

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

BROOKINGS DOHA CENTER

RUSSIA'S ROLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Doha, Qatar

Monday, December 9, 2013

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING

706 Duke Street, Suite 100

Alexandria, VA 22314

Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

PARTICIPANTS:

Moderator:

IBRAHIM SHARQIEH
Deputy Director
Brookings Doha Center

Panelists:

VITALY NAUMKIN
President
International Center for Strategic and Political
Studies

ADNAN HAYAJNEH
Professor, Department of International Affairs
Qatar University

* * * * *

P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. SHARQIEH: Thank you very much. I would like to welcome everyone for this important discussion on the role and the policies of Russia in the Middle East. We are very fortunate today to have two experts on Russian affairs and Russia's policies in the Middle East. I would like to thank everyone for your time and for your interest for coming to this important event. I am sure you will find the discussion very interesting. It will be very challenging, thought-provoking for all of us. We look forward to this very interesting discussion.

On a question that has actually been at the core of interest of the Middle East audience on the development of the Russian policies in the region, Russia's policies are not new in the region. The relations are not new in the region. We all remember the Russian relations with Egypt back in the '50s and the '60s and how difficult (inaudible) in the '70s, and through the (inaudible), of course, and then later with Iraq and with Syria where Syria became the major

Arab country in alliance with Russia, with strong relations with Russia.

So, over the past 50 years the role of Russia has evolved, and it has always been important. Today probably is one of those very important steps and those very important positions of how the Russian position has been affected. The political/social/economic developments in the region and that's why we have many that they've been trying to understand this role and how it is going to develop and to evolve whether it's about Syria or Egypt recently with the movements and the changes in Egypt or in the rest of the region.

For all these questions and for others, I'm sure you have many questions. Again, please join me in welcoming Professor Vitaly Naumkin, Professor of (inaudible) to discuss this important question. I would like to begin first with Professor Naumkin. He is the President of the International Center for Strategic and Political Studies in Moscow. He is a renowned scholar on the Arab and Moslem worlds.

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2013/12/09

MR. NAUMKIN: But my main (inaudible) is Director of Oriental Studies.

MR. SHARQIEH: Yes.

MR. NAUMKIN: My first (inaudible). This was the second.

MR. SHARQIEH: Okay. Professor Naumkin is also the Director of the Center for Arab Studies.

MR. NAUMKIN: No, no. I'm Director of this institute. (inaudible). Sorry to say that.

MR. SHARQIEH: Okay, of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Science and chair of the faculty of World Politics at Moscow State University. He's fluent in Russian, Arabic, English, French, German, and other languages and has published over 400 publications, so we'd like to welcome you again and the floor is yours. You have 15 to 20 minutes, Professor Naumkin.

MR. NAUMKIN: Thank you very much. I am honored to be here and to speak to this distinguished audience. Thank you for inviting me. And the question is really now fashionable because so on many

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2013/12/09

occasions I was able to discuss it with many people in different parts of the world, especially in the Middle East where this policy is part of the political environment.

We can start with the fact that in my view in the last months and probably a couple of years, so Middle East became more important for Russia in its system of foreign policy priorities. So, several years ago I was able to say that probably Middle East was not a priority because we were more concerned with our relationship with the countries bordering the commonwealth states, especially Turkey and Iran.

And Turkey, by the way, is one of the main partners of Russia in the field of economics; also an important political and strategic partner despite the fact that Turkey is a NATO country.

Iran is also very important, so you know about the relationship between Russia and Iran probably. But after the Arab Spring, the Middle East became -- I would say it was prioritized in the Russian foreign policy activities if you judge on the

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

trips the Russian diplomats are making and the number of negotiations and contacts and number of the delegations coming to Moscow. We can say that probably the Middle East is everywhere; is now a very important part of the world and very important for Russia's interests.

So, I can acknowledge that still this region as a whole is not a region of major Russian national interest, (inaudible) significant presence in the Arab world. Our trade and economic ties are not important for Russia in comparison with other states, as I said, with Turkey or China or India or Germany or some other states as well. So, I think, but still given the strategic importance of this region, of the turbulence that was brought by the Arab Spring, so this region is a part of very intensive Russian diplomatic activities.

So, there are a lot of misconceptions about Russia's stance, Russia's view on the Arab Spring, as if Russia was against it or its interests was against these changes. Or there is also misconception that

DOHA-2013/12/09

Russia is a status quo state, whereas for instance the United States is not more like a divisionist power. It's not quite true. Russia is not a status quo power. Russia welcomed the Arab Spring but was cautious about expressing its attitude because in general Russia is more conservative, not as I would say as emotional in expressing and quick in expressing its position on many development in the world.

So, that's why during the first revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt everything was more or less clear, so Russia after some Poles supported these movements as genuine expression of people's dream about freedoms and equal opportunities for everyone against corruption, against sectarian rule and (inaudible).

But during Libya it was a different story, quite a different story, and I can say that the Libyan syndrome is available in Russia. I can tell you that when Russia abstained from voting on Resolution 1973, this decision let no-fly zone pass through Security Council. Later this decision was broadly criticized

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2013/12/09

in the Russian public opinion. (inaudible) another misperception. We have public opinion. We have a lot of debates about our foreign policies.

