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## CONCOURS EXTERNE ET INTERNE POUR L'ACCÈS À L'EMPLOI DE SECRÉTAIRE DES AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES (CADRE GÉNÉRAL ET CADRE D'ORIENT) AU TITRE DE L'ANNÉE 2015

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### ÉPREUVES ÉCRITES D'ADMISSIBILITÉ

Du 15 au 19 septembre 2014

#### ANGLAIS

Durée totale de l'épreuve : 3 heures

Coefficient : 2

Toute note inférieure à 10 sur 20 est éliminatoire

Barème de notation : note en anglais 12 points ; note en français 8 points



#### Note en anglais :

*Rédaction en **anglais** d'une note (450 mots avec une tolérance de plus ou moins 10 %) à partir de documents en anglais.*

Ce dossier comporte 11 pages (page de garde et sommaire non compris)

#### SUJET :

Using the documents in the dossier, explain in your own words the evolution of Qatar's role in the Middle-East and the geopolitical points of friction that result from the Emirate's new positioning.



## **Qatar**

### **Composition du dossier**

**(9 pages)**

**Document n°1 : Qatar signals strategic shifts as Iranian diplomacy sways EU (2 ½ pages)**

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## **Qatar signals strategic shifts as Iranian diplomacy sways EU**

<http://english.al-akhbar.com>, March 10, 2014

When Belgian Foreign Minister Didier Reynders visited Iran on February 22, 2014, the Iranians blatantly told him that the only solution in Syria would be to form a broad-based national unity government comprising of representatives of both the regime and the opposition, but under the leadership of President Bashar al-Assad.

The European official also heard harsh words from the Iranians about the role that Saudi Arabia and Qatar have been playing in sponsoring terrorism. Iranian officials said that two Gulf countries, encouraged by the international community, were destabilizing the region and thwarting all efforts for peace in Syria.

The Iranians also said that funding terrorist groups would backfire on Saudi Arabia and Qatar, and presented information, lists, and documents of their support for terrorists, mentioning that a brother of Prince Bandar bin Sultan was involved in funding them.

On February 26, only four days after the Belgian minister's visit, Qatari Foreign Minister Khaled bin Mohammed al-Attiyah arrived in Tehran. The minister, who has Syrian relatives, had started out his career as a fighter pilot, before he went into politics, business, and law. Because of his background, he probably understood that going to Tehran was not only mandatory now, but urgent.

How couldn't he have realized that when Doha has been receiving reports for some time that Saudi Arabia was planning to undermine the Qatari role and eliminate the Muslim Brotherhood's remaining bastions?

Qatar's ambitions are justifiable, but its role was delicately drawn on its behalf. Riyadh allowed Doha's ambitions to run their course. The kingdom encouraged, supported, and suggested that it was right behind Qatar. But as soon as the Qatari role in France suffered a blow due to its funding of terrorism in Mali, Saudi Arabia moved in to take its place. As soon as Qatar's role in Egypt suffered a setback after the Muslim Brotherhood-led regime there was toppled, Saudi Arabia moved in to shower Field Marshal Abdel Fattah al-Sisi with money and support.

Doha sent officials to Damascus and Tehran, but its overtures were not well-received. What is required of Qatar is much more than a few publicized visits.

Two more blows came from Saudi Arabia. First, the ambassadors of Saudi, the UAE, and Bahrain were recalled from Doha. Then, the Muslim Brotherhood was designated by the Saudis as a terrorist organization. The media outlets funded by the two countries then proceeded to take part in the worst dispute in the history of their relations.

### **Qatar's strategic shift**

Iran is waiting, and so is Assad. The first is famous for its diplomacy and patience. The second brings in a military option that has started to turn the tide of the ongoing war.

The Qatari foreign minister went to Iran to offer a comprehensive deal that is currently under consideration. The Qatari position on Assad remains rigid, but everything is now up for discussion.

Qatar's financial and moral contribution in securing the release of the nuns kidnapped in Syria is significant. The same can be said about other similar developments, even if the details of which have not been fully publicized, including Qatar's recent move to curtail its support for armed groups. Those details will come to light in the near future.

