

**Forum:** The Security Council  
**Issue:** The question of the blockade of Qatar  
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**Position:** President & Deputy President

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## Introduction

In 2017, suspicions that Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani had been supporting and funding several Islamist and terrorist groups as well as strengthening diplomatic relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, four surrounding nations have imposed a land and maritime blockade on the nation of Qatar. Moreover, due to this event other Member Nations have taken suspicion and weakened their economic and political relations with the country in question.

The four countries actively involved in the issue are Egypt, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates and most importantly Saudi Arabia, who is leading the blockade group and convincing other Member States to sever their diplomatic relations with Qatar. Apart from the four countries aforementioned, it is important to point out the fact that the US is also having an important role in the conflict due to its alliances with countries in the region.

Although it may seem that such an issue is provoking horrible consequences to the country, there are as many beneficial consequences as bad ones. The blockade has affected almost every facet of the country, including private companies located in and/or funded by Qatar. It should be noted that the embargo is an ongoing conflict that is likely to be solved in the near future since up to now the conflict has not escalated to military level or very radical threats.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Embargo

An embargo is an official ban or trade or other commercial activity with a particular country, in this case with Qatar. (Oxford Dictionary)

### Blockade

The definition of a blockade is very similar to embargo but it has a detailed difference. It is the isolation of a particular country to prevent the passage of persons or supplies. (Oxford Dictionary)

### Emir

An Emir is a legally recognized ruler, chief or leader in Islamist countries. Also, it can be defined as the descendant of Muhammad. The title of emir also belongs to the ruler of Afghanistan and certain Turkish officials. However, this title can also belong to military commanders. In this case, the word Emir will make reference to the Qatari Head of State. (Free Dictionary)

### Sever diplomatic ties

First of all, diplomacy or diplomatic ties should be defined. Diplomacy is usually understood as the practice of making negotiations and keeping a healthy relationship between nations and being able to handle affairs without arousing hostility. To break relations is defined as the formal act of severing any diplomatic relations with a particular country to emphasize the disapproval of certain actions or policies. It is usually done in critical situations. (U.S Department of State)

### Terrorism

There are various definitions of terrorism around the globe, especially ones made by politicians and Member States. The US Department of State defines it as “premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience” whereas the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) defines it as “the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a Government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives”. Moreover, it can also be understood as an action made by certain clandestine groups that provoke terror and physical fear in order to achieve a certain objective. (Journal of Military and Veterans' Health)

Unluckily, nowadays the word “terrorism” is actually misrelated with the Muslim people, due to the recent rise of terror by the Islamic State and other Muslim terrorist groups all around the globe in the 21st century. As a result of this discrimination towards Muslims, many policies were applied to ensure the innocence of such people, such as the extra security revision on these people in certain countries or airports. This is a stereotype that

has been around in the last 20 years and that should be abolished from people's minds and not blame a person for other person's action, as it is in this case.

### Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

The Gulf Cooperation Council or also known as GCC is a political and economic alliance between six countries located in the Arabian peninsula, which includes the countries: Kuwait, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. Such council was established in 1981 with the objective of having social and cultural cooperation between the six states, but the main goal, due to their geographical proximity, was to protect themselves from the Iran-Iraq war. Every state that confirms the GCC reunites once a year to discuss regional affairs. Regarding its economy, it should be pointed out that the GCC possesses approximately half of the oil production around the globe, but however, it is not the only source of income they possess. As an important agreement to emphasize, in 2004 the GCC Counter-Terrorism Agreement was adopted and later a terrorism committee was created to tackle the matter. According to the facts of the blockade, it is possible that Qatar violated such agreement.

### Arab Spring

The Arab Spring was a series of political protests that looked for regime changes, humanitarian changes or cultural changes which were carried out between 2011-2013. These protests were carried out throughout Arabia, in countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Libya, etc. Tunisia has had some improvements after these series of protests but many of them had a government that reflected political instability and oppression, which was and still is Syria's case nowadays. (History.com editors, 2018).

