



Mitvim Experts Weigh In On Egypt-Qatar Rapprochement

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In late December 2014, Egypt and Qatar have agreed to normalize their relations, which were strained due to Qatar's support of the Muslim Brotherhood. The deal, which coincides with parallel rapprochement between Qatar and the Gulf States, is expected to have broad regional ramifications. Mitvim experts – Prof. Elie Podeh, Ksenia Svetlova, Dr. Nimrod Goren and Gabriel Mitchell – weigh in on this development, assessing why it happened and what can we expect next.

1. Why did Qatar normalize its ties with Egypt?

Prof. Elie Podeh, Board Member at the Mitvim Institute: “The isolation that Qatar found itself in, has damaged its regional standing and has caused its young leader, Emir Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, to understand that a policy change is needed. The Qataris sensed the course of events in the Arab world. They understood that a-Sisi is here to stay and that they failed in ousting him. Moreover, they grasped that IS poses a threat to Qatar, as it does to other Arab countries. These are the reasons for their U-turn regarding Egypt. Saudi Arabia had a key role in this process. The Saudis made clear to the Qataris that they are the strongest country in the Gulf and that they cannot be ignored. A day before the Qataris sent their delegate to Egypt, they also sent a delegation to Turkey, in order to notify Erdoğan on their coming policy change. Qatar did not give up on its alliance with Turkey, but is heading towards reconciliation with Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the moderate axis, and is willing to pay the price vis-à-vis Erdoğan. The Egypt-Qatar rapprochement will weaken the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, which has been relying on Qatari media and financial support. The first sign of this is the suspension of the *al-Jazeera* Egypt-focused channel that has been broadcasting live from Egypt since the 2011 revolution.” **(To read more, in Hebrew, see Amir Tibon, “[The Qatar-Egypt Reconciliation](#),” *Walla News*, 24 December 2014)**

2. How was the rapprochement made possible?

Ksenia Svetlova, Policy Fellow at the Mitvim Institute: “The road to Cairo was actually paved during the GCC summit two weeks ago. It was there, in the glittering palace in Doha, that leaders of the Gulf States agreed to put aside their differences for the sake of ‘regional security’ - whatever this vague term may

mean. The deal, reached between the Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim and the Saudi King Abdullah ibn Abd al-Aziz was simple: Qatar would stop its relentless support of ousted Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi and of the now-banned Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and stop its anti-Saudi and anti-Egyptian propaganda on *al-Jazeera*. In return, the GCC countries will normalize relations with Doha, reinstate their ambassadors and resume security ties. Qatar will improve its reputation in the Arab world and will no longer be a pariah swimming against the current. What did the Qatari envoy promise the president of Egypt is still unclear, and most probably problems will emerge shortly, but for now the agreement satisfies both countries – Qatar is busy improving its image in the East and in the West, and Egypt will probably enjoy some major loans from Qatari banks providing a measure of freedom for its failing economy.” (To read more, see **Ksenia Svetlova**, “[Egypt-Qatar Love and Hate Relationship](#),” *i24News*, 23 December 2014)

3. What does this development mean for Israel?

Dr. Nimrod Goren, Chairman of the Mitvim Institute: “During the war in Gaza, Israeli officials constantly slammed Qatar for its vast support for Hamas, and accused the Qataris of blocking various cease-fire proposals. Following the Egypt-Qatar rapprochement, Qatar’s role vis-à-vis Hamas may change for the better, as far as Israel’s interests are concerned. Qatar is the best-suited country to put pressure on Hamas to moderate its policies and actions. It can do so by conditioning financial support for Hamas on policy changes to be carried out by the organization. Moreover, should a future escalation in Gaza take place, Qatar and Egypt will now be able to form a more effective mediation mechanism between Israel and Hamas. Such a mechanism was badly missing during the last war in Gaza, mostly due to the Egypt-Qatar rivalry. Lastly, Qatar, which has a history of cooperation with Israel and is a US ally, may now be gradually integrated into the behind-the-scenes ties that are reportedly taking place between Israel and the Gulf States, and into efforts to promote the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.”

4. Will Turkey normalize its ties with Egypt too?

Gabriel Mitchell, Israel-Turkey Project Coordinator at the Mitvim Institute: “Qatar’s decision to normalize ties with Egypt was a pragmatic one, but it is difficult to see Turkey taking the same route. This is primarily due to the manner by which Ankara has developed its foreign policy, through emotion rather than pragmatism. Now it finds itself further isolated in the region. President Erdoğan should view this as an opportunity to salvage ties with Egypt. However, in order for this to happen, Turkey will have to recognize Abdel Fattah al-Sisi as Egypt’s president, make some kind of apologetic gesture, and engage in a sincere conversation regarding Turkey’s support of Hamas during last summer’s Gaza war. At present, that may be asking too much.”