### **Iran on the diplomatic track, Assad on the battlefield**

On Sunday, Europe's foreign policy chief, Catherine Ashton, heard from Tehran the same things her Belgian counterpart was told during his visit: the fight against terrorism is a priority, there must be a political solution in Syria based on the premises mentioned earlier, and there must be good faith on the nuclear issue. Everything else can be discussed.

Ashton's response was more than encouraging to Iran as she said she was carrying a message of goodwill from 28 European countries. Ashton affirmed that by overcoming this stage with Iran will allow them to address more strategic issues down the road.

Tehran is aware of Europe's need for making compromises. In Iran's line of thinking, this is acceptable, so let it be the starting point and the bargaining chip that it can use with the Obama

administration.

Iran's warm reception of Ashton, and other European officials, is important and deliberate. It was followed by an equally warm reception that the U.S. extended to Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli premier who is pathologically obsessed with Iran.

#### **Yabrud: By force or by negotiations**

Assad does not want July's presidential elections to take place without first being in control of major cities – including Aleppo.

The P5+1 negotiations are progressing. The Syrian army, in parallel, is making progress on the ground. Yabroud has all but fallen, whether through negotiations or by force. The decision to retake it was made a while ago, yet without haste. Other strategic regions might fall to the regime as well. Assad does not want July's presidential elections to take place without first being in control of major cities – including Aleppo.

Washington and Tehran have been trading accusations during the negotiations, but this is to be expected. Obama needs this to silence the Israeli lobby in Congress and reassure Israel. Tehran needs it to ease the hard-liners' attacks on the negotiators. The decision regarding the "gladiator's flexibility" made by the Supreme Leader is irreversible, unless it proves to be detrimental to Iranian interests. So far, Tehran has gained much more than it expected in 2005.

The European officials who visited Iran heard the following: "We have the will to reach a final agreement. Iran's sovereignty and rights as a signatory of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) must be respected when it comes to nuclear enrichment. We are not negotiating from a position of weakness. The sanctions did not kill Iran, but only made it more self-reliant."

The Europeans told the Obama administration: "Ease your threats if you want to negotiate. Do not embarrass the negotiators." At the same time, Iranian officials told them unequivocally: "The bomb does not benefit us. It runs against our faith. It even poses a threat to us."

Iran is testing the West and vice versa. This is what is at heart of the coming shifts in the region. If the negotiations succeed, many things will change.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia is worried and justifiably so. The issue has to do with its future role on the international arena. Iran is now a cornerstone in the war on terror. Therefore, it was necessary for Saudi Arabia to make a public volte-face shortly before Obama arrives in Riyadh this month by putting several organizations it once funded on its terrorism list.

The Iranian-European negotiations also include Gaza and the future of Palestine. Western powers realize that Tehran is not negotiating over the principle of resistance and settlements, and the Europeans have begun sounding the alarm over the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

Ashton spoke about the dangers of the Israeli blockade and the continued closure of the crossings on the Egyptian border. She said that Gaza must be taken into consideration during Palestinian-Israeli talks. The Europeans are preparing to offer what they call an "unprecedented package" for both the Palestinian and Israeli sides. This presupposes an agreement between them.

Do all these things allow Iran and its allies to be optimistic? Not quite.

What if Western negotiators ask Iran to take additional measures not stipulated in the NPT? The "gladiator's flexibility" will vanish, or turn into a showdown.

What if nuclear inspections end up allowing NATO to spy on Iran's conventional weapons? This is a possibility.

What will Iran do with the law it passed in 2005, requiring the construction of 20 nuclear reactors for civilian purposes? These will all need uranium enrichment.

All of these questions are on the table. Yet the European Union is looking for a way out of such predicaments. For instance, European mediators proposed the idea of forming an international group to supply Iran with the nuclear material it needs. They believe that this would meet Iran's needs while encouraging it to abandon uranium enrichment. Iran has yet to approve and hasn't suspended production of heavy water in the reactor in Arak. Western powers fear this could help Iran produce plutonium, which can be used to make nuclear weapons.

The tug of war continues.

