

The Gulf crisis: Grappling for a face-saving solution



JAMES M. DORSEY

A two-week old conflict in the Gulf goes to the core of key issues in international relations that hamper the fight against political violence and govern diplomatic relations: the absence of an agreed definition of terrorism that allows autocrats to abuse efforts to counter extremism by repressing non-violent critics and the ability of small states to chart their own course and punch above their weight.

Proponents of maintaining the term terrorism as a multi-interpretible catch-all phrase argue that one man's terrorist is another's freedom fighter. While that is no doubt true, it applies to persons and groups that see violence as a legitimate tool but misses the mark when applied to non-violent critics, particularly proponents of a pluralistic, democratic environment and/or forms of Islamic governance that challenge monarchical autocracy.

Authoritarian leaders like the Gulf ruling families, Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and Egyptian-general-turned-president Abdel Fattah Al Sisi have a vested interest in either imposing their definition of terrorism on the international community or preventing it from adopting a definition. The absence of a definition has allowed them to brutally suppress basic human rights, including freedoms of expression and the media, and to put tens of thousands of non-violent critics behind bars.

Bahrain this week, in a bid to pressure the United States to adopt the Saudi-UAE definition of terrorism

that includes any group, violent or not, that challenges government or potentially questions their autocratic rule, expelled Qatari military personnel working at a US military base on the island state. The expulsion was the first indication that the Gulf crisis could affect the US defensive umbrella for the region as well as operations to defeat the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.

In a twist of irony, Bahrain's minority Sunni Muslim ruling Al Khalifa family relies on support of the Muslim Brotherhood, a main target of the Saudi-UAE-led boycott of Qatar, to counter opposition from the Gulf state's Shiite majority. Yet, it has been exempted from the ire of Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Bahrain joined the Saudi-UAE-led boycott of Qatar and accused Doha of seeking to overthrow its government.

There is little doubt that Qatar maintains ties to jihadist militants, as does Saudi Arabia. Nonetheless, there is also little doubt that the Saudi-UAE effort to force Qatar to adopt their sweeping definition of terrorism would undermine US-backed efforts to maintain a back channel to militants.

In one such instance, the US State Department in a letter to US Republican Congressman Peter J. Roskam during the 2014 Gaza war noted that Qatar was important in efforts to get Hamas, the Islamist group that traces its roots to the Muslim Brotherhood and controls Gaza, to accept a ceasefire with Israel. The department further pointed out that Qatar was also funding the internationally recognised Palestine Authority headed by President Mahmoud Abbas.

"We need countries that have leverage over the leaders of Hamas to help put a ceasefire in place. Qatar may be able to play that role as it has done in the past," Assistant Secretary

for Legal Affairs Julia Frifield said in the letter. At the same time, Ms. Frifield admitted that the US was pushing Qatar to be more compliant in its crackdown on funding of political violence, which she described as "inconsistent."

establish which demands stood a chance to garner international support. They have said they would put forward their demands within days.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE have signalled through their media and various statements by officials that

militants that is the basis for a discussion, but we would need a monitoring system. We do not trust them. There is zero trust, but we need a monitoring system and we need our western friends to play a role in this," Mr. Gargash told The Guardian. In

ban the Brotherhood was all but impossible. Speaking to the House Committee on Foreign Relations, Mr. Tillerson cautioned that designating the Brotherhood, with an estimated membership of 5 million, as a terrorist organisation would "complicate matters" with America's relations with foreign governments.

"There are elements of the Muslim Brotherhood that have become parts of governments. Those elements...have done so by renouncing violence and terrorism," Mr. Tillerson said. He said groups affiliated with the Brotherhood that commit violence had already been added to the US terrorism list.

By breaking off diplomatic relations with Qatar and imposing an economic boycott on the Gulf state without a clear definition of demands that stood a chance to win international support, Saudi Arabia and the UAE have put themselves in a position in which they are effectively grappling for a face-saving exit strategy.

In the process, they have highlighted the danger of not clearly defining what constitutes terrorism and who is a terrorist not only for the rule of law and defence of human rights, but also for the credibility of autocrats who abuse the void in their bid to arbitrarily impose their will.

The United States, France, Iran, Pakistan, Morocco, Turkey and Kuwait have urged both sides to quickly resolve their differences in negotiations. The calls put Saudi Arabia and the UAE further on the spot as long as they do not table a clear set of demands that resonate with the international community.

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US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson suggested that seeking to ban the Brotherhood was all but impossible.