Even Russian President Medvedev was criticized openly for his decision, and the overwhelming view was that Russia was cheated by our partners and no-fly zone turned into direct military intervention.

But the Russian view about the world order is based on very negative attitude towards any sort of intervention without direct, clear mandate from Security Council of the United Nations and respect to national sovereignty, non-use of force unless it's sanctioned by Security Council and, of course, the rule of international law. And so, it's well known -- so it's a matter of philosophy, then the matter of pragmatic interests.

So, jumping to the Syrian issue I can say that we didn't have any substantial pragmatic interests in Syria like another misperception is about the importance of the so-called base in Tartus. It's

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2013/12/09

a technical facility which can be easily replaced by any other place; not important. Trade is not significant to (inaudible). I said that for instance (inaudible) much more interests than with Syria or with Algeria, for instance, where we have very substantial trade relationships and with some other states as well.

So, going back that, so the lessons of Libya have been learned as one of the Russian official said. We have learned lessons from Libya well, and that was one of the drivers for the Russian stance on Syria and on the Russian voting in Security Council. Not because from the very beginning Russia supported Aasad personally, both the government as a whole or was blind towards violations of human rights. But also jumping to Syria you can say as one of my American colleagues, American general was saying, he said that in civil wars there are no bad guys and good guys. There are only winners and losers. So, but we'll come to that.

DOHA-2013/12/09

I can turn now to Egypt, and to the problem of the winners in the first wave of the Arab Spring which ended with the government of victor of Muslim brothers, and that created a problem for Russia because the Muslim brotherhood was on the black list in Russia, as a whole, as a movement. So, Moscow understood that there were enough moderate factions within the less moderate factions. The reason was the involvement of certain factions of the Muslim brothers or the way that the Muslim brothers in the conflict in Chechnya and the support of the separatist movement, and of course Russia was sensitive about that.

The second reason was that there is an ongoing inter-confessional conflict within the Russian Umma, Russian Muslim population, which is more than 20 million people. It's when the traditional Hanafi school of thought and those who came from the Arab world and some missionaries who are trying to profess a different view on the statehood in Russia and the relationship between the Muslims and Christian

majority and so on and so forth. So, there is big sensitivity on this issue.

So, that's why probably Russia hesitated. On the one hand, understood that it is necessary to establish relations with the Muslim brothers, and on the other hand there was some special thing that I mentioned. Then President Putin decided to invite Morrissey to Moscow, and it happened on the 19th of April. This year it was a significant shift in Russia's (inaudible) and thoughts, these Islamic movements, in general and the Muslim Brotherhood. Also President Morrissey came. He asked for financial aid for credit of \$2 billion. A lot of economic projects like constructing nuclear power plants and I guess pipelines and a lot of other things, so he was welcomed, in general. A lot of other projects were discussed during meeting with Putin and Morrissey and such.

So then, the problems almost started as you know. And then a different situation was created. We can say that if Russia's position, I think, before

DOHA-2013/12/09

there was the third revolution in Egypt had been weakened by the Syrian crisis and Russia's position on Syrian (inaudible) that we had some problems with the reputation of Russia and our relationship with a lot of groups here in this part of the world. But with the third revolution the Egyptians turned to Russia. Russia was invited to Egypt given the difficult relationship between new government in Egypt and some certain deterioration of relationship between Egypt and the United States and some other states in this part of the world probably including this country, Turkey, and some other countries supportive to President Morrisey. But now it has been repaired, and I think it will go on because everybody's interested in stability in this region, and everybody hopes that it will come to a natural course of democratic elections and constitution and so on and so forth.

But still a newer possibility was opened for Russia. A new format was opened; meetings between 2-plus-2, Russia's relationship with Egypt is witnessing

very good transformation, positive transformation.

It's very (inaudible) to be continued.

And so, we'll come now because the time is going, you know. What we'll come to the next important events given the situation in Syria, the whole Syrian crisis, Russia is still sticking to its principle that the solution of the crisis should depend on Syrians themselves without any intervention, and Russia is very, very much alarmed by the growing role of the jihadists in Syria, and so for all this time Russia is calling for reconciliation, for negotiations in Syria, for national dialogue.

So, Geneva II came as a fact of agreement, final agreement, between Russia and the United States, which is very important. It was based on the previous agreement under liquidation of chemical weapons where Russia played a very positive role. It was Russia's initiative, and the fact that this region hopefully will be deprived of the chemical weapons I think it's a big achievement done by many countries, mainly the United States and Russia.

DOHA-2013/12/09

And it was a very important step as well was the step towards Iran's nuclear program. It's another, I think, very important point in Russia's policy in the region where also Russia has been very active in contacts with the Iranians, and it was also a matter of understanding between Russia and its Western partners. And as you know, it's only the first step. I hope that it will be continued. My view is that this interim agreement will be followed by another interim agreement. Probably it can last long. I cannot envisage some magic solution for that; very quick solution, final solution for the Iranian nuclear problem, but still I believe that these two occasions have contributed to the improvement of the situation around prospects of Geneva II.

That extremely difficult given that the Syrian army and security forces are demonstrating, striking, cohesion. And, of course, there are divisions, I believe, as everywhere in these forces, but still there is an illusion on both sides of the civil war that every party believes that it can win;

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

the same about the opposite side, about the opposition.

