Oman, Turkey and Iran.

The damage to Saudi Arabia's reputation and standing in the Islamic world is likely to be worse than that to the Emirates. If the kingdom has colluded with the conspiracy, it is not likely to emerge unscathed. Neither will King Salman bin Abdel-Aziz be spared since the entire fiasco occurred under his watch. Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman, who has benefited from the crisis to shorten the distance between him and the throne, may be most vulnerable if accountability becomes an important factor within the Al Saud family or if the United States gets its act together. On the other hand, not colluding is not an exoneration of the Saudi Arabian leadership since Riyadh sees its alliance with the UAE against Doha as sacrosanct. What is required, thus, is a clear statement from King Salman and evidence that the kingdom had no role to play in the conspiracy and that he is ready to again sponsor a wise retreat from the edge of the abyss towards which the crisis has pushed the GCC.

Third, the UAE action may have been the final nail in the coffin of the GCC as an alliance of like-minded and interested states. In fact, a hack as described by the *Post* approaches being an act of war against a sovereign country to force it to alter its behavior and cause harm to its cohesion, people, and leadership. No alliance member

interested in its own and its partners' wellbeing executes such an act in the service of collective interests. Before the breaking of the story, there might have been some hope that a foreign (non-GCC) power might have undertaken the hack. But now, the dye has been cast and the UAE (and potential others) will be accused in the court of Arab and world opinion of subverting the stability of a sister country and an alliance partner. The GCC will for a long time be hard put to return to the modicum of coordination and cooperation it had had before the crisis.

Moreover, if the GCC as an institution and a body of common interests was harmed by these developments, and it was, the corollary is that Iran reaped the eventual benefit. Suddenly, the Islamic Republic found itself playing the role of benefactor, thanks in part to the Saudi-Emirati-Bahraini-Egyptian blockade of Qatar. Iran was suddenly handed the opportunity of appearing to be protecting an Arab Gulf country from its Arab Gulf sisters.⁷ Similarly, after Qatar was asked to sever its military relations with Turkey and close the latter's base on its soil, Turkish troops became an essential element in Qatar's defense, in direct opposition to the anti-Qatar entente and detrimental to GCC common defense strategy.⁸

THE ALREADY DAMAGED AMERICAN POLICY

Finally, an important yet not merely potential damage that the UAE hacking will incur is that to the credibility of American

policy and diplomacy in the Gulf. From the early going, President Donald Trump sided with the anti-Qatar camp and tweeted his pleasure that Qatar was being castigated for its behavior. His intervention threatened to put the United States on the side of some members of the GCC against others, a policy not imagined by any other president or administration. It is actually possible that the original conspiracy to falsely blame Qatar may have benefited from a mistaken belief by some Gulf leaders that if President Trump supports the move against Doha then it is likely that the whole scheme would succeed.

But the positive attitude that the secretaries of Defense, James Mattis, and State, Rex Tillerson, exhibited toward Qatar helped put the brakes on the American plunge into the ill-advised arrangement. Early in the crisis, the Department of Defense expressed its satisfaction with Qatar's behavior. Secretary Mattis actually signed a \$12 billion Qatari deal to acquire American F-15 fighters after Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, Egypt, and others severed their diplomatic relations with Qatar. After a period of hesitation, Secretary Tillerson joined Mattis in calling for a negotiated settlement and a return to Gulf unity. He pledged to help Kuwait's mediation efforts and eventually signed a memorandum of understanding on combatting terrorist financing with his Qatari counterpart, Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdel-Rahman Al Thani; an agreement that others in the Gulf have refused to sign. Perhaps both secretaries were privy to the

information revealed by the *Post*, informed the president of it, but got rebuffed because he wanted the Saudi Arabian-Emirati accusations to stick. Only time will tell.

For now, however, American diplomacy seems to have suffered from the episode. Neither has President Trump distanced himself completely from the original accusations nor have his chief lieutenants been able to resolve the unneeded crisis. He will arguably never again be believed by the Qataris if he were to declare a change of mind or call for a face-saving compromise. In the binary, us-versus-them, atmosphere dominating the Saudi-Emirati coalition, his secretaries have committed the sin of neutrality and rationally looked at GCC and American interests. They thus cannot be trusted as allies against Doha. In the process, the United States becomes least effective with both sides of the equation.

POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS?

The revelations about the UAE's hacking have indeed presented the Gulf, the Arab world, and the world at large with a different understanding of the development of, and potential end for, the GCC crisis. They are as much a refutation of the original accusations that set three GCC members and Egypt against purported Qatari malevolent behavior as they are an exoneration of the Qatari leadership's insistence on charting their own independent foreign policy within the confines of GCC interests.

As the UAE leadership continues to deny

its culpability, it may be time for the Qatari government and American intelligence agencies to release whatever information they have gathered since the original hacking took place last May 24. Verification of what appeared in the *Post* story is the first step towards an admission of responsibility.

A clear and unequivocal statement by the Saudi Arabian government on the hacking story is essential. As of this writing, Riyadh has not issued a response to the hacking report, a very strange shortcoming given its deep involvement in the crisis. Its al-Arabiyya television station, for example—one that was at the forefront of covering the accusations against Qatar—has not even

carried the story or the UAE denial of its role in the hacking. It is therefore the duty of King Salman bin Abdel-Aziz to direct his government to issue a statement to that effect; otherwise, his kingdom will be accused of collusion as well.

Finally, it behooves the United States government to clearly make its united position known: that the United States continues to believe in the importance of GCC unity that will only be served by a complete admission of guilt where required. The Department of State would do well to lead the American effort since Secretary Tillerson has been involved in the diplomatic approaches to the crisis.

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THE GCC CRISIS: MEDIA, HACKS, AND THE EMERGENCE OF “CYBER POWER”

Tamara Kharroub

The current GCC crisis has seen a significant employment of media technologies as tools of conflict and influence. Media and communications platforms were used to launch a negative public relations campaign against Qatar, such as the attacks by Saudi, Emirati, and Egyptian television networks aimed at painting Qatar as a threat to regional stability. The blockading countries, especially Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain, also used social media platforms to identify their own citizens who expressed sympathy with Qatar and arrested them based on their views and online activities, in direct violation of freedom of expression. Additionally, the 13 demands leveled at Qatar included demands to shut down media organizations, and this violates freedom of the press.

Most recently, new reports and investigations have revealed that the United Arab Emirates was behind the hack of the Qatar News Agency and the false statements broadcast on the site.¹ This was a perilous move intended to legitimize the conflict and the blockade against Qatar, where communications technologies were brazenly used as instruments of warfare.

During the last few years, it was predicted that the year 2017 would be the year of cyber warfare. The GCC crisis presents a prominent example of this, demonstrating both the dangers and the implications of such efforts.² Most visibly, the GCC crisis and other recent events reveal a new trend in global political dynamics: the replacement of military and soft power with a rapidly emerging “cyber power.”

HACKING AND THE MOVE TO CYBER POWER

The year 2017 has so far produced several signs of a new era of global politics and competitions for power. For example, during the 2016 presidential elections in the United States, it was reported that hacks were perpetrated by Russia to influence the results, whether it was the hacking of the Democratic National Committee and email leaks or of state voter registration systems. With the reports of Russian hacking of US elections, the cold war has taken a new turn. Russia has also used several cyber tactics against Ukraine including espionage, denial of service attacks, leaks, and disruption of government communication networks, among others.

Cyberattacks introduce threats and damage in the real world on many levels—not only threats to individuals and states in the political sphere, but also economic threats to businesses and the world order. A report by Lloyd’s of London estimated that economic losses from a global cyberattack could be

up to \$53 billion.³ In fact, following the WannaCry global ransomware attack in May 2017, which was based on a vulnerability in Windows discovered and kept secret by the US National Intelligence Agency, many analysts echoed Microsoft's call for a "Digital Geneva Convention" to protect against cyberattacks.⁴

When considering the recent GCC crisis, it is clear that cyber operations played a significant role in the development of events. According to an investigation by the Qatari interior ministry, the UAE was responsible for the hack.⁵ The investigation confirms that the attacks started one month before the actual rift became public, when malware was planted in the Qatari state's news agency website on April 19 and all accounts and password information were obtained and shared with another person through Skype.

The evidence presented by the Qatari investigation team shows that shortly after midnight on May 24, two Internet Protocol (IP) addresses originating from the UAE had increased traffic to the Qatar News Agency (QNA) website minutes before false statements were broadcast by the agency, attributing fake remarks to the Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani purportedly expressing support for Iran, Hamas, Hezbollah, and Israel, and suggesting that US President Donald Trump would not stay in power. Almost immediately after the false statements were made public, Saudi Arabia and the United

Arab Emirates led an aggressive media campaign against Qatar as if the content and the campaign had already been planned in advance, according to the Qatari investigation team.

While the actual hack by an iPhone device could have come from a contracted third party anywhere in the world, the drastic increase in traffic from the two IP addresses in the UAE indicates that it was an attempt to confirm the hack was successful through repeated refreshing of the page. Interior ministry officials also stated that these two IP addresses did not visit the site before or after the incident, and that the advanced skills portrayed in the hack signal that a government entity was involved.

The investigation by Qatar's Ministry of Interior is not the only source of evidence. Soon after the cyberattack on QNA, it was reported that a team from the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) traveled to Doha on May 26 to assist the Qatari interior ministry in the investigation.⁶ The FBI then confirmed that QNA was hacked.⁷ Although the FBI did not comment on the results of the investigation or its role in it as of late, the *Washington Post* reported a few days before the Qatari press conference that US intelligence agencies believed the UAE was behind the hack.⁸ New information collected by these agencies confirmed that on May 23, before the false statements were posted, senior Emirati officials had discussed the design and implementation of the hacking operation.

This premeditated event was essentially the spark triggering the GCC crisis, providing fodder for the Saudi-Emirati coalition to launch attacks, accusations, and a blockade against Qatar. The timing and content of the hack are very significant as it came only two days after President Trump’s visit to the region and his statements focusing on countering violent extremism and Iran’s influence. This is an indication that the hack was a deliberate attempt to portray Qatar as a threat to US interests in the region, which President Trump had emphasized. In this regard, it appears that the hack was a deliberate effort to legitimize and justify attacks against Qatar and to trigger the crisis that followed.

The deliberate nature of this move is significant, as it can be considered an act of war. While this was not the first time in history when media and communications tools were used to legitimize conflicts and pursue public influence for political ends, the developments in technology have enabled more substantial influence and easier access.

During World War I, a series of war propaganda posters were used in the United States to garner support among Americans for the war.⁹ From the “I want you for the US army” poster to “Wake up America,” “Buy a liberty bond,” and “Step into your place,” these posters were widely publicized and are believed to have sold the war to the American people. This was achieved through simple print technology,

which played an instrumental role in gaining public support for US involvement in the war.

Several decades later, in 1964, advancements in technology presented audiovisual capabilities and broadcast television, when Lyndon B. Johnson’s presidential campaign placed the “daisy” advertisement on TV.¹⁰ The daisy ad made use of audiovisual technology to portray a dramatic image of a little girl facing nuclear explosions and subsequently elicit emotion and incite fear among Americans of Johnson’s opponent Barry Goldwater’s potential to start a nuclear war. The ad became controversial and was taken off the air. Although it aired only once, it is believed to have significantly contributed to LBJ’s landslide victory in the elections. In this case, the technology enabled more powerful, dramatic, and emotional content that influenced public opinion.

In 2017, media and communications technologies have evolved rapidly and drastically and have enabled cyberattacks, which are far more dangerous. The hack by the UAE as a deliberate attack on a state, using computer technology for strategic political purposes, is clearly part of cyber warfare operations.

In this regard, technology presented a new domain for influence and control. For most of the 20th century, hard power and military actions were the preferred means of control, as domains of influence were limited to physical spaces such as land, sea, and

aerospace. Unlike attaining power by force, the last few decades of the 20th century saw soft power measures arise as the primary tools of influence and control, and these depend on the domains of persuasion and education.

Today, a new power has emerged, “cyber power,” to achieve control and influence, this time through coercion rather than by physical force or persuasion. In contrast to military and soft powers that require significant monetary and logistical resources, cyber power entails minimal resources and can be controlled by private individuals—even teenagers—with technical skills, to incur global widespread damage in a matter of seconds. With the evolution of the cyber domain of influence, both state and non-state actors can exert and exact control over other states and entities.

Following the release of the findings of the Qatari investigation and reports by US intelligence agencies, Saudi Arabia and the UAE launched a renewed and heightened propaganda campaign against Qatar. While the crisis was intended as a PR campaign of manufactured claims with the aim of ostracizing and isolating Qatar in the international community to coerce it to align itself with Saudi agendas, the plan backfired. The absurdity and illegality of claims, demands, and methods used almost had a reverse effect for the Saudi-Emirati bloc. Finding themselves in the middle of their own PR crisis, official Saudi and Emirati institutions increased their media

activities and investments this week, with internationally directed English-language materials disseminated widely through popular mainstream media outlets and social media platforms. The campaign continues to focus on alleged Qatari financing of terrorism, albeit without providing any evidence and despite the recent signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between Qatar and the United States on combatting terrorism and its financing.

The future will likely bring more advanced cyberattacks, and communications platforms will be highly employed as tools of warfare. Russia has so far shown its investments and focus on cyber power, but many more will follow. If such actions of warfare by Russia and the UAE are not addressed by the international community through regulation and monitoring, they will set a dangerous precedent for the rest of the 21st century of launching cyber war operations to achieve power and political ends.

THE GCC CRISIS AND FEARS OF DEMOCRATIZATION

Although today a form of a “Digital Geneva Convention” is more vital than ever, such regulations should also ensure freedom of expression and the press in the digital sphere. While media tools can be used as a means of warfare to justify conflicts and suppress freedom of expression and the press, free media platforms are essential

constituents of democratic governance.