Hamas has been designated as a terrorist organisation by the United States and the European Union, but not the United Nations. The EU has kept Hamas on its terrorism list despite a controversial EU court ruling that it should be removed.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE appear, two weeks into the boycott of Qatar, to be struggling to present Qatar with their demands or what Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir termed "grievances." While there was no explanation why demands had not yet been tabled, it seemed likely that the two Gulf countries were trying to

they want Qatar to break its ties to Islamists, including the Brotherhood and Hamas, as well as shutter Qatar-sponsored media, first and foremost among which is the Al Jazeera television network.

Speaking in an interview, UAE Foreign Minister Anwar Gargash lumped the Brotherhood, Hamas and Al Qaeda together as terrorist organisations and demanded that Qatar be put under some kind of international supervision.

"If we get clear strategic signals that Qatar is going to change and it will stop funding violent Islamist

separate comments to journalists in Paris, Mr. Gargash suggested that the Saudi-UAE-led effort to isolate Qatar "may last for years."

Many in the international community, including the United States, which could emerge as the major mediator in the Gulf crisis, are unlikely to support curbing of the press. Saudi Arabia and the UAE more-over differ over the degree to which the Muslim Brotherhood poses a problem.

If that were not enough to complicate the formulation of a list of demands, US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson suggested that seeking to

Hiring people with disabilities

A shared responsibility

S M ALI HASNAIN FATME and MD ANISUZZAMAN

BANGLADESH'S garment industry is aiming towards reaching an export target of USD 50 billion by 2021. An abundance of potential labour gives our ready-made garment (RMG) industry a comparative advantage. The sector can also benefit a lot from the country's existing demographic. Despite such opportunities, many RMG factories are still facing a shortage of skilled labour.

According to the World Health Organisation (2011), persons with disabilities make up 15 percent of the population. Developing countries lose up to seven percent of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) due to the exclusion of persons with disabilities from the labour market.

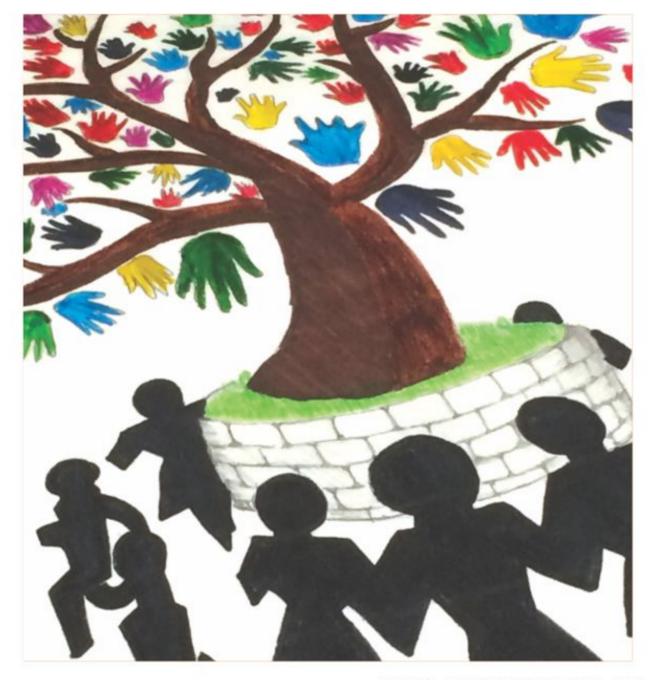
When persons with disabilities have access to skills training, they can significantly meet the rising demand of skilled labour, which provides considerable economic advantages. Many RMG employers are increasingly recognising the value of persons with disabilities in their workforce. They say that persons with disabilities can equally contribute to the production process of certain jobs, even with higher job retention rates.

To promote an inclusive environment, RMG factories simply need to make some small adjustments at their workplaces. They also need to have disability friendly policies. With

expertise in inclusion, a national Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) named Centre for Disability in Development (CDD) provided advisory services on inclusion of persons with disabilities in the workforce among 200 RMG factories from December 2014 to March 2017, with technical support from Promotion of Social and Environmental Standards in the Industry (PSES). PSES is a joint project between the governments of Bangladesh and Germany. It is being implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, which works on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), in partnership with the Government of Bangladesh.

With advisory support, more than 150 factories in the RMG sector are gradually 'going inclusive'. They have installed audio and visual alarms, accessible lifts, ramps and handrails. Factories have also marked floors, emergency exit points and toilets with colour signage and pictogram to improve accessibility. Some of them even made necessary amendments in their company policies.