Russia has been contacting different position groups. It's very active in building relationships with the position groups trying to convince both sides, especially Russia contributed in convincing Aasad's government in coming to Geneva II, but the divisions within their position and especially the growing role, as I said, of the jihadist groups like mosora or ICIL, (inaudible). Of course they are not eager to participate in any negotiations and they know about the obstacles of participation, obstacles of who has to be invited, whether it's -- because we insist on inviting Iraq, Iran, and some partners are against this. Some parties are against inviting Saudi Arabia which is also needed, and Russia has very constructive contacts with the Saudis despite the very big differences in views on Syria. Amir Bandar is a frequent visitor conducting dialogue in Moscow, and in general I believe that coming to the final portion of

DOHA-2013/12/09

my preliminary remarks because I believe it's better that we come to a dialogue among ourselves.

I can conclude that I can see changes to the best with the one reservation about acute humanitarian crisis in Syria, acute humanitarian catastrophe which Russia recognizes. Russia is providing some assistance to certain groups of population in Syria, but to be very frank, I can see that this idea of humanitarian corridors, which is welcome by certain states, not welcomed by other states, is an idea that is not shared by all, and we understand this very well.

And the second thing is about the foreign fighters. We know that the people from the opposition, they believe that it should be a condition for a dialogue, that Hezbollah and Iran withdraw their forces from Syria, but as they say, and it is right, that there are a lot of jihadist fighters on the other side from many countries. We have about -- more than 500 jihadists from Russia fighting in Syria, and it's dangerous because they will come back. And I know

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2013/12/09

from my British polling it says that about 1,200 fighters with British passports are there. And so, when I was speaking to some of the leaders from Hezbollah they were saying that it's a preventive action, what they are doing in Lebanon, to prevent them from jihadists coming to Lebanon, which is already on the brink of explosion.

So the sectarian -- they mention all these conflicts and especially the Syrian conflict and what's going on in -- the (inaudible) and the threat of civilization of the threats that we are afraid of.

So, thank you for your attention. I am ready to answer questions or to participate in discussion.

MR. SHARQIEH: Thank you very much, Professor Naumkin, for these great insights into the Russian policy in the region. We'd like to hear now from Professor Hayajneh. He's visiting professor at Qatar University. He's also a political science professor at Ashmite University. Before that he was a professor at the University of Jordan and the Jordan

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2013/12/09

Center of Diplomacy, the University of Arizona, as well. His research interest is in international relations, political and economic development, strategic and security studies, conflict resolution, and of course, he has published over 40 publications. We are delighted to have Professor Hayajneh with us and the floor is yours.

MR. HAYAJNEH: First of all I'm very grateful for the kind invitation from Brookings and Dr. Ibrahim Sharqieh to take part in this dialogue on the role of Russia in the region. I've written down some notes when I received the invitation about a week ago. I think from my academic point of view, I went into this as a professor here and a professor there. Professors speak in academic language, and we try to focus on the scientific facts rather than emotions or others.

Without the Russian veto, we'll be speaking this evening about Russian role in the Middle East. I'll be alluding to different points. This will be a long evening. In case I get carried away, please

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2013/12/09

remind me and stop me. I'd like to be objective and scientific and emotionless. I'll be mentioning nothing about any political agendas. I'll try to be purely academic.

The Arab Spring is not a Russian conspiracy as Russia seems to think, and it wasn't an American conspiracy either. It was the result of Arab sacrifices for generations. It culminated the Tunisian revolution and Libya was supported by outside forces in Egypt. It was conspired against by many quarters. In Syria there was a lot of outside intervention against it, so we must set aside right from now the question of conspiracy theories. The final route in the Arab Spring will not come in the next decade maybe. It was maybe even longer, a very long time.

The Arab world, the Arab homeland, the Arab countries cannot stay forever just playing pawns in a chess game run by the Russians and the Americans and others. They'll have to have their own role, and as I will try to explain in my intervention, the Arab

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

people's beginning to realize a basic principle in international relations and that is to rely on their own points of strength. We have relied on the Americans when the whole arena was there. They were the sole players since the end of the Cold War. They did nothing for us.

Some questions which arise here allude to the role of the Russians and how we can assess any Russian role and when Ibrahim talked about that from a point of view of the people, not necessarily the regimes, especially when it pertains to the Arab Spring.

How could Russia play an important role in the past? And I tried to look for justifications for the Russians from regional, national, and local points of view, from internal Russian factors and factors leading to the Arab situation in general. Russia inherited the Soviet Union and with all its capabilities and the capability of playing an active role in the international politics after the Cold War,

this can be analyzed and enough evidence can be presented in support of this analysis.

America had set down the rules of international cooperation and crisis management, and larger powers including Russia could only play a regional role and could never make it to the higher degree of international politics like the Americans were doing.

For example, until, of course, when Putin came to power in 2000 when the situation had slightly changed, I'll mention some indicators: the demographic, economic, and political levels which helps Russia play a role in this region. Russia and the Arab Spring -- I think Russia has contributed to a great deal to contain the Arab Spring through coups and counter-revolutions and other powers, Russia included, bear responsibility for the failure of the Arab Spring so far not materializing in a way which fulfills aspirations of the people and research tends to pay more attention to that.