Participatory democracy is built on the premise of an informed public, which is made possible only through the concept of the public sphere. The public sphere is a network of communicating points of view on issues of public concern, where information is subject to informed discussion and independent political debate. In today’s digital era, this type of independent public debate is often enabled by media platforms.

In the Arab world, this was not even imaginable before the 1990s, when Arab media outlets across the board were the official government mouthpieces in their respective countries. The onset of satellite technologies in the 1990s revolutionized the Arab media industry, allowing for private and independent commercial media organizations and providing platforms for different political parties and opposition groups to express their views.

Satellite technology presented the first pluralist forums of free debate and discussion, and essentially led to an information revolution in the Arab world. By transcending government control, holding government institutions accountable, and enabling citizens to engage with the political process, the media became a vital catalyst for democratization during the first decade of the 21st century. However, when the blockading countries in the GCC crisis presented the 13-point ultimatum to

Qatar, the Saudi-led quartet demanded the shutdown of several media organizations, including Al Jazeera and others. This demand threatens not only to shut down media organizations but also to block any possibility for a functioning public sphere in the Arab world, thereby suppressing forums of independent discussion of issues of public concern.

In addition to the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government, the media is considered the “fourth estate” whose role is to be the watchdog of government action. In this regard, the media holds a crucial responsibility to inform citizens, scrutinize the institutions of government, and prepare and enable the public to actively participate in democratic politics. The Arab public today can choose among hundreds of TV channels expressing different perspectives and thousands of online platforms to obtain information (and entertainment). The freedoms of the press and expression are vital for the promotion of a democratic culture in the Arab world and must be protected.

The demands to shut down media organizations not only violate the principles of democracy and free press, but also human rights and international law. For example, UN General Assembly resolution A/Res/36/103 grants people the right to free access to information and it endows states with the right to establish media organizations and systems of information.¹¹ Additionally, the UN Human Rights Coun-

cil considers closures of media outlets as attacks against journalists and calls on states to establish safe environments for them. As such, demands to shut down media institutions are in violation of UN resolutions and international law.

Whether one agrees or disagrees with the approaches or agendas of certain media organizations, the response should not be to suppress freedom of the press and violate the people's right to information. In cases where there might be valid and legitimate concerns about possible negative effects of media content and reporting, certain measures can be taken such as fact-checking, employing methods to verify sources, facilitating and encouraging evidence-based reporting, and introducing media literacy programs that provide citizens the tools and skills necessary to assess and verify sources of information. This is not only a concern for traditional

mainstream media outlets, but more so online with the increasing presence and voices of alternative and independent sources, which can be a positive development but can also have negative consequences.

Powerful autocratic states will try to counter and suppress alternative sources of information and viewpoints to ensure their sole narrative and political survival. However, the freedom of the press and the right to information must be promoted and protected not only as fundamental human rights but also as necessary prerequisites for democracy and as tools of democratization in the Arab world. It is advisable that any proposals for regulating the cyber sphere and instituting international digital conventions not only focus on the negative consequences of cyber operations, but they must also ensure the protection and facilitation of pro-democracy initiatives.

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IV. IMPACT ON ENERGY MARKETS

Impact of the GCC Crisis on Global Energy Markets

June 21, 2017

Joe Macaron



Arab Center Washington DC

IMPACT OF THE GCC CRISIS ON GLOBAL ENERGY MARKETS

Joe Macaron

For decades, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries have been a pillar of the global energy market for their wealth of resources and political stability. However, their current infighting might lead to a strategic shift in how the world looks at the geopolitics of the GCC. The diplomatic row that began on June 5, when Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Bahrain cut transport links and trade ties with Qatar has been contained but remains in place. While there is no immediate impact on energy trade, the uncertainty and longevity of the crisis might have long-term reverberations in the global market.

ENERGY SUPPLY ROUTES

Accounting for nearly 40 percent of global oil reserves and 24 percent of gas reserves, GCC countries benefited between 2011 and 2014 mostly from the growing demand in emerging markets and the Middle East's political unrest, with oil prices exceeding \$100 per barrel. Since then, traditional concerns about oil and gas supply routes have increased. The current GCC crisis will only intensify them.

While the initial shock of the measures against Doha was absorbed, confusion prevailed in the energy and shipping

markets. Supertankers typically travel back-to-back around multiple GCC ports to load nearly two million barrels of crude oil per month and save on transportation costs. The UAE's al-Fujairah port, located near the Strait of Hormuz, serves as the major bunkering hub where ships transit on their way to Asia, Europe, and North America. Since the diplomatic row began, these tankers were left with no clear guidance on the restrictions they might face in their traditional route. The International Energy Agency (IEA) noted that the GCC spat caused "logistical headaches," with a backlog of cargoes and increasing shipping costs.¹

For instance, two UK-bound Qatari liquefied natural gas (LNG) shipments on June 8 abruptly changed direction in the Gulf of Aden, which led to a spike in UK and US natural gas futures.² There was no clarity as to whether the measures taken against Doha in the Suez Canal apply to all vessels coming in and out of Qatari ports or strictly to Qatari-owned vessels. If the canal is ultimately closed for Qatari LNG exports—an event not supported by international law—then carriers heading to Europe will have to add three to four weeks of travel via Africa to their itinerary.

Furthermore, on June 7 the Abu Dhabi Petroleum Authority issued two contradictory circulars that added to the confusion.³ While the first circular eased restrictions on oil tankers going to and from Qatar, the second circular later in the day denied entry "for all vessels arriving from,

or destined to Qatar, regardless of its [sic] flag.” In addition to Jebel Ali, the UAE’s al-Fujairah port serves as the oil trading hub and a major refueling point for all ships entering or leaving the Gulf area.

Qatar and its willing trade partners came up with ways to circumvent these sanctions. Maersk, the world’s biggest container line, opened an alternative route to transport LNG containers in and out of Qatar via Oman’s Salalah Port. On June 20, Qatar Petroleum launched a “temporary” ship-to-ship fuel bunkering facility at Ras Laffan.⁴ Qatar’s Hamad Port is also looking to sign agreements with shipping companies to improve direct services; India’s Mundra Port was one of the first signees. Ships from China’s Shanghai are now re-routed via Iraq, making the voyage to Qatar 27 instead of 20 days long. The other alternative for Qatar, which comes with political risks, is to take the Iranian route.

Even with traders scrambling to adjust their routes, it is worth noting that the ban is not as strict on energy products as it is on other commodities. In fact, nine out of 13 tankers that loaded crude oil in Qatar since June 5 also took cargo from Saudi Arabia and/or the UAE.⁵ Despite European concerns that Egypt could close the Suez Canal, international vessels carrying Qatari LNG are still passing through the canal, though at a lower rate than before the crisis. All this uncertainty is exposing the vulnerabilities of the GCC energy market. The oil market remains volatile, Dubai is losing some of

its bunkering role to Oman, and shipment companies are now using small tankers to make separate stops in GCC ports, while Qatar might have to increase the price of its gas to accommodate all these adjustments.

THE LNG MARKET AS A STABILIZING FACTOR

Saudi Arabia’s Minister of Energy, Industry, and Mineral Resources Khaled Al-Falih was right when he said he expected the crisis not to have an immediate impact on the crude oil market.⁶ The deal reached in December 2016 by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) limiting oil production to 1.2 million barrels per day remains intact. Last May, that agreement with non-OPEC members like Russia was extended until March 2018. Qatar produces only 2 percent of the agreed-upon OPEC deal, or 30,000 barrels per day. Short of military intervention in Qatar, the oil market should not be impacted. The greatest danger to the energy market remains a drop in crude oil prices if the current OPEC deal is not respected or not extended beyond March 2018.

In contrast to the oil market, Qatar is a global leader in LNG, ranking third in natural gas reserves after Russia and Iran and providing 30 percent of the world’s LNG supplies, mainly to Asia and Europe.⁷ A disruption in the production, shipment, or pricing of Qatari LNG could impact European countries, compelling them to rely instead on Russian gas—a move they

would prefer to avoid considering political tensions with Moscow. Indeed, there has been a realization by all sides that disrupting the global energy market would trigger alarm bells, most notably in Europe and Asia; hence, disrupting LNG exports has remained a red line throughout the crisis.

Furthermore, the concerned parties in the GCC crisis did not trigger a full-fledged energy war among them. Qatar did not shut the Dolphin gas pipeline that transports LNG from its North Field to the UAE, Oman (which received more than two billion cubic feet per day), and Egypt (which, last year, imported 60 percent of Qatar's LNG via third party traders).⁸ In return, the UAE and Egypt did not completely shut off Qatari LNG transiting through Jebel Ali and the Suez Canal. Abu Dhabi owns 51 percent of the Dolphin pipeline while the UAE's gas system relies on gas imports from Qatar, hence potentially making the national electric grid vulnerable to a blackout. However, any move by Qatar to cut the gas supply to the UAE and Egypt not only means an all-out escalation but also could damage the country's reputation as a reliable leader in the global gas market. That is more significant than ever now in light of Qatar's decision in April 2017 to lift the moratorium on development of the North Field, which would ultimately allow Doha to produce an additional two billion cubic feet per day.

THE LONG-TERM IMPACT OF THE CRISIS

Energy security is no longer a given in the Middle East with political instability surrounding key waterways, most notably the Suez Canal, Bab al-Mandab, and the Strait of Hormuz. GCC countries that have long resisted making a concerted effort to pursue energy security because of national sovereignty sensitivities are entering a new era during which securing their trade routes will be an essential part of their mode of operation.

In that sense, Washington's ambivalent position has raised questions in Europe and Asia, considering their countries' vulnerabilities to the ongoing crisis. Two key factors played out in recent weeks: 1) Washington, or at least the White House, briefly backed away from its role as a stabilizing force in the GCC; and 2) the United States understood that it is immune from any direct economic impact from the crisis. Indeed, the United States last imported gas from Qatar in 2013, while—during the last year alone—it received 11 percent of its petroleum needs from Saudi Arabia, ranking a distant second after Canada (38 percent). Although US dependence on Middle East energy sources has decreased significantly in the past decade, any shortage internationally will create uncertainty and impact the global economy; an example is the United Kingdom, which imports a third of its natural gas from Qatar and would face serious energy challenges if that were to change.

Obviously, beyond energy, there are other components of US policy that are important to address in this context, mainly the Al Udeid military base in Qatar, which houses nearly 11,000 US personnel, the strong partnership with the GCC countries, and the regional fallout of the ongoing crisis. Washington would be wise to balance these relationships and calculations, and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has recently taken the lead in facilitating the mediation efforts – which so far have no clear end in sight. The ambiguity of US policy and the status of these reconciliation efforts are leaving the energy market on edge regarding what to expect, even though the assumption is that diplomacy trumps disputes when the global energy market is at risk.

While business as usual was not disrupted, the brief chaos concerning supply routes will have a long-term effect. European and Asian countries will most likely rethink how

much their economies should rely on energy resources from the GCC market. With global oil demand expected to remain high until 2040, most notably for road freight and aviation, renewables and natural gas are becoming the future of energy sources in the coming two decades. The price volatility of crude oil in recent years is compelling economies around the world to become less dependent on oil. Meanwhile, competitive gas suppliers are emerging in Australia, North America, and Iran.

The most crucial strategic impact of the GCC crisis is the damage that has been largely self-inflicted. For the first time, GCC countries showed readiness and willingness to potentially endanger their energy security for political ends. While the daily operations were not significantly disrupted, the cloud the Qatar crisis has left will not go away soon enough.

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V. REGIONAL REPERCUSSIONS OF THE GCC CRISIS

Turkey and the Gulf Crisis: Erdoğan's Most Difficult Game?

June 19, 2017
Mustafa Gurbuz

The GCC in Turmoil: Repercussions of the Gulf Crisis on Iraq-GCC Relations

June 27, 2017
Abdulwahab Al-Qassab

An Economic Explanation for Egypt's Alignment in the GCC Crisis

August 9, 2017
Imad K. Harb



TURKEY AND THE GULF CRISIS: ERDOĞAN'S MOST DIFFICULT GAME?

Mustafa Gurbuz

The Saudi-led campaign against Qatar has put Turkey in a difficult position due to Turkey's increasingly warm relations with Saudi Arabia over its Syria and Iraq policies. Understanding that it does not have enough power to play the sole mediator role in this very heated atmosphere, Ankara sided with its long-term political ally, Qatar. Turkish food supplies have also been rushed to Doha with the support of a strong media campaign. More importantly, Turkey's parliament swiftly authorized the deployment of Turkish troops—currently up to 3,000 soldiers—in the country.¹ Although this agreement was signed in 2014, the step of fast-tracking implementation is interpreted as a strong willingness to defend Qatar against a potential coup d'état; the approval document authorized Turkey to assign as many military personnel as needed to train Qatari forces “in internal security.”²

The top Turkish diplomats' hurried visits to the Gulf countries highlight how Ankara perceives a real threat in the case of a deepening conflict among members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Although President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan called the blockade “inhumane and against Islamic values,” Turkey is pursuing a very cautious approach in avoiding criticism of the Saudi

regime.³ Erdoğan recently noted Turkey's past offer to set up a military base in Saudi Arabia, highlighting that the Turkish base in Qatar is no threat to the kingdom.⁴ Erdoğan's hint that King Salman had agreed to consider Turkey's offer, however, prompted Riyadh to release a strong statement rejecting the claim.⁵

Following the official line, Turkey's pro-government media presented the current Gulf rift as an American plot and accused the US president of sowing divisions in the Muslim world.⁶ Given that the Turkish government has sought to discourage criticism of US President Donald Trump, such a discursive shift is remarkable.⁷ Erdoğan repeatedly implied that the crisis is part of a major conspiracy that targets Turkey.

