BROOKINGS DOHA CENTER

THE INFORMATION REVOLUTION:
DEMOCRACY AND LEGITIMACY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

A BROOKINGS DOHA CENTER POLICY DISCUSSION WITH:
THE RIGHT HONORABLE DAVID MILIBAND, MP

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. SHAIKH: Ambassadors and members of the public, it's wonderful to have you here in what I'm sure you'll agree is a truly special event. We are delighted to have the two gentlemen on either side of me for what I'm sure will be a very, very, very interesting discussion.

We called it "The Information Revolution: Democracy and Legitimacy in the 21st Century". Again, I can't think of two better people to talk about this. Both with regards to the Arab world, but broader in Europe and elsewhere.

Without further ado, let me introduce them to you formally, I guess. To my right is David Miliband, of course, British labor politician, member of Parliament -- from South Shield since 2001? Many of you know him, of course, very well as the now former British foreign secretary. He started off his political life first working with Tony Blair in his policy unit at the age of 29, and then head of the policy unit from '97 to 2000, at which time he was elected to Parliament. He was promoted to foreign secretary at 41, the youngest person to hold the post since David Owen 30 years earlier.

Welcome, David.

MR. MILIBAND: Thank you.

MR. SHAIKH: It's wonderful to have you here.

To my left, Wadah Khanfar who is the co-founder of now the Sharq Forum and, of course, former director general of the Al Jazeera network.

He began his career with the network in 1997 covering some of the world's key political zones, including South Africa, Afghanistan, and Iraq. In 2006 he became Al Jazeera's director general and, safe to say, that during his 8 year tenure at the helm of Al Jazeera he himself brought about a revolution of sorts, taking just a single channel into a whole media network including Al Jazeera Arabic, Al Jazeera English, Al Jazeera Documentary, and the Al Jazeera Center for Studies. He was also -- I hope you don't mind me saying this -- in September 2011 named as one of the *Foreign Policy's* top 100 global thinkers of 2001. Wadah, it's wonderful to have you here. Thank you very much.

How we're going to do this is make it as much of a conversation as we can. We've got about an hour and 20 minutes, maybe a little bit more. We want to make this as open and informal and yet as structured a discussion as we can.

We'll just start off by asking -- I'll start off by asking some questions and then we'll throw it open to you, because I'm sure many of you would also want to ask and make comments of the two esteemed guests we have here today.

Let me start with you, David. We are calling this "Democracy and Legitimacy in the 21st Century". What are the sources of legitimacy? Those in government or in politics now draw on in this new context? Bearing mind that even in Europe political systems may not necessarily be working as well. There

is a crisis of expectations, a lot of talk about a new politics. What is it that we need to get right here?

MR. MILIBAND: Well first of all, Salman, thank you very much for laying on this forum. I'm really looking forward to listening to some of the people who have come here this evening. Certainly listening to my co-panelist, Wadah, who has been able to hide behind -- he's been in the editorially policy position rather than front-of-house, but now we can hear what he really thinks.

My view is essentially a pretty simple one, that there are four sources of legitimacy, three of them were identified by Max Weber, the German sociologist, quite a long time ago, and one of them I think needs to be added. And the interesting thing about the global village in which we live is that these four sources of legitimacy apply in all societies, whether they are democratic, monarchical, autocratic. What are those four sources of legitimacy?

I think the first and the one that Weber identifies is obviously state-building. The role of people or elites in building states is an important first element of legitimacy. The second is one which speaks to monarchies and to theocracies, and that is not state-building but history, historical lineage, back to the foundation of a state or to the foundation of a religion.

Third, the democratic mandate I think is an obvious fourth source of legitimacy -- buttressed, I think it's really important to say, by institutions like Free Media, an independent judiciary, that can hold democratically-elected

institutions in check. Those are not new sources of legitimacy. The fourth, I think, is important in the modern world, and that is -- you can give it a different number of names -- efficiency, delivery to your own citizens. It's essentially the effectiveness of the state in carrying out its functions.

I think if you look around the world and look at those four indices of legitimacy, you can see in different countries that they score higher or lower on those indices. I mean, interestingly you mentioned Europe. European countries at the moment are scoring -- traditionally score high on democratic legitimacy. In countries like mine there is obviously a monarchical -- it's a constitutional monarchy, so there's that element. But we're scoring low on efficiency and effectiveness at the moment, but nonetheless people wouldn't say that the legitimacy of the system is invalidated.

In other countries, they score lower on democratic mandate but higher on state-building, theocratic lineage, or on delivery and effectiveness, and so if you look across the Middle East you can see different balances. I would also argue, actually, that you can explain the relatively high legitimacy with which the Chinese government is viewed by its own people through that set of barometers as well, because obviously they don't score high on democratic mandate but they have a very clear view about the role the Chinese Communist Party and the foundation of the state -- it's practically Year 0 and they've got a record of delivery that speaks to their own citizens. So, I think that is the lens through

which I'd answer your question.

MR. SHAIKH: Thank you. There is follow-up for one more second. The democratically-elected rulers are suffering some sort of a crisis of legitimacy, whether they're in Italy -- in fact in Italy, we now have a technocratic government, and even one was being talked about in Greece, and they're also having to answer to Brussels, perhaps, or there is much more of a role that is being played in places like Brussels.

What, again -- and you know, you were very much one of the champions of the third way between markets and let's say the social welfare state and yet, it seems as if that third way hasn't yet quite delivered and as a result there is a crisis of legitimacy which is being applied, perhaps --

MR. MILIBAND: That is a good question but I'm not going to answer that question. I'm going to answer a different question which I think gets to the point you're making better, which is I thought what you were going to -- (Laughter).

MR. SHAIKH: Are you a politician?

MR. MILIBAND: I thought what you were going to say is that the four indices I've referred to are all to do with national politics and national government. Now what's new in the modern world is that the international system crowds in on every nation, every city, every village in a way that I think is more profound than ever before. And the truth is that international legitimacy

exists in only two senses. One is a very basic idea of the sovereignty of the nation

state and equal value of each nation state, except for those five that are members

of the UN and have a veto in the Security Council. So, we can talk about that and

how legitimate is that, but that's one source of legitimacy.   Votes at the UN

General Assembly, votes at the UN Security Council.

The second source of legitimacy -- I don't know if there are any

lawyers here -- is legal. In fact I know there's one very distinguished lawyer here,

but whether there are others. Second is obviously international law, because

international law has been developed over the last 60 years provides a foundation

both for action and to judge the actions of states.

But I think the truth about the examples you've cited is they're

examples of a clash between essentially incredibly weak systems of international

legitimization for action, but in the face of very, very strong international forces --

economic, but also social, climatic, you can -- security -- that are at work across

national borders. And I think it's the mismatch between those international forces

and international engagement with them that explains really the Greek and Italian

democratic crises, if you want to call it that.

MR. SHAIKH: Great. I'll quit while I'm behind.

Wadah, similar sort of question. But of course in the Arab world,

we're seeing the whole relationship between the citizen state being transformed.

In fact, society is being transformed. We're seeing, thank God, the demise of the

security state and the end of fear, at least in many cases and particularly in North

Africa and what's going on with regards to Syria.

And yet, we did have sources of legitimacy, whether it was

historical lineage with regards to the Gulf families or it's the ideology of Pan-

Arabism that came after independence, or whether it was resistance. What are the

sources of legitimacy now that political actors should be most focused on in the

Arab world?

MR. KHANFAR: Thank you very much. You know, although I

agree on the above mentioned as far as sources of legitimacy for a nation state, I

would argue in the Arab world we have never really had proper and completed

concept of nation states. What we had for the last maybe 90 years or since post-

Colonial era, we have actually territorial entities, fragmented rather than unified.

So the concept of nation state we may in a degree give it a title. For example,

Egypt. But besides that, you are looking at a region where a vacuum existed for a

long time. Since the first World War.

I think this region, which we call the Middle East, the Arab world,

from maybe the Balkan up to Somalia, we are indeed going through a major crisis

of legitimacy as far as the state is concerned. We have territorial states with

artificial borders that have been defined not by the national interest of the nation

that we refer to, not by legitimacy of history, not by the spirit of the social and

cultural fabric of the society, not even by tribal borders. It was defined by foreign

powers, thanks to (inaudible) and thanks to the international powers that

dominated this region and decided that this is how the Arab world should look.