According to Freedom House indicators, the Arab world represents 50 percent of the remaining dictatorial regimes in the world at a time when the rest of the world is moving towards democratization. And also the policies adopted by Russia and others seem to be not to be based on any ethics including the Syrian case, Iraq's case, Palestinian case, and they very, very only commit themselves when they want to provide some humanitarian aid, when they send some blankets, medicine, et cetera.

Our causes in the Arab world in Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Iraq; they're not many humanitarian causes there. Not questions of flood and natural disasters. They're a lot more (inaudible). They really are the causes of people who want to have their own say in their future and democratic aspirations.

The Russians stands vis-a-vie Syria is a stigma, and I do not want to go through the figures. The entire Syrian question has been turned into a question of figures. How many refugees? How many victims of violence? How many children dead? How

DOHA-2013/12/09

many of this and how many of that? I think the Arab view and that of citizens know only too well that Russia played a major role not only in stopping any possibility of the Americans delivering a military blow to the Aasad regime, but even the establishment of a no-fly zone, even the establishment of some safe corridors, humanitarian corridors. Also Russia found itself in a position of antagonism towards most Arab countries, even some Arab countries who may be wanting or thinking of having some strategic relations with Russia like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Lebanon, et cetera.

Russia, like our colleague has said, that Russia learned from the Libyan situation, and I remember comments on al Jazeera television that Russia will not repeat the same mistake but they have, in fact. The first time they abstained from voting on Libya before any possible solution and in fact there are prospects looming in the horizon of political solution of that (inaudible). In Syria they did that without any prospects of any solution.

DOHA-2013/12/09

So, I ask myself can Russia play a role in the Middle East. I try to find justifications for Russia just to be objective nonetheless. I found Russia has (inaudible) very negative. They could not withstand American pressure except for the two or three occasions when they've used the veto. And since the end of the Cold War until now I could not find one Russian stance in support of an Arab cause. Maybe there's been some support for some regimes in the Arab world, but not with the Arab people. Russia did not side with Iraq. They did not stand up against America in Iraq. Russia did not stand with Libya against military intervention. Russia did not play a conducive role in solving the Arab/Israeli conflict. Russia did not provide any military assistance, any (inaudible) of any consequence and effect, and the Arab memory cannot forget what the Russians did against the Chechen Muslims and the (inaudible) against the governor when they start against intervention of NATO to save the Muslims from massacres and genocides.

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

So therefore, from an Arab perspective we cannot expect Russia to play any positive role because the Americans always pay the Russians off. They reward them with things here and there to play a support or complementary role.

Even the regional system which was found after the Arab revolution, especially when we talk about Turkey, Iran society, and the Russia's role in the 5-plus-1 Agreement did not really serve the Russian interest, and the only thing the Russian foreign minister said was there was a need for them apart -- there's no justification apart from getting rid of the ballistic missiles in Europe, and they're only reason for establishing this missile shield is to stop the threat of Iranian missiles hitting European targets.

And also any talk of that Russia supports the Iranian intervention and all that to continue the status quo in Syria and to stop any gas pipelines which can benefit Qatar or Iran, this is another

DOHA-2013/12/09

justification which shows that Russia is not thinking as a super power.

As the role of Turkey, Russia stood against Turkey despite the strong economic relations between Turkey and Russia, which can reach some \$30 billion a year.

As for Saudi Arabia which is a strong actor in the region and also can affect change vis-a-vie the Americans, there are no really any relations of any consequence apart from the visits paid by Prince Bandar, which is only to play the Russians against the Americans every now and then to avoid any agreement over the Iranian nuclear issue. But the strategic level, Saudis did not really develop any strategic agreements, and the Saudis did not end up buying any weapons at any large scale.

As for the Arab countries, the most and by and large these relations which a lot of countries and the Russia are just diplomatic niceties, nothing more.

As for the Islamic perspective, this Islamic perspective and the fact that 15 percent of Russia's

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2013/12/09

population are Muslim, this could have been a good entry point for Russia and especially in the view of the fact that the largest increase in the population comes from Muslims. And some studies indicate that half of the conscripts for the Russian armed forces are Muslim, and many researchers think that the future in the Arab world is one of an Islamic identity after the collapse of Pan-Arabism, Communism, et cetera and other ideologies. As for the, I think, how much time do I have? Five minutes?

Even if we take it for granted that the world system will turn into bi-polar system, I don't think this is possible if we compare Russian military expenditure to that of the American. While the size of the Russian economy were the size of the American economy, America only spends more than 20 countries - the top spending countries put together. The number of the population in Russia is on the regression and decrease with other ethnic conflicts and problems, I don't think -- and on top of that I don't think the

DOHA-2013/12/09

Americans will allow the Russians to create such a strategic change in the area.

It's true that the Arab countries do not have much say when it comes to strategic matters, especially at the political and economic levels, but Russia doesn't have that ability either to impact change, so therefore they should find other entry points to make some breakthroughs in the area.

Finally and in conclusion, I will mention them and then we've leave it up to the audience to discuss. I think the Russian position vis-a-vie the civilian revolution has weakened the Russian role in the area. And if we link that to the historic role and the Cold War and Russia's dealing with Arab and Muslim causes after the Cold War, may have lost the Russians any possible role they may have been thinking of. And maybe the Russians are trying to just make some progress and entries into the area, but to these roles are not given. They are taken.

