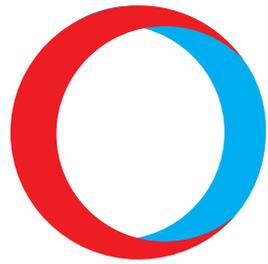


**ROUND TABLE MEETING IN ORSAM
WITH DR. SAMI ALFARAJ,
PRESIDENT OF THE KUWAIT CENTRE
FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES**

**ORSAM'DA KUVEYT STRATEJİK ARAŞTIRMALAR
MERKEZİ BAŞKANI DR. SAMİ ALFARAJ İLE
GERÇEKLEŞTİRİLEN YUVARLAK MASA TOPLANTISI**

**اجتماع المائدة المستديرة مع الدكتور سامي الفرج
رئيس مركز الدراسات الاستراتيجية الكويتي
«المنعقد في مركز «أورسام»**

ORTADOĞU STRATEJİK ARAŞTIRMALAR MERKEZİ
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STRATEGIC STUDIES
مركز الشرق الأوسط للدراسات الاستراتيجية



ORSAM

MINUTES OF
THE MEETING

CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STRATEGIC STUDIES

History

In Turkey, the shortage of research on the Middle East grew more conspicuous than ever during the early 90's. Center for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies (ORSAM) was established in January 1, 2009 in order to provide relevant information to the general public and to the foreign policy community. The institute underwent an intensive structuring process, beginning to concentrate exclusively on Middle affairs.

Outlook on the Middle Eastern World

It is certain that the Middle East harbors a variety of interconnected problems. However, neither the Middle East nor its people ought to be stigmatized by images with negative connotations. Given the strength of their populations, Middle Eastern states possess the potential to activate their inner dynamics in order to begin peaceful mobilizations for development. Respect for people's willingness to live together, respect for the sovereign right of states and respect for basic human rights and individual freedoms are the prerequisites for assuring peace and tranquility, both domestically and internationally. In this context, Turkey must continue to make constructive contributions to the establishment of regional stability and prosperity in its vicinity.

ORSAM's Think-Tank Research

ORSAM, provides the general public and decision-making organizations with enlightening information about international politics in order to promote a healthier understanding of international policy issues and to help them to adopt appropriate positions. In order to present effective solutions, ORSAM supports high quality research by intellectuals and researchers that are competent in a variety of disciplines. ORSAM's strong publishing capacity transmits meticulous analyses of regional developments and trends to the interested parties. With its web site, its books, reports, and periodicals, ORSAM supports the development of Middle Eastern literature on a national and international scale. ORSAM supports the development of Middle Eastern literature on a national and international scale. ORSAM facilitates the sharing of knowledge and ideas with the Turkish and international communities by inviting statesmen, bureaucrats, academics, strategists, businessmen, journalists, and NGO representatives to Turkey.

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**17 August 2011
ORSAM - Ankara**

ROUND TABLE MEETING IN ORSAM WITH DR. SAMI ALFARAJ, PRESIDENT OF THE KUWAIT CENTRE FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES

SPEAKERS

Dr. Sami Alfaraj

President of The Kuwait Centre for Strategic Studies

Assis.Prof.Dr. Serhat Erkmen

ORSAM Middle East Advisor,

Head of Ahi Evran University Department of International Relations

Dr. Bayram Sinkaya

Atatürk University

Oytun Orhan

ORSAM Middle East Researcher

Pınar Sinkaya

Middle East Technical University, Research Assistant

Oytun ORHAN:

Firstly, Could you describe us the security perception and approaches of Gulf countries, especially Kuwait, regarding the recent developments and Arab Spring? Then we can pass the question-answer part with details.

Dr. Sami ALFARAJ:

Well, the hot topic for all of us is Syria. Honestly, almost all my life, I have radical views. I view always five years ahead. A lot of people call me pessimistic because of my views. Unfortunately, my views became true by the time. Turkey as I can see has a different modern thinking for us actually in spite of the fact that we are closed to each other and we have common culture and religion. You could call the Gulf Arab countries as reactive, not proactive countries. For example there was no way and expectation of that Saudi king would give a speech about regime and Mr. Assad. Now, we stopped all the finance to Syria and we were followed by three other nations. Only Oman and UAE have not yet. I think UAE doesn't say anything because they already involved in Libya. Add to this, UAE always offers safe centers for former presidents in their country.

