

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

CONVERSATION WITH MARTIN INDYK, VP AND DIRECTOR OF
FOREIGN POLICY AT THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION, AND
H.E. SHEIKH HAMAD BIN JASSIM BIN JABR AL THANI,
PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, STATE
OF QATAR

Washington, D.C.

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. INDYK: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. If I could have your attention, please, I'm Martin Indyk, the Director of the Foreign Policy Program at Brookings. It's a real honor and a pleasure for me personally to have the opportunity to host Sheikh Hamad and thank him for his friendship over actually two decades now.

When we first had the idea at Brookings that Strobe Talbott, our President, spoke about of trying to deal with the divide created between the United States and the Islamic world in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, I first came to Sheikh Hamad and explained to him that we were going to be launching this project. And he said immediately, I will support it, but you have to do the conference in Doha. And I said, Doha, well that sounds like an interesting idea. And that's what we did, and ten years later we're celebrating a decade of efforts to bridge the divide thanks to the support of Sheikh Hamad and his

commitment to this project of building better relations between the United States and the Muslim world.

Three years into that, he suddenly then told me we want to have a Brookings in Doha. And I said, well, okay, we'll have a Brookings in Doha, too, and we ended up with the Brookings Doha Center. And so it's been that his vision has led us to two great enterprises that he has been the supporter of and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has worked with us on all of these years. I'm very glad to welcome here Ambassador Mohamed Al-Rumaihi, the Qatar Ambassador who was the Minister for Follow Up Affairs working for Sheikh Hamad and our partner in these enterprises. I want to also welcome all the other Ambassadors that have joined us this evening to honor Sheikh Hamad.

We're now on the record and, therefore, you can tweet away. And I have the opportunity now to do what I appreciate so much. We've done it many times before, to have a conversation with Sheikh Hamad.

I want to start if I could, Sheikh Hamad, with some of the enterprises that you've been so involved in. This is really kind of a general question, which is when you see all this turmoil in the Middle East, how do you view Qatar's role in terms of trying to influence things? Why is Qatar so actively engaged in trying to change the situation? What's your strategy and strategic objective?

SHEIKH HAMAD: Well, you remember Martin, we make many bets between me and you, and I won the last bet. Is that right?

MR. INDYK: That's right.

SHEIKH HAMAD: And you pay me the dollar.

MR. INDYK: Careful, we're on the record here.

SHEIKH HAMAD: It's only one dollar, but what about the bet?

Well, first of all, thank you very much, Martin. You've been a friend. We've known each other for two decades. We worked on many issues, sometimes in the good times, sometimes in the bad times, but we

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worked together as a friend, as a partner, when you are in, when you are out of the government, and it's my pleasure to be a friend to you.

Well, Qatar is in the middle of what's happening, how we can see it, what we can see. Do you remember -- and I say this publicly even at Brookings that things will change in the Middle East. It cannot stay where it was. The Middle East was before the Arab Spring happened a moment where we are standing still. Most of the leaders care about their position, how they give their children, their sons, to be predecessor, and they just want things to stay as it is.

Probably or most of the countries which I'm talking about, they have prosperities. They can have better economy, better education, better health care, but most of the focus was in the security -- security not for the people, security for the regime, let me put it this way. And over the last 30 years or 40 years, they built a skill, a very good skill, to keep the situation in hand, keep the security. I mean the

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security not for the country; I mean for the leaders or for their positions. They managed to do that for 30 or 40 years, but they never think over this 30 or 40 years to spend part of that time doing something for their countries so the people they can say okay, there is stability, political stability, but there is economically other prospects -- transparency, freedom of speech.

So it went on, and then the leaders start to forget that they have an agreement with the people. They thought that the people have to agree with them of what they have to do, and they just drift away from the mission to a guard mission, and that means the leaders knew what you cannot know or anyone know. And the people around them, of course, they want to live. So they follow and they try to defend the situation in these countries. And it went on and the fire start to be accumulated more and more with the people. No education, no jobs, no work, and it started in a simple city in Tunisia. By the way, I was in Tunisia two weeks before what happened in Tunisia, and I was

talking with the President about what could happen in Tunisia and in the poor places and why you don't do kind of housing, jobs, try to pay things.