And as for Russia's internal situation, do not help the Russian position and the regional

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2013/12/09

environment does not help Russia either, even from popular point of view. For example, any agreement between Russia and Egypt to provide Egypt with some weapon system, from the point of view of the general population the vast majority of these weapons will be aimed at combating riots and stuff like that; tear gas and this kind of weapons. So, how can this be possibly thought of as anything positive?

Russia relied, by and large, on the American failures in the region, and from a strategic point of view and when the region is seen as was handed over to some proxy powers, and this is not only when it comes to rid Iran of its nuclear powers but to turn the clock backwards to the pre-Islamic Revolution in Iran and really insert American hegemony in the area. In fact, the Americans never left the area, and they will never allow anyone else to come in whether the Russians or any other power. And if the financial situation, America continued -- we're not talking about other costs in Iraq or Syria, and when Russia contributed in this from Afghanistan to Palestine,

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2013/12/09

Iraq, Syria, and all these Arab countries, if we look pragmatically at this and other questions.

The American/Israeli organic relationship and we will not allow the Russians to play a major role after the Arab Spring, especially when the Palestinian causes no longer occupy the main concern, and we do not have a resistance cap any more. All these concepts have changed. I leave it here and I hope I have not been too frank and didn't annoy anybody. But thank you very much for your kind attention.

MR. SHARQIEH: Thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you, Mr. Naumkin for these great insights to the Russian role in the region. And let me thank you also, in addition to our great speaker, (inaudible) Mubasha who's covering this discussion, and I'm sure there is great interest in the Arab audience in this discussion and in the Russian policy.

And for this reason let me begin with a question to Dr. Naumkin on the Russian position on Syria which is -- I think that's what most of the Arab

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2013/12/09

audience would like to understand today, for this is what has been as, like, the major question within the Arab audience about what does Russia really want to achieve?

I completely understand the reservations that Russia has over this relationship with the international community and how it worked with on the issue of Libya in particular and the development of the Security Council Resolution 1973 and how the 1973 was stretched to the extent to the largest level possible to justify and explain different kinds of operations. So, this is very understandable of the Russian participation and the way it's leading with the Security Council.

But the Russian position so far for many in the Arab region is not really clear, and most of the issues that mentioned in the Russian position mostly to deal with the approach and the methods rather than the objectives and the goals meaning when we talk about, like, Russia role is we'd like to see a national reconciliation, a dialogue, a Geneva II, the

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2013/12/09

Syrian people solving the problems themselves. These are all national dialogue and national reconciliation, Geneva II. There are methods, there are approaches to achieving certain outcomes. What are the certain outcomes, my question is, that Russia would like to see? Like in points (inaudible) the Arab audience try to understand what does Russia want to achieve in Syria in particular? Thank you.

SPEAKER: (inaudible) speak in Arabic although Mr. Adnan may be (inaudible) disasters that are waiting for Russia in the future, I think these are illusions are not true fears of fatal disasters. I think Russia did not say and no official, (inaudible) Arab Spring is a conspiracy, (inaudible) at all. And if you had read what I wrote in many of my articles I wrote something quite different of what you said, but some people think that way in all over the world about these developments.

As for Syria, it is clear as I said and to sit by the analysis, the Russian analysts and politicians, that our objective is national

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2013/12/09

reconciliation and to serve this Syria this crisis by the Syrians without foreign intervention and then we think such intervention is there. There was a direct intervention by some (inaudible) countries, networks, and world powers. That's why reconciliation and national dialogue might be as a method and approach, but if we look into Geneva I and we find that there's very few (inaudible) in Geneva I, it is about the transitional authority with all the responsibilities and mandates. And Russia had signed this decision and approved it. That's why Geneva II is built, in fact, on Geneva I, and that's why we see that stopping violence, violence on both sides, Russia thinks that violence is (inaudible) by two sides and the responsibility of this violence and is subject to violence as well by both parties of the conflict and the two parties, not more than two parties in the conflict.

On the other hand Russia wants Syria to stay a unified country, and there's a real threat that the (inaudible) of the conflict of Syria in this crisis,

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2013/12/09

there is a power that wants to tear apart Syria and Russia is against such a scenario. The only scenario for us is an agreement between the conflicting powers, and we take into consideration that the regime is still enjoys the support by given a portion of the population. The Syrian society is divided sectariially and politically and also divided over other lines. That's why -- and this divided society as we see there's no way for any other solution but reconciliation. We have many examples when the national community could serve the crises of civil wars and blood shed (inaudible) Syria. Take example Combojia. We know many positive examples of reconciliation. Yemen at the present time and thanks to the Gulf Initiative. So why not have such a formula, such approach for a solution in Syria? (inaudible) the logic of toppling down the regimes at the hands of foreign countries. This is one of the lessons that we learned on the past experience literally. Finally and only to answer your question, I would want to say the Russian people who have made a

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2013/12/09

lot of sacrifices to support and to help the position and movements in the Arab world including for helping the Palestinians and all the peoples of the region, and I am surprised that my colleague, academic, has so little respect and says that Russia gives nothing to the region.