## Iran to Geneva II

The Belgian minister, and then Ashton, proposed to integrate Iran again into the Geneva 2 talks. Tehran had moved negotiations from Geneva to Vienna, to protest the Western position on Iran in Geneva.

Iranian Assistant Foreign Minister Hussein Amir Abdul-Lahian proposed to a European foreign minister to mediate with Syria over humanitarian issues, and to create a joint Iranian-European-Syrian follow-up committee. The Iranians said that they were extending assistance to Syrian refugees, especially in Jordan and Lebanon. The Iranians also spoke about their role and Hezbollah's in brokering reconciliations in Syria. There were also discussions over possible cooperation between the Syrian Red Crescent and the European Red Cross.

These strategic developments involving Iran and Europe coincided with an increasing Iranian-Turkish rapprochement. Recep Tayyip Erdogan is in need of Tehran, amid his feud with former ally and present enemy, preacher Fethullah Gulen. There were also talks with Russia recently to safeguard the rights of the Tatar minority in Ukraine. Qatari-Turkish-Iranian meetings, even ones involving Russia too, are no longer far-fetched. So how will this be translated on the ground in Syria?

Things are clearer than before. Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif will hold further meetings with Ashton until July. By then, it would be time for Syrian presidential elections.

Things in Ukraine will be clearer too by then: Either they will deteriorate further inviting more firmness by Vladimir Putin, or there will be de-escalation, bringing about better conditions for broader negotiations. The Europeans told Tehran that they were not enthusiastic about escalation with Putin and were inclined to seek settlements.

Also, the military situation in Syria would have become clearer by then. Everything therefore indicates that the coming months will be crucial, critical, but also full of promising possibilities.

## **Qatar: regional backwater to global player**

BBC News, 7 January 2013

'Known for being unknown'; such was Qatar, the tiny Persian Gulf state that often appeared merely as an appendage to its neighbour Saudi Arabia. Members of Qatar's ruling Al Thani family had so often deferred to Riyadh for fear of causing tension or attracting undue attention to themselves.

Quiet and inoffensive was the modus operandi of the Qataris for so long. Rich in oil and gas, they were poor in manpower and the state resources necessary to defend themselves against the region's dominant powers.

But the Emirate has seen a remarkable transformation in recent years.

Qatar is everywhere, utilising its immense wealth to buy skyscrapers, football clubs, hotels, rare art collections, support rebellions in the Arab region, and play a central role in the diplomatic affairs of Arab politics.

### **Palace coup**

So why has this country, so long a regional backwater, become a player on the global stage?

Today's Qatar is the product of 17 years of stable rule by Emir Hamad bin Khalifah Al Thani, who took power from his father Khalifah in the most peaceable of coups.

Old Khalifah - content to spend his days on the French Riviera - did not possess the ambitions of his son, whose desire to secure Qatar was sharpened by the experience of Saddam's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, a similarly tiny hydrocarbon rich state surrounded by larger rivals.

The ability of Saddam's forces to overrun the Emirate set in motion a series of initiatives by the then Crown Prince Hamad to ensure that his own nation did not meet the same fate.

To be secure Qatar could no longer be the quiet man of the Gulf, it had to become useful to a world who would then have a vested interest in protecting it.

Most important of all it should be useful to the United States, the only power capable of securing Qatar's survival.

Knowing US presence on Saudi soil after the Gulf War was untenable, Qatar provided the perfect alternative and a US base was established on Qatari soil in 1992.

It has since become the Headquarters of Centcom, responsible for coordinating US operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

### **Reform and transformation**

But being useful to the world involves more than just having troops on your soil.

The future Emir realised that in order for the world to notice Qatar, it would have to make itself noticed.

Hamad's assumption of power in 1995 heralded immediate changes.

He established Al Jazeera the Arab world's ubiquitous television network, and began programmes to upgrade Qatar's educational, healthcare and infrastructure facilities funded by massive increases in hydrocarbon production.

More recently the country bid for and successfully won the right to host the Asian Games in 2006 and the FIFA World Cup in 2022. This once closed off and quiet country is now opening its arms to the world.

