



Consequence of the Iran War: Qatar, Too, Appears to Be Moving Closer to Israel

In Qatar, largely unnoticed by the West, a shift in attitude toward Israel appears to be taking place. In the wake of the war with Iran and the missile and drone attacks by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard on U.S. military facilities and civilian infrastructure in neighboring Gulf states, the Qatari TV network Al Jazeera Arabic has altered its coverage and vocabulary regarding the Jewish state.

By Mohamed Diwan and Sacha Wigdorovits

This shift did not happen overnight. In the first weeks of the war, Al Jazeera Arabic took a decidedly apologetic stance toward Tehran: The network provided Iranian officials with a largely unchallenged platform, presented the Iranian narrative as fact, and largely ignored the attacks on the Gulf states—and on Qatar itself. To this day, the network regularly invites Iranian guests into the studio who downplay the attacks by claiming that only American bases were targeted.

But at least since the attack on the natural gas facilities in Ras Laffan, the editorial line appears to be shifting. On March 18, Iranian missiles struck Ras Laffan Industrial City, Qatar's most important gas facility. Doha condemned the attack as a dangerous escalation and a flagrant violation of its sovereignty, and declared the military and security attachés at the Iranian embassy persona non grata.

According to QatarEnergy CEO Saad al-Kaabi, approximately 17 percent of Qatar's LNG export capacity was destroyed, resulting in an estimated annual loss of revenue of \$20 billion; repairs are expected to take three to five years.

A New Narrative at Al Jazeera

In doing so, Tehran had struck at the very source of revenue on which the emirate depends for its very survival—and damaged the foundation of the special relationship between Qatar and Iran that had lasted for decades. Recently, Leqaa Makki, a senior analyst at Al Jazeera Arabic, said during a live broadcast that Iran had committed more serious crimes in the region than Israel, particularly in Iraq and Syria. He argued that Iran's actions had caused far more destruction and suffering than those of Israel.

It is not only the content of this statement that is noteworthy, but also Makki's choice of words. This is because, in the past, Al Jazeera Arabic served as a propaganda channel for Hamas. The State of Qatar, along with Iran, was among the



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main financial backers of the Palestinian terrorist organization and grants its political leaders asylum. Hamas denies Israel's right to exist. Accordingly, the Jewish state was not referred to as "Israel" by Hamas and circles affiliated with it, such as Al Jazeera Arabic, but rather as a "Zionist entity."

The fact that Al Jazeera Arabic is now referring to "Israel" is therefore not a given. Together with the massive criticism of Iran mentioned above, it is rather an indication that the mullahs in Tehran are increasingly isolating themselves with their military strategy, which not only threatens the security of neighboring Gulf states but also harms their economies. To Israel's advantage.

A Community of Purpose, Not of Values

However, caution is warranted when it comes to Qatar. In the past, the country's rulers have been very adept at using their wealth, their propaganda channel Al Jazeera—which broadcasts a much more moderate program in English than in Arabic—and diplomatic initiatives to buy influence and a positive image. Not only in Europe and the U.S., but presumably even in Israel.

There, staff members of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu are suspected of having accepted funds from Qatar in order to portray his efforts as a mediator in the Gaza war in the most favorable light possible. Law enforcement agencies are currently investigating whether this was in fact the case.

True to the saying "The enemy of my enemy is my friend," it could nevertheless be that their common adversary, Iran, brings the traditional Muslim state and the Jewish state closer together. How lasting and reliable such alliances of convenience are is another matter entirely.