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December 2019

Slight changes in the magnetic field between Saudi, Qatar and UAE

Amir of Qatar didn't attend GCC Summit



The annual GCC summit, which brings together GCC leaders from six countries, was held on December 10 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. In response to King Salman's call, Amir of Kuwait and King of Bahrain joined the meeting. Amir of UAE and Sultan of Oman are in poor health. Therefore, UAE was attended by Shaikh Muhammad Al-Maktoum, the Vice President and the ruler of Dubai. From Oman the First Deputy Prime Minister attended the

Summit. In case of Oman, Sultan Qaboos, who is also the prime minister, left Belgium for a medical check just before the meeting and returned home on the 14th of December¹. Qatar drew attention to whether the Amir Shaikh Tamim Al-Thani would be present at the Summit. Prime Minister, Abdullah Al-Thani, was in attendance in place of the Amir².

Qatari Amir Shaikh Tamim Al-Thani is 40 years old, born in 1979. He is the most young and healthy leader among the six countries. He should have no problem to attend the Summit. In contrast, Kuwaiti Amir of 90-year-old had been hospitalized several times in the past. And he again hospitalized in US in this September. His depression is clearly noticeable in the recent pictures. But the Kuwaiti Amir who was eager to keep the GCC unity attended the summit pushing aside his illness.

GCC magnetic fields: attracting Saudi and UAE, repelling Saudi / UAE and Qatar

Qatari Amir's absence in the Summit was because that Saudi Arabia and UAE disconnected the diplomatic ties with Qatar two years ago. Bahrain and Egypt joined the rupture with Saudi Arabia and UAE. Four countries confronted Qatar 13 requests including to reduce the level of diplomatic relations with Iran, to cut off relations with the Muslim Brotherhood, to close Al Jazeera, and to withdraw immediately Turkish troops from Qatar. They were too oppressive to accept for Qatar. Two partied have been severing the relation until now.

Crown Prince both in Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi, the same name Mohammad, are tightly united to defeat their mutual enemy, Iran. This is the common basis to rupture Qatar. Also in Yemeni civil war, Saudi Arabia and UAE support the UN-approved Hadi government and battle a proxy war with Iran, which supports the rebel Houthi. This means that Saudi Arabia and UAE are strongly attracting in the magnetic field activating in GCC. On the contrary Qatar and two nations are repelling each other.

Kuwaiti Amir rushes to mediation

The United States and Kuwait are very much concerned about the turmoil inside GCC. US President Donald Trump deems GCC as the first shield to oppress Iran, which is the biggest threat to Israel in the region. But GCC themselves are fragile. The United States, therefore, has its own air force base in Qatar and naval base in Bahrain. In addition, US sent 3,000 troops to Saudi Arabia recently due to a drone attack at oil facilities of Saudi Aramco³. The United States cannot overlook the conflict between Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

Kuwait had a bitter experience of being raped by Hussein of Iraq. Kuwait is keenly aware of the need for GCC to unite against external enemies. It is the reason why Amir Shaikh Sabah mediates GCC brother countries despite his own serious health condition. He was even trying to get in touch with President Trump during his stay for medical care in US this September⁴.

Saudi Arabia has no afford now



Now Saudi Arabia has begun to change its attitude. Communique of the GCC summit stated unity on internal and external issues but did not refer to the Qatar boycott issue⁵. One day before the summit, King Salman had a telephone call with US President Donald Trump. The talks were reported to have been mainly for the purpose of apologizing and explaining the shooting case by a Saudi pilot trainee at a naval base in Florida on Dec. 6⁶. It would be certain that President Trump strongly instructed King Salman to reconcile within the GCC (most probably Trump intimidated the King).

It was worthy to mention that when Gulf Cup of soccer match game was held in Qatar this fall, Saudi Arabia sent its team without boycotting the game. Saudi Arabia, who has been the dominant force of GCC so far, was always arrogant in the past. But the image of Saudi Arabia has been severely damaged not only by the Khashoggi's murder case but also the turmoil of corruption detection for political opponents. Saudi Arabia lost the trust internationally and domestically at once. And the OPEC strategy

utilizing oil as weapons is ineffective as once used to. The magnetic field between Saudi and Qatar is changing from repelling to attracting.