### Stalemate

Stalemate is a position at war or conflict where both parties are unable to make further action or progress because it seems impossible for one party to win the conflict. (Merriam Webster)

## Background Information

### How did it start?

In May the 23rd of 2017, the Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, was accused of allegedly supporting terrorist groups such as Hamas, Muslim Brotherhood, etc. Furthermore, Qatar was accused of also supporting Iran, a country who was feared by the

GCC, council which is formed by Qatar and 5 other countries. Those accusations were said to be “fake news” and the statements made by Qatar's Emir founded in such news were false. Those “fake news” were aired in several United Arab Emirates’s (UAE) and Saudi’s networks, leading to a diplomatic breakdown between such countries and the State of Qatar. Then Saudi Arabia shut its borders with Qatar and imposed an air, land and sea embargo together with Egypt, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates. After that, several countries followed the path and cut their diplomatic relation with Qatar. Also, many countries downgraded their diplomatic relation, and some others offered themselves to act as mediators of the conflict. (Al Jazeera, 2017)

However, another justification made by the four countries who imposed the blockade is that Qatar was meddling with internal affairs of their country, so that fact together with the fact of funding and supporting terrorist groups and Iran are the main factors that lead to the actual critical situation. (Chughtai, 2018)

### **What are the roots of the issue? Did something similar happen in the past?**

When digging into the past of the GCC’s conflicts one can found that the current issue is not really surprising. It all started in 2011 with the Arab spring when the tension arouses between some Member States of the region, especially between Qatar and Saudi Arabia due to the fact that they were backing different sides. However, nothing major happened in that year, meaning that there were not any conflicts in 2011 or the following 2 years. (History.com editors, 2018)

A very similar problem to the current issue at hand surged in 2014. The main difference of that conflict from nowadays is that there were any blockades imposed by any country, however, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain removed their ambassadors from Qatar’s jurisdiction. Qatar’s government at the time was really surprised by the action taken by three of their GCC allies, but it remained committed to the GCC security and stability.

The main reason for the Saudi-led trio having taken that action was because Qatar supposedly failed to respect the agreement made on November of the previous year which consisted on not supporting any groups or entities that put on risk the security and stability of the region. It was thought by such three countries, that Qatar had been supporting Islamist groups and movements that challenged the dynastic rule. What is more, the State of Qatar was also accused of sheltering members of those groups. At the time, Qatar’s stock market

was badly affected for such conflict and experts speculated that that could be the end of the GCC's existence. (McDowall; Bakr, 2014)

### What is Qatar's perspective? What is their response to the matter?

The government's general perspective and response was of denial of such accusations and states that there are no "legitimate justification" for making a blockade, especially from their supposed GCC allies. As stated before, Qatar's Emir and Foreign minister state that those accusations come from "fake news" and that is not a reliable source to take such action. As a matter of fact, both of them emphasized that such actions are an "insult to their sovereignty" as a Member State. (Al Jazeera, 2017)

Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani together with Qatar's Foreign minister stated numerous times that the country is willing to reunite with the boycotting countries in order to negotiate and clarify the perspective of every country at the meeting. However, due to the imposition of 13 demands through 10-day ultimatum that the countries who imposed the blockade proposed, it does not seem that these are very open for negotiation before the demands are fulfilled. Followed by that, Qatar's emir accused such countries of "meddling in different countries' international affairs and accusing their opposition of terrorists." (Chugtai, 2018)

#### *Demands*

As stated before, the 22nd of June of 2017 was the date when Bahrain, Egypt, UAE and Saudi Arabia sent a list of a total of 13 demands to be fulfilled in a 10-day ultimatum. As well as the accusations, the State of Qatar rejected the list of demands which included the following:

- 1) Downgrade diplomatic relations with Iran, expel Iranian military representatives from Qatar, and limit economic cooperation
- 2) Shut down the Turkish military base under construction in Qatar and cease all military cooperation with Turkey.
- 3) Sever ties to all "terrorist, sectarian and ideological" groups and add them to current and future "terror lists".
- 4) Stop all funding of individuals, groups and organisations designated "terrorists" by the blockading countries, the US and others.
- 5) Hand over all listed "terrorists" and criminals wanted by the four countries and the US and to share all information about them.
- 6) Shut down Al Jazeera and all affiliated stations.

