

Five Things You Need to Know About What's Going on with Qatar

A new Cold War in the desert.

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It's not every day that two states with similar societies and international alignments break into an open cold war, but this is what is happen between Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

Here's what you need to know.

1. Black Gold Meets Cold War In The Desert

Qatar and Saudi Arabia are neighbours and the similarities do not end there. Both are heavily reliant on energy exports in order to fund their lavish domestic economies. Both practice similar forms of Salafist Islam and both countries have been the traditional enemies of secular Arab states, notably Syria. Both countries are sponsors of terrorism including of al-Qaeda and ISIS at various times.

Hillary Clinton email reveals she knew of Saudi & Qatar government funding for ISIL (ISIS) by August 2014 <https://t.co/tlWxkEZ8FN> pic.twitter.com/RmaFi9IQQP

— WikiLeaks (@wikileaks) [June 5, 2017](#)

Although the states are arguing over their differences, it is their similarities that are the real root of the crisis.

With experts predicting that oil prices will never recover as non-OPEC members continue to produce more energy and as China becomes a pioneer in green energy production, Saudi Arabia is feeling the economic sting and is trying to isolate a regional energy exporter.

Oil prices rose after Saudi and others made the announcement that they were breaking off relations with Qatar. However, the bigger question is: will the prices go back down? Most experts say yes, something which will embolden the deeply un-creative Saudi regime to take even more aggressive measures, even against neighbours with similar ideologies.

Although Saudi Arabia and Qatar had a somewhat similar spat in 2014, the current issue is far bigger.

Saudi has managed to convince many more countries to join in the boycott and has also

moved to shut down state-owned Qatari media, notably Al Jazeera. Saudi has also shut the border to Qatar as well water access to its neighbour. Flights from the state airlines of Saudi Arabia and its ally the UAE to Qatar have all stopped. Furthermore, Saudi is now demanding that Qatar change the name of its Imam Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab Mosque, named for the spiritual father of the Saudi ideology.

It really is as if the Saudis and the UAE are building a kind of invisible but deeply unambiguous Berlin Wall around Qatar.

2. Qatar Diversifies Its 'Geo-political Portfolio'

Qatar has long been attempting to subtly and at times overtly shift its international alliances in order to differentiate itself from Saudi and carve out a unique niche as a 'separate but equal' despotic Gulf state.

Most notably, Qatar has made overtures towards Iran just as Saudi's habitually anti-Iranian stance goes into overdrive. The proximate cause of the dispute are now deleted Tweets from Qatar's state-run news agency wherein Qatar's supreme ruler Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani spoke warmly about Iran and even praised the Lebanese Resistance Hezbollah, a Shi'a party that is an ally of Iran but one considered a terrorist group by Saudi Arabia *and* the US.

Although Qatar continues to insist that the Tweet was the product of a hacking hoax, the Saudis are not buying it.

Qatar is by no means pro-Iranian, but pragmatism has led Qatar to seek possible business opportunities, especially in respect of gas deals with the Islamic Republic. The idea that a fellow Gulf Cooperation Council member might have any positive relations with Iran goes against everything Saudi Arabia and the United States stands for.

3. What about Egypt? What do they have in common with Saudi Arabia?

The short answer is that apart from the kinds of Saudi business dealings that proliferate throughout the entire world with the exceptions of countries like Syria and Iran, Egypt has little practically to do with Saudi.

Egypt is a secular, multi-faith state that has recently been under attack from Salafist terrorist groups like ISIS which are supported by both Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

However, unlike Saudi, Qatar supports the illegal group Muslim Brotherhood which briefly ruled Egypt between 2012 and 2013 after Barack Obama's United States abandoned its traditional ally, former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

Now that secular rule has been restored, Egypt is particularly angry with Qatar for funding and supporting the Muslim Brotherhood.

That being said, most Egyptians have very negative views about both states as do most moderate Sunnis and virtually all Shi'a Muslims and Christians.

The real shame is that Egypt which was the undisputed leader of the Arab world under the leadership of President Nasser, is now simply following in Saudi's bleak shadow.

4. Saudi Arabia Accused Qatar of Sponsoring Terrorism...YES THAT Saudi Arabia

Nobody said that the Saudi regime was honest, even though this time they've really gone for it. Saudi Arabia is by any estimation, the world's largest state sponsor of terrorism. Qatar is also a state sponsor of much of the same kind of terrorism. Saudi Arabia is correct when it accuses Qatar of sponsoring terrorism, but this doesn't mean that Saudi Arabia is suddenly on the side of the righteous. It means that Saudi Arabia is simply as hypocritical as it has always been.

In other words...pass the popcorn.

5. The Syrian Connection

It is widely known that both Saudi Arabia and Qatar are fighting on the same side in Syria, using their mutual terrorist proxies who receive funds and arms from both states. This includes groups like ISIS and al-Qaeda as well as other Salafist terrorist groups.

Secular Ba'athist Syria has no relations with either Qatar or Saudi Arabia and this is unlikely to change in the immediate future.

However, with Saudi and Qatar now at loggerheads, it could mean that terrorists will have to pick which country they are loyal to and in the process they may lose one of their two main cash cows.



Furthermore, with Syria set to win the war against Qatari and Saudi funded terrorism, Qatar's plans to build a gas pipeline to Turkey, running largely through Syria, may never happen. This was one of the main reasons Qatar sought to overthrow the legitimate government of the Syrian Arab Republic. It might also be a reason why having more or less given up on the Syrian pipeline, Qatar is embarrassingly (for Qatar) turning to Iran, which as everyone knows is fighting Qatari terrorists is Syria along side Iran's partners against terrorism, The Syrian Arab Republic and Russian Federation.

Russia and America have remained neutral on the dispute as has Pakistan, an ally of both Saudi and Qatar, which depends greatly on investment from both countries.

This dispute will not immediately change the war in Syria, but it could lead to some fracturing in the loyalties and funds of jihadists.

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