Qatar has seen an influx of institutes, art galleries, think tanks and research centres that also serve to build civic and cultural dialogue in the country.

Discussions of issues of the day, particularly amongst the youth, are encouraged. Centres of academic excellence regularly hold debates about foreign policy issues and domestic concerns facing the country.



### **Wealth and privilege**

Qataris, traditionally a highly passive and apathetic people when dealing with political questions, are now being imbued with a sense that they must begin to contribute more.

Ideas are seeping into this most traditional of Islamic societies from all over the world. Qatar is becoming a melting pot for modernism and traditional Islamic values.

Young Qataris grow up in this environment and into a land of wealth and privilege very different from their parents, most of whom experienced so little of the modern world that they did not even know their own date of birth.

Where older generations favoured traditionalism, younger generations consistently push back the frontiers of social norms.

Even in this most conservative of countries it is not unusual to see young men and women holding hands or dating in public spaces, much to the chagrin of the country's traditional and religiously conservative families.

Understandably this has not been a wholly comfortable process.

Qataris know the tale of their next door neighbour Dubai, who by opening its arms to the world subsumed traditional Emirati culture in favour of westernisation, and all the vices that came with it.

Beneath all the gleaming buildings and money Qataris are still a traditional people. Islam is still important in their lives and whilst they openly embrace many of the benefits of globalisation there is an attempt to limit the Western vices that swept into Dubai.

### **Hybrid state**

Furthermore, in the Qatar of 2012 the locals make up just 15% of the population of the country. Asserting their culture in the face of an overwhelming influx of foreigners is an issue of crucial importance to Qataris.

Qatar will not become another Dubai is the oft-repeated phrase that you hear from the local population.

With ultraconservative Riyadh to the West, and effusively liberal Dubai to the East, Qatar seeks instead to become a genuine hybrid state that manages to conserve Gulf culture and tradition, but with more open and tolerant social attitudes.

The pathway may take some years to navigate and may be a little bumpy along the way. The influx of one million alcohol-fuelled football fans in 2022 is a cause for some concern. Quite how Qataris will tolerate the sight of openly drunk foreigners walking around their streets is a question no one yet has an answer to.

In foreign affairs the country has also become hyperactive. The Arab Spring has marked a turning point for Qatar in the eyes of the world.

The Emirate has ridden on the wave of popular movements across the region and actively supported the fall of dictators in both Libya and Syria. It has supported growing populist Islamist movements across the region with money, diplomatic action and even weapons.

Qatar's attempts to solve the Arab world's problems have met with mixed reactions, especially from those who believe Qatar operates a double standard in its attempts to support revolutions against dictators in the Arab world, or place itself in the middle of diplomatic disputes in other countries.

It is after all still an absolute monarchy and whilst proposed elections in 2013 may be the first major step in renegotiating the bargain between citizen and state it is unclear just how far that process will be continued in coming years.

### **Breakneck speed**

However the path forged by Qatar's ruling elite has merged the priorities of foreign policy with the need for domestic change, and the two seemingly separate spheres are more interlinked than many outsiders think.

The regional aspirations of the Emir to change the Arab world into a more active, capable and effective

collective is also reflected in the social changes that he seeks to inculcate into his own citizenry.

The adventurism in foreign affairs and the rapid development at home stem from the same basic premise; to push the Arabs into a more engaged, 'modern' and globally competitive people, first by encouragement and financial inducement, but also by force if necessary.

Qatar is the product of incredible oil and gas wealth, a ruling elite with a vision, and a local population willing to accept the dictates of that elite.

The country is moving at breakneck speed away from its past and towards a new and unknown future. It has its share of plaudits and detractors alike, but what cannot be denied is that Qatar is now on the map and is destined to be for some time yet.

## Diplomacy in the Gulf - No one is happy

*The Economist*, March 8th 2014

BARACK OBAMA already faced a long and tricky agenda for his visit to Saudi Arabia scheduled for later this month. Sixty-nine years after Franklin Roosevelt and King Abdul Aziz bin Saud, the country's founder, forged an alliance aboard an American cruiser in the Suez canal, the two nations find themselves at odds not only over such perennial irritants as Israel and human rights, but increasingly over newer issues, from Gulf security to the Syrian civil war and to post-revolutionary troubles in another prickly ally of America, Egypt.