The situation is very difficult for us because we are surrendered by problems, an expanding Iran and unstable Iraq. New Iraqi leadership has no political understanding and a strategy. Today we discussed the issue of building a harbor in Boubyan Island for thirteen years and now they are saying that they were surprised. The Iraqis think of the daily things, the things of how to provide electricity for their conditioning. We think about build-



Dr. Sami Alfaraj

ing a harbor for the future. From this; you can see the differences between us and them.

We have stronger ties with Turkey. First of all, Kuwait signed Istanbul Declaration. It was something to new to have Turkey in the picture not just ally of NATO –only for nations in the Gulf and Israel enjoy this status. Besides that, we have unstable Egypt. I can tell you that it was emotionally value difficulty for the Gulf regimes and the Gulf people to see Hosni Mubarak failed. Of course we could not say Hosni Mubarak was legitimate but at the moment he failed, the new regime was there. So, we basically went to support the new regime economically; there is a full program by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE and Qatar.

Today we will talk about Yemen. Gulf came with an initiative. The question

in Yemen is the unity and the stability of Yemen. The instability can spread to Gulf while the army of Al Qaida is creating problems for us. Also across the sea, we have Sudan, the division of Sudan and piracy in the Horn of Africa which affects our trade. Then we have Arab-Israel conflict all we know. And this problem develops and there are escalations. We suffer from misunderstandings of each other especially between the two parties, the Israelis and Palestinians. And again, within us, we have problems of modernity, development, social, economic and politics.

Now we are more aware of environmental issues. I have to point that Iran issue is primarily environmental, because we don't have water. Our water is just comes from sea. So when they pollute the sea it harms us. When we look at the general picture, we have very full plate.

In 1998, we were telling Iran to start a new development region in whole area. This is the only way to deal with Saddam and Iran. Iran just started its nuclear capabilities in 1996. When we offered this the Iranian was excited but Americans decided to put Iran and Iraq in the dual containment. By the time, Americans realized their mistakes. They had September 11, entered war in Iraq while Iranians change from common developments in northern Gulf to opposition. Iraq was open to degrade. Now it is not just the trouble for USA but also for all allies of United States. So the danger was extenuated by all sides because of the lack of understanding of our allies. That is why we got GCC retraction until we reached the stage of trouble in Bahrain. Trouble of Bahrain as looked upon by the world is a

political problem and we actually recognize that there is a need for political reform in the Gulf. But there was a lack of understanding in Bahrain that is my personal view. I said openly in Kuwait and Gulf televisions that they are playing with fire in next door. You know once you have fired it will come to me. When Bahrain and Pearl Square have demonstrations, other regions of Gulf felt that fire. Pearl Square is only forty minutes from Ras Tanura Harbor, the most important oil terminal in Gulf, almost two hours from Kuwait's oil terminals, 1.5 hours from Qatar's gas fields and 2.5 hours from Abu Dhabi. So it was an explosion next to us. The way we respond it is the only way we could respond. If you like I want to examine how we as GCC develop. In 1979, there was a revolution in Iran. Iran decided to export the rhetoric of revolution while there was Soviets in Afghanistan. At that time, Saddam Hussein invaded Iran in September 1980. So Iraq, the next Arab power to balance Iran, was engaged in a war with Iran. Egypt was kicked out from Arab common work because it signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1979. Also United States, which is our security insurance, was engaged the war in Afghanistan. 1979 really was a year of full action for us. How to deal with this rhetoric of revolution and terrorist operations started by 1981 had become our main concern. Iran was still there as a threat, Egypt was outside, United States and Iraq were engaged wars so, we were alone. Within these conditions, we formed GCC which was mostly a defense treaty and then have developed today. If you look at 2011, Iran is still threat, Iraq and Egypt are engaged instability, United States does not have a clue and there is a bankrupt in all over the world. What do we do? Just