There are three major drivers that shape Ankara's policy toward the Gulf crisis: (1) fear that the allegations against Qatar, such as supporting the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas, could be directed at the Turkish government in the long term; (2) financial concerns that stem from Turkey's increasingly fragile economy; and, (3) potential harmful consequences regarding Turkish calculations in Syria and Iraq.

IS TURKEY THE NEXT TARGET?

Not surprisingly, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi called for Gulf leaders to boycott Turkey for supporting Qatar.⁸ The call taps into an already growing sentiment in Ankara that the Erdoğan regime is being

impacted by the Qatar blockade. Ankara and Doha have long shared similar foreign policy perspectives; their joint support for the Muslim Brotherhood, in particular, has raised eyebrows in the GCC leadership—which had designated the group as “terrorist” after the Egyptian coup in 2013.

Although the current crisis is unprecedented in many respects, the Gulf’s pressure against Doha has previously pulled Ankara into a contentious political game. In March 2014, for example, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain withdrew their ambassadors from Doha, demanding Qatar’s cessation of support to the Muslim Brotherhood.⁹ Although tensions were eased within a few months, Qatar maintained its independent foreign policy by further deepening ties with Turkey. In December 2014, Doha and Ankara signed a military agreement for deployment of Turkish troops on Qatari soil—developing their previous defense industry cooperation agreements of 2007 and 2012.¹⁰

The Syrian civil war made Turkey and Qatar even closer. Both provided strong support to the Syrian opposition and also to each other. Following Ankara’s spat with Moscow over the downing of a Russian jet in Syria, Doha offered about \$3 billion in financial support to make up for Turkey’s loss of Russian tourism.¹¹ It also promised gas export guarantees if Moscow decided to withhold natural gas supplies to punish Ankara. Such close cooperation reached its peak as the Turkish president and the Qatari

emir cultivated personal bonds through frequent meetings in Turkey.¹²

Hence, if Doha gives in to the pressure, Ankara may face increasing isolation in regional diplomacy. After all, the very accusations that put Qatar on the spot may well be used against the Erdoğan regime. Turkey, however, already feels the heat as the Saudi-led GCC is a prized economic partner. Extended instability in the Gulf region means greater negative consequences for the Turkish economy.

TURKEY’S INDISPENSABLE ECONOMIC TIES TO THE GULF

Turkish economic concerns are largely behind Ankara’s cautious approach toward Saudi Arabia. A prolonged crisis could jeopardize the prospects for a free trade agreement between Turkey and the GCC, one that was expected to be signed at the end of 2017.¹³ Moreover, Ankara has entered the lucrative Gulf defense sector, hoping to sign a major defense export deal with Saudi Arabia.¹⁴ Thus, compared to Qatar’s financial significance to the Turkish economy, the Saudi-led bloc is equally important. For example, while Qatari foreign direct investment (FDI) amounts to \$1.5 billion, total Saudi and Emirati FDIs are over \$6 billion.¹⁵ Considering foreign long-term loans for the Turkish private sector, Bahrain is the lead Gulf lender with \$11 billion, whereas Qatar is not a player in this regard.¹⁶

Turkey’s dwindling tourism sector and eco-

conomic slowdown make Gulf money even more important.¹⁷ At present, some Saudi tourists have begun to cancel their visits to Turkey for the Ramadan Eid holiday.¹⁸

Earlier, in January 2017, the pro-government Turkish media boasted that Erdoğan's Gulf tour was an economic success, ushering in a new \$20 billion investment from the Turkish-Gulf fund generated by Saudi and North American investors.¹⁹ Erdoğan had hoped that his victory in Turkey's nationwide referendum could bring financial stability; ironically, however, the referendum results have emboldened the opposition in major cities including Istanbul—the economic hub—where Erdoğan lost for the first time since becoming the mayor of the city in 1994.²⁰ This is significant because the new presidential system will come into effect only after the 2019 parliamentary elections, and some analysts expect that Erdoğan may even call early elections in 2018 to ensure his party's victory in parliamentary seats.²¹ In any event, given the extremely polarized political atmosphere toward such critical elections, avoiding a crash in the highly fragile Turkish economy will remain a priority for Erdoğan in the near future.

ANKARA'S STRATEGIC CONCERNS: A NAIL IN THE COFFIN OF NEO-OTTOMANISM?

Turkey's involvement in the Syrian civil war has shaped its strategic calculations in the Middle East. One of the most noticeable policy changes was Turkey's increasing re-

sentment toward Iran and its rapprochement with Saudi Arabia. Ankara's policy in Iraq was perhaps the best showground to watch such transformative relations. In fact, in remarks after the referendum victory in April 2017, Erdoğan criticized "Persian expansionism" in the Middle East;²² a few months before, he had exchanged in a verbal spat with Iranian officials.²³ Most tellingly, Erdoğan repeated his verbal attacks against Iran regarding "Persian expansionism in Syria and Iraq" in a recent interview, in which he calls for Saudi Arabia to "show its leadership," and thus, to put an end to the Qatar crisis.²⁴ The fact that Ankara reminds Riyadh of the two countries' growing and shared interests in the region indicates how damaging the Gulf crisis may be to Turkey's regional aspirations, if it persists.

Although the Gulf crisis may prompt renewed Turkish-Iranian reconciliation, there are strong limitations. Geopolitical calculations dictate Ankara-GCC cooperation in Iraq, including the Iraqi Kurdistan region. Saudi Arabia perceives Turkey's influence over Iraq as a bulwark against Iranian expansionism. Ankara declared the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), better known as the Shiite militias, as "terrorists"²⁵—despite the fact that the PMF is officially recognized as a legitimate "state-affiliated entity" in Iraq.²⁶ Baghdad's tense relations with Ankara were most evident when the Iraqi government demanded the removal of Turkish forces in Bashiqa camp near Mosul.²⁷ The strong cooperation between Erdoğan and Masoud

Barzani, leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, also irritates Baghdad. The battles over disputed territories in Iraq's oil-rich Mosul and Kirkuk regions have not only eroded Erbil-Baghdad relations but also hurt Ankara-Tehran interactions.

The limits of Turkish-Iranian cooperation are perhaps most evident in Syria, where the two parties are in an active fight on opposing sides. Ankara has major expectations from the Gulf countries to secure Turkish borders. In his Gulf tour, Erdoğan courted the GCC's financial support for Syrian refugees, explaining his vision to turn an area of 4,000-5,000 square kilometers into a safe zone where new housing projects would be built.²⁸ In addition to Washington's approval, the Turkey-led reconstruction of northern Syria will require billions of dollars and Erdoğan noted that Saudi support would be essential in this endeavor.²⁹

In the case of further escalation, therefore, the Gulf crisis will not only harm Turkey-GCC relations but also jeopardize Ankara's maneuvering capacity in shaping regional politics. Turkey's domestic troubles have already led to the rise of nationalist bureaucrats, who prefer isolationist Eurasianism over an active neo-Ottomanism in the Middle East.³⁰ Some influential Eurasianist circles already expressed their support of Erdoğan's Qatar policy as long as Russian-Turkish cooperation is enhanced.³¹

WHY THE TRUMP-TILLERSON DIVIDE MATTERS FOR ANKARA

For Ankara, Washington's inconsistent signals regarding the Qatar crisis indicates that Riyadh may be able to reconsider its long-term calculations. While Secretary of State Rex Tillerson called for diplomatic efforts to mitigate the crisis and to ease the blockade, President Trump—only a few hours after Tillerson's remarks—took a strikingly different approach by accusing Qatar of being “a funder of terrorism at a very high level.”³²

Ankara views the Saudi leadership as traditionally risk-averse, especially under King Salman's predecessors, and thus, it sees negotiation with the kingdom as feasible. Although King Salman and his son, Crown Prince and Defense Secretary Mohammed bin Salman, pursue more aggressive policies, the costly war in Yemen may cause the Saudi elite to step back indeed. Given that Iran would exploit a dysfunctional GCC and could even trigger protests in Bahrain, the stakes are too high for Riyadh—especially at a time when Washington's policies are not consistent. The first indication of de-escalation was the statement by Saudi Arabia's foreign minister, Adel al-Jubeir, that the kingdom was preparing a list of grievances, “not demands,” from Doha.³³

The divide between President Trump and the Department of State, however, signals a bumpy road ahead. Facing increasing domestic pressure, Trump appears to be

susceptible to special interest groups in Washington—especially those supporting the bill in the US Congress which designates the Muslim Brotherhood as a foreign terrorist organization. By shunning Qatar due to its relations with the Muslim Brotherhood, Washington may open the proverbial Pandora's Box. Tillerson recently admitted that the violent groups affiliated with the Brotherhood had already been added to the US terrorism list and that peaceful elements of the group have become parts of the governments in the region.³⁴ The guilt by association with the Brotherhood could even hurt Bahrain, which cut diplomatic relations with Qatar and expelled Qatari military personnel at the US military base there.³⁵ The fact is that Bahrain's royal Al Khalifa family's close ties with the Bahraini Muslim Brotherhood's political wing, Minbar, is no secret.³⁶ Similarly,

allegations of the Qatar-Hamas link are problematic. Hamas is not considered a terrorist organization by the United Nations and Qatar has cultivated good relations with Hamas's main rival, the Palestinian Authority headed by Mahmoud Abbas.

In the larger picture, Washington's incompetence in crisis management complements its fading soft power in the Middle East. Ironically, Trump Administration officials even confess how such weakness is exploited well by Russia. Defense Secretary James Mattis, for example, commented that the Qatar crisis is a sign that Russia is "trying to break any kind of multilateral alliance ... that is a stabilizing influence in the world."³⁷ Apparently, US diplomatic leadership is missing at a time when it is needed more than ever in the Gulf.

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THE GCC IN TURMOIL: REPERCUSSIONS OF THE GULF CRISIS ON IRAQ-GCC RELATIONS

Abdulwahab Al-Qassab

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Iraq and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have a long history of cooperation as well as enmity. Their history dates back to the early twentieth century when relations were tense and strained between Iraq and the Saudi Sultanate of Najd, and subsequently, the Sultanate of Najd and Hijaz after the toppling of the Hashemite Kingdom of Hijaz in 1925.

By 1922, an agreement called the Uqair Protocol was reached between the two entities under the patronage of Sir Percy Cox, the British High Commissioner to Iraq, and signed by their representatives. Kuwait was also part of these border discussions. After the failure of the parties to agree on borders, however, Sir Percy Cox drew a line in the sand projecting the borders between the three countries; but his decisions satisfied none of them. This was the root of the ensuing problems between Iraq and Kuwait, holding many consequences for the two countries for decades to come.

History also shows that relations were not always strained in the Gulf region; in fact, there was a long period of practical and stable collaboration between Iraq and

Saudi Arabia. Relations between Iraq and Kuwait were strained most of the time, however, though there was a positive and constructive period during the Iraq-Iran War (1980-1988). Whether cordial relations among GCC countries were caused by the Iraq-Iran War or by the conviction that the parties shared the same interests, it is clear that those years were characterized by amicableness. However, relations started to worsen the moment the war ended.

IRAQ AND THE GCC

The GCC, a regional organization of cooperation established in 1981 during the Abu Dhabi summit after the Iraq-Iran War had begun, was intended to safeguard member states from the consequences of the war on the Arab Gulf states. The alliance was shaped initially as a political and economic entity; later, it advanced to address the security problems faced by the alliance or any of its states.

This security alliance demonstrated its viability during the Kuwait crisis of 1990-1991, when all the Gulf states allied with the international coalition led by the United States to regain and liberate Kuwait. This was when enmity started between Iraq under Saddam Hussein and the rest of the Gulf states. Iraq saw the GCC countries' stance as facilitating the "aggression" of the United States in Operation Desert Storm. Many Iraqis perceive the current situation in Iraq as a direct result of the 2003 invasion by the US-led coalition that included the

GCC countries.

After the invasion and the following splits in Iraqi society on ethnic and sectarian lines, the GCC countries, particularly Saudi Arabia and Qatar, were accused by the Iraqi Shi'is of supporting terrorism (Al-Qaeda in Iraq, and subsequently ISIL). For their part, the Iraqi Arab Sunnis accused the Iraqi Arab Shi'is of being Iranian puppets and furthering the Iranian project in Iraq and the Levant. Relations deteriorated despite the efforts of GCC countries to reconcile with Iraq to pull it away from the Iranian orbit. Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE tried hard to convince the Iraqi government that the GCC countries were willing to help, that there was no link between the terrorist groups and the working agenda of the GCC countries, and that any citizens from GCC countries who were caught collaborating with ISIL were behaving according to their own convictions rather than being encouraged by their governments. Saudi Arabia nominated an ambassador to Baghdad and he did his best to advance bilateral relations; however, he was targeted by what the GCC countries perceived as Iranian-supported militias and was forced to leave Iraq. This reflected negatively on bilateral relations—a good chance to enhance relations was ruined.

The GCC countries also accused the Iraqi government of meddling in Bahraini affairs, and the Iraqi Shi'i militias of threatening to intervene in support of the Bahraini Shi'i opposition. The same militias threatened

to avenge the execution of a Saudi member of the Shia clergy, Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr. There was no real reason that made the Iraqi Shi'i militias—supported by Iran's Revolutionary Guard—to abduct scores of Qatari nationals who had entered Iraq under a tourist visa to spend some time in the southwestern desert, which was their preferred hunting ground.¹ The abductors asked for a huge ransom, which Qatar handed over to the Iraqi government in return for the freedom of its citizens. This issue became one of accusations against Qatar—that it supported Iranian militias in Iraq. It was refuted by Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi, who declared that not a dollar was touched by any party and that the money was entrusted to the Central Bank of Iraq pending procedures that called for the presence and approval of the Qatari government.