Therefore, the current debate that we have at this stage, especially

in Libya, Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen, and the post-Arab Spring countries is actually

maybe the first debate that the Arab world has about the concept of legitimacy.

Free debate that people have without the constraints of other dominance of the

state that was forging identity, trying to convince us that we have nations. So, we

came up with slogans.

If you remember, during the last decades -- of my age, four

decades. I mean, during the last four decades we are speaking about Jordanian

nation, Bahraini nation, Saudi nation, Egyptian nation, and so on and so on

nations. And then, we come -- our leaders come up with the new themes. They

say, Jordan first, you know? Egypt first, Libya first. First in what sense and

why? Because there was a very deep sense that we are not, indeed, having a

concept of a nation. So we are trying to forge and to consolidate something that

does not exist.

I do believe that during the next phase of our revolution, this

concept is going to be debated and major questions are going to be answered.

Number one, can the Arab world survive as 22 nations economically and

politically? Can we say that we have 22 legitimate political entities in this

region? This is a major question that I think people should answer.

The second one. The relationship between our traditional, culture and religion, Islam, and the modern state. To what extent that should in a way form our perception about the legitimacy of the state? As you see today, the debate in Tunisia and Egypt in particular where they are drafting two constitutions, the concept of Islam and Sharia is, you know, the most important element in the debate taking place within these countries. Maybe this is the first time since the collapse of the Ottoman Khalifa that we are debating to what extent Islam should or should not be part of the formation of the state. So, also we are in an early stage of forming, let us say, mergers of defining the legitimacy of the state.

Then the third important concept is democracy. Although democracy is regarded -- I mean, you speak about the Greek. A few thousand years ago, the Greeks invented the concept of democracy and everyone followed. But in this part of the world, there is very deep suspicion about the concept of democracy because democracy was used during the last few decades from autocratic regimes and authoritarian governments in order to provide some kind of fake legitimacy, and so everything was done in a democratic manner and democracy was, in a way, another given very, very fake implementation.

And on the other hand, there was a huge campaign of actually putting a lot of suspicion into what does democracy mean? Because I cannot understand in Libya for now -- I have just come from Libya. So, the Libyans are

debating the concept of democracy and parties and diversity, and so on and so

forth. Given four decades of Mr. Gaddafi telling them that whoever belongs to a

party he is a traitor and the party is actually the tribe of the (inaudible) and so on

and so forth. All this rhetoric has, in fact, affected the psychology of the people.

So, people still have to define what does it mean to be a democrat? That is also

very important.

Democracy is going to be also a huge debate in the Arab world.

The concept of democracy and Shura within the Islamic context as well is going

to be debated.

Two weeks ago, I attended a conference in Tunisia where the United Emirates --

major buddies of the Sunni scholars of Islam meet together to debate the renewal

of political (inaudible) in Islam, which was very interesting to listen to the

(inaudible) perception about democracy, and the difference between it and Shura.

So, again, that concept is going to be debated for a while.

What I can tell you at this stage, that we are in one of the most

unique experiences in history in this part of the world, where we are really

defining concepts and values that, based on them, we can really derive the

legitimacy of the new modern state, of the post-Arab Spring state. So it is maybe,

if you ask me this question in two years, I will be much more accurate in defining

what exactly the word "legitimacy" means. But for now, I will say the legitimacy

is the government that will follow the concept of consensus within the Arab

world, respect the spirit of the nation, and also implement, you know, actual

democracy that is creating, you know, consensus of the societies.

MR. SHAIKH: Thank you.

MR. MILIBAND: Wadah, I wonder if you agree with me that -- and others

-- that the bar for the legitimate exercise of power has been raised? That the free

flow of information, that more educated citizens, that people getting experience of

other cultures and other countries, that the ability to organize the people now have

-- suddenly when they're educated, even if you're not going to move to a

democratic system, which many countries have not yet done in the Middle East.

It nonetheless means that governments have to take more account of their people's

views one way or another. Do you think that's right, or is that a rose-tinted

Western view?

MR. KHANFAR: You know, I would say it was right. During the

previous period -- I mean, during the last few years when the social networks

started in the Arab world, I think what was important in the definement of social

networks that it did provide a generational view with new imagination about

politics that no one in the Arab world had. I mean, the structural institutions,

governments and oppositional groups, did not have proper imagination about how

could we proceed towards democracy?

Social networks provided free environment and atmosphere.

Because the network is democratic by nature, by nature it is democratic. Once

you join the network, no one asks you about your tribe or your family or your

class or your social status. They ask you about your social ideas, and once you

join you are as equal as everyone else. So virtually speaking, we succeeded in

social networking in creating virtual democratic zones.

If you abide by youth who had connections with the world, they

had mobiles to build on and they had aspirations and, most importantly, they were

not ideological. So they came to government based on values. That was

necessary to create the revolution, so the revolution took place.

After the revolution, I see that this spirit that was generated by

youth networks is not carried forward by the post, you know, revolution elections,

for example, where traditional organizations and movements are actually asking

over, going to the Parliament, and practicing politics based on the traditional

concept of politics in this part of the world, which in my opinion is not mature yet

and it has a lot of differences.

Now, I would argue if we are going to create stable democracy we

need to take the spirit that was generated in Tahrir Square, Tunisia, and

everywhere else by youth and try to inject the current political system and the

coming constitutions and institutions with it, rather than resorting to ideological

partisanism that might actually turn us away from the concept of democracy

towards much more sectarian, traditional, even tribal political politics.

MR. SHAIKH: Wadah, what you've said basically points to sort of

a birth of a changing identity of the Arab citizen. It also points to the birth of

Arab politics, in perhaps ways we haven't seen. And the role of information

technology and youth in particular is something that you pointed to.

But aren't we over-playing the role of information technology that

the Facebook revolution and all of that? And are too many people relying on

information technology to understand the world around them? Maybe it's giving

them a false sense of reality?

As you said, it ultimately so far -- that information youth

revolution has not carried forward.

MR. KHANFAR: I must be frank with you and say, I was leading

a TV station that was, in the Arab world, regarded as the most important source of

information and still it is, I would say, without social networks that started in

Tunisia and then later on Egypt we would have never covered the revolution as

we did, because they were necessary. Not necessarily only to maintain the

coverage, but they were necessary to direct our attention to the issue itself. We

had uprisings in the Arab world during the last 20 years. We had many uprisings.

This one in particular, because it was carried by social networks and then after

that it did provide us with a sense of reality from the ground, we could not but

follow the trend.

Now later on after, let us say, a few days in Egypt and a few days

in Tunisia, mainstream media became much more important than social networks

because mainstream media was able to bring the message, take the message to everyone at home, to the mass around us, and to spirit the message from the elitist group of youth who have connections to the Internet to everyone who exists. Besides that, it gave a sense of legitimacy to the revolution.

I think when Al Jazeera put a story about something happening in Tunisia, it does carry credibility and value amongst the public more than if they read it on Facebook or Twitter or carried by bloggers. So that, also, was the third point, which was important.

I think we did protect social networks in a moment of time. Mainstream media did protect social networks when they -- when Internet in Egypt, for example, was switched off and bloggers were not able to feed their stories from the ground. It was Al Jazeera, it was BBC, it was many other networks did actually cover the shortage or the absence of Internet. So, there was some kind of ecosystem that emerged between mainstream media and traditional -- and the new media, and I would argue from no on, this ecosystem will be developed into integral media rather than the separation.

I don't know if after five years we are going to still speak about new media and mainstream media. We are going to speak about media, which will take a new form, and this form will be a merge between what we call now new media and what has been called as mainstream media.

MR. MILIBAND: I agree with that, but I just want to draw back a

bit away from the correct point that the ability to share on a democratic basis is a very significant change. Many people talking to many other people, rather than one or a few people talking from a TV station to masses is very significant. But I think there's something else about the information world that we live in, the mass information world that we live in. And it's not about the ability to share, it's about the ability to compare. And above all, the ability for people to compare public statements and private actions.

