The one-day summit in Doha of member states comprising the GCC ( Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf) in addition to attracting the attention of many politicians, also identified new trends in the development of domestic and foreign policies of Arab countries in this very important region. It is worth pointing out that this association consists of six monarchies of the Arabian Peninsula: Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, UAE and Saudi Arabia. These countries account for about 20 percent of the world's oil production and have more than 50 percent of the world's proven oil reserves (Saudi Arabia ranks in the first place in the world), the total GDP of these kingdoms and emirates amounts to 1.5 trillion USD.

First of all, it’s an important factor that the summit actually took place in Doha, as Riyadh, Manama and Abu Dhabi had sharp differences with Doha for most of the year, which had led to the withdrawal of ambassadors. Recently Arab ambassadors returned to their duties, and the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani agreed to change his policy regarding the organization of the Muslim Brotherhood, coordinate a course for the Syrian question in accordance with the plans of the “elder sister” - Saudi Arabia and restrain the ardor of the once famous TV channel, “Al Jazeera”. It would seem that in this respect peace and harmony have come to reign. However, the famous theologian, Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi is still in Doha, although he has toned down his fiery sermons criticizing Arab neighbors, and Qatari Muslim foundations are still sponsoring terrorist organizations in Syria. And, moreover, it is quite a remarkable fact that, instead of two days the summit lasted one day, and, according to the Arab press, it took two hours to complete, which induces pessimistic thoughts.

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The creation of a single law enforcement agency which has already been dubbed by the Qatari media as the “Gulf
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It is quite obvious that the U.S. has recently demonstrated military-strategic and political weakness. On the other hand, the interests of Saudi Arabia and several other countries differ from the interests of the USA in this region. Therefore, they cannot count on U.S. support completely. Under these circumstances, they are looking for a way to compensate for this by mutual support. And internal instability of these regimes suggests that suppression of popular uprisings will be achieved by the collective efforts of other countries. At the same time, it is unlikely these initiatives are related to the intensification of differences between the USA and Saudi Arabia because of the oil market games being played, as has been widely rumored lately. According to one version, it was the Saudis who were behind the decline in oil prices, which also deals a blow to the shale gas projects in the USA.

In general, the GCC summit, according to the opinion of the Arab press, was largely devoted to the fight against terrorism. The Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, the chairman of the meeting, spoke about this repeatedly: “We must put aside differences and stand together against the dangers.” This was his appeal to the leaders of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, UAE and Bahrain. “We have no other choice but to stand against terrorism”, insisted the Emir of Qatar.

Lately, the Islamic State has posed the main danger to Arab countries. The Islamic State’s organization sprung from the armed opposition groups fighting in Iraq and Syria against Arab regimes. It quickly became a serious military and political force and a contender for greater influence than its predecessor, Al-Qaeda, since it gained control of the oil-producing companies within Syria and Iraq. The majority of GCC countries are members of the US-led international coalition to fight the militants of the Islamic State; Saudi and UAE fighter planes have carried out a number of attacks, while Kuwait has provided material and technical support.

In addition, it is quite clear that the decisions taken in Doha are also aimed at continuing the confrontation with Iran, as the Saudi rulers repeat literally every day and try to impose this point of view onto their Arab neighbors. Citing the dangers of Shiite dominance in the region, Saudi Arabia is pushing hard for a conflict with Iran, not only other Arab countries but also the USA and Israel, inciting them to military adventures against Iran. Saudi rulers are becoming increasingly aware that at this stage, Iran is more important to Barack Obama than the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. After all, today Tehran is key to solving the problems of Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq and Yemen; hypothetically this presents the possibility to use the huge energy potential of this country to put pressure on Russia, as it is the gateway to the South Caucasus and Central Asia, and finally, it is a huge market for American capital, especially in Iran’s energy sector. Washington is actively trying to get rid of the excessive dependence on their Arab “allies” in the Gulf, especially Saudi Arabia, whose petrodollars have created a hugely influential political lobby in the United States, comprised mostly of Republicans, the political opponents of the current Democratic administration.

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Although Arab rulers in Doha publicly demonstrated their unity and solidarity, in reality the position of the Sultan of Oman has turned out to be the fly in the ointment. Oman refused its turn to host the summit of the GCC in 2015, as the Qatari news channel Al-Jazeera reported upon the conclusion of the Doha summit. According to Al-Jazeera, the decision not to hold the meeting in Oman is due to its disagreement with the initiative to transform the GCC into a Union which was approved at the Doha Summit by the majority of Arab monarchs. According to the news channel, the situation reached such a point that the Sultan of Oman threatened to withdraw from the Cooperation Council altogether if Saudi Arabia continues to insist on its transformation into a Union under its aegis.

After the summit in Doha, the intentions of Riyadh were quite obvious; it intended to transform the GCC which was conceived as a union of Arab States in the fields of economy, transport and culture into a military alliance with the primary objective to defend the interests of the “elder sister”, Saudi Arabia. In anticipation of the imminent change of government (the current King is 90 years old and is seriously ill), the Saudis are quickly and frantically trying to build, at least on paper, such a unity which, in their opinion, will be able to save the Arab states from the new turbulent world trends. But, as the ancient Greeks said, their hopes are futile!

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**Victor Mikhin, a member of the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences, , exclusively for the online magazine “New Eastern Outlook”**.