look at the statements coming from Obama administration there is no help for us. The only people who understand what is happening next to us are probably Turkey and Israel, but not the insurance company. So we decided to go to Bahrain and try to force them to political reform. Because especially for Saudis, the possibility of spreading riots from Bahrain to Eastern Saudi Arabia is the biggest threat to their national security. The reason of this is that the Eastern Saudi Arabia is the oil field and proportionate party for this. Second step in Bahrain is basically to earmark billions. We already gave ten billions to Oman for creating jobs. On the other hand, United States decided to send its fleet outside of Bahrain. This was just like leaving Turkey with PKK alone. They give impression and leave you to your fate. After sending fifth fleet for a visit outside of Gulf, they gave a statement by Ben Rhodes, the Deputy of National Security Advisor. There were small demonstrations in the area of Kataif, Saudi Arabia, the number of demonstrators were around 600-800 according to BBC which is quite neutral. This is not really a big thing and Riyadh police interfered to them. After this, this statement, I talked about come from United States, which is saying that Saudi Arabia ought to look seriously at political reforms. We are not talking about the millions in Tahrir Square, we are talking about 600-800, probably 1000 people. Americans do not understand what is happening. Basically Saudis decided to use military force. As Kuwait, we are different from the others because the Shias in Kuwait are a part of the political process. Shias in Kuwait present 1/5 of the population. That is why they have 10 MP in the parliament and 1/5 of the cabinet. Also, there was no dif-

ferentiation in the past, the Head of Navy was Shia, former Chief of Staff was Shia and our Ambassador in Iraq now is Shia.

Actually, Shias in Kuwait or anywhere in the region are not united; they were divided as Persian origin and Arab origin, while Arab origin is divided according to countries such as Iraq, Saudi Arabia or Bahrain. While we don't choose the military exercise, the Saudis went this path because we have already started a political dialog. You can not engage the political dialog with pointing a gun to someone's head. So it is not as it is looked from outside. It was a common united effort, but each one got its own color. Kuwait did not want to be seen in the streets of Bahrain at all so they it chooses the strategic side like the naval base so sent couple of missile bouts. UAE did not want to appear as military so, they sent 500 polices. Qatar provided intelligence only so you could not see anybody in the streets from Qatar. But Saudis were in front of Iran but then again retreated to strategic asserts. In fact, you don't see GCC force at all. I was in Bahrain recently. But everybody there understands that Saudi Arabia was in Bahrain. Actually, the people who are surprised by Saudi Arabia's military intervention to Bahrain should have considered why Saudi Arabia built causeways. They built the causeway to be one way which means prosperity can be from Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia's efforts on creating business and building causeway made Bahrain an offshore banking center. Totally Bahrain is different comparing with ten years ago. Today they were job creators. The link between Kuwait and Bahrain is much older. The people of Bahrain immigrated in 1630 from the

heart of Arabia to Kuwait and then to Bahrain and Qatar. So we have a historic association with Bahrain as well as sentimental bond between two people. But honestly, protecting the regime in Bahrain was basically protecting the people who run Al Jazeera, Qatar and the people in Abu Dhabi. They basically sounded like Saudis, not like us. Whatever is happening in the area is a kind of being a fireman. There is a fire here, we go and extinguish. But there is no strategy at all to deal with what they call Arab Spring. I think the people in Arab world and in Gulf are reconsidering what is happening in Egypt and Tunisia, because the changes have not brought an economic prosperity that people demanded. Actually the economies are downed. Such an economic tension that surrounds us perceived as threat by Gulf. In that matter, I think that this is history of success. If we have a success history, it held into real by the economic and social prosperity. Because this is not the first time that we establish economic and social projects in Egypt. Kuwait alone has created one million jobs while Egypt has 80 million populations. The Gulf population is not existed of only Arabs, there are 202 nationalities. Therefore, there are more of them in the Gulf than their own country.

