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*Francisco J. Berenguer Hernández*

**QATAR AT LOW EBB**

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## **QATAR AT LOW EBB**

### **Abstract:**

The strong support to the policy option represented by the Muslim Brotherhood in the political transition processes in the Arab world, especially in Egypt, has resulted in the relative diplomatic isolation of Qatar. The defeat of the Brotherhood and its classification as a terrorist organization has led several Arab countries to punish Qatar and withdraw their diplomatic representation in Doha.

### **Keywords:**

*Qatar, Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt, withdrawal of ambassadors.*

## THE QATARI BID

Western countries, at least what concerns its public opinion, shows a falsely homogeneous perspective of what Islamism represents in politics and of the support it receives from different Arab nations. In fact, not surprisingly, each of these countries has their own interests. This is revealed in their support to certain political parties and organizations and not to others.

In this regard, during these last few years, Qatar has shown its preference for the postulates and the modus operandi of the parties belonging to the large network that the Muslim Brotherhood has been organizing from Egypt in a number of countries in the region. Any party or group identified with the Brotherhood or related somehow to it has therefore drawn the attention of Qatar. And often times they have even drawn its explicit support through different tools, chiefly the diplomatic and the financial one.

Hence, in the same way Hamas is showing its support in Palestine for the main historical opposition to the Assad regime in Syria, for the Jordanian Islamic Action Front and especially for the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Qatari sympathy and support have extended to a number of parties that emerged from the political transition processes in the Arab world, like, for instance, Tunisia and Libya. Moreover, they have extended to many opposition groups from the ongoing Syrian civil war related to the postulates and organization of the Brotherhood.

## THE MAIN QATARI TRIUMPH

Against this background of actions, there is no doubt that the successful emergence of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Egyptian political landscape after Mubarak's regime has been the main diplomatic Qatari triumph. That support was also intensely expressed after the electoral victory of the Brotherhood and the government formation by the deposed Morsi.

Perhaps the clearest sign of Qatari influence was Morsi's mediation between Hamas and Israel, as a result of the episode of violence that triggered Operation Pillar of Defense. This was a decisive operation to limit the Israeli military response to a greater extent than on earlier occasions. It also put an end to the umpteenth crisis in the Gaza Strip with a far smaller number of victims on both sides.

The apparent rise of the Brotherhood in the regional political landscape made it then possible that at the same time its main external supporter, Qatar, forged ahead, reaching a position never achieved before and turning Doha into one of the focal points of both the regional and the international landscape.

## RISKS TAKEN BY QATAR

However, during this period of apparent success various risks have been developing. Qatar had signs of these risks very soon. First, it should be taken into account that Morsi's rise to

the presidency resulted from elections that were approved by the international community as valid and clean. This has been considered by different leaders as a bad example before the public opinion of those nations distant from Western democratic standards, especially among other monarchies in the Gulf.

Among all of them, Saudi Arabia stands out, with its traditional rivalry with Egypt in order to figure as the spearhead of "the Arab identity". For this reason, the contention between Qatar and Saudi Arabia has been deepening, with clear signs in everything related to the very complex regional environment of today. However, not only Saudi Arabia has opposed the Qatari support to the Brotherhood in Egypt, as it has been demonstrated during the last few days.

### **QATAR AT LOW EBB**

Qatar's response in Egypt, far beyond discrepancies in Syria or in the political transition processes in nations under less influence from the Arab sphere, is the key to enhance its influential capacity: Qatari regional power in the end.

Consequently, the failure of the Brotherhood in Egypt has resulted in a similar reaction, although in the opposite direction. Morsi's removal from power, the Brotherhood's repression, the imprisonment of a great part of its leadership, some of which found refuge in Doha and, especially, the formal declaration of the new Egyptian government of the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization, has led to a serious deterioration of the Qatari position. Saudi Arabia has adhered to such declaration only a few days ago.<sup>1</sup>

From that moment, accusations to Qatar for acting outside the "Arab solidarity" have multiplied, as the Egyptian authorities have recently expressed, for opting out of the Arab community and other similar communities. This has gradually placed Doha's government in a situation of progressive isolation and has rapidly dismantled its progress to a great extent during the last few years.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, last week, this loss of influence was graphically displayed when Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Egypt have withdrawn their ambassadors within barely two days, together with very harsh words from the latter; uncommon words in the diplomatic landscape.

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<sup>1</sup> Francisco Carrión, *Arabia Saudí declara 'grupo terrorista' a los Hermanos Musulmanes*, El Mundo, 7 March 2014

<sup>2</sup> David D. Kirkpatrick, *Egypt pulls ambassador from Qatar*, The New York Times, 6 March 2014

The statements from the Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki have been even harsher, as he has accused both Qatar and Saudi Arabia for declaring a war to his country as a result from the financing of the Sunni insurgent groups that are fighting against the government of Baghdad.<sup>3</sup>

Consequently, the rapid rise of Qatar to important positions in the international scene has been partially truncated for the moment, because of its decisive bid for an option that has turned out to be the loser in the very complex Egyptian environment. Perhaps, especially in the Egyptian case, this situation could even result in one of the numerous examples of severance of diplomatic relations, sometimes maintained for decades. This kind of severance of diplomatic relations has done so much harm to the capacity to engage in dialogue and consensus in the Arab world and ultimately to the capacity to improve integration and stability in a vital geopolitical region to the international community.

*Francisco J. Berenguer Hernández*  
*TCOL.EA.DEM*  
*IEEE Senior Analyst*

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<sup>3</sup> Aljazeera, *Maliki: Saudi and Qatar at war against Iraq*, 9 March 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/03/maliki-saudi-qatar-at-war-against-iraq-20143823436553921.html>