In Bangladesh, approximately 3.2 million youths have some form of disability. High quality skills development is one of the pathways that can lead them to employment. According to the National Skills Development Policy, 2011, and the circular of the



SOURCE: GOV.LOUISIANA.GOV.COM

Ministry of Education, five percent of seats are reserved for persons with disabilities in all technical institutions, which show the interests of the government and strong determination towards disability inclusive skills training. In addition, bilateral and

multilateral agencies, private sector and civil society organisations have also come forward to address the cause.

In order to ensure effective implementation of the five percent quota for persons with disabilities, PSES pro-

vides technical guidance to selected vocational training institutes on how to improve the accessibility of their training programme for these students. PSES provides training on inclusive training techniques and relevant disability contents for both teachers and instructors. However, many challenges and barriers still remain regarding disability inclusion in skills training. For instance, persons with disabilities may lack motivation to access skills training due to a lack of confidence and support from their families. To address these challenges, PSES worked with the Disabled People's Organisations (DPO) through the Inclusive Job Centre (IJC), which is located at Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed (CRP). This network among organisations helped them get access to skills training and employment.

Since 2014, PSES has supported the training of more than 250 women with disabilities at Shahid Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib Women Training Academy. They are among 2,500 women who have received such training. On one hand, the IJC professionals extended advisory support to factories regarding inclusion; and on the other, provided assessment, counselling, referral, linkage, placement, and retention support for persons with disabilities. With the support from Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) and Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers

and Exporters Association (BKMEA), the IJC has placed 150 persons with disabilities in different RMG factories, from December 2015 to May 2017.

National Skills Development Council (NSDC) has recently approved the National Strategy for Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in skills development. NSDC is well positioned to coordinate with different actors to promote inclusive vocational trainings in Bangladesh. NSDC is also keen to replicate the model of disability inclusive training in regular skills training programmes.

Finally, it is expected that through coordinated efforts between the government and the private sector and other stakeholders, sustainable economic growth in the garment and textile industry will be ensured. Civil society organisations, including DPOs, have to continue providing their support to the initiatives of the government and the private sector in regards to inclusive skills development. Combined efforts between all the parties will surely help persons with disabilities protect their rights and give them access to skills training and employment in Bangladesh.

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QUOTABLE Quote

ELIZABETH GILBERT
AMERICAN AUTHOR, ESSAYIST, AND MEMOIRIST

You need to learn how to select your thoughts just the same way you select your clothes every day. This is a power you can cultivate.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 11 T-shirt size
- 6 Scan Diego player
- 11 Squirrel's find
- 12 Perfect
- 13 Base runner's act
- 14 Barn areas
- 15 Carpeter's need
- 17 Golf peg
- 18 St. Louis player
- 22 Sky saucers
- 23 Hitter's feat
- 29 Sermon volume
- 27 Slow mover
- 30 Chances to hit
- 32 List-ending abbr.
- 33 Snakes
- 35 Knight's address
- 38 Crowd sound

DOWN

- 1 -- Vegas
- 2 Play division
- 3 Fish eggs
- 4 Hitter's feat
- 5 China's Chou --
- 6 Temple supports
- 7 Commotion
- 8 Skilled
- 9 Assess
- 10 Otherwise
- 16 Bank acct. additon
- 18 Jose Abreu's birthplace
- 19 Throw -- (flip out)
- 20 Eddard Stark's heir on "Game of Thrones"
- 21 Hitter's feat
- 24 Noogin
- 25 Teller of tales
- 26 Building wings
- 28 Unending
- 31 -- Paulo
- 34 Scruffs
- 35 Fizzy drink
- 36 Steel ingredient
- 37 Boxing side
- 49 Pee Wee Reese's retired number
- 42 Work leather
- 43 Music buys
- 44 TV's "-- Haw"

BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER

I WANT TO SEND LT. FUZZ A MEMO

YES, SIR, WHAT SHOULD IT SAY?

STOP SENDING ME MEMOS!!

BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

WHO WANTS TO FLY THIS COOL KITE WITH ME?

NOT ME.

MAYBE LATER.

THERE WILL PROBABLY BE CUSSING INVOLVED...

I'M IN!

LET ME GET MY TATTOO SHEET!

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

L	A	R	G	E	P	A	D	R	E
A	C	O	R	N	I	D	E	A	L
S	T	E	A	L	L	O	F	T	S
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C	A	R	D	I	N	A	L		
U	F	O	S	T	R	I	P	L	E
B	I	B	L	E	S	N	A	I	L
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S	I	R	R	O	A	R			
O	R	I	O	N	P	I	T	C	H
D	O	N	N	A	E	V	A	D	E
A	N	G	E	L	S	E	N	S	E