When we talk about the Arab Spring and the problems that it brings us, we also recognize that it took place neutrally. The reason of that is the economic downfall; therefore no single new government can produce something Mr. Mubarak or Mr. Ben Ali failed to produce. It is staff for everybody. Regarding Syria, nobody wants military intervention because it is expensive for everybody, even for the Syrian army. If Turkey were

to disassociate itself from the regime and consider it as illegitimate, this would not encourage the people who demonstrate against Assad but would create a division in Syrian army. So in the Gulf, Kuwait is a model because I always say the Gulf develop in the line of Kuwait, this line is more democracy and liberation, treatment of women and children's rights. I think Morocco has made much more with one single referendum than conservative regimes- the eight monarchies- in the Arab world. The day before I left Kuwait, a new commission established to calculate the loss in our finance. In 2009 and 2010, our income was around 90 billion dollars; we expect 20 billion dollars for 2011. This would really affect the way of our respond to the crises around us. The people who were even thinking to go and demonstrate before would be serious after seeing results in Tunisia, Yemen, Bahrain, Syria and Libya. I believe that if we have a revolution in the Arab world, it is going to be in Libya and Syria, if they develop and completed the revolution. I think it is coup d'état because if you look at the so called Arab Spring, you will see that the final arbiter has been armed forces. In two cases, Libya and Tunisia, they stood in the side of people, in other four cases they stood against the people but they decided to final results of situation itself.

I want to tell you about the general psychology in twitter and other net works where thousands discuss the situation like policy makers. They see the situation in Arab world and they prey "I hope Allah does not change Kuwait". This is the common praying in Kuwait. We don't even want the sudden failure of Iranian regime because we will have refugees and

Kuwait is only far from Iran half an hour by boat. Also, if Iranian air force launches its missiles, five minutes after it is in our space. So called Arab Spring is basically has the potential of revamping the whole infrastructure of Gulf. We have never had a chance to reform. In that time, Iraq is busy with election of Iraqi government, Mr. Ahmedinejad is busy with 5+1 and Syria and Israel at least in armed peace, terrorism has at least being controlled in Arabia, there are successes and Yemen is stable. So we basically put our investment. The investment earmark by Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and UAE alone is 1 trillion dollars and plus. The foreign currency is possessed by Kuwait, Qatar and UAE. This three have more foreign reserves than China. We have all types of companies and business from all over the world because we aim to be hub of business and interaction. We want everybody to be happy. So what do we have? Oil. We control the price of oil. Mr. Nejat came and pushed the prices a little bit up with one speech but we bring the price down because we all including Iran have ships and tankers outside of Gulf with enough quantities for our clients. Our plans towards economic prosperity as a path to security basically were not matching with popular sentiment in the Arab streets like in Egypt and Tunisia. Obviously, it was a big shock even to the people who live in Gulf whether they are Kuwaitis, Saudis or non gulf people to see that a guy desperation in Tunisia. This image really was reflected, majority of the people in the Gulf support what is happening in the Arab streets but they did not have an idea where this was going to. It is funny I mean to tell you the story; we had people who wanted to Prime Minister down in Kuwait. So they gathered, first they

already have t-shirts and caps. They were around 500 people who are ready to replicate what I happening in the Arab streets without looking at conditions. They drive to the location of the demonstration and then they gathered. It is really unheard for the people who came from Nile delta for hours to reach Tahrir Square to express their views. So, this tells you about a society of consumers; that is the society of Gulf, not just the Gulf Arabs but everybody who lives in the Gulf. This consumerism is very different to societies like yours who are the producers of retail products. Your retail products are all over the Gulf. We don't resemble each other at even in the point of perspective of life; you produce, we consume. That is a big difference, but we need each other. Turkey presents not only military things. There is already a popular culture called Turkish culture and soup operas. I am sure that people in Arab world know Turkish actors more than you. There is a natural acceptance of that Turkey is a great Sunni power, part of NATO. We already signed the Istanbul declaration. It has strategic underpinning be together in time of war, of facing crises and terrorism and so on. We said if this is an economic hub, then we want to look their economic interests, not anything else. It is very difficult for you to do something by escaping some claims. For example you cannot escape from the claims of that "you are encouraging the MB in Syria to shape them in Turkey as alternative to Beshar Assad regime". Compare Mavi Marmara with the riots in Bahrain and Mr. Erdogan's visit to Bahrain. He spoke there and before that MR. Hariri visit Mr Erdogan and there were large demonstrations. Hariri is our ally and we supported his government to disarm Hezbollah.

