



A workshop on

**Qatar's Unilateral Policies: Political Risk  
Assessment of Doha's Ambitions**

**Executive Summary**

**Emirates Policy Center**

**Sep. 26, 2017**

Emirates Policy Center (EPC) organized on Sep. 25, 2017 a workshop entitled “Qatar’s Unilateral Policies: Political Risk Assessment of Doha’s Ambitions”. The event was attended by a number of Emirati, Gulf and Arab officials and experts, as well as, representatives of foreign embassies in the UAE to shed light on the crisis with Qatar and discuss the consequences associated with Doha’s unilateral policies, its role dilemma and illusion of power on the region in general and on the GCC in particular.

To this end, the workshop focused on four major themes: the first one dealt with the UAE perspective on boycotting Qatar; the second theme tackled regional and international contexts of the relationship between Qatar, GCC Countries and Egypt; the third one touched upon options for both sides of the crisis; the last theme attempted to foresee scenarios of the crisis and consequences of each scenario.

This paper presents key conclusions, forecasts and scenarios from the workshop’s sessions and discussions.

## **Conclusions**

### **A. Background and objective causes of the crisis**

1. Roots of the crisis with Qatar go back to the unilateral policies adopted by Qatar since the former Emir Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani rose to power in 1995. These policies in their essence reflect Doha’s endeavor to play a regional role that exceeds the capabilities of a “small country”. Therefore, Qatar has fallen victim to its illusions, obsessions and perceptions about its role and capabilities.
2. Doha’s regional role and foreign policy were at odds with the tendencies of the GCC block, which was seen by Arab Gulf countries as threat to their security and interests. Qatar, however, perceives this as a tool for promoting its regional role and foreign policy. In fact, harm emanating from Qatar has surpassed Arab Gulf countries to reach other Arab countries such as Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Libya, Algeria and Tunisia.
3. Dispute between the Arab quartet and Qatar has nothing to do with differences in political views but with the existence of countries. Doha has targeted the security of some countries in the region and interfered in the internal affairs of others without having any direct and clear objectives in these countries. This included the support of Saudi opposition in London, attracting Saudi citizens, backing Bahraini opposition and supporting armed groups in Syria and Houthis in Yemen and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and elsewhere.

4. The Arab quartet gives two fundamental justifications for boycotting Qatar: the first one has to do with Doha's policies that pose a threat to the Gulf security and stability, while the other justification revolves around Qatar's vision of the region's future, which stands at odds with the vision of the rest of countries in the region.
  - As for the first justification, it was evident that Qatar has targeted the security of Saudi Arabia, which is a pillar for the Gulf security and stability. Doha has forged ties with non-state actors to destabilize Arab Gulf countries and Egypt. It has caused the collapse of the structure of some Arab countries hit by the 2011 and 2012 uprisings of the Arab Spring, thereby creating crises and conflicts that are still raging until now. Finally, Doha has employed media outlets such as Al-Jazeera network as part of its agenda to settle scores, political incitement and spread the discourse of hatred.
  - The second justification is a struggle of visions; Qatar's vision for the Middle East's future is very different from that of the Arab quartet. The UAE supports regional policies that cement regional security, stability, development and prosperity. Doha on the other hand backs non-state actors including Islamists and Jihadists. While the UAE supports moderation, modernity and social and economic freedoms, Qatar's policies support religious extremism and groups based on narrow and closed identities. In addition, the UAE and Saudi Arabia are more inclined to adopt an approach of gradual change and mature progress in reforms and governance so that peoples' aspirations towards freedom and justice do not turn into chaos, civil wars and states' disintegration. Qatar does the opposite and destroys what Arab Gulf countries have built in the region.
5. Since its inception, the GCC block has agreed to respect the privacy of some of its members in their regional and international ties, such as Kuwait before the Iraqi invasion and Oman. Qatar, however, has disregarded diplomatic norms and political traditions and violated the GCC charter by interfering in the internal affairs of GCC countries and targeting their security and social fabric.

## **B. Regional and international contexts of the crisis**

1. This crisis is different from those of 2013 and 2014 because it is not a diplomatic or political one only. It also has surpassed the local dimension to the regional and international one. For the first time, Qatar is facing four countries together. This means that Doha cannot perform its regional role in light of its isolation by the Arab quartet.

