

Qatar Ready for Military Intervention against Syria, on Behalf of Pentagon. Reckless Policy Fraught with Dire Implications

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The Russian military operation in Syria has divided the Arab world. One side is made up of the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Jordan, which view Russia's actions with optimism. Their attitude was voiced by Egypt's Foreign Minister Sameh Shukri, who recently said his nation believes «that the Russian operation will impact the fight against terrorism in Syria and help eliminate it». «Russia is concerned by the resistance to terrorism and the purpose of its intervention is a fatal blow to terrorism in Syria, and its strikes are in line with those of the anti-Daesh coalition in Syria and Iraq», he [stated](#).

The UAE, Jordan and Egypt view the groups being hit by Russian airstrikes as extremists. King Abdullah of Jordan, Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Zayed of the UAE and President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi of Egypt all met with Vladimir Putin at the MAKS air show in July and likely exchanged the views on the situation in the region to align their positions.

The other side is made up of Saudi, Qatari and the Turkish governments, which are adamantly opposed to Russian intervention in the Middle East. Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir described the Russian military moves as an «escalation» [at a recent meeting](#) of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

According to Reuters report, Qatar, a member of GCC, is a major supporter of rebels in Syria's civil war, suggested it could intervene militarily following Russia's intervention [in support](#) of President Bashar al-Assad.

The comments made by Qatar's Foreign Minister in a CNN Arabic interview on October 21, hit the newsstands to shock the world.

Asked if Qatar supported the Saudi position that does not rule out a military option in Syria as a result of Russia's intervention, Foreign Minister Khalid al-Attiyah said, «Anything that protects the Syrian people and Syria from partition, we will not spare any effort to carry it out with our Saudi and Turkish brothers, no matter what this is». «If a military intervention will protect the Syrian people from the brutality of the regime, we will do it», he added.

Attiyah also said Qatar preferred to solve regional crises through direct political dialogue. «We do not fear any confrontation, and thus we will call for dialogue from a position of strength because we believe in peace and the shortest path to peace is through direct dialogue».

Reuters also reports that Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad was quoted by Lebanon-based al-Mayadeen television as saying: «If Qatar carries out its threat to militarily intervene in Syria, then we will consider this a direct aggression... Our response will be very harsh».

Al-Attiyah defended the Ahrar Al-Sham Islamist militant group which Qatar and its allies have been supporting, [saying](#): «They are not allies of Al-Qaeda. They are a Syrian group fighting to liberate their country. We do not consider them extremists and terrorists. They are part of the moderate opposition».

Qatar has been a leading supporter of anti-Assad rebel groups, providing arms and financial and political backing.

Ever since its outbreak in 2010, the Arab Spring has brought about misery and violence to the Middle East. The hopes were dashed as vicious circles of unfulfilled revolutions, ethnic wars and societal polarization hit the region.

As a typical small-state, Qatar benefited from stability in its region prior to the Arab Spring. When the tumultuous events came, the Qatar's policy shifted to fostering change. The swift rise of Islamic groups in the region gave rise to expectations that they would come to power. Qatar took advantage of its close contacts with such groups. The country allegedly hosts prominent members of the Taliban, Hamas, the Muslim Brotherhood as well as rebels from Syria and Libya.

A dialogue between the US and Iran agitated Saudi Arabia. It enabled Qatar to move more freely in the region and fill in the vacuum created by decreased Saudi influence. The sudden changes in the region resulting from the Arab Spring have revealed its ambitions and allowed it to shape regional politics according to its interests.

For instance, when the turmoil hit Yemen in 2011, Qatar sided with the opposition, and publicly called on President Ali Abdullah Saleh to step down. In Libya Qatar was quick to side with the opposition and provided it with financial and military support.

Decreased US interest in the region creates an opportunity for regional actors such as Qatar to take on greater role in the resolution of conflicts in the region. Dr. Kristian Coates Ulrichsen of London School of Economics and Political Science, [believes](#) that «The country took advantage of the unique niche which it had spent years crafting in order to play an astoundingly high-profile and increasingly controversial role in the uprisings. Initially, it displayed unprecedented regional leadership bordering on outright activism in responding to crises across the Arab world».

There are also economic reasons that drive its policy.

In 2012 Felix Monti, an analyst cited by Ansa Mediterranean, posed the article entitled Qatar: Rich and Dangerous published by specialized website "Oilprice.com". There he provided the clue to real motives [behind](#) the Qatar's Middle East policy.

The author suggested that Qatar's involvement in the Syria civil war was based in part on its desire to build a pipeline to Turkey through Syria. According to him, «The discovery in 2009 of a new gas field near Israel, Lebanon, Cyprus, and Syria opened new possibilities to bypass the Saudi Barrier and to secure a new source of income. Pipelines are in place already in

Turkey to receive the gas. Only Al-Assad is in the way. Qatar along with the Turks would like to remove Al-Assad and install the Syrian chapter of the Muslim Brotherhood. It is the best organized political movement in the chaotic society and can block Saudi Arabia's efforts to install a more fanatical Wahhabi based regime. Once the Brotherhood is in power, the Emir's broad connections with Brotherhood groups throughout the region should make it easy for him to find a friendly ear and an open hand in Damascus».

That's the gist of it. First and foremost it is a matter of finances. Transporting gas by pipeline is quicker and far more economic than cooling it down to liquid form to be shipped in specialized tankers. And although Saudi Arabia and Qatar may be working hand in hand to remove Bashar Assad from power, this is where their cooperation stops. Both the Saudis and the Qataris want to control the outcome of the Syrian conflict.

As oil-price.net [reported](#) back in 2012, Qatar needed to get its Qatar-Turkey pipeline through Syria. Europe wants the project to come through to diversify its energy supplies and make gas cheaper. A middle-eastern pipeline going through Syria is a very attractive option. If Syria has a Sunni government, the Middle East energy rich Arab states will have a Sunni corridor stretching from the Persian Gulf to the European Union. The government of Bashar Assad [preferred](#) a pipeline going through Iran.

Soon civil unrest hit his country. The migrant crisis currently faced by Europe is an unintended consequence of the plans to build a Qatar-Syria gas pipeline and undermine the position of Russia on the European energy market. That's what Foreign Minister Khalid al-Attiyah has in mind when he so eloquently expresses his concern over the fate of Syrian people.

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At the Valdai discussion forum on October 22, Russian President Vladimir Putin said some countries are playing a double game, adding that while they fight against terrorism they also «place figures on the board» in their own interests. "Success in fighting terrorists cannot be reached if using some of them as a battering ram to overthrow disliked regimes,» Putin told the forum, saying that this way the terrorists [would not go anywhere](#). «It's just an illusion that they can be dealt with [later], removed from power and somehow negotiated with,» he added.

Saudi Arabia and Qatar are already embroiled in an expensive and bloody war in Yemen that may limit both their military and financial resources. An intervention in Syria would be a gross violation of international law if it is not sanctioned by the United Nations Security Council or conducted upon an invitation of Syria's government.

There is a consequence to be taken into account before Qatar implements the plans announced by its Foreign Minister. The Qatar's military may clash with the armed forces of Russia, Syria, Iran and the formations of Hezbollah. This danger is evident. It gives ground to conclude that the official statement made by Qatar's Foreign Chief is nothing else but a good example of reckless policy fraught with dire implications.

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