SPEAKER: Thank you, Doctor. Thanks for this. (inaudible) lets me speak Arabic, also I would be speaking Arabic. My question is to Dr. Adnan. Don't you think that this is what Russia has and has not given everything it could to Arabs? It supported Saddam Hussein. It supported the region, the (inaudible) cause, but within the limits that (inaudible) diplomatic support to Iraq and political support to Iraq but at the surface (inaudible) to television. Russia could look to change its position, et cetera, to make a military (inaudible) against the United States for the regime of Iraq.

SPEAKER: Don't you think that it has -- did what it could, Russia? The second part of the question, do you see that this changes (inaudible) any

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

possible changes in the Russian position on Syria and the region? Do you think this strategy will continue the way it is now in Russia?

MR. HAYAJNEH: I think that the Arab countries must not forget the support it got from Russia or USA or other countries. For a long times they depended, as was said by my colleague, Russia for some time did support some of the liberation movements and some of the communist parties in Arab countries which were banned in most of the Arab countries.

But the Arab Spring was a strategic change and an opportunity for many resource centers in Arab world and for Arab nation to refigure the roles played by Russia which we considered as the closest to the region geographically speaking, but we know that and we don't want to go into the past history. We know the Russian history even before the Cold War, it's all the history and conflict in this region, but maybe what the last straw was the position regarding Syria.

In fact, (inaudible) I tried to find some justifications for Russia as well and its active role.

DOHA-2013/12/09

(inaudible) Putin Russia has tried to have independent role of the rest, but we don't see that on the ground. Maybe it's (inaudible) are not possible. Even the American military, the Russian military are based in Tartus does not have -- Russia cannot use the forces of that base and all that would be dangerous for the American forces in the region, even the military base that is being fought off now in Egypt.

From a popular point of view, not an academic one, thinking that Russia might have a positive and active role in helping the Arab world, this is the hope of all Arabs and democracy and (inaudible) and economically and economic help and economic aid has dangerous consequences for the Arabs. Maybe there's success next month in Geneva and the bloodshed will stop, but I think if you look at organized polling, most of the Arab countries, (inaudible) the Americans as less than 20 percent. You will find that it's even less than that for Russia despite the many (inaudible) that Arab peoples have about America (inaudible). Now we open the way for

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2013/12/09

Christians and of the audience who want to comment of speaker or ask (inaudible).

SPEAKER: (inaudible) Thank you, Dr. Adnan, for this presentation. In fact, I have some fast points that I want to elaborate. First of all, when you speak of the Soviet Union, how it supported all Arab liberation movements, although it planted communist thinking which we are (inaudible) now because Israel (inaudible) communists (inaudible) all the people who rule, most agents are all communists. They are there to fight Islam.

In fact, Russia has become from an enemy of USA to a (inaudible) of tennis game of USA, so what Egypt is doing and against the coup is an American game to cover the fact that USA is the patron of this coup. That's why it put Russia in this position. If Russia wants to build a military base in Egypt I would say that (inaudible) nothing, but I have received nothing (inaudible) except the dancers who come there. As for the railway that will be built there, it will kill (inaudible). I stop right there to let others

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2013/12/09

speak, and I say to Russia if you want to come to Egypt you should come as a Russia, not as a shade of USA or shadow.

SPEAKER: Thank you for your discussions. Two quick questions, Professor Vitaly. One is in your discussion of Russian relations you didn't have a chance to really talk about Palestine which is an indicator of how much is going on in the region. Could you tell us what your understanding is of how Russia feels about the core tax and what role it's played in that and what it feels about the future of that process?

And on Syria, one brief question. If the deal in Geneva II is essentially an alliance between parts of the regime and the opposition against the jihadists with the condition that Aasad goes, which seems to be a condition, is that something that Russia could support, do you think?

MR. NAUMKIN: Thank you. I want to react very shortly to what my friend, Dr. Adnan, said about the fact that Russia was supporting only communist

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2013/12/09

factions (inaudible). It's not true. For instance, Libya emerged as an independent state due to the position of Russia in the '20s. You know this well if you are a historian. I don't have time, but I can name to you a lot of other examples how Russia was (inaudible).

On the contrary, if we take the documents revealed from the Soviet archives, Russia was very active to prevent the Arab Communist parties from undertaking adventures in trying to seize power in certain regions. It was more pragmatic than anywhere else, but Russia was the first -- or the Soviet Union was the first state that established a relationship with Saudi Arabia, and the first one that recognized the Kingdom, so before a lot of states. You know this also very well and was very sympathetic also.

So, but let's not go through history. By the way, about the present so-called base in Tartus, there is no base. There's about 50 personnel who are cleaning up vessels, and it's not essentially important from any military strategic point of view.

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2013/12/09

With it or without it, we don't have bases anywhere with the exception of the post-Soviet space. We have a base in Armenia. We have a base in Tajikistan and nowhere else, and we've lost our bases in Cam Ranh in Viet Nam, and in Cuba. So, we had two big bases. They were closed.

Russia has no ambitions to be anywhere to have military presence anywhere, especially there abroad. We have nothing against the American military presence in the Gulf if it's done on the request of the local states that want American protection for its security. And we are very pleased with the cooperation with the United States and here on many issues including the weapons of mass destruction and including our role in the Quartet in trying to provide a solution of the Palestinian-Israeli crisis.

