

TURKISH-QATARI RELATIONS CONTINUING TO SERVE STABILITY

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- What is the status of Turkish-Qatari relations?
- Do Turkey's new relations with the UAE affect its relationship with Qatar?
- Where are Turkish-Qatari relations heading?

Thanks to remarkable development since 2014, Turkish-Qatari relations have reached a high level of cooperation, especially in times of crisis experienced by both countries. This cooperation has been discussed in numerous descriptions in the academic field, sometimes described as harmony, sometimes as cooperation and at other times as a strategic partnership, or even an alliance.

Indeed, the relations of the two countries have developed since 2009, during the period of the rise of the Arab Spring after 2011, after its decline after 2013 and throughout the subsequent regional and international changes.

The most prominent stages of cooperation between the two countries were represented in several important stages. Qatar clearly stood with Turkey during the attempted coup of July 15, 2016, and the emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, was the first leader to contact President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

Turkey also supported Qatar during the siege in 2017, and Ankara sent forces to Doha. Their presence was an important factor that prevented the out-

break of a military confrontation, and at the same time, Turkey continued to mediate to end the Gulf crisis and supported Kuwait's efforts in this context. Likewise, there was harmony in Qatar's policy with Turkey's policy in Libya and Syria and regarding the Palestinian cause. Qatar also made major investments in Turkey at critical times. Likewise, the world has clearly seen that Turkey and Qatar are among the few countries that can play an important role in the stability of Afghanistan.

On the bilateral level, today, Turkey and Qatar are on the threshold of the seventh session of the meeting of the Higher Strategic Committee, which will be held in Doha, where President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is heading to Qatar on December 7 for a two-day visit, during which he is expected to sign many agreements.¹

During the sixth meeting in Ankara in 2020, the two countries signed six new agreements.

The first meetings of the joint Higher Strategic Committee between Turkey and Qatar were in 2014.

1. Turkish parliament speaker receives Qatar's deputy speaker, AA, 30.11.2021, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkey/turkish-parliament-speaker-receives-qatars-deputy-speaker/2434962>

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From 2014 until before the meeting that will be held in Doha in December 2021, the two countries signed 52 agreements in various fields.²

The cooperation between Turkey and Qatar is characterized by the diversity and breadth of its fields, as the agreements ranged from military cooperation to industrial, commercial and cultural cooperation, and even the fields of religious, social and family affairs.

At the trade level, the volume of trade exchange between the two countries amounts to \$2 billion. Qatar has made important investments in Turkey, as more than 179 Qatari companies operate in Turkey, and according to statements by the Turkish ambassador to Doha, Mustafa Goksu, it has reached more than \$33 billion in total. While more than 600 Turkish companies operate in Qatar, specifically in the fields of construction and infrastructure.³

Regarding defense and security, cooperation between the two countries has intensified at the bilateral level and in support of friendly parties. For example, intelligence cooperation between Turkey and Qatar recently, in November 2021, led to the successful liberation of seven Turkish citizens who were detained in the areas under the control of Khalifa Haftar in eastern Libya, where they had been detained for nearly two years. In March 2021, the Qatari Ministry of Defense announced the signing of new cooperation agreements with Turkey at the conclusion of the third meeting of the Joint Higher Military Committee. It is known that Turkey will play a role in security to ensure the effectiveness of the 2022 World Cup, which will be held in Qatar, and the two countries also signed a security agreement in 2019.⁴

At the level of the Turkish military industries, Qatar has concluded several military deals with Turkey, where it purchased armored vehicles, unmanned air-

craft and naval vessels. For example, Doha purchased the Turkish anti-drone weapon known as IHAMAX, a weapon developed against dangerous drones.⁵

Doha also received the delivery of a Turkish warship in October 2020. Manufactured by the Turkish Anadolu Shipbuilding Company, the ship is one of the largest training ships in the world.

The fields of cooperation have not been limited to security, military and trade, and also included the subject of family and cultural fields. Perhaps we will refer here only, for example, to the agreement between the Qatar National Library and Turkey's Presidential Library. We can refer here to the activities of Qatar University in November 2021, when it hosted Mr. Ibrahim Kalin, the spokesman for the Turkish Presidency, for an intellectual and cultural lecture on his book "I and the Other and Beyond: An Introduction to the History of Relations between Islam and the West." The university also organized an intellectual conference on Turkish-Arab relations with the participation of Arab and Turkish researchers.⁶

UAE FACTOR IN TURKISH QATARI RELATIONS

The visit of United Arab Emirates Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan to Turkey recently on November 24, 2021, and his meeting with President Erdogan, the agreements that were signed and the investments he promised to implement in Turkey prompted questions about the possibility of a change in Turkey's relations with Qatar, especially since the UAE is considered a competitor of Qatar.⁷

At the outset, it must be said that just as there has been tension between Qatar and the UAE in recent years, the relationship between Turkey and the UAE has also been tense.