You see, what strikes me -- you know far more about Egypt than I do, but I was struck by the description of the photo of President Mubarak, and President Obama, the official photograph was published showing President Mubarak in a sort of dominant position. The real photograph was the opposite. It allowed Egyptian citizens to compare the fiction that they were being sold and the truth, and I think that if you think of sources of illegitimacy, the opposite of your thing.

MR. KHANFAR: Yes.

MR. MILIBAND: What are -- you can do a grading of sources of illegitimacy right up to the abuse of power, corruption, kleptocracy, but hypocrisy is a great source of illegitimacy and when leaders say one thing and do another, that is very dangerous for them in a world where citizens on a mass scale can compare. And that is not a new media, old media point, it's just a media point. And it's not just comparing photos with President Obama, it's comparing what you

say about helping the poor, with what you do about taking the money off them.

It's about what you say about sharing power with what you do about abusing it.

Et cetera, et cetera.

And it seems to me, I always say to British people in politics but also people in business, the biggest sin in the modern world is hypocrisy, and it's a massive sin in politics and it will become the cardinal sin in business as well because there are enough people who will brand hypocrisy illegitimate, and thereby shift their votes or shift their custom or shift their allegiance, which essentially is what we're talking about.

MR. SHAIKH: And yes, that not only applies to information and information technology, it applies to politics, doesn't it?

MR. MILIBAND: Yeah, absolutely.

MR. SHAIKH: In terms of the fact that it can be too intrusive or maybe it's legitimate that people are able to see politicians and the political system in a way that they never were able to do so even 5, 10 years ago.

MR. MILIBAND: Well, the danger is it's a very blunt tool. That's the danger, that there's a lot of rough justice associated with it and the saying is that a rumor can be halfway around the world before the truth gets its boots on. That's something that as society has become more aware or as people become more aware of the abuse of information power, then they can sort out, they can sift out.

But it seems to me this is one-way traffic. There's only one direction that this is going to go, which is more access to more information to more people more of the time. And governments will try and -- it's like -- will try and block the flow, it's like the flow of water. They'll try and block it, but it will become more expensive and more difficult to block it.

And I think that in that world, in that world where the global village is suffused with information, that ability to compare the statements of leaders with the actions of leaders creates a new legitimacy bar.

MR. KHANFAR: This is right. I would actually comment on this and say we should not entrust politicians on actually establishing the foundations of democracy and democratic thought within the Arab world only.

Now, the arrival of social networks and the general participation in defining the rules of the future are necessary, and they become handy at this stage. Now, we have emerging what I call "smart crowds", smart people who are much more informed than any other, you know, maybe public during the last few decades. So, they are well-connected, they have great imagination, they can easily understand trends within not only their region and their countries, but also the world, and therefore they can judge much better. So, the wisdom of the crowd at this moment in time can be entrusted under the transformation rather than politicians, because by definition politicians would argue about certain elements that might suit their own, you know, status -- their interest. Immediacy in politics

has become a major issue, so a statesman might really think of long-term, you

know, philosophical and theoretical foundations of a system that is established,

but some politicians might not think about that. So, this is number one.

Second, even simple people, naïve people have a sense -- and I see

this everywhere I travel in the Arab world. Just to share with you, I will share

with you in two minutes the shortest story that happened with me a few days ago

when I was visiting Egypt. I decided to go visit the pyramids, and in fact I have

never been to visit the pyramids because during the Mubarak regime it was really

complicated. And you know, on my trips to Egypt they were very short, just

going for two, three grim meetings with the Minister of Information, a little bit of

shouting, and then I come back because we have never had a good relationship.

So this time, I decided to go visit the pyramids. Once I arrived at

the pyramids, an Egyptian young guy -- actually he's coming from Saudi and he

told me that his father and his grandfather were also tour guides in the pyramid

area. I went with him on a horse-riding tour around the pyramids. Maybe if one

of you visited the pyramids, you know what I'm talking about.

So, the gentleman taking me around explained to me (speaking

Arabic), the great pharos of Egypt, trained to explain to me the situation. He

forgot completely that he is, in fact, a tour guide. The moment I was on that horse

he was using every single minute to ask me about my opinion regarding (speaking

Arabic), you know, going into politics is right or wrong, whether the military is

going to hand over rule or not. And this guy suddenly, he is in fact giving me an

analysis. And also, I found myself engaged in a debate. In a moment, he will

discover that he is a tour guide and he will, you know, you see? That was a

pharaoh built it, I don't know, 2,320 years ago and it was his wife that was buried

next to him. (Laughter)

So I said, what a magnificent scene to see this beautiful Egyptian

person actually speaking about the pharos of Egypt who existed 3,000 years ago --

with admiration, by the way, you know, because they built magnificent pyramids

-- and speaking about the next kings and pharos of Egypt who might come. But

for the first time, he had a say in who the pharaoh is going to be in Egypt. So, this

feeling is beautiful, and this is why tomorrow I am going to Egypt actually to see

the first election, maybe, in the history in Egypt where it is free and fair, and

where the human being has regained his dignity.

And I think this nation, not only Egypt but these nations called the Arab

world have been going through historical humiliation for more than 90 years now

where people were not regarded at all as anything deserving to give opinion. So

for the first time, you should appreciate what extent, really, people have this pride

within them in order to go to elections and to vote for the next president.

MR. SHAIKH: Before I ask, David --

MR. MILIBAND: Of course, what I said against politicians was

just part of our game to provoke each other. (Laughter)

But, look. He's onto something really important, which is that

people want more than an occasional vote. Government by the people is as

important as government for the people. However, we all know that mob rule is a

fine line from the wisdom of crowds, and the lesson of history is that all power

needs to be checked and it needs to be checked by independent institutions,

independent scrutiny, et cetera. I don't need to tell this audience that story.

What's interesting, though, coming from a European perspective is

that the joy -- what did you call it? I wrote it down here. The beautiful feeling. If

you said to 100 people in my constituency how beautiful is the democracy that

you enjoy, obviously many of them would say are you talking about our member

of Parliament and whether he's beautiful or whether the democracy is beautiful?

(Laughter)

The paradox of democracy is that where it exists, it's in disrepute.

The truth about our Western democratic systems is that they are gridlocked, that

in some cases the power of money is far too great. If you think about the

American presidential elections, money is corrosive in American politics. That

representative democracy and certainly mainstream political parties are perceived

to have inadequate answers to times of massive change, so fringe parties are doing

better.

I think that in this triangle between, on the one hand, government

by the people without falling into the fallacy of mob rule. On the other hand, the

real sense of liberation that comes from making your own mistakes. It's almost

better to be governed in a country that makes mistakes if they're your own

mistakes than governed in a country that does things well if someone else is

deciding, second poll.

Third poll is, how does representative democracy renew itself? I

think one interesting thing is that in our democratic system in the UK, if the

centralized Western system is weak, then all of democracy is weak. Whereas in a

country like the United States, if Washington is held in disrepute you can still

have vibrant democracy at local level, state and local level. In Germany you have

a pretty rigid national system, you have a pretty vibrant and innovative local

system, and I think that it's important to see that democratic systems only ever

prosper not just where there are checks and balances, but also where there are a

number of sites of power. You have to redistribute power around the system and

make it worth contesting power, not just for a presidential system but at local

levels as well.

MR. SHAIKH: David, what are you learning from the Arab

Awakening? This beautiful feeling, this desire of people to make finally a big,

broad change in their lives and in their societies. Surely that's infections. What

are you learning?

MR. MILIBAND: Well, I think it's important that we don't fall

into the sort of sin of being wide-eyed about this. I mean, this is a complex,

difficult, deep-seated, long process. But what am I learning? One, that it's good

to have faith in human nature. And in the end, however repressed it is, it will find

a way to assert itself. It think it's important to be reminded of that and I think that

certainly comes through.

Secondly, in a way -- not exactly contrary to what I said, but the

defining images I had of the last year and a half are not actually about young

people, they're about old people saying I never thought I'd live to vote. And so, I

think this isn't just a youth phenomenon, this is something that goes across the age

spectrum.