And I say we can put program, Qatar could help in program, because that His Highness' vision is to help these countries if they want to help themselves. But maybe not because it's too late, but the wish of the leaders all the funds they needed for the security or for their own business, which can lead to what happened in the region.

What happened in the region was a revolution by all means, and I think we are in the beginning. I'm sorry to say that. I think it's not finished. And it's a big tsunami wave coming. We cannot choose for the countries who are their leaders or which party should win. But in the end they will be democracies in my opinion after what happened in the region. What kind of democracy? I think this is each country has to see their way of the will of the people, how they want it.

If we turn to our region -- I want to talk about our region. It's sensitive a little bit. It will not be good, but I have to talk. We don't have full democracy, but we don't have full dictatorship. And it seems that there is a relation between us and the people because I cannot say this. It has to be said by somebody else, an independent. I'm not an independent guy, but it seems there is a relation between the leadership and the people and the communication is more easy. Yes, there are mistakes in our region. Yes, we need to enhance a lot of regulation, a lot of rule, a lot of things.

But if we can see in the world size, if we compare, for example, the world and Qatar -- I don't want to talk about any other country -- and compare it with Libya, for example, which they are very rich and very unique place with an excellent people. They have knowledge. They work everywhere in the world, but for 42 years, Gaddafi destroyed them. If you go to Qatar, you can see the prosperity. Yes, there is a mistake. We cannot say that everything is right, but I believe

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Qatar in the middle of all what happened, we decided that we want what the people want of the Middle East. We are not going to choose or prefer anybody to lead any other countries. That's the job of the people in each country.

So for us, our position is to help, to assist if we can, because we need the stability after what happened in this region.

MR. INDYK: So I think that's very clear and there's plenty of history to point to the way in which Qatar is on the side of the people. It is a basic principle. But lately there is the impression created that Qatar is on the side of the people, but also it's on the side of the Muslim Brotherhood. That whether it's your bailing out of the Muslim Brotherhood government in Egypt or your support for the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria or Hamas in Gaza, there's the impression that you're taking sides. And I wonder if you could address that.

SHEIKH HAMAD: I am happy for this question because this thing has been spread a lot in

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Washington. And I know how it's being spread and you know from your old mission, me and you together, we know how the rumors in the Middle East happen. And when we are upset from each other, how we can try to make rumors against each other in the Middle East.

But now this is a cheap way. Why is it a cheap way? Because I know that our memory is short, but in the same time, there is like TV, Internet, whatever you want. When we started to support the Tunisian uprising, there was no Islamic Brotherhood. And when we visited Tunisia, the Emir, the Crown Prince, myself, there was no Islamic governments in Tunisia. When we announced that we are going to support them financially by half a billion dollars, there was no Islamic government in Tunisia. And that money being given before, the Islamic government come. The Tunisian people choose the Islamic government, and we should respect what the Tunisian people want to have. We did not elect this government. You can say we love them or we don't love them. That's another situation.

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But we will respect anything being chosen by the people, not by us. We cannot dictate to the Tunisian people which government there should be. If they choose tomorrow another government, we will stay friends and stay supportive for them because that's their own choice. It is same in Egypt, everybody talking about Islamic Brotherhood, and Qatar is supporting them.

Also, I know and you know that these rumors come from our region. Fine, we expect this. We've been used to this. We don't mind, but again, I will go to the history. When the army in Egypt takes over, the first visit was by the Crown Prince and the Emir and after myself before any Islamic government. When the government of Assam Sharif came to power, we announced our package and we paid our first aid to Egypt by supporting financially and by giving some loans to Egypt. It happened way before any Islamic Brotherhood come. And when the people choose the Islamic Brotherhood after that, we cannot stop in the

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middle of the road because that's also the choice of the people of Egypt.