Blowing draft between Saudi Arabia and UAE

As a result, drafts began to blow between Saudi Arabia and UAE. UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Dr. Gargash tweeted that the Qatar issue had not been scrapped since the summit. He expressed discomfort with the signs of a Saudi-Qatar reconciliation⁷. UAE took also different policy from Saudi Arabia about Yemen. During the Yemen civil war, Saudi Arabia and the UAE formed the Arab coalition with the endorsement of the United Nations. They supported the UN-authorized government and bombed Iran-backed Houthi rebels. However, UAE departed from Saudi Arabia gradually during the battle with the Houthi rebels. UAE backed Southern Transitional Council which was the separatist in southern Yemen and more powerful than the Saudi-backed exile government in Riyadh.

Inner struggle took place in the Yemeni government. It was far from the elimination of the Houthi rebels. UAE was disgusted and decided to withdraw from Yemen, leaving it to Saudi Arabia. Draft blew out between Saudi Arabia and UAE, too. The magnetic field between two countries is changing from attracting to repelling.

Qatar remains calm

At the initial stage of Qatar boycott, Saudi Arabia believed its overwhelming power and expected Qatar to surrender. Power balance, however, has been changed completely. Saudi Arabia is now in a hurry to settle down, whereas Qatar remains calm. Qatar has minimized the influence of boycotts by importing food from Turkey and asking Turkey to station its troops in Qatar. In addition, Qatar has withdrawn from OPEC and is focusing on increasing production of natural gas and export of LNG. Furthermore, Qatar attended the Islamic International Conference held by Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad along with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani. Saudi Arabia and its breathtaking OIC (Organization of the Islamic Conference) strongly opposed the meeting, saying it was a sectarian activity. But Qatar remains calm⁸.

The magnetic field inside the GCC is changing slightly. For the time being, it is necessary to keep an eye on what will happen to the unity of the GCC, or whether the GCC itself will melt down.

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¹ His Majesty the Sultan leaves for Belgium for medical check-up

2019/12/8 Muscat Daily

<https://muscatdaily.com/Oman/385511/His-Majesty-the-Sultan-leaves-for-Belgium-for-medical-check-up>

and

His Majesty the Sultan returns from Belgium

2019/12/14 Muscat Daily

<https://muscatdaily.com/Oman/385575/His-Majesty-the-Sultan-returns-from-Belgium>

² GCC summit calls for greater economic and defense unity among Gulf countries

2019.12.10 Arab News

<https://www.arabnews.com/node/1596771/saudi-arabia>

³ Deployment of 3,000 US troops to Saudi Arabia almost complete

2019/11/19 Arab News

<https://www.arabnews.com/node/1586641/saudi-arabia>

⁴ Kuwait Amir continues medical tests, postpones Trump meeting

2019/9/8 The Peninsula

<https://www.thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/08/09/2019/Kuwait-Amir-continues-medical-tests,-postpones-Trump-meeting>

⁵ GCC summit calls for greater economic and defense unity among Gulf countries

2019.12.10 Arab News

<https://www.arabnews.com/node/1596771/saudi-arabia>

⁶ King Salman leads Saudi official condemnations of Florida attack

2019/12/7 Arab News

<https://www.arabnews.com/node/1595296/saudi-arabia>

⁷ Qatar should address issues raised by four states, says Gargash

2019/12/12 Khaleej Times

<https://www.khaleejtimes.com/region/qatar-crisis/uae-minister-issues-statement-on-solution-to-qatar-crisis->

⁸ Organization of Islamic Cooperation: Malaysia meeting runs against Muslim community interests

2019/12/18 Arab News

<https://www.arabnews.com/node/1600941/saudi-arabia>