Thirdly, anyone in politics will tell you that however doctrinaire

and hard-line someone can seem when they don't have to answer to anyone, the

minute that they have to get people to vote for them they suddenly become pretty

flexible. I think you're seeing quite a lot of ideological flexibility in the vote

chasing that's going on at the moment, which I think is actually a healthy thing.

I think actually the fourth thing I'd say, which is not so positive,

and that is that by definition this nation-building process that's going on, that

Wadah has described, it does turn countries inwards. It makes them look towards

their own identity and their own affairs. So for example, you know, the forgotten

actor in the Middle Eastern drama at the moment is the Palestinians. Forgotten is

maybe too strong, but the players who moved from center stage in debates

between governments, I think in many ways is the Palestinian cause, and that is

because it's a national cause for them but it's not at the forefront of the minds now of many of the regional players. I think that's dangerous.

And in a world where if I'm right about what I said earlier about the interdependence of countries, when countries look inwards that can mean that they miss some pretty important factors. And so, I hope that the links across borders in the Arab world, whether it's 22 countries or whatever, I think those have to be understood. The necessity of joint action, I think, is really important.

MR. SHAIKH: Wadah, let me ask you a similar question before I turn it over to everybody else. What is it that we can learn from Western-style democracy? Particularly this paradox in the modern age, where it does exist? It is seemingly in decline. What is it that already at this stage we would emphasize for the Arab world?

MR. KHANFAR: I think mature democracies have developed some kind of shared values and common interest that so far in the Arab world we could not succeed in doing politically. So, it doesn't matter really in Britain if the labor or, you know, the conservatives take over. Eventually, Britain as a state has certain --

MR. MILIBAND: It matters quite a lot to some of us.

MR. KHANFAR: Most of the time. (Laughter) Most of the time, certain interests for the state. So, people are interested in implementing the national interest of the state and the consensus, rather than starting to define it

from the beginning.

So in the Arab world, for the first time we are given the
opportunity to define what exactly Egypt's, you know, national interest should be.
We have seen during Hosni Mubarak, for example, that he did welcome the
human invasion of Somalia, in a way or another. Or at least, he said -- I mean this
is, you know, something. He did not care about whether Darfur was with Sudan
or not. Darfur was next-door to him. His position on Gaza was not only silent,
but in fact, Levni, as you remember, did announce the war from Cairo.

So, did that fit within the perception of Egypt about itself? The
perception of the Egyptians about their role in the region? I think from now on,
that debate is going to be different. So, the Egypt of the future -- democratic
Egypt in the future is going to define certain kinds of common values that all
politicians have to respect and to abide by, otherwise they will not be included in
the political process. So, that is important.

In the West, I think we have nation states who over the last few
hundred years developed through long dialogue and long balance of power,
developed certain kinds of values. Still in the Arab world, these values have to be
defined based on many factors. Just about the issue of Palestine, I think the
priorities within the region are understood very well by the public. I think this is
why the issue of Palestine is not occupying the most important place in the current
presidential elections, for example. But definitely, the issue of Palestine will

continue in Egypt or Tunisia or wherever it is. It will continue as deeply

important. It's part of the DNA of the public opinion, and it cannot be ignored.

But, people have sense of priorities and they understand that in

order to reach a point where you can really consolidate a vision about Palestine,

you need also inside your house to sort out all the troubles. Taken into

consideration that most of the regimes in the Arab world did use Palestine in order

to be authoritarian and autocratic, so the masses right now are trying to get rid of

this notion and to rebuild the relationship with Palestine based on their freedom of

choice rather than the usage of Palestine within autocratic and authoritarian

framework.

MR. SHAIKH: Great. I can't resist one more question, actually.

In building democracy, where does faith fit in? Especially in the Arab world?

MR. KHANFAR: Faith in the Arab world is regarded -- I mean,

let us say Islam. In the Arab world, is not regarded as a religion only. I think it is

regarded as a style of life or way of life, way of thinking. So, we are going to ask

the following question: What is the relationship between Islam and the modern

state? When I use the world "modern state", allow me to say something. This

state which you call modern in the Arab world is not the traditional state that we

have in the box, where Islam and Muslims established during the last few

centuries. So, this is the first time we are confronted with the following reality.

There is a state with a not-defined concept of the state, the boundaries of the state,

the DNA of the state, and there is a religion that has been implemented on other models rather than the modern state.

So, our scholars or our intellectuals and thinkers are going or should really debate this issue and come up with a version of understanding different from the traditional and historical one. Second, secularism in the West existed in order to separate from the church and the state. Because at a time, church did overtake the state in an amount of time, or the church was -- exactly. So the church in a way or another was interfering in the state.

In the Islamic world, we need to separate religion from the state, because I think the state in the Arab world did use religion and did use it in folly. This is why (inaudible) was annexed to the Ministry of Education in Egypt. This is why (inaudible), which is a great school, the first university in the Islamic world, was built in 122 (inaudible) which is like 1,400 years ago. This university was, in fact, you know, demolished basically because it became part of the system, the so-called modern state system.

So the legitimacy of our religious institutions were confiscated for the sake of short-sighted policies of modern states, and that process was called "modernization". So, modernization made Islam a toy in the hand of politicians, and right now we need to separate religion from the state. It means that we need to liberate the religion from the hegemony of the state. Therefore, I am not arguing at all that the concept of merging state and religion could exist in the

Islamic world, because Islam is a concept of religion and way of life that should

freely live within the boundaries of society without being used politically in favor

of this government, of this political group. This is how we could create balance.

So we should entrust the society on religion, rather than the state.

So, I don't want the future state to reclaim (inaudible) as part of its institution, or

(inaudible) as part of its institution, or (inaudible) which are a source of

independence for our society and the intellectual thinking of (inaudible), which is

the trust, the endowment, the Islamic society is unique and it should continue to

be independent from the state. So, this is why in the next future, in the next

democracy that we -- the next phase of discussion about democracy, I think we

should be aware of separating religion from the state rather than around the state

again to use religion for its sake, including states that might come from Islamic

parties and groups.

MR. SHAIKH: Thank you. Okay, I'm going to throw it open.

If we could ask you to make your points quite succinct. I want to

take as many of you as possible. But if I could also ask you kindly to just tell us

your name and any affiliation that you would have, that would be great as well.

I'll start with Gilles and then (inaudible 00:46:50) and then we'll go

around this way.

MR. KEPEL: Thank you very much, Salman. I would have to ask

a question to Mr. Wadah Khanfar. I do agree with you that much more significant

mass mobilization roles in the social media in the onset of the revolution, and that definitely Al Jazeera was the key player in that game. If we remember the way Al Jazeera sort of transported the visions and the images and the slogans from Tunisia to Egypt, for instance, and then played a role in Egypt, and so on and so forth.

Do you think this is still the case? Or would you say from your own experience as the former editor-in-chief, that we are now living in a sort of post-Al Jazeera era, where the channel is being challenged by the new media that have emerged from the liberated countries, from the various revolutions?

Let me give you, if you allow me, two brief examples so that we can have a richer discussion. In late March 2011 I happened to be in Ramallah, Palestine where I watched television because I had missed my appointment. So, I watched Al Jazeera, what would you expect? And there was a huge coverage of Benghazi. It was after what in Arabic you call (speaking Arabic), which we should not translate precisely to David here because it means the Sarkozy Strike. It was also a British strike, on Benghazi. It was huge, huge coverage.

But at the same time, the coverage of what had happened in Bahrain in the crossing of the famous King Fahd Causeway was given very minimal coverage on Al Jazeera, and in order to see what happened in Bahrain you had to turn to the Iraqi/Shia channels that would give, you know, endless airtime to exponents of the Shia opposition members.

Then, another example. In the beginning of the revolutions in

Tunisia and Egypt, everybody was watching Al Jazeera. From my experience,

this is not the case anymore. In Tunisia and even more so in Egypt, everybody

now is watching a local TV in the vernacular, no one is talking Farsi anymore, as

opposed to Al Jazeera. And there is a sort of new access to information,

something which is far more -- how would you say? Bottom-up from top-down,

as opposed to, you know, what was the Al Jazeera model.