The second thing is that there was Hariri visit and Erdogan visit to Bahrain and then Erdogan being invited to speak on the Cidde Conference and now Mr Gul being there the meeting of Oxford Center for Islamic Studies. What I am saying is that there are expectations from Turkey. Of course Turkish national decision making apparatus will see what their interests are. On the other hand, if we look at today's Middle East, the people who influence on Arab world are the non-Arab speaking power: Israel, Iran and Turkey. Therefore, we say also that we believe that the influence is a limited sum. If I take your influence, there is no substitute, if I push you, you withdraw, but there is the sea and you cannot fall into it. If you allow, then you are actually missing whole regional picture.

The picture is not as simple as that the greatest Sunni power is next to us expected to defend us in Beirut or Sunni government in Lebanon or majority in Syria. No. it is more than that, because of the security stood of Gulf Arabs. It is more sensitive today, because the largest Sunni Arab power, Egypt, has its own deep problems. So we backed to the situation in 1981 that when we felt alone. Today we feel the same things, adding to that, the United States, almost bankrupt. The Chinese are shocked and think of their bonds, if they will get them or not. So the options for us in the east are Pakistan, India and other. With regard to the power coming closer to the area in military form is India, because of piracy. The Indians have got better naval presence; at least, they are closer to the base than the other because of the rotations of their investments. The Indian Ocean is considered as natural hub. Chinese applied

for visa for the first time to Dubai for one million Chinese. Just imagine one million Chinese in Dubai. So what is the meaning of Chinese to come to region? The last military attempt by China was during the Abbasid period to enter the Gulf. Today, if you have a hub for gathering on Chinese companies which are basically responsible for the strategic projects. China is also give contracts in the Gulf for strategic projects like harbors, big highways and airports. We have big relations with China who were at one stage before Iraq war and considering Kuwait could be the only supplier to China. This idea regarding a strategic deal for supplying oil to China is in the agenda for a very long time. China develops blue water naval force now. In Dubai there are 400 Chinese companies that own by government and the biggest of China. So you don't need to fly to China if you are in Europe or Turkey; you can come to Dubai and see the products and then decide on buying or not buying. Then, China asked the cooperation of development to Dubai for increasing its presence to 4000. The more China gets contracts in billions, the more China is willing to come and protect its investments. Now the China has got conception for oil in Iraq; they want more; so they will be coming in order to protect their oil suppliers. As you can see, there are lots of variables of other powers. So what is the role of China in Syrian conference? What could be the role of India? India's interest is to protect labor, jobs in Gulf and to have more jobs. The unstated strategy of Gulf leaders is to say "Okay, we are ready to make business with you but are you ready to protect your business". By protecting their business they are protecting the Gulf States. So it is not that we need you to get involved to war but treaty

commitment even with China. In real, it is not the treaty; it is the capability of project power, to send power to the area. Now they are developing their power.

If Iran persists in staying in Syria then again, this will end the green picture of Syria. At the end, Syrian control over Lebanon would increase and create a corridor from the north to Mediterranean Sea for Iran. Iran would be more encouraged to go even further, to push their influence. There are two balances to Iran: Turkey and Israel. Mr. Obama was busy with election, perhaps British are running in the streets now. So everybody is busy. I hope I have described enough how we think.

Bayram SINKAYA:

I would like to ask a question about your view of portraying Iran as a regional threat. We don't see any concrete threat from Iran to Gulf when we compare the revolutions activities probably in 1980s. After Hatemi period, Iran's policy and approach toward Gulf and Arab countries have started to change. Now they are voicing cooperation, they called Gulf council to cooperate on regional security. Gulf Council hosted Ahmedinejad in 2007. Is not it possible to consent Iran to tend peace and cooperation for stability and regional security?