THE CURRENT CRISIS WITH QATAR

The recent GCC crisis resulted in renewed turmoil in the region. Although Iraq is not one of the parties in conflict, it provides land and sea continuity for the GCC land mass. In the past, this facilitated the infiltration of ISIL adherents of Iraq, and the establishment of a military presence by Iranian-backed militias at the Iraqi-Saudi and the Iraqi-Kuwaiti borders. The most strategic physical location was al-Nukhaib—a strategic link in the desert between Iraq and both the Najd, the heartland of Wahhabism, and the Hejaz, where the two holy places of Mecca and Medina are situated. The militias vowed

that they would someday “liberate” the two shrines from the Saudis. The rift within the GCC has encouraged this threat and may bring some of the GCC parties closer to Iran.

Prime Minister Abadi expressed his disagreement with the blockade against Qatar both in Baghdad and in Riyadh, where, in June 2017, he was received by Saudi Arabia’s King Salman with hospitality and respect, after which he flew to Tehran, where he listened to critical advice and warnings from Ayatollah Ali Khomeini.² In fact, Iraq now finds itself engulfed by three dimensions of pressure fueled by the present crisis. The most dangerous and effective pressure is that which comes from Iran through its official tools and its unofficial leverage by the militias. Second, American pressure started to gain ground after President Trump assumed office, and US military deployment in Iraq seems to be serious and threatens the Iranian-backed militias. The third dimension of pressure is the domestic one, as Iraq’s problems will increase as a result of the spillover from the crisis.

THE FUTURE OF IRAQ AND THE GCC

The fragmentation of the GCC is imminent now. Other alliances will likely materialize, such as links between Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain, leaving Qatar, Oman, and to some extent Kuwait, behind. Left alone, Qatar will be forced to establish

some sort of alliance with Iran on practical issues, since it needs Iran for corridors for its air traffic and the provision of food for its population. This, in turn, will increase Tehran’s influence on Doha, paving the way for Iranian meddling in the internal affairs of Qatar by encouraging sectarian differences between Sunnis and Shi’is. In this context, Iraq will become one of the players in the GCC’s bilateral relations through the influence of the Shi’i militias in Iraq acting under Iranian instructions.

The factors behind the role that Iraq may play in the present situation within the GCC center around the closeness between Iraq and Iran and the hegemonic influence of Iran on the Iraqi government. The Iraqi government has failed to establish its control over both internal and foreign affairs in Iraq. Prime Minister Abadi has stated that Iraq will not provide a platform for any attack on Iran, which is the long-sought aim of both Saudi Arabia and the Trump Administration. Iran’s siding with Qatar will influence the way the militias behave toward Qatar – which will certainly be different from the previous and more aggressive approach that resulted in the kidnaping, for 16 months, of Qatari citizens in 2015 and the high ransom that was demanded for their freedom.

The current blockade of Qatar by the three GCC states may result in a new interregional bloc that leaves Qatar outside the GCC and pushes it toward a new regional alliance where Turkey and Iran will play an effective role. Iraq will be caught in the middle and

will invest heavily in terms of diplomatic and security assets to safeguard against militias that meddle in GCC affairs.

To be sure, the crisis with Qatar will not be the last one within the GCC. Saudi-UAE relations are not that cordial, so problems are expected to arise between these two countries at any time. The most important working article in the GCC Charter is Article 4, which states that the alliance

was established with the aims of strengthening relations among member states and advancing relations among their citizens. These aims were not fully attained because of the continuous friction between the signatory states. This friction presented itself in various ways, such as in the problems between Saudi Arabia and the UAE over the Gulf monetary system and unified GCC currency.

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AN ECONOMIC EXPLANATION FOR EGYPT'S ALIGNMENT IN THE GCC CRISIS

Imad K. Harb

It was expected that Egypt would join Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain in castigating Qatar for purportedly supporting extremist and terrorist organizations, and then to cut off diplomatic relations with Doha. The Egyptian leadership missed no opportunity, since Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's coup of 2013, to agitate against Qatar, which had been the chief supporter of Sisi's predecessor, the Muslim Brotherhood's Mohamed Morsi. To President Sisi and his cohorts, the Al Jazeera television network was an agent of sedition and conspiracy whose mission was to destabilize Egypt and spread doom and gloom about his rule. The thaw that ended Qatar's crisis with its current antagonists in the Gulf Cooperation Council in 2014 did not help warm Egyptian-Qatari relations; and the interregnum since then only added elements of discord that justified, for Cairo, a rather hostile approach to Doha's leaders.

This year, and during the American-Islamic Summit in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, President Sisi upbraided "some countries which are involved in supporting and financing terrorist organizations and providing safe havens for them" – which was understood to include Qatar.¹ An anonymous Egyptian

foreign ministry official told *al-Monitor* that "Egyptian diplomacy sees the strict Gulf stance against Qatar this time in its favor," and that it has been working "over the past four years to obtain a strong Gulf position against Qatar's policies."² Whether Sisi's claims about Qatar's or his government's unsubstantiated boasts are true, Egypt seems to have chosen what is likely to be a long-term and fateful alignment with the Gulf countries. The choice, however, leaves it vulnerable more than ever before to uncontrollable factors that may one day prove detrimental to its regional and international standing.

Specifically, Egypt's extended reliance on Saudi Arabia and the UAE for its economic stability may make it endlessly beholden to them and thus unable to chart a different foreign policy course. It is doubtful that Egypt's position regarding the current GCC crisis would be any different given developments since July 2013, when Egyptian military officers ousted Morsi, the former president. But Egypt's ability to maneuver independently during and after the current crisis may have become too circumscribed given the level of financial assistance of Saudi Arabia and the UAE to the Sisi regime. Foreign policy has long been a tool to assure the survival of regimes, so President Sisi's survival may hinge on his adaptability to circumstances governed by intra-GCC conditions that are beyond his control.

EGYPT'S UNCERTAIN ECONOMICS

With a population of over 95 million, Egypt has progressively become hostage to outside assistance to nurse its weak and dependent economy.³ According to Trading Economics, Egypt's GDP annual growth rate was 3.4 percent in September 2016, down from 4.5 percent the previous July. It had an unemployment rate of 12 percent in March 2017 and inflation soared to almost 30 percent this past June. Egypt's current account deficit hit \$3.5 billion in March, while its external debt topped \$67 billion last December. Its foreign exchange reserve witnessed a dangerous dive in July 2016 when it dipped to a mere \$15.5 billion, though it currently shows improvement at around \$31 billion.⁴

Hardest hit of Egypt's economic sectors has been tourism, the major producer of hard currency for the country. The victim of slow economic growth since the failed revolution of 2011, tourism has also suffered from the rise and resilience of extremist activity in the Sinai Peninsula and the Egyptian mainland. Seminal events over the last two years were the downing of a Russian airliner over Sinai in November 2015, in which 224 persons died,⁵ and other attacks on Coptic Christians in Cairo, Alexandria, Asyut, and other places.⁶ Today, Egypt is facing an active insurgency involving myriad groups, especially the so-called Islamic State, which has occupied the resources of security forces. While experts point to a possible good year in 2017, statistics for 2016 showed a serious

decline in the number of tourists visiting the country, from 14.7 million to 5.4 million visitors.⁷ This directly impacts tourism revenues and employment as the country reels from slow economic activities in other sectors.

To arrest its economic slide, in November 2016 Egypt negotiated a \$12 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund and received a first tranche of \$2.75 billion, but only after it instituted a drastic austerity program to boost investor confidence.⁸ (It also secured some \$6 billion in outside financing.)⁹ The same month, the Egyptian government also floated the currency to halt the slide in foreign exchange reserves (the exchange rate now stands at 18 pounds to the dollar)¹⁰ and severely slashed fuel subsidies. In June 2017, the government further reduced these subsidies and in fact increased fuel and gas prices by an average 55 percent, affecting the agricultural and industrial sectors. With 71 million Egyptians dependent on ration cards to obtain basic necessities, President Sisi declared an increase in rations—but that was followed two days later by a large increase in the prices of sugar and cooking oil, main staples for average Egyptians.¹¹

While meant to boost business and international confidence in the government's ability to control the economy, the austerity program generated an unwelcome public response. The Egyptian government clearly lacks the means necessary to right the country's economic ship. As former presi-

dential candidate and moderate Islamist Abdelmoneim About Fotouh poignantly observed, the “current stability is stability on the tip of a volcano that is on the verge of an explosion.”¹² This will likely lead to chaos in Egypt, the region, and the west. Indeed, the 3.9 percent annual growth expected in 2017 is not enough to “jumpstart an economy and reduce unemployment,” a negative prospect that does not augur well for the future stability of the country.¹³

SAUDI ARABIAN ASSISTANCE

The infusion of IMF financing is insufficient although welcome. It is no cynical coincidence that Egypt is very much indebted to Saudi Arabia and the UAE, its main benefactors since the ouster of Morsi in 2013. Estimates put Saudi grants, loans, and investments in the Egyptian economy at \$25 billion since 2014.¹⁴ The Saudi-Egyptian Business Council is actually planning an increase to \$51 billion in Saudi investments in agriculture, industry, tourism, energy, real estate, and the Suez Canal Development Project.¹⁵ Saudi investments are also distributed in various areas of Egypt and will include agricultural, industrial, electricity production, and real estate projects, even a bridge connecting the two countries over the Red Sea.¹⁶ There also are investments by private entrepreneurs, such as that recently announced by Saudi billionaire Alwaleed bin Talal, who intends to spend \$800 million to build hotels around the country.¹⁷ Furthermore, over 2 million Egyptians work and live in the

Kingdom;¹⁸ in 2015, one million expatriate Egyptians there remitted \$7.57 billion to their home country.¹⁹

In addition to making Cairo beholden to Riyadh, Saudi largesse may also come with a hefty price. In April 2016, President Sisi announced that he signed an agreement with visiting Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz to transfer two strategically located islands at the mouth of the Gulf of Aqaba—Tiran and Sanafir—to the Kingdom.²⁰ Saudi Arabia is said to have given Egypt temporary sovereignty over the islands in the early 1950s. Sisi’s announcement resulted in a public backlash and protests, and a court in January 2017 ordered a delay in the transfer, until a higher court this past June overturned the lower court and allowed for the issue to be debated in parliament. But a pliant parliament finally issued a law allowing for the transfer. President Sisi immediately signed the legislation.²¹

The back-and-forth about Tiran and Sanafir threatened to seriously derail warm Saudi Arabian-Egyptian relations in addition to, reportedly, 24 different economic agreements signed during King Salman’s visit.²² Together with an Egyptian vote to support a Russian resolution about Aleppo at the UN Security Council in October 2016—a vote that resulted in cutting discounted Saudi oil shipments to Egypt—and other moves by Cairo anathema to Riyadh’s anti-Iranian stance,²³ the dispute could have meant a dangerous divorce, especially that it was

accompanied by a vitriolic media campaign and protests in Egypt.²⁴

ASSISTANCE FROM THE UAE

The United Arab Emirates has also provided desperately needed funds to Egypt. Immediately following the July 2013 coup, the UAE gave Egypt \$3 billion, \$1 billion of which was a grant and the rest was in “the form of an interest-free deposit with Egypt’s central bank.”²⁵ In April 2016, it again provided Egypt with \$4 billion, half in investment and half to support the central bank’s cash reserves.²⁶ At an Egyptian investment conference in Sharm al-Sheikh in March 2015, the UAE pledged one third of a \$12 billion package, with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait also pledging \$4 billion each (Oman pledged \$500 million over five years) to help steady Egypt’s economy.²⁷ Additionally, the UAE is the largest foreign investor in Egypt with a \$6.2 billion portfolio, especially in real estate development.²⁸ A sizable Egyptian community of 935,000 thrives in the UAE, forming the second largest group of foreign guest workers and their families in the country.²⁹ In 2015, they remitted \$1.83 billion to Egypt.³⁰

More UAE investment opportunities are being discussed between Emirati and Egyptian officials. There are future UAE investments in the new Egyptian administrative capital project, the venture to build a new El Alamein city on the Mediterranean coast, and other schemes in Cairo and south Sinai.³¹ The UAE is even partnering with the

state-owned Russian Direct Investment Fund to co-invest in joint projects in developing countries, including Egyptian “agriculture, nuclear power, hydroelectricity and other energy projects” with a potential of \$110 billion of investments.³² The UAE and Egypt are also looking for alternatives to Qatari liquefied natural gas supplies which might be affected by sanctions they themselves have imposed on Doha.³³ The latter has not indicated that it will change its previous contractual agreements on its gas exports.

Beside economic relations, Egypt and the UAE have coordinated their efforts regarding prosecuting a campaign against the Muslim Brotherhood and influencing developments in Libya. Both countries (as well as Saudi Arabia) consider the brotherhood a terrorist group, on par with the so-called Islamic State and al-Qaeda. In fact, the Muslim Brotherhood is arguably the most serious issue at the heart of the current anti-Qatar campaign. As for Libya, both countries have become involved in supporting General Khalifa Haftar, commander of the Libyan National Army in eastern Libya, who has pledged to eradicate Islamist parties and affiliated militias from the country. But what may negatively affect their economic relationship are disputes arising from ongoing business dealings such as that last February when the UAE’s Dana Gas company threatened to halt all investment in Egypt because of debt non-payments.³⁴

QATAR'S FORGOTTEN AID

The treatment of Qatari assistance to Egypt in the post-2011 revolution has arguably dovetailed with Egyptian political developments following the collapse of the Hosni Mubarak regime. During the initial period of uncertainty, when the Egyptian Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) was in actual control of the country, Egypt's economy experienced wrenching chaos as the country's reserves dropped precipitously from \$36 billion to \$13 billion.³⁵ But after the election of the Muslim Brotherhood's leader, Mohamed Morsi, as president in June 2012, Qatar pledged to invest \$18 billion over five years in Egypt's tourism (to build a \$10 billion "giant tourist resort on the Mediterranean coast") and industrial projects (\$8 billion in "gas, power and iron and steel plants").³⁶ Despite the apparent chaos that dominated Morsi's rule and the Islamists' haphazard handling of the Egyptian economy, Qatar pledged an additional \$3 billion in April 2013 as Cairo was seeking a loan for \$4.8 billion from the International Monetary Fund.³⁷ All in all, Qatar is reported to have invested a total of \$7.5 billion during Morsi's one year of rule.³⁸

But relations between Egypt and Qatar began to sour after the coup against Morsi in July 2013. Egypt returned to Qatar a \$2 billion tranche of a \$3 billion loan Doha invested to buy three-year bonds in Cairo.³⁹ Whatever remains of Qatari investments in Egypt—since the days of the Mubarak

presidency—remains safely invested in different economic activities. Egypt's Minister of Investment Sahar Nasr intimated as much when she announced recently that Qatari investments are protected by Egyptian law.⁴⁰ What, however, is unfortunate are the impediments to more investments as Egypt continues to participate in blockading Qatar and severing diplomatic, economic, and social ties with Doha. Importantly, estimates put the number of Egyptians in Qatar at about 300,000.⁴¹ In 2015, they remitted \$1.05 billion to Egypt.⁴²

WHITHER EGYPT'S FOREIGN POLICY?

