Qatar Carries On its Vicious Anti-Russian Policies

One couldn't help but notice that the Persian Gulf monarchies have recently started sending their emissaries to Moscow and Sochi way too often. This statement is particularly true when we take a close look at the actions of Saudi Arabia and Qatar – the sole two Wahhabi states in the world that are preaching the twisted form of Islam dating back to 17th century. In sharp contrast to previous years, when Russia was mindful of the role those two states played in fueling the conflicts in the North Caucasus along with the so-called "color revolutions" among those Arab states that were friendly to Moscow, it seems that Russia has now been successfully tricked into an attempt to seek cooperation with those states on different levels, even despite the fact that the four meetings in the Russia- GCC format have led to no actual agreements being signed.

In fact, Moscow understands that Riyadh and Doha are making every effort in preventing Russia from achieving a political settlement in Syria. Those states are not simply supporting the most radical groups in Syria, they are deeply involved in Yemen, Libya and Iraq. And if one can find an explanation for the continuous meetings between Russian and Saudi authorities, since they are imperative for reaching an understanding on the black gold pricing, the contacts with Qatar are quite different in their nature.

Qatar has been carrying out aggressive anti-Russian policies in the Arab world for over a decade now. Moreover, the level of bilateral economic trade Russia has with this “dwarf” state that is essentially nothing but an appendage of ExxonMobil is totally negligible. Qatar has repeatedly promised Moscow billions of dollars in investments, first in 2006, when Vladimir Putin first visited this emirate, and then in 2010 when Emir Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani went on a trip to Russia. None of the promises have been fulfilled so far.

Nevertheless, on May 6 Russia's president has suddenly decided to hold a meeting in Sochi with the head of the Qatari Ministry of Foreign Affair, although the better part of Russian allies that have been pretty successful in developing bilateral economic ties, haven't received this kind of treatement yet. Formally, the pretext was that the Minister had an important message from the Qatari Emir to pass, although this was not true.

After all, according to the press-release that was published after the meeting, the Qatari Foreign Minister thanked the Russian President for the opportunity to meet and announced that he brought a verbal message from the Qatari emir that concerns the situation in the Middle East. In diplomatic language a verbal message – is nothing but an excuse to hold a meeting since it doesn't have the value of the written message. There's always room left for plausible deniability when the messenger can state that he's got the message wrong. Moreover, as if in an attempt to justify the meeting, Putin's aide Yuri Ushakov announced on its eve that a special agreement was reached with the Qatari Emir during the phone talk he had with Russia's President, since heads of states rarely meet ministers. According to Ushakov, it was announced that Qatar has some new ideas and suggestions regarding the Syrian settlement. It should be noted that so far the only role Qatar did play in the Syrian settlement was limited to the financial support it provided to the most radical groups such as Jabhat al-Nusra and cooperation with Turkey's special services. And now Doha doing everything it can to disrupt the Geneva talks, which can hardly be regarded as a friendly step.

In addition to Syria, Putin and Mohammed bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani discussed the situation in Yemen and Libya. And it's a pretty curious fact if you remember who initiated the overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi and the
resignation of Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh. Qatar participated in the bombing of Libya, and now has employed its air forces to bomb on civilians in Yemeni cities. It's been reported by the media, that Putin in response to the message from the Emir confirmed his intention to develop Russia's cooperation with Qatar in all fields, including the economy. Qatar has been declaring this intention for over a decade but nothing has been actually done. As it has been noted by Putin's press secretary Dmitry Peskov, during the talks to Putin and Al Thani discussed their views on world oil prices, however once can hardly expect the agreement to freeze production levels, as the two countries can develop a collective approach to this matter.

But Qatar is not simply aiming to fight Russia on the oil market, he's pretty determined to occupy its positions on the European gas market as well. It plans to carry on its supplies of LNG through Poland, thereby undermining Gazprom's position. But oil and gas are the two major concerns for Moscow these days, since they allow to alleviate the pressure of anti-Russian sanctions. It should be understood that that the introduction of LNG terminals creates preconditions for the formation of a single global gas market instead of the three existing regional ones, and Qatar is playing the leading role in this development. At the same time Moscow remains dependent on the Ukrainian gas transit and does not have the capacities to compete with Qatar on the Asian LNG market.

Therefore, Russia as the leading exporter of pipeline gas is the direct competitor of Qatar as the leading exporter of liquefied gas. In fact, the introduction of LNG supplies from Qatar and the US on the European market allowed Brussels to introduce the so-called Third Energy Package, which openly discriminates against Gazprom, preventing it from investing in the construction of new gas pipelines and thereby blocking many projects, including the notorious South Stream. Moreover, Doha is clearly not going to stop its attempts to squeeze Moscow out of its traditional gas markets. Thus, the objectives of the Doha clear - to obtain Russia's support in exchange for huge economic investments. But Qatar cannot fulfill its promises, since its LNG exports to Europe are unprofitable. In operational terms Qatar is still receiving profit but it has to pay debts for the infrastructure it created. Moreover, Doha is not able to drop its unprofitable LNG sales, therefore, it takes new loans to strengthen the gas infrastructure in a bid to get a bigger share of the market.

It is a vicious circle that drives Qatar in even greater debt. No one can predict when a bubble will burst but it will some day. Therefore, Doha has introduced a regime of brutal economy. It's enough to mention the repeated funding cuts of the Al Jazeera - the main instrument of Qatari foreign policy. Left without money while being accustomed to live in grand style, Al-Jazeera has completely discredited itself in the Arab media space, and its talking head started leaving the channel not only due to their reluctance to spread misinformation, but also on the financial reasons. And Moscow is well aware of this fact.

And again, Moscow remembers the destructive role Qatar played in the Libyan, Egyptian, Yemeni and Syrian events, along with the support it provided to Wahhabs in Chechnya during the terrorist-separatist rebellion there. One can remember the insult Moscow received in November 2011, when security services of the Doha airport assaulted the Russian ambassador in an attempt to steal his diplomatic pouch, manifesting Qatar's dissatisfaction with Russia's policy in Syria. So Russia is using Qatar to advance its gas interests in the Middle East. There should be no illusions about it here, it's reported that Vladimir Putin has a remarkably good memory.

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