Dr. Sami ALFARAJ:

We would like Iran but when we sit around a table, we do not talk military or political issues, just talk about economics. I accepted that they have better cards than us in number, in size, in military power. Our best cards are economy and finance. We have a

strategic vision for Kuwait now. From 1998 to now, we have a budget around 132 billion per the first years. To prepare us to be a hub for Iran and Iraq is good business for us, while Gulf still investing in Iran and Iraq because there has been no construction of Iraq and Iran after the war in 1980s. Why the Iranians are threat for us? First of all, the reason is their size, just like a mouse is walking alongside of an elephant. So who would watch for staying alive? Of course mouse, even they are friend. So even Iran is friendly to us, we have to watch Iran. This is fundamental reason for our insecurity visa via Iran.

The second thing is geography of Iran throughout history, topography of Iran. I mean that these features make Iran moves to left. It never moves right in the history. They are in Syria; it is not a new thing for Mr. Nejad or revolution. This is their national security perception which target to be in different waters. They are in Black Sea, in Red Sea and Mediterranean Sea, Egypt and Syria are around the Iranian control. Unfortunately there is a rise of the leadership of Iran of those people who think Persia more than Islamic Shiites, today. I think that it is possible to find a common ground for Shiites, while there s a very little common ground with revolution. On the other hand, historically every time they crossed the Arabia, they crossed from Northern Kuwait and Southern Iraq. Every maneuver they do today involves crossing Peninsula from Northern Kuwait and to be closer the Strait of Hormouz. In 1991 they claimed that Iranian islands were captured by enemies and liberated by Iranian forces. When you talk about what Iranians do, strategically, you can see the intentions of them. Even

they said Kuwait or Bahrain belongs to Iran, it shows their intentions. They can say whatever they want, but once they have the capability to make that real, it becomes a real. Shall we wait for them to have the capabilities? If you add Iraq and Yemen to GCC, our population hardly matches with Iran. So we have to think of numbers.

Whatever they cook in Iran, we can smell the cooking in Gulf. The way of wing brings it. For Ahmedinajed producing nuclear technology is fine, but for us it is okay when they built it in the centre of Iran. Whatever they throw into Gulf, that comes to us because the direction of currents. If Bushehr has become like Fukushima, it will not go to Pacific, it will come to Kuwait, the biggest population centre of gulf. It would hit Southern Iran if there is pollution in the water. The water is deeper in that side than our side, it comes, and it would affect the Southern Iraq and Kuwait city, because we don't have rivers. Iraq and Iran throw their dust to rivers than having deals with us. As you can see there is every type of national security aspects like water security. We had an agreement with them a few years ago, we paid our part of agreement which was 1 billion pounds for the studies to be done by Britain to build a pipeline to bring the river water to us, but they stopped the project. It is not the case of crazy mullahs that stopped the project, it was open letter by 140 lecturers and all Iranian newspaper called on the parliament to stop the project, so the government stopped it. Now I am speaking about substantial nation security threat to us related to topography, water, wind, sizes and numbers. These have no relations with Ahmedi-nejad or revolution or Shah. It related to Iran. We have maritime treaty inside the Gulf to control oil pollution. If there is a spill by anyone, we exchange

the information and fight with pollution. Why we fight because it goes to fish areas. Fish areas in our side are 15 meters at maximum, their side is over that. It will come to another aspect; the food security. The Gulf countries developed as Iranian cities but we are capitals. The capital of Iran is Tehran in the centre of country like Ankara. Nothing will touch them. If there is an accident it will touch the people of Bushehr and us and 202 nationalities who live in gulf, not Tehran. The Gulf cities developed as harbors, ports and then become big cities. So we don't have population in inner land, actually we don't have any inner lands. You can cross Kuwait in 2 hours. Back to pollution there was a responsibility in 1986; Iran signed a treaty to share the information about the pollution. It is unimaginable that they work with nuclear which is worse than oil pollution and do not want to share any information about what they do. So what do we think? We can just think negatively. As you can recognized besides the natural factors, there are also things related to the behaviors of Iran, but the point is that the pollution treaty was signed with this revolutionary regime who refused to inform us about the nuclear program, even electrical information, the technical of walls or the procedures. We know that they failed in procedure regarding earthquake. They said to us that do not expect any earthquake. Based on what? Based on imagination or based on science? They don't even give us a study. We expect an earthquake in this unstable region.

