Fikra Forum

How GCC Conflict Impacts the Gulf Response to Israeli Annexation

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With the potential of Israel moving forward with annexation looming, the question of its likely impact on recent steps of normalization with Gulf countries is becoming increasingly relevant. Yet the situation is ambiguous; while the scope of any annexation and the intensity of opposition to it throughout the Arab world will likely shape the contours of its impact on Israeli-Gulf relations, Gulf states' reactions will also be impacted by the ways in which their internal conflicts have played out over the past several years.

As such, a plausible answer to this question requires an understanding of how the rift between Qatar and its three GCC partners—Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain—has impacted the Gulf's broader foreign relations, including those with the United States and Israel. Ironically, Qatar's decision to not follow in the steps of other Gulf states in making visible moves to normalize relations with Israel make it less likely to stop what coordination with Israel it does have if annexation is to go forward. In contrast, other Gulf states' more public moves to normalize relations with Israel—which have developed during the intra-GCC rift—are likely to be adjusted in response.

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