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Photo tells: Critical Crack between Saudi Arabia and Qatar



On December 9, representatives of the six GCC countries gathered in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia for the 39th GCC Summit. The above picture is at that time. There are six gentlemen in the picture. This picture shows as if they were representatives of each six countries. But you might notice something strange in this picture. In fact, the gentleman at most right side is the Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman (MbS) of Saudi Arabia, At the same time you can see the King Salman in the center. Other gentlemen are the representative of four GCC countries. That is, the representatives of one of the six GCC countries have not appeared in the picture.

It was a representative from Qatar. Qatar sent Minister of State for Foreign Affairs as the government representative. All the summits up to now, including the Kuwait Summit of last year, Tamim, Emir of Qatar, was present at the Summit. But in June last year Qatar was isolated from GCC because Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain and Egypt severed the diplomatic ties with Qatar. Since then Saudi Arabia and Qatar heavily hate each other. It is understandable that Tamim himself avoids the Riyadh Summit. Despite there is a proper foreign minister of royal family member, Qatar sent the state minister for foreign affairs, who was the technocrat of non-royal family.

In the above photo, Emir of Kuwait and the King of Bahrain are on both sides of King Salman. The second from the left is UAE Vice President and Emir of Dubai, the leftist gentleman is Omani foreign minister. Both are royalty. Was the Saudi government intentionally eliminated Qatar's representative? Or the Qatari State Minister declined himself to join the group photo? The truth is unknown. It was easy to guess that Qatar would get a cold reception at the meeting.

At Kuwait Summit held last year after four countries, namely Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain and Egypt, severed diplomatic ties with Qatar, Qatari Emir Tamim attended the Summit. In return Saudi Arabia sent Foreign Minister. Neither King Salman nor Crown Prince MbS attended the meeting. Kuwait took the effort of mediation between the two. But it was fruitless. Kuwait, who was the host country of the summit, lost its face. In this year's Riyadh Summit hosted by Saudi Arabia was in reverse. The antagonism between two countries is now in a critical situation.

The friction between Saudi Arabia and Qatar was rooted in deep. It started from critical report by Al Jazeera TV of Qatar related to Saudi royal family. In addition, Saudi Arabia recently claimed that Qatar had a close relationship with Shiite Iran and Sunni Muslim Brotherhood. Saudi Arabia seemed Qatar as a sponsor of terrorist. The conflict between Qatar and Saudi Arabia entered into the new phase. In other words, the reason of conflict has changed from democratic values of freedom of press to religious affairs related to terrorism. Democratic values can be compromised or resolved through dialogue, but it is not easy to solve conflict related to religion.

In fact, the GCC Summit was not the only one issue that confronted the two sides. Qatar announced the withdrawal from OPEC just before the Summit. Qatar oil minister said at the press conference that the reason why his country exit from OPEC was to focus on increasing production and expanding the market of natural gas for the future. He stressed that there was no political intention at all.

Even though the oil minister's remarks were not false, no one believes that Qatar has no political intention. Recently Saudi Arabia conspired with the non-OPEC oil producing country Russia to reduce production and maintain high prices. US President Trump condemns the OPEC as a cartel and insists low crude oil price. Saudi Arabia neglects the opinion of other OPEC members. Qatar thought bitterly about the attitude of Saudi Arabia and doubted the advantage of being a member of OPEC.

The relationship between Saudi Arabia and Qatar is in a desperate situation. Qatar undoubtedly seems to be exit from GCC following OPEC membership.

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Please tell us your comments and opinions on this matter.

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