It is true that foreign policy is domestic policy by other means, since it tries to manage external relations in a manner conducive to regime survival. But it is equally true that domestic legitimacy is aided by conducting a foreign policy that is as independent as possible; otherwise, the regime loses its freedom of action and becomes a vehicle for the realization of other states' objectives. The corollary, thus, becomes imperative: the impact of a country's foreign policy may be contained, at least partially, by changing the domestic conditions under which the country's government operates.

In Egypt's case, the country's economic malaise and possible collapse have indeed made it susceptible to being swayed by more powerful economic actors in the Arabian Gulf, specifically Saudi Arabia and the UAE. But this reliance on external economic assistance has come at a high

price to its foreign policy and its standing in the Middle East. This is not to say that Cairo's loathing of the Muslim Brotherhood and its supporters in Doha, and fear of Al Jazeera's exposure of the Egyptian regime's iniquities following the anti-brotherhood coup of 2013, were only incidental. Indeed,

these factors may have helped drive the formation of Egypt's alliance in the current GCC crisis. But what is to be answered by Cairo as it faces the myriad challenges of the future—be they economic or political—is a series of questions about the degree of independence its foreign policy enjoys.

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VI. US ROLE IN THE GCC CRISIS

What's at Stake for the United States in the GCC Crisis?

June 8, 2017
Joe Macaron

President Trump Failed His Gulf Test

June 15, 2017
Imad K. Harb

Qatar-US Memorandum of Understanding: A Game Changer

July 11, 2017
Imad K. Harb



WHAT'S AT STAKE FOR THE UNITED STATES IN THE GCC CRISIS?

Joe Macaron

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is facing its foremost existential crisis since its inception in 1981. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Bahrain teamed up on June 5, 2017, to sever diplomatic ties and impose an embargo on Qatar, while Kuwait and Oman remained neutral.¹ It is true the crisis has been long in the making, however, key factors allowed it to dramatically evolve. The coming days and weeks may decide whether this rift will be internationalized or rather contained within the GCC: Kuwait is leading the mediation efforts, Turkey has announced its intention to deploy troops in Qatar, Israel endorsed the Saudi view, Iran has weighed in to fill the vacuum, and US policy has been ambivalent to say the least.² A lot is at stake for US national security, including the scenario of living with a divided GCC, the potential expansion of Iranian influence, and questions regarding the future of Al Udeid Air Base.

THE TIPPING POINT

In the past century, Saudi Arabia and Qatar had decades of difficult relations over border demarcation, an issue that was mostly resolved in the July 2008 border agreement. Riyadh withdrew its ambassador twice from

Doha, in 2002 and 2014, and both countries reached a loose “Riyadh agreement” in 2013 to ease political tensions, as neither side was willing to concede. The major shift came in 2011 when Saudi Arabia and Qatar stood on the opposing sides of the “Arab Spring.” The clash over developments in Egypt was perhaps the most potent one, a battle Riyadh won in 2013 by driving the Muslim Brotherhood out of power. In March 2014, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain suspended ties with Qatar over breaching the 2013 agreement. The main recurring contentious issues have been the Al Jazeera Arabic broadcast, support for the Muslim Brotherhood, interference in the affairs of GCC countries, and opening to Iran.

The root of all these contentious issues has been the Saudi willingness since 1995 to accept having Qatar, the tiny neighbor to the east, lead an independent or rather antithetical policy to Riyadh while enjoying self-sustainability. Qatar’s ability to balance mixed and often contradictory policies helped the country survive and defined its regional role. Doha managed to balance having relations with both Hamas and Israel, sharing a gas field with Iran, and hosting a US military base, as well as embracing both Islamists and Arab nationalists. A US official acknowledged a “certain utility” for that role and added that “there’s got to be a place for us to meet the Taliban.”³ The Hamas (folks) have to have a place to go where they can be simultaneously isolated and talked to.” With all its benefits

and flaws, these policies became part of an emerging Qatari identity that is increasingly difficult to reign in.

What remains unclear though is what exactly caused the full-court Saudi diplomatic offensive. UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash spoke about irritants in the past several months:⁴ the accusation that Qatar undermined the Saudi-led campaign in Yemen and Qatar's handling of a hostage crisis in Iraq last April, paying ransom to Iranian-backed militias and al-Qaeda to release detained members of the Qatari ruling elite.⁵ While Doha miscalculated handling the hostage crisis, all GCC allies do not see eye-to-eye regarding Yemen, including Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

The direct irritant was the alleged speech last month that was attributed to the Emir of Qatar Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) suspects that Russian hackers breached Qatar's state news agency and planted the fake news report that triggered this crisis.⁶ However, US officials are unsure about the motive behind the Saudi move; some argue that Trump's call in the recent Riyadh summit to "drive extremists out" might have been interpreted as a green light to act.⁷ To be sure, Trump's tweets on June 6 did not help to play down that argument.⁸ Furthermore, it is not clear what exact provisions were breached in the 2013 "Riyadh Agreement", since no official reference document was published to that effect,

which eventually led to the current crisis.

However, three main reasons seem to have paved the way for the recent developments:

1. The lack of trust between Saudi Arabia and Qatar has been building up for a while. Qatar thinks Saudi Arabia seeks to control its sovereign decisions, and Saudi Arabia believes Qatar is out to harm its interests. While the elderly rulers in both countries managed these mistrusts, the new generation is more willing to be confrontational. The ambiguous 2013 "Riyadh Agreement" did not help to find a mechanism that resolves the contentious issues. Building trust is the only way out of this two-decade-old rift.
2. President Donald Trump's recent embrace of Saudi Arabia was interpreted as unconditional support for Riyadh to reassert its regional influence. Saudi Arabia is perceived in Washington as "the deep state"—whether by the Defense or State Departments—and US officials have been cautious not to over-promise Arab allies more than the US can deliver, whether in Syria or Yemen, and most importantly now in Qatar. Trump's lack of leadership and mixed signals might have caused this crisis to materialize.
3. Qatar's decision to open to Iran last April might have been the tipping point for Riyadh. Restarting the development of the North Field, the world's biggest

gas field that Qatar shares with Iran, after a 12-year self-imposed freeze is a regional game changer.⁹ The North Field accounts for nearly all of Qatar's gas production and around 60 percent of its export revenue with a capacity of 2 billion cubic feet per day. Once ready for production in five to seven years, this gas field will give Qatar a competitive edge in global natural gas production and help Iran deal with its severe domestic gas shortages. Last month, the Emir of Qatar called Iranian President Hassan Rouhani to congratulate him on his election victory and suggested that cooperation, and not confrontation, among Arab countries and Iran is the way to go.¹⁰ That phone call came hours after Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said that Saudi leadership faced a "certain downfall" for aligning with the United States.

EVOLUTION OF THE US POSITION: THE AL UDEID FACTOR

The 2014 crisis between Saudi Arabia and Qatar was similar in context yet softer in rhetoric. It came a day after Oman invited the Iranian president to Muscat and ahead of former President Barack Obama's visit to Riyadh. At that time, Washington was swift in containing the fallout, unlike now when there is a schism between the White House and the rest of the administration. US Ambassador to Qatar Dana Shell Smith was left with no guidance, confined to retweeting past positions.¹¹ After

astonishingly taking credit for the long-coming Gulf spat, Trump came around and offered mediation in the crisis and even willingness to host a reconciliation meeting in Washington, which is unlikely to happen.

At the core of the US policy concern about the current crisis is obviously the Al Udeid Air Base in Abu Nakhlah Airport, located 20 miles southwest of Doha and currently home to more than 10,000 US military personnel. On that base, the United States has the longest runways in the region in a facility that accommodates up to 120 aircraft.¹² The US Air Force calls Al Udeid the "nerve center" where B-52 are launched to target the Islamic State targets in Iraq and Syria. Around the clock and approximately every 10 minutes, an aircraft takes off and lands in a strategic facility that the United States uses free of charge. Qatar reportedly spent \$1 billion in the 1990s to construct the air base, which was kept secretive until March 2002 when former Vice President Dick Cheney visited the facility.¹³

The State and Defense Departments scrambled to signal the importance of Al Udeid for US operations. Pentagon spokesperson Navy Captain Jeff Davis said in a news briefing on June 6 that the United States has no plans "to change our posture in Qatar."¹⁴ Secretary of State Rex Tillerson did not believe the Gulf crisis would have an impact on the war against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Defense Secretary James Mattis said he was "positive there will

be no implications.”¹⁵ Now that the Raqqa offensive has been launched, the Al Udeid Air Base will be more crucial than ever for US operations against ISIL in Syria.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

The UAE noted on June 7 that the measures against Qatar are not “about regime change, this is about change of policy”; however, the tensions are rising.¹⁶ The Turkish parliament fast-tracked a bill giving Ankara the mandate to deploy troops in Qatar.¹⁷ Doha is in talks with both Ankara and Tehran to secure food and water supplies to address possible shortages.¹⁸ Iran now has claimed that Saudi Arabia was behind the June 7 attack on the Iranian parliament, which will only fuel the Gulf spat.¹⁹ The deteriorating crisis in the coming weeks will give both Iran and Turkey a foothold and bring trouble to the Saudi backyard. It could evolve and take a similar path to Yemen, where Houthis were forced to cement their alliance with Iran and where the Saudi leadership is still looking for a way out of its intervention.

In a nutshell, the GCC spat goes against US interests and most importantly Trump’s “America First” mantra. Washington has long hoped to strengthen the GCC and hand over some of the security burden to its members. The prospect of relocating 11,000 US military personnel out of Qatar at this point is a logistical nightmare for the Pentagon while it is in the middle of the battle against ISIL; indeed, no free-of-charge alternative base can be ready immi-

nently in the region to host such a high-scale US operation. Discord in the GCC is the last thing any US administration wants, even an unconventional one led by Trump. It is safe to say that any talk now about an “Arab NATO” is on hold, if not indefinitely postponed.

Beyond the Saudi-Qatari rift, Oman has its own concerns and has threatened numerous times to exit the GCC amid discord about its institutional framework and its own distinctive policies. Muscat played a key role in opening channels between the Obama Administration and the Rouhani government, and the United States has suspected numerous times that arms flowing to the Houthis were going through the Yemeni-Omani border.²⁰ The current crisis raises questions about the viability of the GCC as an institution.

To resolve the GCC rift is to acknowledge that there are different reasons for different countries to compel Qatar to “change its behavior,” Egypt and the UAE are mostly concerned with the Muslim Brotherhood, the Saudi objection is about having a Qatari rapprochement with Iran, and Israel’s focus is on Doha hosting Hamas. On the other side, Washington wants to retain its free-of-charge operation in Qatar while at the same time have GCC allies coordinate together to make room for US military activity focused on the last stretch of defeating ISIL. While further escalation might not and should not be expected, the diplomatic stalemate can last (it lasted for eight months in 2014) and

could potentially lead to a realignment of alliances in the Middle East. The search for a way out of the crisis has begun and will bear fruit if cool heads prevail.

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PRESIDENT TRUMP FAILED HIS GULF TEST

Imad K. Harb

President Donald Trump's lack of discipline, knowledge, and experience and his ill-advised declarations and tweets appear to have convinced some in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)—erroneously—that the United States has indeed sided in the entente with one faction over another. Despite his half-hearted corrective move to invite GCC leaders to a reconciliation conference in the White House and the neutral statements by the Departments of State and Defense, he continued to insinuate that Qatar is culpable for supporting terrorism. Indeed, a report citing administration officials explained that the ongoing GCC crisis has in fact begun after President Trump demanded that Arab allies, especially Qatar, “end their support for Islamic [sic] extremism.”¹

President Trump seems to have waded into a dispute that undoubtedly will have an enduring impact on intra-GCC relations and the broader US-GCC relationship. It would not be an exaggeration to state that the negative impact he has wrought on the crisis is likely to remain a sore reminder of an irrational approach to foreign policy, one that is also apparent in other areas of the American strategic landscape. While different in circumstances and participants,

the president's dealing with the GCC crisis conjures images of his disastrous visit last month to NATO headquarters and the G-7 meeting. While in Europe, he refused to commit to Article 5 of the NATO charter about common defense and announced his unilateral withdrawal from the landmark Paris Climate Accord.