2. 6th High Strategic Committee Meeting Held Between Turkey and Qatar, AA, 26.11.2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/politika/turkiye-ile-katar-arasinda-6-yuksekk-stratejik-komitesi-toplantisi-duzenlendi/2056892>

3. Turkish Ambassador to Doha: Turkey and Qatar present the best example of cooperation based on win-win principle, AA,25.11.2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/turkiyenin-doha-buyukelcisi-turkiye-ve-katar-kazan-kazan-prensibine-dayali-is-birliklerinin-en-iyi-ornegini-sunuyot/2055417>

4. Qatar 2022 entrusted to Turkey, YeniŞafak, 1.11.2019, <https://www.yenisafak.com/sport/katar-2022-turkiyeye-emanet-3512567>

5. Domestic 'drone repellent' exports to Qatar and Albania, AA,21.10.2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/ekonomi/katar-ve-arnavutluka-yerli-drone-savar-ihracati/2013658>

6. ISLAM AND THE WEST ,Qatar University, 09.11.2021, <http://www.qu.edu.qa/events/Islam-and-the-West>

7. Abu Dhabi Crown Prince bin Zayed in Turkey, AA,24.11.2021, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/gundem/abu-dabi-veliaht-prensi-bin-zayid-turkiyede/2429343>

Turkey has been very keen, even while building and developing its relations with Qatar, to build its relations with other Gulf countries, especially Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

However, as the region entered a state of polarization, Turkey and Qatar found themselves in the same trench, and for this reason, their rapprochement increased in the context of solidarity and then partnership.

After the Al-Ula agreement in January 2021 and the Gulf reconciliation and the return of relations between Qatar on the one hand and the four countries with which the crisis occurred, led by the UAE, on the other, the regional field became ripe for other reconciliations. Ankara, in particular, also supported the positive atmosphere because of the repercussions of the tense situation in Turkey in all its vital areas.⁸

Today, with the region returning to a state of calm and reconciliation and the turning of a new page in relations, the trust that has been built between Turkey and Qatar in the face of common threats will support the creation of space for common interests, especially since stability will bring with it many opportunities; therefore, positive relations with the UAE are not expected to negatively affect Turkish-Qatari relations.

On the other hand, Turkish-Qatari relations were built on a set of expectations of the two countries, and these expectations still aim for the continuation of the positive relationship.

THE FUTURE OF RELATIONS

In the beginning, at the economic level, it was possible for the two countries to combine efforts to raise the level of trade from \$2 billion to \$5 billion. It is encouraging

8. Apart from the items in the communiqué from the JCC, 'non-interference in internal affairs and joint fight against terrorism' came out, AA, 06.11.2021, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/kikten-bildirideki-maddeler-disinda-ic-islere-karismama-ve-terorle-ortak-mucadelede-cikti/2100271>

in this context that Turkey has significantly developed in the technology sector and can provide solutions for many needs in Qatar and other Gulf countries.

Doha has always placed importance on its investments in Turkey in critical times, and currently, at a time when Turkey is in dire need of investments, it is expected that Qatar will continue to follow the same policy.

At the strategic level, seven years of strategic partnership have built up a great state of trust between Turkey and Qatar. In addition to confidence, there are major projects that have been started and are expected to continue. In this context, Turkey is not expected to close the military base in Doha.

In conclusion, it can be said that regional reconciliations have become one of the features of the current stage in the Middle East, and there is a state of mutual understanding and mutual interests among countries that leads them down this path in the current period; however, at the same time, this stage faces a "stability test" because of the current situation. The current rapprochement does not mean that things will return to what they were before 2011 or that the differences will end completely, but what is clear is that at least there is seriousness in turning a new page.

What has been established here is that Qatar's relations with Turkey were harmonious in the period before 2011, converged in more than one place after 2011, and solidified and strengthened after 2014, and therefore it is likely that they will continue to maintain their advanced state. The continuation of cooperation between the two countries serves stability in more than one place, whether in the Gulf region or outside it, as we saw in Afghanistan. Likewise, it may be reflected even in North Africa, Libya in particular, the Horn of Africa, and also the Eastern Mediterranean region.



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