So, would you say that Al Jazeera or (inaudible), to that extent, but

Al Jazeera mostly is now being challenged by the emergence of new competitors

that did not exist in the pre-revolutionary phase? Or, do you think that the Gulf

channels have to adapt to this kind of challenge, or would you say that this

challenge is minimal?

Thank you.

MR. SHAIKH: Of course, thank you for your remarks and your

question, Professor Gilles Kepel who, of course, we've had the pleasure of having

precisely on this platform just recently. Thank you. (Pause)

SPEAKER: Is that working, hello? (Pause)

SPEAKER: My question really is to Wadah. I thought a lot of

what you said was really fascinating and I'd like to take up, if I may, the point you

were making -- try that one. That's working.

The relationship in the Arab world between Shura and democracy,

which I think many of us in the West have difficulty getting our heads around.

The concept of Shura as a political way of thinking, and its relationship back to

political Islam. I think that's perhaps one of the reasons we've had such difficulty

a lot of the time working out what makes a lot of Islamic parties tick, and political

Islamic parties tick.

So, I'd like to hear you say a little bit more about that relationship

if you could. And also, following on from that, the relationship of that to

opposition in the transition of the Arab world. The reason I'm asking that is I was

talking to some people from the Islamic Action Front in Jordan quite recently

about the evolution or the prospects for democracy there, and so on. Now, on one

level they could understand and relate to the concept of Shura as a way of

ensuring that different political currents could be accommodated in a new kind of

democracy in Jordan. However, they also had difficult -- and on the transition to

that, they could understand the concept of opposition.

However, the transition having happened, the question of

opposition and continued opposition outside the framework of Shura was

something that seemed to be something that they were having more difficulty

dealing with. So I'm asking you in a sense, can you translate that for me a little

bit more and is there a problem there?

And the final point is this, and it's back to in a sense the

interrelationship between the points you are making about not being constrained

by traditional concepts of parties, of political structures, and so on, and that

actually snuffing out some of the more spontaneous bottom-up movements that

we're talking about, and the relationship between that and what David said about

in a new state, a new state has to deliver as well as being democratic, as well as

being participatory, and how you see that dilemma being resolved. And that

again, one example.

A number of us were in Egypt quite recently. We were talking to

somebody that's involved in one of the youth movements, very associated with

Tahrir Square. And where he saw himself now was -- and he was very worried

about the way things were going in Egypt, and the fact that some of the creative

things that they were talking about were being subsumed into a new orthodoxy.

But his answer to that was to get state approval of NGOs, a register of NGOs that

would somehow give them more authority and give them status. And again, we

were saying to him, it's not about getting approval for doing it, it's a question of

doing it.

So again, perhaps if you could give some comments on that?

MR. SHAIKH: Thank you. Since Richard has come a long way, I

let him ask three questions, but I will be more severe next time.

Gentleman there and then we'll go to Taymor and we'll take all of

them.

SPEAKER: Thank you very much. I'm (inaudible), I serve as the

first deputy speaker in Bahraini Parliament. I'm one of the main opposition

leaders.

I wouldn't talk about Bahrain. I will only talk about the wisdom of

the crowds. And very specifically, what Mr. Wadah Khanfar said about this, and

we have to watch out.

Mr. David Miliband, when he said about the hypocrisy. Where

specifically and transparently have you supported Arab Spring revolutionaries

when you hate regimes and you stop supporting them, when you support those

regimes? Where is this people-to-people? You came through people

representation, but when it comes to support the people you tend to either hate the

regime and you try to leverage this revolution to nick of that regime. And when

you support the regime, you just ignore the people. You have not worked on

people-to-people. You work on regime-to-regime, although you're coming

through people representation.

MR. SHAIKH: Thank you. Taymor?

MR. NIBILI: Hi, I'm Taymor Nibili, one of the presenters at Al

Jazeera English and I just had the wind taken out of my sails entirely, actually,

because I was going to ask exactly that question to David Miliband. You said one

of the greatest sins in politics is hypocrisy, and I wanted to ask you as someone

who has to deal with these questions every day as you have, perhaps you'd give us

some advice. Because, I'm not sure how one might define hypocrisy in the light

of what this gentleman has said. I wonder if you could give us some advice on what it might mean, and whether perhaps the accusations of hypocrisy that are thrown by -- to use I guess loose terminology, the non-G-20 nations towards the G-20 nations had any merit at all in your mind?

SPEAKER: Is a case -- a revolutionary.

MR. SHAIKH: I don't want to be.

SPEAKER: (Inaudible), associate economist (inaudible), council of developing the social studies in Africa and Senegal, and I was one of the opposition and who participated in the revolution from Alexandria, Egypt.

By the way, I'm asking some questions. Do you think that the Western-type right now in democracy could be exported anymore after the failure of the international economy? This is a very important question because they are not any more, in my point of view.

What do you think of the role of media in Western during the war with Iraq? Because there was a big hypocrisy, if we are talking about hypocrisy, talking about fake, they tried to convince people that attacking Iraq is something perfect and they have a mass destruction weapons, but the truth was not.

Concerning the other side, we're talking about media and fairness of media. Nobody talks about the bad use and misuse of social networks and media. I'm talking right now concerning -- because I submitted in the Ninth Interface Conference here in Doha in October, I researched concerning the misuse

of social networks on religious societies and how much it makes a big eruption.

For example, between Sunni and Shia in just one religion, in between Kopts and Muslim, in the case of Egypt. This is a very important issue because nobody talked about that. Because if it is like the sectarian dispute, they will call that the Shia always supported by Iran or whatsoever, and the other is supported by the other side.

Concerning the empowerment of use -- yeah, just the last one. Do you think that we should make a shake in the institutions like the Arab League and we should all the United Nations to make a new article of association that are representing the people and the youth? This is a very important question. If we really have credibility in our discussions, and that should be tackled here.

Thank you.

MR. SHAIKH: Thank you very much. Would you like to take one or all? We'll go through another round.

MR. MILIBAND: Let me be brief. Look, I think hypocrisy is very easy to define. It's saying one thing and doing another, and the allegation is that the West says it cares about human rights and democracy but actually doesn't care about human rights and democracy. That's, let's be honest about it -- that's the allegation.

Now your question, though, raises a different point, which is that in one way it's an easy one to answer. Should diplomacy be about people-to-

people links, not just government-to-government links, to which the answer is

unquestionably, yes. So that means educational links, it means cultural links, it

means media links, it means sponsorship of everything from students to

journalists. It means -- I don't know, the BBC World Service. There's a whole

range of things. That's the easy bit, in a way. That should be the easy bit, for any

diplomatic service.

The hard bit is about how you -- there are two of the hardest bits.

One, how do you expose the abuses of governments that you're having to deal

with? Because that remains an obvious source of hypocrisy. If President

Mubarak is there for 20 years and you expect him to be there for another 10, to

what extent are you privileging ongoing diplomatic business with him over

exposure of what's going on internally? That's a very difficult one.

Secondly, a government which claims to be representative but is

facing a popular revolt -- perhaps not yet visible -- how do you do justice to the

illegitimacy, if that's what it is, of that society? And I think that's a very difficult

one to answer for the following reason: No one wants outside governments

deciding on the government of another country. That must be for the people of

that country. And when those people face an imbalance of power, outside forces

are in a very, very difficult position and I don't think there's any easy answer to it.

Certainly the debate that says military intervention is about nothing

doesn't do justice to the complexity of the issues, in my view. I think the truth

that we've learned in the last 18 months is that in the end, it's internally-generated

opposition that's going to topple a government, despite the obvious Libyan

counter-example.

I think that in respect of the hypocrisy point, I think that you've got

to divide the imperfect world that we live in and the inability of governments to

achieve all that they want to in all circumstances from actually betraying your

own principles. Now, you can go through the individual cases about the extent to

which that has or hasn't happened. My own judgment would be that over the

years, the durability of the Middle Eastern autocracies, the sort of Mubarak-style

autocracies, lulled Western governments into a routinization of diplomacy. It

became too routine to just make your calls at the Egyptian President's office and

the Egyptian Foreign Ministry.