As the Arabian Gulf reels from uncertainty and from Riyadh's and Abu Dhabi's inability to retreat from accusing Qatar of myriad sins and misdemeanors, cooler heads, firmer hands, and more experienced officials at the Defense and State Departments have stepped in to fill the breach the president helped open. At present, what is required from the United States is nothing short of a full-fledged commitment by the White House to cease adding fuel to the GCC fire and to emphasize the importance of GCC unity for the future of the Gulf and of the American relationship with all its peoples and leaders. American friendship with and commitment to the GCC has always been and should remain to the collective body of the GCC and not to one or some of its constituent parts.

DISCORD BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND HIS MEN

Instead of coming out with a unified position representing the American government as a whole regarding the unfortunate, and unneeded, developments between members of the GCC, President Trump threw all caution to the wind and tweeted a

number of statements castigating Qatar for purportedly supporting extremism.² Qatar was funding extremist ideology, he asserted, and those present at the Islamic summit in Riyadh supposedly attested to that. He even took credit for the blockade that Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates imposed on the Qatari peninsula.

This came after he said—following a meeting with Qatar’s ruler Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani—that the United States and Qatar have been “friends for a long time” and that Qatar discussed the possibility of purchasing “lots of beautiful military equipment.”³ When it became apparent that he had caused serious damage, he invited Sheikh Tamim to the White House, only to be soundly rebuffed since the emir has been busy dealing with the imposed blockade on his country.⁴

The president’s clueless and dangerous behavior was the opposite of that exhibited by more seasoned and knowledgeable officials in the Departments of Defense and State. Defense praised Qatar’s “enduring commitment to regional security,” according to spokesman Jeff Davis, who also expressed appreciation for Qatar’s hosting “our very important base at Al Udeid.”⁵ While less effusive, the new spokeswoman for the Department of State, Heather Nauert, spoke of Qatar’s continuing “efforts to stop financing of terror groups, including prosecuting suspected financiers, freezing assets, [and] introducing stringent controls on its banking system.”

In his capacity as the United States’ chief diplomat, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson sounded a conciliatory tone urging Gulf states to work on bridging their differences.⁶ His long career in the energy sector undoubtedly showed him the folly of jeopardizing relations with the world’s premier natural gas exporter. Moreover, as her country’s representative in Doha, Ambassador Dana Shell Smith decided to resign from her position, ostensibly to retire.⁷ She had previously expressed reservations about political developments in Washington, and her dissatisfaction with the president’s statements may have given her more reason to leave the foreign service.

As the representatives of long-standing practical relations with the GCC, and as the institutional repositories of such, it is arguably the case that Defense and State are the best equipped to speak for the American position on the current row in the Gulf. It thus was a positive development that Secretary of Defense James Mattis finally signed the deal with Qatari Minister of State for Defense Affairs Khalid Al Attiya, to supply Qatar with 72 F-15 fighter jets, valued at \$12 billion.⁸ While signing the deal points to the strategic importance Secretary Mattis gives to Qatar, the economic side of the affair cannot be ignored—specifically that related to employing Americans, an essential priority for the president himself. Incidentally, two American Navy vessels docked in Doha on the same day for joint maritime maneuvers with the Qatari Navy.

It is also arguably true that the president personally may have burned his bridges with Qatar, notwithstanding the many excuses he may have listed for showing a tough hand. Just as European leaders, most especially German Chancellor Angela Merkel, showed disappointment and dismay in how President Trump dealt with their affairs, it is not likely that Qatar's leaders – after this snub from a supposedly friendly American president – will put all their eggs in his basket. It would indeed be better for them to keep their functional relationship going with the institutions that matter, despite Trump's ability as the constitutional president to subvert what is and remains an essential relationship in the Arabian Gulf.

IMPACT ON THE AMERICAN MILITARY POSTURE IN AND AROUND THE GULF

The Arabian Gulf has been an important node in US military planning since at least the 1970s. Washington has built enduring military and security relationships with every country of the GCC, supplied hundreds of billions of dollars in military equipment and training to all of them, and integrated them in a strategic network encompassing Asia, Africa, and Europe. The Gulf is also home to tens of thousands of American soldiers stationed up and down its western coast and a base for a varied array of air, land, sea, logistical, and cyber equipment and operations. In fact, it would be difficult to differentiate between

the levels of importance of such assets as Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar, Camp Arifjan in Kuwait, the 5th Fleet naval base in Bahrain, Dhafra Air Base in Abu Dhabi, UAE, Thumrait Air Base in Oman, or the secret Saudi Arabian bases for American drones fighting al-Qaeda in Yemen.

These bases and others in the region cannot be seen as separate military installations serving American objectives throughout the theater extending from the Middle East to Central and South Asia to Africa, but as integrated nodes of a strategic picture and posture. Naval vessels docking at the Jebel Ali port of call in Dubai, UAE, serve other areas of the Gulf but also go on patrol for months in the Gulf of Oman, the Arabian Sea, and the vast Indian Ocean in the service of the American global peacekeeping mission on the high seas. But while doing so, they also rely on the existence of other bases along the coast of the Arabian Peninsula as a continuous and interdependent network. Severing the functions of these bases is impossible from a military standpoint and is folly to attempt if the United States wants to continue to both defend its national interests and assure international peace and stability.

Thus, disagreements between GCC states arising out of rivalries, different interpretations of interests, or baseless accusations and recriminations will only impede the execution of the American mission in the Middle East and around the world. It is true that the Trump Administration is struggling to identify how it goes about devising its

international strategy—and may therefore not know how to deal effectively with a challenge such as the one presented by the GCC dispute. But it is also true that no one in the American foreign policy structure fathoms ending America’s global leadership, President Trump’s demagogic “America First” slogan notwithstanding. It follows that it is in the American national interest that the GCC remain a unified body of strong states, that the United States continue to strengthen the entente, and that Washington play a pivotal role in reconciling the differences among its Gulf allies.

Presently, the American military posture in the Middle East is concentrated around the objective of defeating the so-called Islamic State (IS) in both Iraq and Syria as well as al-Qaeda. Such a battle cannot be achieved without the integrated network of bases in the Gulf where air, sea, and land assets are deployed. Neither can this mission be accomplished if, for instance, the Al Udeid Air Base is moved from Qatar. This is so for the simple reason that dismantling the base and building another elsewhere—UAE Ambassador to Washington Yousef Al Otaiba wants it in his country—will take years and disrupt current operations.⁹ Al Udeid and all other bases also serve as essential rear stations for redeployment, rearmament, supplies, and/or operations.

Moreover, this posture is not separate from the integrated relations that American military thinking and operations has with individual GCC military institutions.

Indeed, the United States for over four decades has invested in the organization, training, and arming of the GCC states, in the process creating enduring operational capabilities that have helped some Gulf militaries perform outside of their geographical theater. Examples include Qatar’s deployment of troops on the Eritrea-Djibouti border (which was ended recently¹⁰), the UAE’s military role in Afghanistan and elsewhere, and Saudi Arabia’s intervention in Yemen against the Houthi-Saleh alliance to restore legitimate authority in Sanaa.¹¹ Incidentally, all GCC militaries provide assistance, assets, and personnel to anti-piracy operations from the Bab al-Mandab waterway near Yemen to the Indian Ocean and the expanse of waters in between.

Finally, an essential part of the United States’ strategic posture in the Gulf, one that President Trump is keen to preserve, is the stance the administration has so far declared vis-à-vis the Islamic Republic of Iran. From a political perspective and a military standpoint, the United States would be well served for the GCC to appear united, although not necessarily unified. It can be united in its position on rejecting a nuclear-armed Iran, for instance, or on devising ways to limit Tehran’s overreach into Arab countries. But it may not be fully unified in requiring every member to carry the mantle of aggressively challenging the mullahs of Tehran, in the process endangering peace and stability in the Gulf. To that end, it indeed was strange for Bahrain, Saudi Arabia,

and the United Arab Emirates to criticize Qatar for purportedly colluding with Iran while the Sultanate of Oman has for decades had rather cordial relations with the Islamic Republic—not to mention Dubai, which is part of the UAE.

THE REQUIRED AMERICAN ROLE

For these and many other reasons, the Trump Administration would do well to hasten to formulate a unified position that both clarifies where the United States stands on a dispute among what were considered to be very close allies and prevents other would-be interlocutors from exploiting America's absence. Nary a few hours passed after President Trump's tweets castigating Qatar, following the Bahraini-Saudi Arabian - Emirati severance of relations with Doha, that Russian President Vladimir Putin called the Qatari ruler offering diplomatic mediation.¹² While not taking sides in the dispute but clearly favoring Qatar, Turkey hopes to play a mediatory role as well.¹³ Its parliament, however, was quick to pass legislation authorizing the deployment of troops to Qatar, ostensibly as a signal that it will not allow any military action against its Qatari ally. Even French President Emmanuel Macron wants to get in on the action.¹⁴ Other world leaders have

also counseled restraint and called for a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

But the required American intervention would be effective and efficient if it combined the following factors. First, it is essential that President Trump refrain from again taking sides in the ongoing dispute. Whatever qualms he might have about Qatar's behavior should be addressed in private and at the highest level between the American and Qatari leaderships.

Second, the president would also do well to study up on intra-GCC relations, where he would learn two simultaneous lessons: that elite differences in the Gulf are not new, and that the United States has always been a repository of institutional power to help Gulf allies straighten out conflicts they may have between them.

It is also hoped that the Trump White House would entrust the bulk of its relationship with the Gulf states to the departments of Defense and State, which have the institutional longevity, depth, and knowledge necessary for understanding and mediating GCC disputes. This helps GCC unity, protects American interests in the Gulf, and preserves US-GCC relations.

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QATAR-US MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING: A GAME CHANGER

Imad K. Harb

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson signed today with Qatar's Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani about cooperation on fighting terror financing is arguably a game changer in the current Gulf crisis. According to the Qatari minister, "Qatar is the first country to sign a memorandum of agreement with the US."¹ For his part, Secretary Tillerson "praised Qatar for signing the deal, and for committing to the effort 'to track down and disable terror financing'." As the secretary heads to a meeting on Wednesday in Jeddah with the foreign ministers of the four countries blockading Qatar—Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Egypt—he bears with him what is arguably the best proof of Doha's commitment to combat one of the greatest challenges of our times.

THE MOU'S IMPORTANCE

While the terms of the memorandum have not yet been made public, it is important to highlight the act of its signing as a welcome step in the right direction in a crisis that, with hindsight, many consider to have been unneeded and detrimental to the interests

of all the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council. Yet from the beginning and until now, the GCC crisis called out for a political solution that would in the least safeguard Qatari sovereignty to conduct an independent foreign policy as well as save face for the countries that levied the original accusations without any evidence proving the purported Qatari malfeasance.

Thus, the memorandum provides a significant milestone on the road to a political solution that preserves GCC unity, stability, and prosperity. But, importantly, it also should be regarded as at least a partial culmination of Kuwaiti-American cooperation on mediating the crisis. Secretary Tillerson himself admitted the centrality of the Kuwaiti mediation effort, without which he would have been hard put to proceed in a purely GCC-centered kerfuffle.

Moreover, the memorandum should be considered as a reinforcement of the existing strategic partnership between Qatar and the United States not only to fight terrorism but also to preserve overall peace in the Gulf region. It indubitably involves all executive agencies and mechanisms in both countries so that its provisions may be carried out to the fullest extent possible by the largest number of institutions. As the announcement of the MOU also made clear, it is hoped that other countries in the region would embark on similar undertakings that could increase the vigilance necessary to fight and defeat all sources of extremism and terrorism that threaten their collective security.

TILLERSON TAKES CHARGE

The signing of the memorandum culminates a long and often confused American journey to help resolve the current crisis. On the road, the Trump Administration had to sort through ill-advised and ill-timed tweets by President Donald Trump, who took credit for supposedly calling Qatar out on supporting terrorism and urging other GCC states to challenge it. In the end, and after yet more dangerous interventions by the president in late June, it appears that cooler heads in the administration—specifically at the State and Defense Departments—have finally triumphed and reaffirmed the traditional American position of standing at equal distances from the United States’ allies in the Arabian Gulf and calling for GCC unity.

Indeed, what has become patently obvious is that the US Department of State, under the leadership of Secretary Rex Tillerson, is driving US policy regarding the current crisis. Beginning with the early and dangerous White House position, Tillerson was not enthusiastic about wading into the conflict, perhaps because of his newness to the job and inexperience as a diplomat. But every day that the crisis took a more ominous and unwelcome turn, he was ready with well-thought out and reasoned pronouncements that emphasized the importance of GCC unity and the necessity of de-escalation.

It was his demarche to the blockading countries to list “reasonable and actionable”

demands from Qatar that led the four countries, at the end of June, to release their 13 conditions expressing their grievances. And when it quickly became obvious that these were difficult and unrealistic demands to execute, Tillerson expressed his frank opinion and again counseled restraint, urging mediation and unity. Finally, he decided to throw the full weight of his institutional position and of the administration behind the mediation effort after it became patently clear that resolving the Gulf crisis required America’s undivided attention.

No one can be sure of how things will develop over the next few days. But Tillerson’s upcoming visit to Jeddah has the potential of continuing the momentum started in Kuwait City, where he met with the original and tireless mediators, and continued in Doha, where he met with the ruler, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, after which Qatar’s foreign minister signed the MOU. How the blockading countries understand the memorandum and deal with this monumental achievement remains up to them, considering their ill-advised anti-Qatar behavior and policy pronouncements since last May. But if these countries are truly looking for a way out of the impasse—and are indeed ready to let this crisis end—they would do well to receive Tillerson with an equally open mind on mediation and reconciliation as he encountered in Doha.

