



Widening Gulf

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Widening Gulf-Qatar is now taking the fight to the Saudi Arabia-led OPEC and GCC

- Qatar Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani's decision to stay away from the December Gulf Cooperation Council(GCC) summit in Riyadh is the latest reminder of the growing disunity among the Gulf countries.
- Qatar, blockaded by three GCC countries, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain, and their non-GCC allies, has said it will not discuss a compromise unless the blockade is lifted.
- The Saudi-led bloc imposed it in June 2017, accusing Qatar of funding terrorism.
- But as Riyadh came under increasing global pressure after the murder of Jamal Khashoggi in its consulate in Istanbul, it has shown signs of reconciliation.
- Qatar, a tiny kingdom but the largest exporter of liquefied natural gas, remains defiant.
- Doha has announced its decision to quit OPEC, the first Arab nation to do so since the cartel was formed in 1960.
- Though Qatar said the decision was not political, clearly its exit from OPEC was a snub to Saudi Arabia, its de facto leader.
- The blockade has triggered tensions among other GCC countries as well.
- The blockade has made Qatar only more independent in its foreign policy decisions.
- But the intra-Gulf quarrels have dampened hopes for the integration of the region.
- The bloc, which once talked about a common Gulf currency and robust connectivity projects, is now a ghost of its old self.
- After the summit, the GCC issued a customary statement, emphasising regional stability and economic challenges.

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