Saudi Arabia has now added yet another complication. Along with its close allies Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the kingdom on March 5th abruptly recalled its ambassador to Qatar. That small emirate, which juts out of Saudi Arabia like a tiny thumb from a big fist, is not only a fellow member of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC), a six-country club of oil-rich Arab monarchies. Qatar also happens to host the Combined Air and Space Operations Centre, the most critical of the constellation of American military bases around the Gulf, together serving some 35,000 American troops, that have long shielded the GCC and acted as a prod to their mutual foe, Iran.

This diplomatic tiff between Arabs may well be contained. After all, Saudi Arabia suspended ties with Qatar for several years in the 1990s in anger at the overthrow of a friendly emir by his son, Sheikh Hamad al-Thani, father of the current ruler, Sheikh Tamim. Qatar responded to the latest rebuke with mild "regret and surprise", saying its own envoys would stay put in "brotherly" GCC capitals.

Cut them off?

But the row has been brewing for some time, and could get worse. Rumours suggest the Saudis have quietly threatened to seal their border with Qatar, the emirate's sole land link to the outside world, as well as to close Saudi airspace to Qatar-bound flights. This would bother the Americans, who co-ordinate all their military activity in the air space between Syria and Afghanistan from their base in Qatar.

The reasons for Saudi fury are plain. Starting with the launch of Qatar's noisy Al Jazeera satellite channel in 1996, the emirate's openness to Arab political dissenters (except from within the emirate itself) has rubbed up against its autocratic neighbour. Anger grew with the outbreak of the Arab spring in 2011, not only because the Saudis (and most other Arab monarchies) saw the uprisings as a threat, but because Qatar has doggedly and generously backed the re-emergent Muslim Brotherhood in every ensuing contest, from Libya and Tunisia to Egypt and Syria. The Saudis, and perhaps even more so the UAE, have long viewed the Brotherhood as a subversive cult whose pan-Islamic ideology and secretive, cell-like structure pose a singular danger.

When the Brothers won elections in Egypt in 2012, Qatar poured in money to prop up their man, President Muhammad Morsi. Since Egypt's generals overthrew him last year, the Saudis, Kuwaitis and other allies have sloshed in far more cash. Qatar, meanwhile, has served as a haven for fugitives from Egypt, including hardened jihadist extremists as well as besuited Brotherhood politicians. Al Jazeera's Arabic channels, demonised in Egypt to the point that staff in its independently run English-language division are being tried as terrorists, have become lonely pulpits for the Brotherhood. Al Jazeera's star preacher, Yousef al-Qaradawi, rails against Arab regimes that he says were complicit in the "crimes" of Egypt's coup leaders. Mr Qaradawi lives happily in Qatar.

An explanatory joint statement from Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the UAE accused Qatar of breaching a pledge, made by Sheikh Tamim in November, to tone down such invective and "abide by the principle of non-interference in other countries' internal affairs". Less officially they are said to be demanding the expulsion or extradition of Islamist exiles. On March 3rd a court in the UAE sentenced a Qatari doctor to seven years in prison for alleged conspiracy, in the latest of several trials targeting suspected Brotherhood cells. Saudi Arabia for its part recently banned Brotherhood works from the Riyadh Book Fair and blocked suspected members from preaching in mosques.

Mr Obama will have to tread carefully. He must convince Iran that America's Gulf alliance remains strong, while persuading fissiparous Arab doubters that America, hoping for a nuclear deal with Iran and simultaneously reducing its armed forces and seeking to "pivot" towards Asia, has not gone soft on what the Arabs see as a Persian threat. Mr Obama must also explain his reticence to help either Syrian rebels or Egypt's generals, even as his Gulf allies press for a bigger commitment. Mr Roosevelt, by comparison, had it easy.

## Diplomatic crisis as Gulf states withdraw ambassadors from Qatar

*The Financial Times*, March 5, 2014

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain have withdrawn their ambassadors from neighbouring Qatar, as frustration over the gas-rich emirate's maverick foreign policy prompts the worst intra-Gulf diplomatic crisis in recent history.