There are things that Iran cannot change like geography, topography, the direction of winds and currents, so they ought to cooperate with us. It is not important for Iran to lose 100 people, but it is a big loss for us; for Bahrain, UAE or Kuwait. Many people suggest that Iranians are the

best negotiators in the world regarding their nuclear file. According to me, the best negotiator is who knows the line to coincide, not to cross and reach. I think that the worse negotiator is Iran, because they don't try to reach a compromise, just dwell the issue in order to deflect attention of their people from the real issues inside Iran which Iran revolution failed. In the GCC, if we did not create jobs for Iranians, there would be big socio-economic problems in Iran. Anybody who feels comfortable in Iran is someone who has relations with GCC countries. I am not talking about the businessman, also talking about the farmers, taxi drivers, the ordinary people. Just imagine the people who have business in gulf. They cannot function under Iranian banking system.

It is so hard to discuss the issues with them, because they do not want to do this. For example, the islands of UAE. Who would say not to discuss the sovereignty of UAE over the islands? Nobody would say that. So Iran talks about the idea that reaching a middle ground for the islands, not discuss the sovereignty, turn islands into free zone which is in favor of Iran not UAE.

They need liberalization of economy. We have the continental shelf. They are the second producers of natural gas in the world and want to fight us. Last week they declared that we agree to jointly produce natural gas with them. It is not true. There is a developing system in Kuwait; Persian descendents have equal rights as me. You cannot imagine the charting before the Syrian crisis about the glory of being Persian. In Kuwait it is a threat to stability of the regime. As Kuwait we are not like Saudi Arabia who refers Quran as a constitution. We have a constitutional process in

our country. Iranians are also created threats to our institutionalization. The moment they talk, I wish them to be silent. So this is natural factors but they do not want to use these, they just want to have everything.

Why Sunni Arabs are talking about the model of Islamist based parties functioning in a modern country like Turkey? They take it as a model to emulate. Even the leaders of Ikhwan in Arab world reconsider Mr. Erdogan and Mr. Gul's success in Turkey. This is a lesson of democracy, a beginning for the understanding of that the revolutionary model of justice should be emulated to this new one.

So these are the national security threats coming from Iran. A lot of them cannot be changed, are natural; but there is a lot that they can change with their behavior in cooperating with us.

Serhat ERKMEN:

You mention the Gulf perception. On the other hand, in Syria, the main opposition party is Muslim Brotherhood. Do you think that possible so called intervention in Syria can create such kind of a dismay in Gulf countries again?

Dr. Sami ALFARAJ:

No, because you see there is an interesting case about Syria. Nobody wants a civil war or division of Syria, neither Syrians nor Turkey and us. We do not to weaken Syria.

Serhat ERKMEN:

We could have good intentions about the future of Syria, we all support the unity of Syria; but that kind of society and political system cannot be controlled. All regional countries could

have good intentions to maintain the stability in Syria while it is not an easy way. I am pessimistic. We cannot be sure that there would not be an ethnic or sectarian conflict after the fall of Assad regime.