Now, however much I would go to Cairo University, as part of my

diplomacy, I think you can make a compelling case that we were lulled -- the

balance wasn't right. You can decide whether you want to call that hypocrisy or

not, but I think that the important thing is that it's open.

One thing I would say is that whenever I went to Cairo University,

probably because not all of the 4- or 500 people there were actually students, 95

percent of the questions were about Israel, Palestine, and British foreign policy,

not about the internal governance of Egypt, which people didn't dare ask

questions about, and that was pretty telling in and of itself. And I understood that

message, when that happened.

MR. SHAIKH: Before I turn it over to you, in terms of hypocrisy, of course. There are charges of hypocrisy when it comes to Bahrain. There's perhaps another one we can add, with regards -- and we're seeing it now, regarding Algeria. We've had the most extraordinary, in my view, from Western governments supporting these elections when at the same time I think many people would say that these were not clean, fair, free elections where you don't even know what the electoral role looks like. But at the same time, it seems as if we're still treading down that path.

I don't expect you to answer it, but I just make the point. You've got a number of questions to answer.

MR. KHANFAR: Yes, quickly I would just answer as much as possible. About Al Jazeera, I do believe that the spirit and the mission of Al Jazeera has succeeded in spreading all over the Arab world, at least to countries where the revolution has taken place.

What do I mean by that? You know, I think Al Jazeera has never seen itself as an institution that is competing for dominance regardless or disassociated from its mission and its spirit. We were standing for, you know, freedom of expression, for democracy, for giving people a voice, for those who do not have voices, and I think we have succeeded in that and Al Jazeera will continue to succeed.

Now, in countries where Tunisia and Egypt in particular -- and

Libya, and maybe Yemen very soon -- you are going to see miniature channels,

TV stations and websites, and so on and so forth actually in a way or another

inspired by Al Jazeera's mission. So, they have the opinion or the opinion of the

other, they have the freedom of expression, they have a high ceiling for the

political agenda, and so on. But also on the other hand, you have chaotic scenes

at this stage in most of these countries because the media landscape has not yet

reached certain kinds of maturity, especially when it comes to professional

standards. So, you have a lot of opinionated channels, and there is no

differentiation between what the news should be and what comments and analyses

are. So, that is a major challenge in front of us, but we are moving in the right

direction.

On the other hand, I do view the media in the Arab world going in the

Al Jazeera is going to face a challenge as well of finding a way of

updating or moving towards a second phase of influence in the Arab world,

especially in integrating social networks and youth capabilities and interests

within its mainstream broadcast, and I think they are doing this through new

media departments and through a lot of other functions that Al Jazeera is

launching currently. So, this is on one hand.

On the other, I do view the media in the Arab world going in the

following direction: If we are going to succeed in protecting democracy or in

building democracy in the Arab world, we need to establish media that does not

put commercial profit or political agenda above editorial integrity. That is very

dangerous. When I see TV stations launched in Egypt or Tunisia or Libya or

Yemen or whatever it is, owned by businesspeople who have political agendas

and this political agenda becomes editorial policy, I get worried because that is

not what journalism is about. Journalism should put a distance from political

agendas and from commercial agendas and try to concentrate on integrity of

reporting and opinion of the other opinion for various types of people. So, we

need to search for a finance model that could take us forward without falling in

the trap of being a tool in the hand of transitional governments and transitional

partisan political groups.

Going to the Shura political -- and this is a long discussion. I

would say that the Islamists thought that this stage is going through a huge

transformation because, frankly speaking, we have a problem of phraseology.

Most of the terminologies that you could listen to when you are debating this

issue from a religious point of view need to be rehabilitated. What does Shura

mean practically, what does it mean? What does Imam mean? You know, when

you say Imam? What does Shias Sharia mean? What does the concept of Oman

at this stage mean? So, a lot of terminologies should be rehabilitated in order to

serve the current transformation.

Personally, I do argue that democracy in a way is the final

representation of the word "Shura" as it existed in our history at the tradition. So,

the concept of Shura, the essence of Shura is manifested in the current democratic

process, and I don't have any doubt that if you would like to establish something

that is inspired by Islam you will take Shura and you will say Shura is equivalent

to democracy and, therefore, I am going to implement democracy as part of my

heritage and culture without any "but" because the word but here is going to rule a

lot of associated democracy, in my opinion, and that is a long debate.

The concept of Imam that existed -- the Imam is the ruler and the leader who has

certain kinds of duties within Islamic jurisprudence -- I do believe that the current

president or prime minister or whoever in any democratic state has different, you

know, status than the traditional Imam that existed in our history. So therefore,

we need to define new terminology to describe the duties of this person. And in

this case, it would be the constitutional mandate, it would be the conscience of the

society, it would be the legislations within Parliament.

So, this is why rehabilitation of Islamic phraseology is a necessity and

should be done within the Islamic paradigm rather than outside the Islamic

paradigm. Because for generations, when we feel that the Western countries, for

example, Western academics or analysts are trying to tell us how we should look

at our heritage, we become defensive. But I think we have great scholars and

intellectuals who should really sit down and come up with terminology that suits

our current reality from within our traditional religion, and in my opinion they

will never find much better than democracy to embrace as the legitimate Islamic

way of practicing politics in our current time.

About Jordan, the last issue. You know, monarchies in the Arab world have the following two choices to make: Either they pretend that the current reality in the Arab Spring only influences republics and so on and so forth, and so they are very safe, or they really take necessary steps to start opening up and converting their regimes into much more democratic ones. So, I would argue that constitutional monarchy in Jordan or constitutional monarchy in -- what do you call it? By the way, Morocco, where Morocco did actually start some kind of amendment in the constitution and they did really create some kind of at least transitional through free and fair elections in the government that was elected recently. I do believe these are necessary steps to match the spirit of the time.

The spirit of the time in the Arab world is at once freedom and democracy. Whoever resists that is going to face a lot of repercussions, regardless if he's a monarchy or he's a republic, or whatever he is. So, that is necessary, to understand the new generation. Not only the young people, the new generation of thinking. The conceptual framework that has become in front of us as a reality. You should remember that for the last maybe 10 years, all of us are sitting in front of screens and going through training courses and democracy and debate and discussion and rediscovering our identity and our future. It should not be ignored, otherwise we may face troubles, severe troubles, that might eradicate a lot of what we regard as conventional legitimacy. I think -- no, I mean there is

nothing in front of the Arab Spring that could survive if we don't take necessary measures.

Now, coming back to media and hypocrisy and media and Bahrain, in particular. You know, the issue of Bahrain came in a moment of time where other revolutions have taken place in the Arab world, including in Egypt, in Tunisia, and Libya, and in Yemen. Bahrain, when I was Al Jazeera, was one of the stories that we did cover. The opposition in Bahrain had access to Al Jazeera even before the revolution, and they were covered and their stories were always covered until our bureau or our correspondent was actually kicked out of Bahrain and the government put a lot of restrictions on Bahrain.

Regardless of that, we did continue to cover the story of Bahrain, sometimes with undercover correspondents who were able to go and do a lot of business. We were criticized by both parties. The opposition, who thought that we were not giving the same status like Egypt and Tunisia and Libya, which is true, and the government, who thinks we are exaggerating the story in Bahrain.

Now, from my point of view Bahrain has the following difference between it and the Arab Spring that happened in the rest of the Arab world. The accomplished revolutions in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Yemen did not match the uprising that happened in Bahrain. I mean, they are not equal in accomplishment and in success. That is due to many reasons, I don't want to go into that because that might create a lot of controversy again, but definitely the sectarian division of

the Bahraini society has led to a situation whereby there is majority of Sunnis

supporting the regime and majorities of Shia against the regime.

Do I like this? No, I don't like this. Do I subscribe to sectarian

worldview? No, but I'm analyzing and I'm describing a reality that has happened.

This led to a situation in Bahrain where Bahraini uprising did not become a

complete revolution like what we have seen in Yemen and in Egypt and the rest

of the Arab world.