THE NEEDED OPEN-MINDEDNESS

To be sure, what the Gulf crisis has wrought on all parties concerned has been detrimental to everyone's interests. Only retreating from vitriolic rhetoric and ill-considered policy choices helps to preserve whatever is left of the unity necessary to make the GCC the alliance it always was intended to be. What

would help GCC states achieve the coveted coherence within the community of nations are logical discussions about sovereignty and independent foreign policies within agreed alliance parameters, ones that avoid the dictation of choices. Finally, and importantly, these discussions may do well to include needed mechanisms for conflict management and resolution.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Timeline of the GCC Crisis

Appendix B

List of 13 Demands Presented to Qatar
on June 21, 2017

Appendix C

The Six Principles Presented to Qatar
on July 19, 2017

Appendix D

Excerpts of US Official Statements
Regarding the Gulf Crisis

Appendix E

Map of Qatar and the Region



APPENDIX A

TIMELINE OF THE GCC CRISIS

May 20-August 9, 2017

May 20

Qatar reports it has been deliberately targeted by a “smear campaign” over allegations of supporting terrorism, which Qatar says are “absolutely and unequivocally false.”

May 21

US President Donald Trump meets with Arab and Muslim leaders including the emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, in Saudi Arabia. President Trump spoke about countering extremist groups such as ISIL, al-Qaeda, and Hamas, and Iranian influence, as well as improving security.

May 23

The Qatar News Agency (QNA) website is hacked and the Qatari government says false statements were attributed to Sheikh Tamim. These statements promoted good Qatari-Israeli relations, called Iran an “Islamic power,” and called Hamas “the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.”

May 25

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) block Qatari media, including Al

Jazeera. Qatar begins an inquiry into the source of the hack.

May 26

Kuwait’s envoy meets with Sheikh Tamim to ease tensions among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations.

May 28

The UAE foreign minister, Anwar Gargash, tweets that GCC nations are “passing through a sharp crisis” and that “fending off sedition lies in changing behavior...” without pointing to Qatar.

May 30

Saudi and Emirati media outlets attack Qatar.

June 2

An FBI team is reported to be in Doha to help investigate the source of the QNA hack.

June 3

The email account of Yousef Al Otaiba, the UAE’s ambassador to the United States, is hacked. The hackers leak emails that reveal a close relationship between the ambassador and a pro-Israel think tank, the Foundation

for Defense of Democracies (FDD), suggest that the UAE had a role in Turkey's July 2016 coup attempt, and disclose conversations on moving the US military base from Qatar.

June 5

Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt, the UAE, and the recognized Yemeni government sever diplomatic and trade relations with Qatar, accusing Doha of supporting terrorism. Qatari citizens are forced to return home within two weeks and Qatari land, air, and sea transport with these nations is cut off. Additionally, Qatari support of the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen is suspended.

June 6

US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson urges the nations to "address these differences" together. On the same day, President Trump tweets in support of the Saudi bloc, stating that "Leaders pointed to Qatar – look!" in reference to the funding of extremism.

Kuwait offers to mediate the crisis. Kuwait's emir, Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah, travels to Qatar after meeting with Saudi Arabia's King Salman.

June 7

Meshal bin Hamad Al Thani, Qatar's ambassador to the United States, says the timing of this rift was a "shock and a surprise."

The Turkish parliament passes a bill for the deployment of more troops to Qatar. Turkish exporters say they are ready to meet

the food and water needs of Qatar during the blockade.

June 8

Iran offers Qatar use of three ports to import supplies. Qatar's foreign minister, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, says "[Qatar] will never be ready to surrender."

June 9

Secretary Tillerson urges the Gulf countries to work together and highlights the "humanitarian consequences" of the blockade. A few hours later, President Trump accuses Qatar of funding terrorism "at a very high level," in a public statement.

The Saudi bloc expands a "terror" sanctions list by adding a dozen organizations and 59 individuals who are either linked to Qatar or are themselves Qatari. The bloc also warns its citizens against sympathizing with Qatar on social media; the UAE and Bahrain threaten sympathizers with criminal charges.

June 10

Qatar rejects terror sanctions list and denies allegations of supporting extremism.

Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan calls for an end to the blockade against Qatar.

June 11

Citizens from boycotting nations can remain in Qatar, says Qatar's interior ministry.

Iran sends planes full of supplies to Qatar, with cargo ships soon to follow. The nation also opens its airspace to Qatari flights.

June 12

The UK's foreign secretary, Boris Johnson, calls on Qatar to "clamp down" on the funding of extremism while urging the Saudi bloc to ease their restrictions on the Gulf nation.

Qatar defies the boycotting nations' blockade by shipping cargo through Oman.

Qatari Foreign Minister Al Thani declares the blockade both "unfair" and "illegal."

June 13

The US ambassador to Qatar, Dana Shell Smith, resigns from her post amid the Gulf crisis.

The UAE Ambassador to the United States, Yousef Al Otaiba, says there will be no military aspect to the Gulf Crisis.

Qatari Foreign Minister Al Thani says any talks concerning Al Jazeera will stay off the table.

June 14

US Defense Secretary James Mattis signs a deal with Qatar to sell \$12 billion worth of F-15 fighter jets.

In a press release, Qatar Airways announces that its service is largely uninterrupted and "running smoothly" despite flight restrictions.

June 15

Two US naval vessels arrive in Doha for a joint military exercise with Qatar's Emiri Navy.

Qatar's National Human Rights Committee releases a report stating that more than 13,000 Qatari citizens have been directly affected by the blockade.

June 16

Secretary Tillerson cancels his trip to Mexico to focus on the Gulf crisis.

June 17

Saudi Arabia's Foreign Affairs Minister Adel al-Jubeir claims a list of grievances will soon be presented to Qatar.

June 18

Qatar says it will not negotiate with its Gulf neighbors unless the blockade is lifted.

June 19

Qatar accuses the UAE and Saudi Arabia of funding and supporting extremism. The UAE warns that Qatar's isolation could last years if it did not change its policies regarding extremism.

June 20

The US State Department urges the Saudi bloc to present Qatar with "reasonable and actionable" demands.

June 21

The Saudi bloc presents a 13-point list of

demands to Qatar saying it has 10 days to comply.

June 22

The contents of the list are released and it includes demands judged unfeasible by Qatar, such as downgrading relations with Iran, ending Qatari-Turkish military cooperation and closing a Turkish base in Qatar, and shutting down Al Jazeera and other media organizations.

June 23

Turkey rejects the Saudi bloc's demand to shut down its military base in Qatar.

June 24

Qatar officially denounces the list of demands, calling them "unreasonable."

June 25

Qatar urges the United States to use its influence and intervene in the Gulf crisis.

Secretary Tillerson says some of the demands on the list presented to Qatar are "difficult to meet."

June 26

The chairman of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Bob Corker, says Congress will halt arms sales to the Gulf until the GCC crisis is resolved.

Bahrain accuses Qatar of "military escalation" as Turkey plans to deploy more troops to Qatar.

June 27

Secretary Tillerson meets with Qatari and Kuwaiti envoys to help de-escalate the crisis.

June 29

Qatar says it is ready to discuss "legitimate issues" with Gulf neighbors to end the crisis, but states that some demands are based on false allegations and impossible to meet.

June 30

Qatar's Minister of State for Defense Affairs Khaled al-Attiyah says the blockade is a "bloodless declaration of war."

July 1

Saudi Arabia reiterates that its list of demands to end the Gulf crisis is "non-negotiable" as the deadline to comply passes. The Saudi bloc extends the deadline by 48 hours.

Qatar says the list of 13 demands were "made to be rejected."

July 3

Qatar delivers, through Kuwait, a handwritten response to the Saudi bloc's list of demands, essentially rejecting the demands.

July 4

Qatar plans to boost its liquefied natural gas (LNG) output as a show of strength.

July 5

While meeting in Cairo, the Saudi-led

quartet confirms that the Qatari response to the list was negative and urges Qatar to cease support for extremists.

July 7

Secretary Mattis praises Qatar in a phone call with his Qatari counterpart, Minister al-Attiyah.

The Suez Canal Authority bans Qatari ships from docking at the canal's ports, except those carrying oil.

July 8

British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson meets with Kuwaiti and Qatari leaders to help negotiate an end to the GCC crisis.

July 9

Qatar establishes a committee to seek compensation for damages caused by the blockade.

July 11

The United States and Qatar announce that they have signed a memorandum of understanding to help fight extremism and address its funding. Secretary Tillerson says that Qatar's views are "reasonable."

July 12

The Saudi bloc calls the US-Qatar counter-terrorism agreement "insufficient" as Secretary Tillerson meets with Saudi Arabia's King Salman to ease tensions in the Gulf.

July 14

Qatari Foreign Minister Al Thani says he is optimistic about Secretary Tillerson's visit, that it would "bear fruit in time."

July 15

President Trump says that other countries would be willing to "build us" another military installation if the United States pulls out of the Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar.

July 17

The Washington Post cites US intelligence officials who claim the UAE was behind the Qatar News Agency cyberattack. The UAE says this report was "untrue."

Egypt disallows Qataris from entering the country without a visa, with exemptions for students and spouses and children of Egyptian nationals.

UAE Foreign Minister Gargash reaffirms the Saudi bloc's stance on Qatar. He also states that the four Arab nations were discussing additional sanctions on Qatar. Bahrain supports this reaffirmation.

July 18

Qatar calls the alleged cyberattack by the UAE "unfortunate" and a "breach of international law."

July 19

The Saudi-led bloc reduces the 13-point list of demands previously presented to Qatar to six broad principles that call for a halt of financing and providing safe havens for

extremist groups. Saudi Arabia's ambassador to the United Nations, Abdallah bin Yahya al-Mouallimi, stresses that compromise is possible, but not on the six principles.

July 20

Qatar says experts now have evidence to show that the Qatar News Agency hack originated from UAE.

Qatar's emir, Sheikh Tamim, issues a royal decree to change Qatar's anti-terror legislation, which redefines extremism and the financing of extremism.

July 21

Secretary Tillerson urges the Saudi bloc to lift the land blockade against Qatar.

In a speech to the nation, the Qatari emir, Sheikh Tamim, calls for negotiations with the Saudi bloc to ease the boycott.

July 23

Turkey's President Erdoğan begins a Gulf visit to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Qatar to negotiate an end to the Gulf crisis.

The UAE unblocks television channels of Qatar-based beIN Media, a Qatari entertainment company.

July 24

The Saudi bloc adds nine entities and nine individuals, allegedly tied to Qatar, to their terror sanctions list.

Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi reaffirms his government's support for the blockade against Qatar.

Russia indicates its willingness to help mediate the Gulf crisis if asked.

July 25

A UAE-backed documentary claims that Qatar had strong links to the September 11, 2001 attacks, despite the fact that none of the attackers were Qatari.

July 26

US Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Florida) says that "Doha's behavior must change the status quo, and if it does not, it risks losing our cooperation on the air base."

Qatar says the nine entities and nine individuals added by the Saudi bloc to the terror sanctions list was "a disappointing surprise" after Doha's consistent effort to fight extremism.

July 27

Qatar calls on the United Nations to help resolve the Gulf crisis.

Defamatory anti-Qatar television advertisements begin to appear in American media after the Saudi American Public Relation Affairs Committee pays \$138,000 to Washington, DC-based channel NBC4.

Qatar hires Avenue Strategies Global, a Washington, DC-based influence firm, signaling that it wants to challenge Saudi Arabia's PR campaign to defame Qatar.

July 29

The Saudi bloc countries, after meeting

in Bahrain’s capital Manama, say they are ready to have a dialogue with Qatar if the embargoed state shows a willingness to comply with their six new principles. At the same meeting, the bloc decides to impose new sanctions on Qatar.

Qatar accuses Saudi Arabia of politicizing the Hajj and suspends its citizens’ registration for the upcoming pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia.

July 30

Saudi Arabia’s foreign minister accuses Qatar of internationalizing the Muslim holy sites and considers that a “declaration of war” against the kingdom.

July 31

Qatar files a legal complaint at the World Trade Organization to challenge the trade boycott by the Saudi bloc.

Leaked emails reveal that the UAE lobbied the United States to host – instead of Qatar – an Afghan Taliban embassy.

August 1

Turkey and Qatar begin a series of joint military training exercises, ending on August 7.

Qatar Airways discusses a plan to begin new flight routes, bypassing the Saudi bloc’s airspace restrictions.

August 2

Qatar purchases seven navy vessels from Italy for \$6 billion.

The United States sends diplomatic envoys to the Gulf to help defuse the crisis.

August 3

Qatar approves a draft law that grants permanent residency status to some non-citizens such as children of Qatari women who married foreigners, or those who offer outstanding services to the country.

August 4

German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel says both America and Europe are “on the same page” in their disagreement with the Qatar blockade.

August 6

Israel announces that it plans to ban Al Jazeera from operating in the country and the occupied Palestinian territories.

Qatar considers opening trade routes with Iran to bypass the Saudi-led blockade.

August 8

Bahrain and UAE partially reopen their airspace to Qatar Airways.

August 9

Effective immediately, Qatar grants visa-free entry to 80 nations.

APPENDIX B

LIST OF 13 DEMANDS PRESENTED TO QATAR

June 21, 2017

On June 21, 2017, the Saudi bloc presented the following 13-point list of demands to Qatar, giving it 10 days to comply:

1. Scale down diplomatic ties with Iran and close the Iranian diplomatic missions in Qatar, expel members of Iran's Revolutionary Guard and cut off military and intelligence cooperation with Iran. Trade and commerce with Iran must comply with US and international sanctions in a manner that does not jeopardise the security of the Gulf Cooperation Council.
2. Immediately shut down the Turkish military base, which is currently under construction, and halt military cooperation with Turkey inside of Qatar.
3. Sever ties to all "terrorist, sectarian and ideological organisations," specifically the Muslim Brotherhood, ISIL, al-Qaeda, Fateh al-Sham (formerly known as the Nusra Front) and Lebanon's Hezbollah. Formally declare these entities as terror groups as per the list announced by Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, UAE and Egypt, and concur with all future updates of this list.
4. Stop all means of funding for individuals, groups or organisations that have been designated as terrorists by Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt, Bahrain, US and other countries.
5. Hand over "terrorist figures", fugitives and wanted individuals from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt and Bahrain to their countries of origin. Freeze their assets, and provide any desired information about their residency, movements and finances.
6. Shut down Al Jazeera and its affiliate stations.
7. End interference in sovereign countries' internal affairs. Stop granting citizenship to wanted nationals from Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt and Bahrain. Revoke Qatari citizenship for nationals where such citizenship violates those countries' laws.
8. Pay reparations and compensation for loss of life and other financial losses caused by Qatar's policies in recent years. The sum will be determined in coordination with Qatar.
9. Align Qatar's military, political, social and economic policies with the other Gulf and Arab countries, as well as on economic matters, as per the 2014 agreement reached with Saudi Arabia.