- 7) Stop meddling in other nations' affairs and naturalising citizens of the four blockading countries. Sever relations with elements opposed to blockading governments and hand over all intelligence gathered on them.
- 8) Financially compensate the four countries for loss of life, property and income caused by Qatar's policies over the years.
- 9) Seek harmony with surrounding countries - militarily, politically, economically, etc - to ensure Gulf security and the application of the 2013/2014 Riyadh Agreement.
- 10) Hand over all information it holds on opposition elements it supported, with clarifications of the forms of support it gave 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.
- 12) All demands must be agreed to within 10 days or they will become null and void.
- 13) An agreement with Qatar on these points was to include clear goals and a schedule for reporting on progress (monthly for a year, quarterly for the second year, and annually for 10 years after that). (Chugtai, 2018)

Having analyzed the different demands sent to Qatar, and consulting different authorities from Qatar, given the time and the magnitude of such requirements, it was very likely that the document would be rejected. Starting off by the fact that it required monetary compensation to the different countries, which was not of Qatar's interest. Furthermore, it asked for the shut down of Al Jazeera and the closure of all news outlets funded by Qatar, which was thought to be an absurd demand. Sheikha Hind, the emir's sister, responded to that demand as "if Britain was asked to close the BBC, it would be a shock", which is interpreted as an unviable option due to the comparison. Regarding the demands that asked for the State of Qatar to stop funding terrorist groups, that would not be a problem if what the Head of State alleges is true.

As an overall, the demands imposed on the document submitted by Egypt, UAE, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain were too much to take into account given the time trial that was established and also for the fact of the "absurd" demands that could be found and that insulted Qatar's sovereignty

**How is the issue being dealt?**

The issue is actually in a stalemate, where neither of both sides can win. Despite that fact, Kuwait's emir is acting as a mediator of the conflict. Actually, there is no risk of the GCC to dissolve but it is thought that if it is not mediated well enough and the conflict escalates, it could be the end of the GCC. Several countries who volunteered to act as mediators are calling for more negotiations so as to end the stalemate. (Chugtai, 2018)

Although it was clearly stated that in a situation of stalemate, there are no winners, it seems that Qatar is surprisingly winning, meaning that Qatar is actually gaining benefits from the blockade, being these economic, political, etc. However, that does not change the fact that there were several downsides to the problem within the state's jurisdiction. The expression winning, in this case, expresses that while Qatar is not being really affected by the matter, the "anti-Qatar quartet" has shown the world that is being much more affected than expected, even more than Qatar. (Hassan, 2018)

## Major consequences in Qatar

### *Economy*

When the conflict began in 2017, it was thought that the State of Qatar would suffer dramatically in its economy, being the wealthiest country in the world. What was thought that would be isolation and obstruction of oil exports in the future was proved to be not so harmful, in fact, their oil exportation has remained untouched since the beginning of the issue. Moreover, oil exportation exists between the GCC members but as a weak trade, without affecting the states in that matter.

Another thing to point out is that Qatar has an estimated \$335 billion assets in its sovereign wealth fund that could help them significantly to cushion the economic impact. As a matter of fact, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) proved that one year after the conflict the growth of the country was 2,6%. What is more, the Qatari Defense Minister notes with appreciation the fact that since the blockade national production has increased exponentially, including medicine and food. (Al Jazeera, 2017)

### *Flight routes*

Due to the airspace blockade, a lot Qatar Airways flights had to be rerouted as many of its flight routes went through airspace belonging to the blockaders and had to

cancel routes to 18 cities in nearby locations, mostly in the countries concerning the blockade. (Cornwell & Neely, September 2018)

After Qatar reached out to the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), this United Nations organization asked for the neighbouring countries of Bahrain and UAE to follow the airspace agreements. In the end, the agreement reached was that the airspace above international waters was to be reopened to the Qatari airline, seen as Bahrain's airspace completely surrounds Qatar's coast. However, the restriction still applies to airspace directly over the surrounding countries' territory. (Scott, 2017)