The three nations, which are seeking to marginalise their neighbour's support for political Islam in the region, cited Qatar's unwillingness to adhere to agreements of the 32-year-old six-member Gulf Co-operation Council as the reason for recalling their envoys, according to the official Saudi Press Agency.

Riyadh, Abu Dhabi and Manama also asked Doha, which has been a big backer of the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood group, not to "support any party aiming to threaten security and stability of any GCC member".

They accused Qatar of failing to agree on a unified policy to "ensure non-interference, directly or indirectly, in the internal affairs of any member state" after it failed to sign up to a common security pact at a GCC foreign ministers meeting in Riyadh on Tuesday.

Qatar's cabinet in a statement said that the ambassadors' withdrawal had been driven by "a difference in positions on issues out of the GCC," reiterating its commitment to the six-member group, adding that it would not reciprocate and withdraw its ambassadors.

The diplomatic crisis, a rare escalation of behind-the-scenes negotiation into a damaging public spat, poses the most severe challenge of the short reign of the young Qatari emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani. The sheikh met the rulers of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in November, promising a new face to Qatar's foreign policy.

"The new emir promised things would change, and he failed to deliver," said Abdulkhaleq Abdullah, a UAE-based political scientist, referring to a meeting held between Sheikh Tamim and the Saudi and Kuwaiti rulers last November.

"There is a desire to sanction Qatar politically and diplomatically."

Gulf states had believed the new emir would promote a more consensual approach to foreign policy, co-ordinating more closely with his GCC neighbours, rather than striking out on major policy initiatives alone.

"Qatar has been warned a number of times by GCC countries that its policies, particularly with regard to the Muslim Brotherhood, ran counter to the critical security interests of the region," said Michael Stephens, researcher at the Royal United Services Institute in Qatar. "As a result the GCC nations have taken an unprecedented step to haul Qatar back into line, and further escalatory steps could be taken in future."

Last month, the UAE rebuked the Qatari ambassador in Abu Dhabi after Sheikh Qaradawi, the spiritual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood who is based in Qatar, attacked the UAE for not supporting Islamic government.

The UAE's crackdown on domestic Islamists has over the past couple of years prompted several disagreements, many of them on social media, between emiratis and Sheikh Qaradawi and his supporters.

Abu Dhabi this week convicted a Qatari national, dubbed a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International, for aiding a banned UAE Islamist group that the authorities claim is linked to the brotherhood.

So far Qatar has not bowed to initial pressure from Abu Dhabi over Sheikh Qaradawi's comments, says Andrew Hammond, a policy fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations.

"Qatar does not want to allow Saudi and the UAE to dictate policy," says Mr Hammond. "Qatar is convinced it is standing up for just causes, such as Egypt, as well as its interventions in Libya and Syria."

The ousting of Egypt's Mohamed Morsi, the country's first elected president who was a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, has become the biggest flashpoint in GCC-Qatar relations.

The UAE, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have generously supported the military-backed interim regime led by Field Marshall Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. Qatar, a financial supporter of Mr Morsi's government, has criticised the manner in which the president was deposed.

The three Gulf states have also been pushing Doha to rein in its popular pan-Arab satellite channel, Al Jazeera, which they accuse of promoting an Islamist and Muslim Brotherhood agenda. Three Al Jazeera journalists are facing trial in Cairo on charges of belonging to the "terrorist" Muslim Brotherhood.

The channel's reporting sparked another bilateral spat with Saudi Arabia, which recalled its ambassador from Doha between 2002 and 2007.

Oman, which does not tend to co-ordinate closely with the other Gulf monarchies, and Kuwait did not withdraw their ambassadors.

## **Qatar crisis could go two ways: 'diplomacy or sanctions'**

*Gulf News, March 6, 2014*

Abu Dhabi: The withdrawal of three Gulf envoys from Qatar has generated much speculation as to how the situation will turn out, culminating in two major analyses.