Dr. Sami ALFARAJ:

This kind of things can be changed by the time. When there was Turkish intervention in northern Iraq to protect its citizens from PKK, those sides do not worry about fragmentations of Iraq dealing with Saddam Hussein regime. When United States came to Iraq we thought that United States was capable to hold Iraq together. Not the regime has changed, now United States does not only willing but also could not do something about this. In Libyan case, it is an attempt to do something, there is much criticism inside the Congress about what United States has done in Libya, finish the job or not. So when we talk about Syria, I told you before, we have already accepted that United States cannot do anything in there as a worst case scenario. We accept also we are in power to do what we can do as regional states. We are not military power as GCC countries, but we are financial and economic power. Any military intervention, upheaval, revolution or civil war in Syria depends on Assad regime. If Assad chooses the path to reform, we are required to go and built up the newly reformed economy, social and political system. If Assad chooses the path to civil war, we ought to go again and fix what he has done just like in Lebanon. This is what we offer. We will do this not because of charity but because they are in our next door. If we allowed the fire to happen once, the damage will be worse, maybe within our finance. In that situation we cannot be able to fix our damage also. So the urgency is very important. The time

in which the situation is taking place today is totally different than the time that Turkish operation took place in Northern Iraq in the past. When you asked about what we think, I will just give you statistics. The first investor in Iraqi Kurdistan was Kuwait and the second one Lebanese Christians. We think very different than Saudis.

Oytun ORHAN:

My question is about that the Iranian threat and balancing Iran is not a new thing. Especially after the Iraqi war, it was on the agenda. Also at that time especially the Gulf countries were encouraging Turkey to balance Iran. Till today, Turkey's foreign policy tools were enough to play that role. But now on, the situation requires much more that soft power. I did not get what you mean by balancing Iran on concrete manners. What do the Gulf countries expect from turkey to do regarding the Syrian case? Are we talking about the military intervention, a military balance?

Dr. Sami ALFARAJ:

If we imagine that you are sitting in seat of Mr Gul and I am sitting in the seat of Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies in Cidde, we would be agreed on that Syria ought not to be divided. This is the first. Perhaps, we ought to agree on declaring Assad regime as illegitimate. Also we ought to agree on having more assertive diplomacy and; supporting any United Nations resolution or any international coalition of like-minded people which invented by George W. Bush, the junior in Iraq.

In Syria there should not be emptiness. If one regime goes, the other one comes. This is basic tenet of our national security thinking. No emptiness. We already had Iraq. We need somebody to hold Syria together. Syr-

ia has lots of conditions that open to be fragmented. The so called successful revolution will be a bloody path. We would get sick of blood. The point is that how we protect ourselves from what will happen in Syria. The third one what can the other do? I mean the international community with United States, NATO, EU, and Russia regarding pressure, sanctions and resolutions. The fourth thing is that can we do something to protect opposition. I mean the people in the streets not the political figures. We have financial power as GCC. One speech of King Abdullah withdraws our ambassadors who were doing nothing in Syria. Such kinds of moves have results that you cannot control. There is possibility in Syria that groups divided who are fueled by sectarianism and injustice and ethnic differences. That is not the model that we want. This model is Lebanon. We support old Lebanese government according to Taiff Agreement. We want Iran to understand us. We could not live next to that giant called Iran having in its memory that those across the sea are the cause of my trouble. In 2003, Kuwait could not say no to United States as you did. So today they blamed us for their current situations.

There are two powers that can show Iran its limitations. It can be done by only demonstrational force, not by military force. Your verbal speeches and other things can be alternative. In Gulf we say that let your money de-

fend you. The only thing we have is to use oil and finance as influence tools. We so not sell oil because we make money, but to be influential over the events. You have a role in this crisis.

We as Kuwait and UAE offered Saddam Hussein an exit but he refused. UAE offered Hosni Mubarak an exit also, he also refused. Cidde offered an exit to Ben Ali, he accepted. I do not think that any Tunisian court could reach Ben Ali in Cidde. In Egypt there are 300 people who fall on streets. In Syria the number is much more that this, over 2000. We ought to tell them there is no way to insist in a reformed system. They have to calculate their loss. In Arabs the defeat is to defeat the ideology, the strategy itself.

Pinar SINKAYA:

How can Israel balance Iran?

Dr. Sami ALFARAJ:

Israel can do this by restraining. The main point is here that to defeat the regime that produce such missiles and create better security. Israel in my opinion is ready to be sided with NATO or Turkey or any international coalition.

Oytun ORHAN:

Mr. Alfaraj, thanks for your time.

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