### *Socially*

Socially, the blockade imposed by the surrounding countries to Qatar did have its effect. On society, mostly the Qatari youth, a sense of nationalism arose from the event, creating a sensation quoted as "us against the world". Together with this, the image of the young emir has been idealized between this new Qatari youth. (Adams, 2018)

### *Politics*

In the political sense, the blockade obviously put Qatar in a difficult position, since all of the blockaders cut off all political ties with the nation in question, but it also created conflicting politics in other cases. For example the case of Iran. Ever since the USA decided to drop out from the Iran Nuclear Deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, since it put Qatar in a fragile position as it had started negotiating more with Iran, but it also does not want to become an enemy of the US.

## **Major Countries and Organizations Involved**

### **United States of America**

After President Donald Trump decided to withdraw from the Iran Nuclear Deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, it put Qatar into a difficult economic and political position. This is because the blockade put in place by Qatar's neighbouring countries had increased the amount of trade between the concerning nation and Iran, as it had to find new trade partners to make up for the loss of the others. This means that if Qatar decided to continue trading and engaging in other economic activities with Iran, it would be damaging its political and economic relations as the US had once again



imposed the economic sanctions on Iran that were lifted by the deal. This meant that any trade partners of the sanctioned nation were to be sanctioned as well by damaging its trade and negotiating opportunities with the US.

However, even though this happened, Mr Trump's administration has lately been striving for more passive and peaceful ways of resolution, incentivising negotiations and peace talks since it wants to form a united Arab coalition of countries to counter Iran, given the dropping out from the Iran Deal. (Wong, 2019)

### **Saudi Arabia**

Saudi Arabia is a country located to the west and from Qatar in the middle east. This nation decided to abruptly cut off media coverage from Qatar in late May 2017, and then in June of the same year threatened to cut off any political and economic ties, claiming economic ties from the Qatari government with terrorist groups.

Saudi Arabia was one of the four countries together with Egypt, Bahrain and the UAE to propose the list of 13 demands to the nation of Qatar, with the threat that in the case of any of the 13 demands not being carried out, any relation being put on hold by the blockade would not be reinstated. (Lemon, June 2018)

### **UAE**

The United Arab Emirates is another one of the countries that imposed the blockade on Qatar together with Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Egypt.

The UAE is together one of the countries that causes the most trouble to Qatar as it had various incidents apart from the blockade itself. First, the airspace restriction was deeply troubling since it has a frontier with Qatar's airspace. together with this, there was some reopened UAE airspace after the UN organization on aviation requested so for the violation it posed to the previous deals it had with the blockaded country.

Moreover, it had some other trouble as in June of last year (2018) the state of Qatar filed a case against the UAE for the violation of the The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), to the ICJ, which ruled in Qatar's favour.

### **Bahrain**

Once again, Bahrain is one of the blockader countries that cut off both the political and economic ties with Qatar, and in this case, similarly to to the case of the UAE, it was one

of the countries whose previously restricted airspace was reopened by the demand of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). (Scott, 2017)

## Iran

Iran has been affected deeply by the US imposes sanction due to their dropping out from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, commonly known as the Iran Nuclear Deal. This, in conjunction to the blockade that has been imposed on Qatar, had driven commerce between the two nations forward as the link between the ports of both countries flowing with essential materials. not only this but with the issue of the enclosed airspace, Qatar Airways has started using Irani airspace at a price.

But there is the problem that if the US decides to take more severe action towards Iran, Qatar will be left to choose a side as it has around 10,000 American troops and a US airbase in their land. Moreover, Iran's relations is driven further with Qatar as they share the North Field/South Pars natural gas reserve that is so important to the Qatari economy. (Butler, 2018)

## Turkey

Turkey has also been helpful to the Qatari economy as they have been improving business during the times of the blockade. for example, in February 2018, the capital city of Qatar decided to host the Turkey-Qatar Business Forum. Moreover, Turkey decided to open what is called the Investment Support and Promotion Agency office on the blockaded country later that same year. These moves by both countries show how they are striving for better business between both countries.

