

The Saudis Demand Total Surrender but Qatar Will Not Fold

By [Moon of Alabama](#)

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#), [Russia and FSU](#), [USA](#)

Theme: [Global Economy](#), [Media Disinformation](#), [Oil and Energy](#), [Terrorism](#)

Many people believe that Qatar will soon give in to recent Saudi demands and threats. I first thought so too but have changed my opinion. Qatar will likely hold out way longer than anyone assumes and fight more intensive and much longer than foreseen.

The Saudi “young leader” has now given Qatar [24 hours to submit to 10 demands](#). [These include](#) (unconfirmed) the dismantling of Al Jazeera, breaking off of all diplomatic relations with Iran and (the [Israeli demand](#) of) ending all support for the Muslim Brotherhood and especially Hamas. The Saudis threaten with a military invasion.

But Qatar is not like Bahrain where 1,000 Saudi troops could easily take over to save a dictator from a mostly unarmed uprising of his people. It has way more resources and capable allies on its side and recent news shows that it knows how to use them.

Two days ago we [extensively described](#) the complex conflict between Qatar and some of its neighbors that has recently been escalating. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are the main forces on one side, [joined yesterday by Donald Trump](#) but [not by the Pentagon](#). On the other side is Qatar, geographically isolated and seemingly without any real allies even though it hosts a very large U.S. command center and air-base.

The conflict has been simmering for years. Qatar has a strong media arm with Al Jazeera TV and other prominent news outlets. Qatar and its media support the political Islam of the Muslim Brotherhood which won elections in Egypt before being kicked out in a Saudi financed military coup. The ruling Turkish AK Party is a Muslim Brotherhood branch as is Hamas in Palestine. Muslim Brotherhood parties have thereby proven that it’s possible to have an Islam(ist) aligned government without a hereditary dictatorship. Their pure existence de-legitimizes the al-Saud clan and other dictatorial family enterprises in the wider Middle East.



Qatar (Source: visitqatar.qa)

There is little reason to waste tears on Qatar. It is a small country with only 200,000 original inhabitants but with 2,000,000 expatriates living there too. Thanks to its large natural gas reserves Qatar is ultra rich and has a very modern (but also vulnerable) infrastructure. The country is way more liberal than Saudi Arabia. Its cities are somewhat cosmopolitan. Unlike in Saudi Arabia women are allowed to drive and other religions than Islam can build their places of worship. But the rulers of Qatar officially follow the same ultraconservative and proselytizing Wahhabi cult as the al-Sauds. They support terrorists of the worst kind in the war against the Syrian people and elsewhere (just as the al-Sauds do).

The Saudis currently lack money. Oil prices are too low to finance the needs of its 26 million people and the exorbitant expenditures of its ruling family. The Qatari gas fields would be a very profitable extension of their oil empire. The UAE would like to take over strategic Qatari islands in the Gulf (and the hydrocarbon fields around them). Taking over Qatar would bring both countries into a better position to fight their presumed enemy in Iran.

As we wrote:

The extreme bullying of Qatar by the Saudis and the UAE, with total closure of all its borders, is designed to create an immediate capitulation. So far Qatar [holds onto](#) its course but **in the end it is likely to fold**. It will have to stop its support for “terrorism” i.e. the Muslim Brotherhood. Another scenario is a putsch in Doha with [some Saudi puppet](#) prepared to take over the realm. If that is unsuccessful a military move could follow. Qatar has little capabilities to withstand a potential Saudi invasion.

I have since changed my opinion and said so in a few conversation on Twitter. Qatar will hold out way longer than anticipated. It may not fold at all:

Elijah J. Magnier @EjmAlrai - [2:03 PM - 6 Jun 2017](#)
If @realDonaldTrump is suddenly discovering that “Qatar is financing

terrorism” it means he is ready to move forward beyond his statement.

Trump’s statement will push #Qatar to speed-up the reconciliation w/ #SaudiArabia (through #Kuwait) to save its skin.

Moon of Alabama @MoonofA - [2:21 PM - 6 Jun 2017](#)

Replying to @EjmAlrai

I do not yet bet on Qatar reconciliation - still has lots of cards to play. Saudis demand total capitulation. Crisis can extend for a while.

—

salamamoussa @salamamoussa - [4:36 PM - 6 Jun 2017](#)

This is good from @lbishblog But my bet is that #Qatar goes full frontal & becomes an Iranian client

[Qatar crisis: a regional schism that’s been years in the making](#)

Moon of Alabama @MoonofA - [5:35 PM - 6 Jun 2017](#)

Replying to @salamamoussa @lbishblog

Agree with your bet but note that most other people don’t.

Hussein lbish @lbishblog - [5:44 PM - 6 Jun 2017](#)

Replying to @MoonofA @salamamoussa

They might try it but it won’t work or last. No way, unless Washington agrees. You think it would? I’m SURE not!