The two opposing views maintain that either Gulf diplomacy will succeed in stemming the tide of conflict, or that the crisis is prime for deteriorating further as time passes.

"Taking the Gulf Cooperation Council to a political abyss serves nobody's interests. The peoples and leaders of the GCC member states should have a clear awareness of just how lethal a threat the abyss politics pose to everyone," said Dr Yousuf Al Hassan, a leading Emirati political analyst.

The UAE, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain have called back their ambassadors from Qatar on Wednesday, citing contravention with GCC accords as the reason for the move.

The three countries maintained the six GCC members had agreed not to support "anyone threatening the security and stability of the GCC whether as groups or individuals — via direct security work or through political influence, and not to support hostile media".

The recalling of the countries' envoys was "to protect their security and stability," according to a statement issued by the three countries.

Dr Al Hassan stressed rebuilding bridges with Doha is likely to come to fruition as time passes with mediation by Kuwait and possibly Oman, and as the organisations the Qataris bet on decline and die away, he said, referring to the Muslim Brotherhood which Qatar purportedly supports.

"Naturally, we hope for the end of conflict with Doha because there is no complaisance with regards to resorting to sanctions against the Qatari regime," Dr Al Hassan said.

His comments echoed those of Dr Abdullah Al Tamimi, who tweeted: "Iran is the only beneficiary of the dispute [with Qatar], for there will be no winner among the GCC countries."

Dr Mohammad Al Hadla agreed and posted on his twitter account: "[The withdrawal of the envoys from Qatar] is an overdue but prudent move by far-sighted leaders. It's an effective action against the Qatari leadership which opted to push the GCC into the abyss."

However, Dr Abdul Khaleq Abdullah, a leading political analyst, said the unprecedented move by the three GCC members was made after their leaders ran out of patience towards Qatar's policies supporting the Muslim Brotherhood movement and breaching the Gulf Cooperation Council's policies and positions, particularly towards Egypt.

"Qatar could face sanctions clamped by the Gulf countries, including the closing of borders with Qatar, and airspace to it if Doha doesn't stop supporting the Muslim Brotherhood," Dr Abdullah told *Gulf News*.

Dr Abdullah did not rule out the freezing of the relationship between the three GCC countries and Qatar.

He said leaders of the three Gulf countries believe that the Qatari Emir Shaikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani did not abide by the agreement he signed in a November summit in Riyadh in the presence of the Emir of Kuwait Shaikh Sabah Al Ahmad three months ago to stop the use of the Qatari soil in actions that harm the interests of the Gulf countries.

Dr Abdullah noted that Saudi Arabia would lead any such sanctions against Qatar, citing Saudi accusation of Doha of supporting Al Houthi rebels in Yemen with money and weapons through one of the Qatari ruling family, as well as supporting the Muslim Brotherhood in the Kingdom.

Dr Ebtisam Al Kitbi, Chairperson of the Emirates Policy Centre, agreed and said the GCC countries made the move after they exhausted all means to bring Qatar back into the GCC's fold.

"It seems that the Qataris are not aware that the Muslim Brotherhood movement is over. Neither Qatar, nor its allies, would be able to turn back time," Dr Ebtisam said.

Dr Ebtisam added that neither Turkey, nor the Muslim Brotherhood would do any good to Doha. "Only sisterly Gulf countries are the real supporters of Qatar at good and bad times. Even the United States would not prefer Qatar to Saudi Arabia and other GCC countries," Dr Ebtisam said.

Ali Jasem, a veteran member of the Federal National Council, agreed sanctions against Qatar would be an option down the line, because "there is no compromise when it comes to the Gulf security and stability."

Mohammad Al Marar, a UAE citizen, went all the way to calling for military action against Qatar "It is not enough to call back our envoys from Doha, we [the GCC members] should launch a military strike against Qatar to teach it a lesson about its actual size and standing," he said.

Suggesting another difficult action against Qatar, Khalifa Mohammad tweeted: "Should Qatar pursue its schemes [against security of GCC countries], it will be thrown out of the GCC."

His sentiments were echoed by Hamdan Al Shamsi, who expressed the hope that "the next step will be driving Qatar away from the GCC."