However, one of the 13 demands put forward by the blockaders was to “Shut down the Turkish military base under construction in Qatar and cease all military cooperation with Turkey.”, one thing that apparently does not have a very good international image.

## Timeline of Events

Date	Description of the event
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May the 20th, 2017	US President gets together with 55 muslim leaders in Riyadh for conference of “fighting against terrorism”.
May the 23rd, 2017	“Fake news” are posted by hackers on social media regarding the fact that Qatar had been dealing with Iran and other terrorist groups.
June the 5th, 2017	Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain, and UAE severed ties with Qatar. What is more, Saudi Arabia prohibited any Qatar troops in the Saudi-led Yemen war. These four countries together with several others suspended flights coming from Qatar.
June the 22nd, 2017	UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Egypt send a list of 13 demands through Kuwait (Actual mediator) for Qatar to accomplish within a margin of 10 days.
July the 5th, 2017	The four named countries reunited in Cairo after receiving a response of Qatar. No resolution was achieved. On the same day, these countries asked Qatar to accept six broad principles, which included commitments to combat terrorism, extremism, to end acts of provocation, and incitement.
July the 30th, 2017	The 13 initial demands were reinstated (Chughtai, 2018)

## Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)
  - On June 2018, Qatar bought filed a case to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the United Arab Emirates, accusing it of Human Rights violations as a result of the actions taken to impose the blockade on Qatar, including expelling Qatari citizens from their territory, closing ports and airspace. This accusation meant that the UAE was in violation of the The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD),

(to which both countries are signatories) discriminating on a basis of nationality.

- To this, the International Court of Justice ruled it illegal and demanded the UAE to reunite families that had been separated as a consequence, to pay compensation, and allow students to continue their education in the UAE as well as allowing all Qatari citizens to access juridical services in the violating nation. (The New Arab, 2018)
- United Nations General Assembly meeting on September 2018
  - In this meeting, Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani gave a speech in which he emphasised that the situation of the blockade deeply affected the GCC countries image and reputation, that would then affect their credibility towards other international issues.

## Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

On its own, Qatar has started what is called a five year development plan, which in summary is a plan that has the aim to make the Qatari economy as self sufficient as possible, given that on the year of the Blockade, as a result of it, the countries imports decreased by an astonishing 40 per cent compared to 2016. This initially caused the economy to weaken, but now, it seems that it has recovered a lot and continues to grow, as it is one of the world largest exporters of natural gas. This 333-page plan aims for having 30% of its farm produce satiated by their own production as well as 65% of its fish consumption coming from their own production by 2022. (El Yaakoubi, Torchia & Heavens, March 2018)

On late 2018, Qatar's Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani decided to make a tour through some friendly South American countries such as Ecuador, Peru, Paraguay and Argentina in search for other business partners with the intent of lessening their dependability to the countries that imposed the blockade. (Al Jazeera, 2018)

There is pressure from the United States of America to end this.

## Possible Solutions

One way that is encouraged by the international community is the use of negotiations. One can ask the countries involved to start lowering tensions by setting

UN-monitored peace talks and negotiations, as it would be ideal for all countries involved in the issue to start having an open mind to achieve a solution to the problem at hand. Perhaps, a middle ground can be reached were the blockaders can lessen the strict 13 demands, and Qatar to agree on a UN investigation on the charges of terrorism aid.

Another way to take try and tackle this issue is to see how the Qatari economy and society has developed through the duration of the blockade, and supporting it in a way that becomes completely independent from the regional economies that have been cut off by the said blockade. Qatar has not suffered terribly, and with the course of time and the help of the international community it has been seen that it can be possible to live without the income and trade of the countries imposing the blockade, and if the Qatari economy and society start to look for full-time alternatives, it is likely that at some point, said blockade will turn not only useless towards Qatar, but unfavourable for the blockaders, and so it is probable that it will collapse at some point.

The healthiest way to deal with the issue would be peaceful negotiations taken place with UN monitors and for them to be able to reach a middle ground solution, were as promoting Qatari economy would be beneficial obviously to Qatar, it would not alleviate a lot of the political tension that has grown with the blockaders.

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