2. The decision to boycott Qatar came against the backdrop of the “Arab Spring” revolutions that affected the GCC system with the declining global powers’ role in managing political interactions in the region. Moreover, that was accompanied by a growing role of regional powers in protecting their own national security against internal and external threats, and the emergence of Saudi Arabia as a key actor in the Gulf and Arab region.
3. There has been a confusion about the US stance on the crisis for several reasons prominent among of which was the fact that the crisis simply erupted among U.S allies as it has also shown contradicting positions inside the U.S administration itself in this regard (White House vs Department of State and Department of Defense).

### **C. Crisis Management and the Outcomes of Boycotting Qatar**

1. It seems that the Arab Quartet’s approach in dealing with Qatar is primarily designed to achieve one of two principal goals: first, to subjugate Qatar and push Doha to accept the Quartet’s 13 demands. Second, the boycotting countries do not intend to shatter Qatar, but rather to contain it and find an exit solution through reaching a practical compromise. Both goals, however, rest on one premise; the need for Qatar to change the way it perceives its regional role so that it can return to the GCC fold.
2. Among the salient outcomes of the boycott campaign against Qatar is the fact that Doha has started to feel the consequences of the crisis after it has been the source of crises for other regional countries for a long time. Moreover, the country has become in the global spotlight as a “regional trouble maker” as well as a sponsor and funder of terrorism and extremism, not to mention that being distracted by current crisis, Doha’s influence has declined in regional issues.
3. The boycotting countries are still unsatisfied with the level of support shown by Arab, Asian and European nations as well as the U.S with regard to the current crisis with Qatar while Kuwait and Oman have remained neutral in this regard.

### **D. Implications of the Crisis**

1. All stakeholders need to be aware that any deadlock over the crisis would offer global and regional powers a chance to meddle in the problem to advance their own agendas. This has been quite evident in the roles played by some regional powers like Turkey and global ones like Russia and even the U.S.

2. Parties to the crisis need to realize that the continuation of the crisis may threaten the survival of the GCC as the threat -this time- comes from inside not outside.
3. Doha realizes that it cannot totally exit the GCC and inter into full alliances with Iran and Turkey because under such arrangement Qatar would be a satellite state of these regional powers rather than a full partner.

### *Prospects for Crisis Prediction*

1. It is unlikely that the crisis will become internationalized particularly with the support that all international powers have shown for the Kuwaiti mediation initiative. However, the activation or facilitation of such mediation efforts would sometimes require the involvement of international actors.
2. It is likely that the crisis will continue as all stakeholders are still far away from reaching an agreement. It is expected that the Arab quartet will stick to the demands that Qatar is requested to meet, and it is likely that none of the boycotting countries will relinquish any of these demands.
3. It is likely that the support for the Arab quartet will grow over time. However, Qatar will seek to secure enough support from regional actors (Iran and Turkey) to prevent any violent subjugation by its opponents.

### *Potential Scenarios*

1. **Solution Scenario:** Qatar meets the demands of boycotting countries, and this is unlikely at least on the short term given the absence of any signs in this regard.
2. **The Freezing of Crisis Scenario:** The Arab quartet continues its boycotting campaign against Qatar but without escalating measures, pressures, or sanctions against Doha. This seems to be the most probable scenario because the chances of success of Kuwait's mediation initiative have become weak, not to mention the increased number of international calls to end the crisis, and the US opposition to any escalation of the situation.
3. **Escalation Scenario:** The Arab quartet countries impose more economic sanctions and practice more political pressures on Doha through international organizations. They also expand support for the Qatari opposition, and seek to destabilize the country through

attracting tribes, military leaders and politicians. This is a probable scenario particularly if boycotting countries came to realize that all international and Gulf mediation efforts would fail to defuse the crisis and that Doha would continue its policies of supporting terrorism and non-state actors.

4. **Regime Change Scenario:** This can happen through a direct military action or sponsoring a coup d'état. This scenario is less likely given the GCC charter and nature however; it is not ruled out that the boycotting countries may resort to such approach should Doha escalate its hostile policies against the Arab quartet.