The second point of view, which in my opinion should be taken

into consideration, the strategy of evidence that happened in Egypt and the short

time of it were extremely amazing, in a way, and earth-shattering. And the

strategic weight of Egypt and Egyptian weight within the region is huge, that

cannot be compared by any other country. So, revolution in Bahrain or uprising

in Bahrain, that is still continuing, should be covered by media, and should be

covered in a very just way, and it should always be covered in a brave manner as

well, especially when the government is blocking the way in front of journalists.

But, I cannot say that what has happened so far, especially when I was Al

Jazeera, was covering the Bahrain story within Al Jazeera, definitely the weight of

other stories was much more higher. The priorities of the revolution in Egypt and

in Libya, which was an international conflict, basically, were much higher than

what we have seen in Bahrain, and we don't know what's going to happen in

Bahrain in the future, but it's going to continue to be a dominant and most

important story, especially with regional interaction between the Arab world and

Iran and so on and so forth.

MR. SHAIKH: Thank you. Thank you for your answer.

I'm going to take a whole bunch of you and then I promise you you

can all go and have dinner. And in fact, we have some food for you. Let's start

with Dr. Zacharia -- and please, I know the temptation is to say a lot but if you

could make your points.

MR. ZACHARIA: I have two points, one two my friend Wadah

Khanfar. When you visit Egypt, please start with Tahrir Square and don't go with

remnants of the old regime. Go with the revolutionaries, like us, that you can see

Egypt well, Mr. Wadah, because you are revolutionary.

Second, I want to distinguish between the legitimacy,

constitutional, the traditional one, and revolutionary legitimacy, which is acquired

from Al Tahrir or the liberation areas. We have different characteristics from the

old legitimacy. By the way, we can say that democracy is not important for us

like freedom of speech, like distribution -- fair distribution of wealth, like the rule

of law. This is very important to us, I mean the new characters of the

revolutionary legitimacy. Highly different from the old.

We want to get rid of the old regime, or what traces we require.

All the laws, now they are using the old law to release Hosni Mubarak and hold

the revolutionaries. So, I want to concentrate revolutionary legitimacy is different

from the old one or the traditional legitimacy.

Thank you.

MR. SHAIKH: Thank you. We'll go to the lady in the middle here. Please.

SPEAKER: (Speaking Arabic.)

MR. SHAIKH: (Speaking Arabic.) I just realized that many of you don't have headphones, so unless your Arabic is as brilliant is Wadah's, you may not have understood. But in a nutshell, I think what Shaikh was saying was, he was questioning why Al Jazeera covered the Bahraini issue as it did. He sees it very much as being perpetrated by an opposition, perhaps being pushed by Iran, and seen in quite sectarian terms. And then, to David, was very much about political extremism, the right's political extremism in Europe. I think he was referring to the Austrian case in particular and what that phenomenon means with regards to Europe.

I'll take a few more questions, please. Thank you. We have microphones. Go ahead.

SPEAKER: Two quick questions. I hope they're quick, anyway. One just had to do kind of with the role of women within particularly the Arab region. I mean, it's still under great discussion even within Western democracies about potential affirmative action to ensure more women are involved, having quotas, et cetera. You talk a lot, Mr. Wadah, about defining new terms. If all of

those scholars that are defining those terms are male, they will bring only their

point of view towards defining that. What can be done to ensure that women are

part of this non-religious-focused but state-focused area going forward since they

are often slightly the majority or at least 50 percent of the population.

            The other question I have has to do with, again, democracy is ruled

by majority but not at the -- it doesn't mean that you ignore the minority, that the

minority needs to be protected. I'm an unusual case. My children and I hold

legally three nationalities and we've lived now for five years here in another

nation state, and what can be done to ensure that those minorities still have their --

regardless of religion, race, nationality, et cetera, are protected as those new

nation states are built.

            MR. SHAIKH: The gentleman back there.

            SPEAKER: My question is to Mr. Khanfar. Have you ever felt at

one point that you were hypocritical during the Libyan revolution? And if your

answer is no, that leads to another question. Why some groups are being given

the chance to use your platform more than other groups, and I'm speaking from

personal experience. And these groups have been using the experience of

appearance on Al Jazeera to grant some opposition leading the revolution now.

By the way, this group, they were the last to join the revolution and now they

almost completely control the revolution in Libya.

            And this leads to a third question, whether this is a hypocritical moment

from you personally, or is it a plan? Because I know that you were sympathetic

with this group. Thank you.

MR. SHAIKH: I'll take the gentleman all the way here and then

we'll take a few, come back.

SPEAKER: Thank you. My name is (inaudible), I'm a Bahraini

youth activist. My first question is to Mr. Miliband.

MR. SHAIKH: Can we just make it one question? Choose.

SPEAKER: I have two questions, one to Mr. Miliband. You talk

about legitimacy and delivery was one of the elements you discussed, but delivery

is a variable because it depends on economic situation and on resources, and on

the right people. So, the right people may not mean the right system, so you can't

discuss the legitimacy of a system based on the results of people.

My second question is to Mr. Wadah. I worked with Al Jazeera

before, I am very proud with the risk that I've taken. I have two notes for you.

First, the situation in Libya was also a split between the West and the East tribes,

and that did not affect your judgment on the matter. I'm not sure if sect is more

closer to you personally, but it is the same situation but different practices.

The other is, I just got out of prison a week ago and I would like to

say the poetic and beautifying of Arab Spring is actually hurting people on the

ground. It's like a moral relief for the people that are sitting in houses for the

Western government that are watching the news from your channels. They're not

doing enough because they feel that it's all about freedom and it's all going to

work out, and beautifying the Arab Spring is hurting people on the ground.

Thank you.

MR. SHAIKH: I'll just take one more question, please. All right,

Chris.

SPEAKER: (Inaudible), the Council for Arab-British

Understanding. I was actually pulling together a number of points you made.

David, you mentioned about the issue of efficiency of delivery, which is

obviously the crisis really in Europe that was mentioned. But how in a world

that's so dominated by media and so driven -- we talk about social networks in all

its forms. And in having to deal with such huge and massive political issues, can

we get away from having to respond instantly politically because of this 24-hours

permanently on media where people comment instantly and yet we're having to

actually sort out problems, you know, that really need a long-term vision and

thought to it.

MR. SHAIKH: Thank you very much. Would you like to start,

Wadah?

MR. KHANFAR: Yeah, okay. I would say that, you know, to

start with the remnants of the regime and the current beautifying of the Arab

Spring. We need to differentiate between the fact that we had in the Arab world a

great moment in our history where we were able to express our voices, to march

in the street, and to get rid of old regimes. That, in my opinion, is something that we should always be proud of. And we should not at all -- in fact, keeping this ideal is going to protect our post-revolution institutional and constitutional building. That's necessary. So, we should not play that down. That was a genius moment, that was a magnificent moment in our history, and it should continue to be a source of inspiration for us.

I realize that we are not in a status where we can declare that we have moved into democracy. Most of the bureaucracy in Egypt and the bureaucracy in Libya and in Tunisia -- not Libya, maybe. Maybe Libya is the exception because it doesn't have real bureaucracy. But Tunisia and Egypt and, so far, in Yemen, I think the current bureaucracy, the state bureaucracy, civil servants, basically, are the same people who used to torture, who used to put guys in jail, who used to censorship, and who used to do all these kinds of issues.

When I was in Tunisia recently I decided to go visit the jail where most, you know, of the famous politicians including the prime minister and minister of interior were in, (inaudible) Jail two hours far from Tunisia, and I went inside the jail and I met with the same director of the jail who is still there and who was defending what was happening in the jail, trying to explain to me his situation within a regime of (speaking Arabic). So, nothing really on the ground has changed. Most of the institutions are the same.

And while this could be positive, but it could be negative at the

same time. Maybe the speed of change that I wish to see and you wish to see, we do not see. But also on the other hand, this transition could be necessary or this coexistence of the revolutionary system within the old bureaucracy could be useful to maintain the integrity of the state, rather than going into this integration and fragmentation of the society and the state itself.

So, we need to be patient but at the same time we need to continue being vigilant and being careful to not allow our great achievement of withdrawing regimes, you know, going into the direction of mild democratic or sedu-democracy that might exist in the future.