Appendix B

10. Cease contact with the political opposition in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt and Bahrain. Hand over files detailing Qatar's prior contact with and support for opposition groups, and submit details of their personal information and the support Qatar has provided them.
11. Shut down all news outlets funded directly and indirectly by Qatar, including Arabi21, Rassd, Al Araby Al Jadeed, Mekameleen and Middle East Eye, etc.
12. Agree to all the demands within 10 days of list being submitted to Qatar, or the list will become invalid.
13. Consent to monthly compliance audits in the first year after agreeing to the demands, followed by quarterly audits in the second year, and annual audits in the following 10 years.

APPENDIX C
THE SIX PRINCIPLES PRESENTED TO QATAR
July 19, 2017

On July 19, 2017, the Saudi-led bloc (Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Egypt) asked Qatar to commit to a list of six principles, instead of the 13 original demands presented to Qatar on June 21, 2017:

1. Combat all forms of extremism and terrorism, prevent their financing, and deny havens to terrorist groups or individuals.
2. Suspend all acts of provocation and speeches inciting hatred or violence.
3. Comply fully with the Riyadh Agreement of 2013, and the supplementary agreement and its implementation mechanisms of 2014, within the framework of the Gulf Cooperation Council.
4. Adhere to all the outcomes of the Arab Islamic American Summit held in May 2017 in Riyadh.
5. Refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of states and from supporting illegal entities.
6. Uphold the responsibility of all states of the international community to confront all forms of extremism and terrorism as a threat to international peace and security.

List adapted from <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/06/qatar-diplomatic-crisis-latest-updates-170605105550769.html>

APPENDIX D

EXCERPTS OF US OFFICIAL STATEMENTS REGARDING THE GULF CRISIS

June 6, 2017

“Trump Takes Credit for Saudi Move Against Qatar, A US Military Partner”¹

- Tweets by President Trump: “So good to see the Saudi Arabia visit with the King and 50 countries already paying off. They said they would take a hard line on funding ... extremism, and all reference was pointing to Qatar. Perhaps this will be the beginning of the end to the horror of terrorism!”
- US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Defense Secretary James Mattis tried to “smooth over the rift.” Secretary Tillerson “offered to play peacemaker” and Secretary Mattis “insisted it would have no effect on the campaign against the Islamic State.”
- White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer: “The US wants to see this issue de-escalated and resolved immediately, keeping with the principles that the president laid out in terms of defeating terror financing.”

“U.S. military praises Qatar, despite Trump tweet”²

- Department of Defense Spokesman Navy Captain Jeff Davis: “We continue

to be grateful to the Qataris for their longstanding support for our presence and their enduring commitment to regional security.”

- US envoy to Qatar, Dana Shell Smith, retweeted a message from October in which she praised the US partnership with Qatar, citing “real progress to counter terrorist financing....”

June 7, 2017

“US officials scramble to limit Donald Trump’s diplomatic damage over Qatar tweets”³

- State Department Spokeswoman Heather Nauert: “We recognise that Qatar continues to make efforts to stop the financing of terror groups, including prosecuting suspected financiers, freezing assets, introducing stringent controls on its banking system.”
- Press Secretary Sean Spicer: “The president had a very, very constructive conversation with the emir during his visit in Riyadh. At that time he was very heartened by the emir’s commitment to formally joining the terrorist financing targeting centre and showing their commitment to this issue.”

June 9, 2017

“Trump, Tillerson offer conflicting statements on Qatar crisis within 90 minutes”⁴

- Secretary Tillerson: “We call on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Egypt to ease the blockade on Qatar [which is] hindering U.S. military actions in the region and the campaign against ISIS.”
- President Trump: “The nation of Qatar, unfortunately, has historically been a funder of terrorism at a very high level ... We have to stop the funding of terrorism.”
- Captain Jeff Davis: “While current operations from Al Udeid Air Base have not been hindered or curtailed, the evolving situation is hindering our ability to plan for longer-term military operations.”

June 11, 2017

“Arab states’ blockade of Qatar hinders campaign against ISIS – Tillerson”

- Secretary Tillerson: “We call on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt to ease the blockade against Qatar. The blockade is hindering US military action in the region and the campaign against ISIS.”
- Secretary Tillerson: “We ask that there be no further escalation by the parties in the region,” calling for “calm and thoughtful dialogue with clear

expectations” in order to resolve the crisis, and endorsing the mediation proposal by the Emir of Kuwait.

June 13, 2017

“Pentagon chief: Blockade of Qatar a ‘very complex situation’”⁶

- US Defense Secretary James Mattis said the blockade against Qatar by Gulf states, including Saudi Arabia, was a “very complex situation” and it was an area where common ground had to be found.

June 20, 2017

“US expresses frustration over Saudi embargo on Qatar”⁷

- Spokeswoman Nauert: “Now that it has been more than two weeks since the embargo started we are mystified that the Gulf states have not released to the Qataris nor to the public the details about the claims they are making toward Qatar.”

June 22, 2017

“Qatar crisis deepens as Gulf sides stand their ground”⁸

- Secretary Tillerson: “We hope the list of demands will soon be presented to Qatar and will be reasonable and actionable.”

June 25, 2017

“Qatar demands difficult to meet, says US”⁹

- Secretary Tillerson: “Qatar has begun its careful review and consideration of a series of requests presented by Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and U.A.E.” “While some of the elements will be very difficult for Qatar to meet, there are significant areas which provide a basis for ongoing dialogue leading to resolution.”

June 26, 2017

“Corker vows to block arms sales to Gulf countries amid Qatar crisis”¹⁰

- Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Bob Corker (R-Tennessee): “All countries in the region need to do more to combat terrorism, but recent disputes among the GCC countries only serve to hurt efforts to fight [the Islamic State] and counter Iran. For these reasons, before we provide any further clearances during the informal review period on sales of lethal military equipment to the GCC states, we need a better understanding of the path to resolve the current dispute and reunify the GCC.”

June 30, 2017

“Trump tells fundraiser that Qatar is funding terrorists”¹¹

- President Trump, in leaked audio of a campaign event: “I prefer that they don’t fund terrorists,” in reference to Qatar. He also said of Saudi Arabia, “they really are fighting the hard fight.”

July 6, 2017

“US Defense Secretary Mattis affirms US-Qatar cooperation: Pentagon”¹²

- Defense Secretary Mattis, in a call with his Qatari counterpart: Reaffirmed their commitment to US-Qatar cooperation, and stressed the importance of a de-escalation of the crisis, “so all partners in the Gulf region can focus on next steps in meeting common goals.”

July 10, 2017

“U.S., Qatar sign agreement on combating terrorism financing”¹³

- Secretary Tillerson on a bilateral US-Qatar agreement to combat extremism: “Together the United States and Qatar will do more to track down funding sources, will do more to collaborate and share information and will do more to keep the region ... safe.”

July 12, 2017

“Trump team sending mixed messages on Qatar and Gulf crisis”

- President Trump, in an interview: “If we ever had to leave [Qatar], we would have 10 countries willing to build us another one, believe me, and they will pay for it.”

July 13, 2017

“Tillerson says Qatar resolution may take a while”¹⁴

- Secretary Tillerson: Resolving the dispute “may take quite a while” and “In my view, there’s a changed sense of willingness to at least be open to talking to one another and that was not the case before I came... We tabled some documents with both sides while we were here which lays out some ways that we might move this forward.”

July 21, 2017

“Rex Tillerson ‘satisfied’ with Qatar’s counterterrorism efforts”¹⁵

- Secretary Tillerson, in a press conference welcoming the Omani Minister for Foreign Affairs: “I think we’re satisfied with the effort [Qatar is] putting forth.” and “I hope the [Saudi-led bloc of] four countries will consider as a sign of good faith lifting this land blockade, which is really having the most, I think, negative effects on the Qatari people.”

July 27, 2017

“U.S. Must Push for Changes in Qatari Behavior; Rift is Opportunity to Address Terror Financing throughout Region, Says Ros-Lehtinen”¹⁶

- Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Florida) in a congressional hearing on Qatar: “We cannot allow for our air base to be used as a means to justify this sort of behavior.” And, “Doha’s behavior must change the status quo, and if it does not, it risks losing our cooperation on the air base.”

August 2, 2017

“US sends envoys on Qatar mission”¹⁷

- Tillerson told reporters that Qatar is so far fulfilling its commitment to the United States, but that he had sent senior United States diplomat Tim Lenderking and retired General Anthony Zinni.

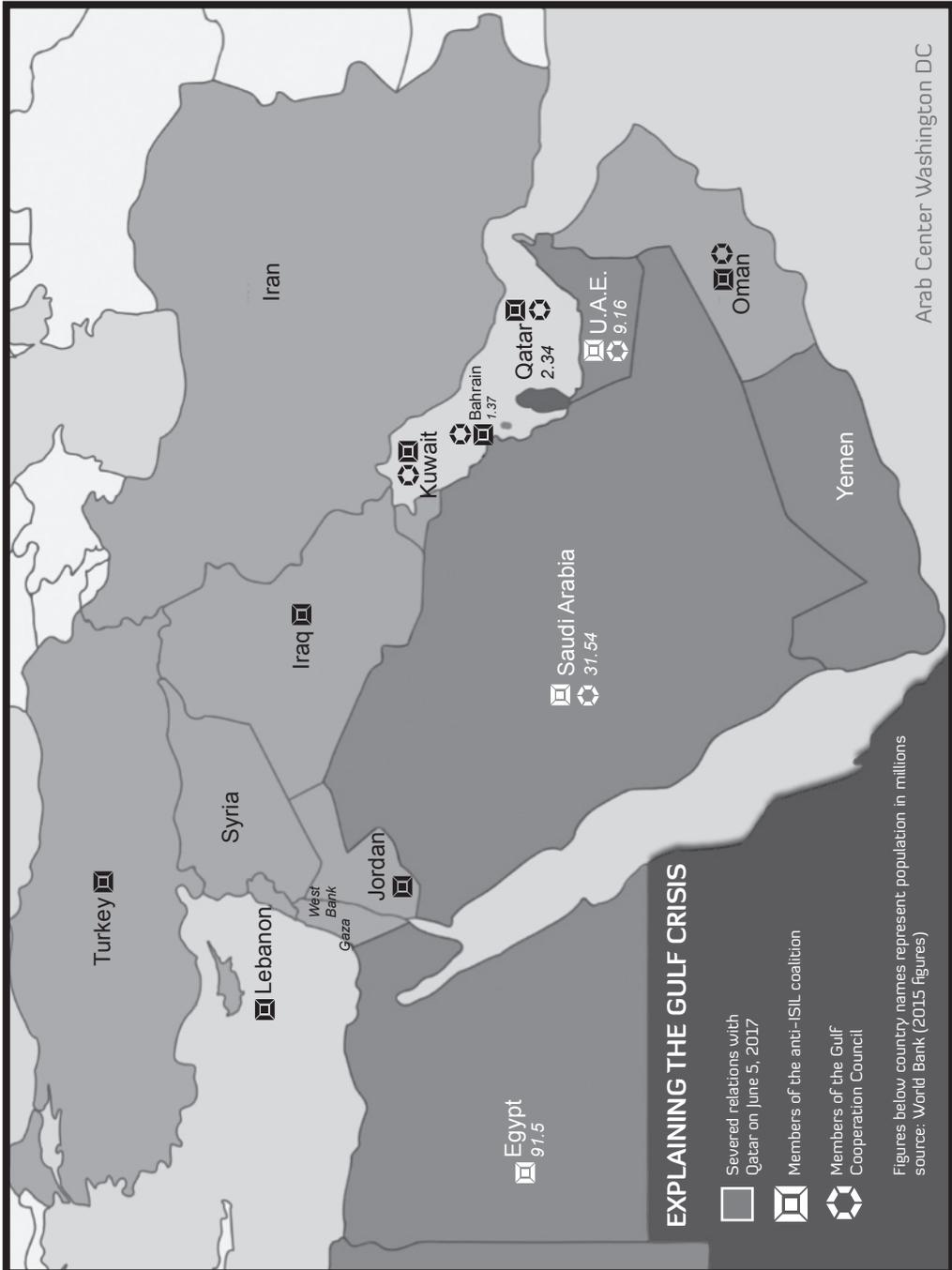
August 6, 2017

- The two envoys arrive in Kuwait and express the US government’s continued support to Kuwait’s mediation effort.

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- 1) The New York Times
 - 2) Reuters
 - 3) The Guardian
 - 4) ThinkProgress
 - 5) Russia Today
 - 6) Reuters
 - 7) Daily Mail
 - 8) BBC News
 - 9) BBC News
 - 10) The Hill
 - 11) Washington Examiner
 - 12) Daily Mail
 - 13) Reuters
 - 14) CNN
 - 15) Washington Examiner
 - 16) Ros-Lehtinen’s House of Representatives website
 - 17) Khaleej Times

APPENDIX E

MAP OF QATAR AND THE REGION



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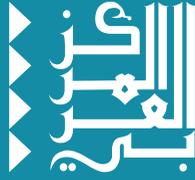
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