Coming back to Syria, I can tell you that we also have a lot of skepticism about the forthcoming conference, but we have hopes that it will be held. It's the beginning of the process in my view, only the

DOHA-2013/12/09

beginning of the process. Whatever happens there can happen, and it's very long process.

If you look at Dayton, for instance, there was the conflicting sides. Everything was prepared but they were sitting together in one room for three - - closed in one room for three weeks before reaching an agreement. I don't think that it will be easy to reach an agreement, but the fact that the conflicting sides negotiate is much better than killing each other. And we don't forget that.

In accordance with -- I can repeat that that there are more than 30,000 foreign jihadists in Syria, and we cannot ignore this fact. And I don't think that their goals, if you were asking each other about their goals and objectives, that their goals and objectives are democracy in Syria or building a democratic state for all communities in this country where we have Christian, Alawites, Jews, Circassians, and we care about these minorities very much because we have our brothers in the Orthodox religion in Syria.

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2013/12/09

We remember that in Iraq, for instance, 1,400,000 Christians, only a little bit more than 3,000 Christians are left due to the attitudes on the part of radical groups against them. Let's be fair let's don't forget that about half a million people have been killed during 10 years, last ten years in Iraq, as well, and nobody could provide security and safety of these people. So, it's not black and white. I'm against black and white picture. I agree that there can be different views.

I agree that we can suffer some defeats from the point of view of our popularity, but we in general the main view of Russians is that this stance is ethically right, and we have justifications for that. And we'll see what will come out of that.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

SPEAKER: I think I forgot to mention that, yes, I think you are right about so many things about supporting some countries, and I forgot to mention that. Russia is the main supporter for chemical weapons to Syria and it's supporting now --

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2013/12/09

SPEAKER: No, no, it was European states. You know this very well. Russia has never used chemical weapons, never supported anyone. The first use of chemical weapons in the region was done by Britain, not by Russia.

SPEAKER: Okay, Europe, and they got some part of -- even from Americans going around getting some fertilizers and using for chemical purposes. But this is a huge example that Russia is supporting, and it is witnessed by millions of people.

SPEAKER: What millions? Where do we find them?

SPEAKER: The chemical weapons.

SPEAKER: From Russia to Syria, chemical weapons?

SPEAKER: (inaudible) to Syria? They just come from nowhere? It was not originated from Russia? Russia has no part of it?

SPEAKER: I can (inaudible) if it's coming from Jordan. Why not? You are telling me it's from

DOHA-2013/12/09

Russia. Why? Why not from Jordan, or why not from Nepal or from --

SPEAKER: I can give you one simple answer. That the Americans were talking about Russia, about reaching a deal about the chemical weapons, they knew that how much the size or thousand metric, and they got all of the numbers and the sizes --

SPEAKER: One thousand tons.

SPEAKER: Yes, one thousand tons. Okay, so is that (inaudible)?

SPEAKER: Produced in Syria with the help of European companies.

SPEAKER: American companies but (inaudible) is coming from --

SPEAKER: Germany, a lot of other states, not directly but indirectly.

SPEAKER: (inaudible).

SPEAKER: No, no. That's not even (inaudible). I don't want to get in (inaudible).

SPEAKER: Okay. Let's be fair, my friend. Let's be fair.

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2013/12/09

SPEAKER: I'm trying to be fair.

SPEAKER: And precise. We're academics.

SPEAKER: Okay, I'm a academician and if you say that the chemical weapons in Syria are not originated from Russia, I would have to believe you because I do not have the citation, the source, in writing --

SPEAKER: Sure, (inaudible).

SPEAKER: -- and if anybody can help us from the audience and say where it's coming from. And so, it is not the fault of the Russian, and if it is not the fault of the Russian, excuse (inaudible).

SPEAKER: Then forget about it if you don't mind.

SPEAKER: Okay, we forget about it. So, it is Americans to bash and to blame.

MR. SHARQIEH: Okay, let's take other questions. Yes, sir? Go ahead.

SPEAKER: I would like to ask you, Professor Naumkin, about discussion in the region about the potential role of Russia as a protector, let's say, of

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2013/12/09

the Christian minority. So, you can elaborate, please, on this?

MR. NAUMKIN: As you know, Russia is a strong supporter of the peace process as the only way to come out of this protracted crisis. And we're a member of the Quartet though I can acknowledge that probably the United States is more active in playing a role, but also the United States is considered as biased because Israel is regarded as a strategic partner of the United States and the region, and as our American partners usually say, Israel and the conflict is not a part of our foreign policy. It's a part of internal policy.

So, I say that our relationship with Israel now, which is developing, and we have in general a good relationship. This gives us some leverage to play a more active role, a proactive role in the peace process, though I'm very skeptical about the prospect of the peace process given the character of the present government in Israel. I'm very critical

DOHA-2013/12/09

towards what it's doing, and Russia in general is critical but still we have relations.

We are frank in our discussions with the Israeli's and Russia expressed its view against the construction of new settlements and was in favor of freezing all construction before negotiations. It didn't work, and so as far as the Christian minorities are considered, we very much -- we care about the Christian life in Israel. We have big supporters of Christian life. We are investing a lot of money in reconstructing and supporting Christian monasteries and Christian communities there. We have several organizations, one of those headed by Mr. Akunin who is chairman of the Russian (inaudible) Roads who is providing significant help to the Orthodox community, Arab, of course, community in Israel.