Women and minorities. This is a huge debate as well. Again, I will go back to the same concern. In order to debate the issue of women, I do approach this matter from within the societies. So, we need an organic methodology of discussing the issue of women. A legitimate, organic, natural, social concept that emerges from within the society.

For years or for decades, the issues of women and minorities were discussed from within a Western prism, as far as the Arab world is concerned. So it was seen by a lot of people as a sort of manipulation of our current, you know, consensus within the Arab society to suit certain kinds of interests. This is why it was resisted by the societies.

But where we started regaining our voice and establishing our confidence within ourselves, I think the issue of women over the last two years has improved

much more than the last 20 years. We have seen in Tahrir Square, we have seen

in (inaudible) -- not in Tahrir Square, forget about Egypt because maybe Egypt is

much more liberal than the Yemen society. But in Yemen, we have seen women

leading demonstrations in a Tahrir Square in (inaudible). We have seen women,

you know, actually leading chiefs of tribes, chanting in front of them, which was a

taboo just two years ago. So there is new momentum within our societies that

will provide for this kind of change. Once we feel confident that this change is

not a conspiracy on our social and cultural society, you know, memory, and at the

same time it is a necessity for democratic transformation.

I agree with you, women in the Arab world do not have the same --

what they should have, actually, in the political process and in the social one, and

I do think that's going to change with time. Minorities, the same. We have never

had an issue of minorities within our collective memory. The memory of this part

of the world has been built on a mosaic of cultures, not majorities and minorities.

Even the world minority and majority do not exist in our lexicon, you know.

So, what we had, we had societies that exist of Muslims and Christians and

all various groups of sects and religious, you know, minorities, if you would like

to call them, in this part of the world. And you know, who knows, for example,

that the prime minister of -- what do you call it? Damascus, the prime minister of

Syria, after independence, was a Christian. The prime minister of Iraq after then

was a Christian. We have never had an issue if there is a Christian or a Muslim or

a Druze or Shia or Sunni.

With the arrival of the modern state and the concept of fragmentation that we had and then the concept of pro-Arab nationalism that existed, so we went into that arena. I think within the current situation, where we are trying to re-define the consensus again, I think minorities should also, again, be included within this mainstream and we should start eliminating the sectarian and the religious and the, you know, ethnic, you know, conceptual partition within our mind. That will be present in our reality, hopefully not very late.

And therefore, Libya -- just to conclude with Libya. Libya, we did cover Libya with a lot of precision, more than any other story. As you know, Libya -- we did not really exist in Libya. We had a correspondent and we had a bureau that did not have any freedom of movement within the country. From the first few days of the revolution in Libya, we decided to suspend our operation in Tripoli when we thought that the government of Gaddafi is using our bureau in order to pass propaganda messages through the wall, and that the same happened in Syria.

However, when we invited people inside Doha because we were banned from traveling to Libya, we made sure that to bring all sectors of the society, all representatives of the society -- and I would argue that people who were outside Libya, mainly, because inside Libya it was impossible to bring, most were amongst the liberal and secular elite, you know? If you remember the first

group that came to Doha and appear on an Al Jazeera screen -- and I was the

person who is arranging that, personally. We had (inaudible), we had al-Isawi,

we had Mahmoud Jibril, we had (inaudible) and we had Mahmoud Shamam.

These are people who were in a way or another resisting the regime of Gaddafi

outside Libya, and they had access to Al Jazeera.

Then after that, we had some other people also who represent

Islamic background and tribal background, and many other backgrounds. Would

you say that Al Jazeera was advocating a certain point of view in order to

promote, you know, this group over the other? That is, in my opinion, not true.

If there was something that we did, it was controlled by the

necessity of presence of certain people outside the country, and those who are

influential in the country when we did smuggle, literally, our SNGs and

broadcasting equipment into Benghazi and started hosting people on the ground

who are never known. Who are they? I mean, we know a lot of people outside

Libya but inside Libya most of the people who appeared on the screen were for

the first time in their life they do speak to a camera. So, I don't think that Al

Jazeera did at all adopt any particular partisanism or ideological or religious

agenda in Libya, neither in Syria or Tunisia or any other country that we reported

from.

MR. SHAIKH: David.

MR. MILIBAND: This is a very, very rich discussion. Let me try

and draw out a couple of points. One, we are being asked in a number of the

questions to dwell on eternal themes, whether democracy tends toward

dictatorship or tends toward pluralism. That is an eternal theme, not a new theme.

I think that the demands of pluralism are very, very taxing, very,

very hard because they demand that you respect minority rights, that you respect

the difference. But I feel that at the heart of at least one part of the Arab revolt,

there has been an assertion of individual human dignity. And the woman in

Tahrir Square who said, look, by asserting my own rights to wear hijab, I know I

am asserting the rights of others not to was asserting the most basic essence of

pluralism, and I think that that spirit is a very, very important one.

Secondly, though, these revolts are not just about people against

government. They are about stress and strife within regimes, military and civilian

parts. They are about different communities asserting themselves, sometimes

trying to assert themselves over other communities. And as we've heard in the

questions, they are also about how regional powers -- not Western powers, how

regional powers play their power. Play their financial power, play their political

power, play their theocratic power. And that makes me think that this isn't just

about eternal universal themes, it's also about some very, very local

circumstances.

We've talked rather quickly about countries that are actually very,

very different, and even coming from outside the region to sweep across from

North Africa right through the Middle East and even within the Middle East's own differences, I think the discussion of Bahrain has brought out how locality -- how all politics really is local. I think that one of the lessons I take out of this discussion is that underneath these grand themes are some real local particularities, and we missed them at our peril.

We were asked whether the media is dominant in the modern world, is the modern world dominated by the media? I think media is a symptom and a cause of the modern world. It's both. But my own view is that 24-hour media is making our electorates, our voters rather more clever than we give them credit for. It's a terrible thing to say in front of such a powerful man as Wadah Khanfar, but people don't believe everything that they are told on Al Jazeera, and that is actually a good thing, not a bad thing, because a critical mind is actually the essence of democracy and people with critical minds are essential.

So I would say we're actually in danger of overestimating the power of the media, because the truth is it's a cacophony of voices out there. As we heard from Gilles Kepel about the local vernacular that is now increasingly challenging the dominance of mainstream broadcasters. So, I would say that in that cacophony the bigger danger is not of media domination, it's of fragmentation.

Final point. I think it's very striking -- we haven't had a single question tonight about economics.

SPEAKER: Well, I said (inaudible).

MR. MILIBAND: Did you? Amidst your four or six questions I missed the one about economics, but I bow down.

MR. SHAIKH: (Inaudible) --

SPEAKER: You answered my question.

MR. MILIBAND: We've only had one question about economics asked by our friend here, and I wonder if we're not missing an important part of the story. Maybe not the spark that has lit these revolts, but I think that the course of them is going to be significantly determined by the way in which the -- especially the economies where there are democratic elections taking place, it's going to play -- one thing I should just say to our friend who was worried that I didn't answer questions. Actually, I didn't answer your question about Iraq. The truth about Iraq is that however much the people in the West were told one thing, they believed the opposite. And the idea that there was a Western conspiracy that brainwashed the Western public is really belied by what actually happened. People didn't believe what they were told, and the critical mind you could argue came into play.

But I do think that we neglect the economics at our peril, and anyone who looks at non-oil commodity prices in the last two or three years sees a very, very clear story and it's part of the economic -- part of the social and political changes that are underway.

MR. SHAIKH: Well, thank you very much. I'm not going to attempt to summarize this rich debate. I will let you clap, though, in one minute. I am going to attempt something.

We've heard a lot in terms of ideas from Wadah's ecosystems, the viability of nation states in this part of the world. Very interestingly, the scrutiny of politicians and the media, which we heard here. At the same time, questions of credibility and legitimacy as we move forward, and the demands of pluralism and of transforming societies.

I'm sure you'll agree, it's a very, very rich discussion and first and foremost -- first, I'd like to thank you. I was just looking around this audience and I think I'm extremely privileged to have all of you here.

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