Qatar and Saudi Arabia: the Scandal is Gaining Steam

The scandal, which started on March 5, after the withdrawal of Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain ambassadors from Qatar, is continuing to gain steam. The media of Saudi Arabia, which was the instigator of this campaign, published a whole heap of accusations against Doha.

The main one is known – it is Qatar’s refusal to observe the provisions of the agreement of GCC on non-interference of Council member states in each other’s affairs signed on November 23, 2013.

It is worth noting that, even despite the massive media pressure on them, the Qatariis refuse to admit that anti-Emirates and anti-Saudi statements on the Qatari channel “Al Jazeera”, including by the well-known Islamic preacher Y. al-Qaradawi, are the cause of the conflict. Doha responded that this is just an excuse, but the true reason lies in the differences in the GCC on the problems “outside of the region”.

Recognizing that Qatar does have differences with other Gulf countries on Egypt and Syria, the Saudi semiofficial newspaper “The Arab News” insists in its editorial on March 9, however, that preaching by Y. al-Qaradawi is in the first place. The newspaper reminds that Riyadh already withdrew its ambassador from Doha in 2002, just because of the “speeches by anti-Saudi dissidents on Al- Jazeera”.

Doha was made a broad hint that Riyadh unequivocally deemed its “refusal to fulfill the agreement of November 23” as the continuation of the anti-Saudi propaganda and reluctance of Qatari authorities to expel Y. al-Qaradawi.

These words were also confirmed by the “strategic analyst” of central Riyadh newspaper “The Okyaz” Abdel Mohsen Sultan, who told that Doha “had become a refuge for terrorist organizations”, and its policy “lacked wisdom and foresight”. His words were echoed by Ibrahim Al- Fahd Dugeyz of “The Al-Hayat”, who claimed that Qatar “constantly provoked” Riyadh, and “Al-Jazeera” had been unceasingly accusing citizens of the KSA of involvement in terrorist activities since September 11, 2001 (as if this were not so!).

However, Haled Dakhil, a well-known commentator in the Arab world, expands the list of Saudi accusations in the same newspaper “The Al-Hayat” of March 9. H. Dakhil laid a special emphasis on the fact that Qatar allegedly used the “umbrella” of the GCC to pursue policies “that endangered the interests of the member countries”. It was emphasized that the new Prince Tamim, who came to power in Qatar at the end of June 2013, “did not meet expectations” and the country’s policy remained the same, i.e., threatening the security and stability of the GCC countries.

First, according to H. Dahl, “the country was closer to Iran, Syria and Hezbollah” than to the KSA and other GCC members before the “Arab Spring”, and it became closer to Turkey after it. The opponents allegedly “used” Doha’s inconstancy in the game against the KSA and its allies. Qatar was reminded of its role in the Doha agreement on Lebanon of 2008, according to which the Syrian regime managed to allocate a third of the seats in the government to
Hezbollah, which fact was used by Damascus in subsequence to force the resignation of S. Hariri’s government, who was a staunch ally of Riyadh.

Second, they try to hang one thing on Qatar, which it has absolutely nothing to do with – Oman’s refusal to join a military and political union of the GCC countries, proposed by Riyadh in December 2011. Allegedly, it gave a bad example to Muscat with its “disobedience”.

For the present, Riyadh is talking with Qatar in the language of blackmail and barely disguised threats. To make Doha understand it better, a communiqué of MIA KSA was issued in Riyadh on March 8, where on the list of terrorist organizations included the “Association of the Muslim Brotherhood” (AMB), on whose behalf Y. al-Qaradawi spoke.

So, what is the specific reason the Wahhabi Saudi clan is so annoyed by the Muslim Brotherhood? And why does Doha, where the same Wahhabis are in power, persist in supporting Y. Qaradawi, who is the spiritual guru of the AMB?

Knowledgeable people in Riyadh believe that the Saudi ruling family has felt annoyed for a long time because of the claims of “upstarts” from Qatar to play a more important role in the inter-Arab affairs than they deserve to, and the transfer of power to the current Prince Tamim has changed little... Qatar has continued its arrogant policies of the “enraged dwarf” from mid-2013 until now. However, that is only one of the factors.

The most important factor is that Prince Tamim, like his father, being a Wahhabi externally, in fact, belongs (as they believe in the Saudi capital), to Muslim Brotherhood organization, which is based on principles of Masonic Muslims. This organization, spiritually guided by Yousef al-Qaradawi, does not only impede the implementation of Riyadh’s leadership aspirations in the region, but has become a direct threat, according to the Saudi people, to the security of the kingdom.

This is not only because of the kingdom’s terrorist activities in the joint struggle of the Saudi people and the Muslim Brotherhood against Bashar al-Assad’s regime in 2011 and 2012, not even being observed in Riyadh. The most important fact is that Saudi society and, even worse, the administrative apparatus was - much to the dismay of the ruling family, from top to bottom - full of proponents of this religious-political movement that promotes a mixture of the Orthodox Islam and electoral democracy. This was due to myopia of the ruling family in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, who sheltered Muslim Brotherhood followers in the 1950s, when they fled from the persecution of Gamal Abdel Nasser. It is worth mentioning their noticeable influence in the Hijaz, where the anti-Saudi and separatist sentiments were always very strong. In the Saudi capital, they believe that one of the “heads” of this many-headed hydra is situated in Qatar and they intend to get rid of this evil forever.

The range of further action against Doha are wide, if it does not “come to its senses”, as they write in Riyadh. Their first requirement is Youssef al-Qaradawi’s expulsion. Then maybe many other requirements will follow - from Doha’s membership cancellation in the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf and the minimization of joint projects up to (it sounds more muffled) promoting a power change in Qatar.

However, this will happen only if Qatar does not change its policy (as they hint here). Some unnamed “diplomats” from the General Secretariat of Arab League in Cairo, told “The Decree” newspaper that there will be taken great pains to overcome disagreements at the upcoming Arab League summit in Kuwait, on March 25.

However, if they observe in Qatar management’s actions a threat to the security of the ruling family (and it looks like this is indeed the case), then half-measures will not be enough, and sooner or later, the Saudis will organize another coup in Qatar. It is believed that this coup will occur soon, due to the approaching departure from the political scene of King Abdullah and the sharpening of the struggle for power in the kingdom, that the Qatar people, especially the Muslim Brotherhood, will not be allowed to...

Maxim Egorov, political commentator on the Middle East, exclusively for the online magazine New Eastern Outlook.