MR. SHARQIEH: Thank you very much. I have a question actually of Professor Vitaly which is a long time ago I've always been familiar with the protests happening in the region, and I'm used to this image of people in the streets --

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2013/12/09

MR. NAUMKIN: Where?

MR. SHARQIEH: In the region, in the Middle East. Of people burning American flags. This is like the scene or the image that I grew up with looking at the region and protests and so it became the tradition over the past decades of people in the streets and burning American flags and all that.

Recently, I mean, with the beginning of the Arab Spring we started to see some new things where actually the Russian flag also has joined, and people burning the Russian flag. My question is, is Russia concerned about the future relationship with this region or why because this is, I mean, as you know with all the polls that overwhelmingly the supporting the (inaudible) Revolution among the Arab street and would Russia being viewed as the country that's blocking resolution in the Security Council or something, blocking resolution? Does this concern Russia on the long term and it's future relationship with the region?

DOHA-2013/12/09

And one major mistake that I understand that U.S. foreign policy did over the past half century in this region that it always allied with the regimes over alliance or the support or understanding the needs of the people, and many American politicians admitted to this including Condoleezza Rice, of course, with this is (inaudible) over stability and security and interests and values, and we didn't achieve stability or democracy as she said. So, there is this concern of mistake that U.S. foreign policy did over the past half century in the region. Is Russia concerned that it's doing the same mistake of aligning with -- I mean, who aligns with (inaudible) regime now? (inaudible) regime sits in the weakest position since the '70s or the '60s since they came to power. And now it's the weakest position, and now with Russia aligning or supporting -- the way at least perceived by the people, does that concern Russia over the future? Thank you.

MR. NAUMKIN: First of all, we don't consider ourselves aligned with Aasad. We're aligned

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2013/12/09

with the reconciliation paradigm, not with Aasad, especially Aasad personally. But let's take into account that practically Aasad is a partner of the international community now in two things: in the preparation for Geneva II because whoever comes to Geneva, he'll be representing the existing regime; and second, the elimination of chemical weapons. We need his part at least for next six months. We are not working for the sake of Aasad remaining in power, not at all. By the way, the Americans don't care about (inaudible). Why should we care? (inaudible) is burning.

SPEAKER: They go Tuesday.

MR. NAUMKIN: We're the same question. We were discussing the same question was, by the way, with Condoleezza Rice when I participated in the last (inaudible) Forum in Abu Dhabi where we were sitting on the panel with General Salim Adris of the Free Syrian Army and (inaudible) and it was hard dialogue but a bit more academic than our dialogue with my friend, Dr. Adnan. I would say --

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2013/12/09

MR. HAYAJNEH: Why do you say it? Why you say that?

MR. NAUMKIN: But, by the way --

MR. HAYAJNEH: No, no, no. I think you took some of the information at the personal level, and when I talk with Ibrahim and I think I said well, this is academic freedom and you can say whatever you want.

MR. NAUMKIN: Yes, of course, you are free. I'm in favor of --

MR. HAYAJNEH: I let it go once and twice and three times. I try to ignore it, and I'll ignore it again.

MR. NAUMKIN: Oh, please. Okay, okay, sure. It's done. So, then the last (inaudible) where I came from yesterday, so the main concern of the states of this region of the Gulf was that, oh, my God, it will be a disaster if the American leave this region. So, probably the popularity of American is low, but the country, the regimes, they want the Americans to protect them, and I understand this very well. They

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2013/12/09

are playing certain role, so the popularity is not a measure of success of this, of that country, or it's very difficult to interpret its policy in the terms of reliance either on the regimes or on peoples, the public.

So, the same about Russia. I agree that, of course, Syria is a weak regime, but we're working not for Aasad, not advocating Aasad, not supporting him, but advocating non-interference. And by the way, the Monoma dialogue there was one of the participants was Senator Kale, head of the Subcommittee for the Committee for Foreign Relations in the Senate. He said that toppling Aasad is not our goal in Syria. We have other objectives. It's the same about Russia. We understand that it's not our goal. Other goals along with our Western partners, and let the Syrians themselves decide who's going to rule Syria.

MR. SHARQIEH: Thank you, Dr. Naumkin.

SPEAKER: I have to say one thing. Nobody can say anything without looking to all of the United States, but when you talk about popularity of Russia

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

among the Arab Republic, if you ask Arab youth who is going to study Russia right now in comparison to the United States, people would choose the United States.

Does Russia represent a model of democracy and if you look at Freedom House you will see it is non-democracy. Nobody wants to be like Russia. Russia is not a role model for the Arabs. The expectation of Russia -- it's a very illusion by the other public that they may stop the influence in the United States, and we are wrong in that too. Thank you.

MR. SHARQIEH: Thank you. Any final questions? Okay, well, with that I would like to thank you both for the discussion (applause) and thank the audience as well, so thank you very much.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

* * * * *

CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

Carleton J. Anderson, III

(Signature and Seal on File)

Notary Public in and for the Commonwealth of Virginia

Commission No. 351998

Expires: November 30, 2016

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190