Moon of Alabama @MoonofA - [5:49 PM - 6 Jun 2017](#)

Replying to @lbishblog @salamamoussa

Strategy must be

-set up defenses; -muddle issues; -skirmish; -sew discord into Saudi coal.; -wait til times/policies change; meanwhile:



[See bigger picture here](#)

The map shows Qatar having moved from the Arab coast of the Gulf to the Persian one.

Our piece on the Qatar crisis two days ago also included this graph:

For Iran this is a chance to further **blow up the GCC** by intensifying its relations with Qatar. It could **increase its food exports** to the country and **host Qatar airline flights**. This in exchange for a Qatari retreat from Syria. The U.S./Saudi plan of confronting Iran through the GCC would then be in complete jeopardy.

Iran [did exactly](#) what I proscribed - NBC:

A top Iranian agricultural official responded by announcing Monday that Iran could send food shipments to Qatar by ship. He said the shipments would take 12 hours to reach Qatar. It is not known if any shipments have yet arrived.

...

An Iranian transportation official said Tuesday that Qatari flights bound to North Africa and Europe that used to cross Saudi, Egyptian or Kuwaiti airspace can now travel over Iran, Iraq and Jordan. Flights to Northern Europe can cross Iran.

Today Qatar [officially asked](#) Iran and Turkey for additional food supplies.

But Iran can not send military support to Qatar - at least not openly and not yet. The Yemeni Houthi, who until very recently fought against Qatari soldiers on the Saudi side of the Yemeni border, now [offer their support](#) to Qatar. The Muslim Brotherhood ruled Turkey had planned since 2015 to set up a large "training base" in Qatar. Currently only 150 Turkish soldiers are there to prepare the ground. That [will soon change](#):

Lawmakers from Erdogan's AK Party have proposed debating two pieces of legislation: allowing **Turkish troops to be deployed in Qatar** and approving an accord between the two countries on **military training cooperation**, AKP and nationalist opposition officials said. Both draft bills, which were drawn up before the spat between Qatar and its Arab neighbours erupted, are **expected to be approved by the Ankara parliament later on Wednesday**.

The large Qatar Airways fleet is able to bring 10,000nds of Turkish troops to Qatar within days. It is somewhat amusing that these will use Iranian airspace while Iran financed proxy fighters in Syria are fighting Turkish and Qatari supported "insurgents".

The Saudi/U.S. strategy of bringing Qatar fully into the anti-Iran and anti-Muslim Brotherhood camps seems to have the opposite effect.

The U.S. controlled Al-Udeid air-base in Qatar is leading the fight against ISIS. The Pentagon surely does not want any interruption of its functioning. Many buildings and institutions in London are owned by Qatar. 90% of British gas imports, 17% of its total consumption, comes from Qatar. Qatar is an important industrial investor in Germany where it owns the largest minority share of the huge Volkswagen Group. It has friendly relations with Russia. Yesterday the Qatari **Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani** [talked](#) with **President Putin**:

Russian-Qatari cooperation, primarily in the trade, economic and investment areas, was discussed, and the results of the meeting of the bilateral Intergovernmental Commission in April 2017 were **highly praised**. International issues were also discussed. Vladimir Putin reaffirmed Russia's principled position in favour of settling crises by political and diplomatic means, through dialogue.

Translation: Qatar offered additional money for Russia's support. A preliminary deal was made but there was no promise (yet) of full Russian support in a military conflict.

The Saudi coalition may have the backing of minor (paid off) nations and from tweets by

Donald Trump. But the U.S. military is against a Saudi war on Qatar. It does not want to strengthen the Saudi position in the Gulf at the cost of other allies. The British government and other Europeans have also many reasons to not let Qatar fall into the hands of the al-Sauds.

Qatar is quite fast in getting its ducks into a row. It quickly solved the most immediate problems resulting from the Saudi border blockade. It called in Turkish military reinforcement to stave off a Saudi invasion. Iranian and Russian (military) supplies will be very valuable in any longer fight. Europe will not back the Saudis and will not support a Saudi annexation. It will press for solving the issue peacefully. Qatar has enough financial capabilities and reserves to withstand a longer crisis.

There is no reason for Qatar to give in soon to the overbearing Saudi demands. The ruling "young leader" – **Deputy Clown Prince Mohammad bin-Salman** – has (again) overestimated his capabilities. The Saudis were sure that **Bashar Assad** in Syria would leave in 2011 or 2012. The Houthis in Yemen [would be defeated](#) in a few days or weeks they thought. Years and billions of Saudi dollars later both are still in place.

Now the Qatari ruler **Tamim bin Hamad** is expected to fold in a day or two. Qatar may eventually have to submit to the Saudi demands and rule, but I sincerely doubt that this will happen anytime soon.

Featured image: foreignpolicy.com

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