So for us, we deal with the government and we fulfill our commitment to the government which we deal with. We cannot go back on our commitment. And our theory in that is today they choose an Islamic government. Tomorrow they might choose another government. After three years they will have election, and they will have parliamentary elections this year in Egypt. Whatever the people of Egypt will decide we will respect. Egypt is very important and a big Arab country and important not only for the region, for you, for Israel, but for everybody. Stability/instability in Egypt is a very dangerous game. And now there is play in Egypt for instability of Egypt. That game -- you can take this as a bet -- will not bring the people which they like to bring. But it will bring chaos to the street and when there is chaos in the street, there are extremists which we are forgetting them. Extremists which they can come in the streets and cause for all of us problem in the

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biggest Arab country. While the Islamic Brotherhood, which I don't want to talk on their behalf, they respect all their agreements with Israel and they announced this publically and they respect all the other agreements. When there were incidents in the border, they act immediately. What we need from them?

In my opinion, some of our region they did not like all what happened as a revolution in the beginning. And they don't like it when the Islamic Brotherhood come, but they did not like it before. So for me, it's nothing new. And I respect their view. Maybe they have a point. Maybe we are wrong. But as a small country, a small nation, we don't want anybody to interfere in our affairs in Qatar, but we respect the other will and the people's will in the other nations.

MR. INDYK: Let me raise another story that's out there. As Under Secretary Sherman said praising Qatar, you led the way in Syria against a brutal regime that is killing its own people -- over 70,000 now, a huge refugee problem and a terrible

situation. But the story around is that Qatar in taking the lead and has been also providing arms to what they refer to as the bad guys, the Nusra Front, the al-Qaida types. I wonder if you might address that.

SHEIKH HAMAD: I will tell you, we did not want to take the lead. We begged a lot of countries to start to take the lead and we'll be in the backseat. But we find ourselves in the front seat. That's a fact. That's true. First of all, if you remember what happened in Syria, it was not a revolution, but it was an uprising, asking for a few things. And they faced the first day with 160 guys in Iraq killed, men and women and children in Iraq killed the first day. Then His Highness, the Emir talked with Bashar by phone. And the Crown Prince told him some action needs to be taken. You have to do a few things to try to get control of the situation and that means you need to give up a lot of things. And you need the people around you to check who's doing his job or who is not doing his job.

A month later I went to see Bashar and I had a long conversation with him. And I told him -- he went, for example, in the parliament to do a speech, which they say will be important speech. He was joking about the people's blood in the street and he was joking and he was making some jokes in the parliament as nothing happened. So there was no serious speech to the nation and to the people, which were being killed and wounded.

And second thing he said he will have a big meeting with the opposition, but we saw that it was a joke. I don't want to go into details, but there was a promise and things and nothing happened. Then I went with the Arab League, leading the Arab League -- because I am the Chair of the Arab League in the Syrian matter -- and we got the conclusion that he's buying time. He wants to kill people. Then we came to our friends and started to take the matter in the Arab League for a few months before we come to you or anyone, try to solve it, send in monetary team, taking a lot of resolutions, try to talk to him, then we find

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the guy he have one way only, kill and kill and kill until you win.

Then we went to United Nations and I went by myself there and fortunately there is dispute in the United Nations, but also I have to say that we have to say or we have to do more. United States has to do more. I believe that if we stopped this one year ago, we will not see the bad people, which we are talking about. If this will take longer, we'll see more bad people. If we don't have -- if we consider ourselves good people to help the good people in Syria, there will be bad people who will help them. Bashar will live either through us and the international community and our friends to give the freedom to the people and to stop the killing in Syria, or the other terrorists will take him out. But later, don't blame us or you blame yourself because it will be our mistake together not to intervene. I don't say intervene by sending troops or by doing action. I'm not going into details. But we need to act together seriously to stop this. We put a lot of redlines. Chemicals? He

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used chemicals and there is evidence. But he used it in pockets, small pockets. He wanted to try your reaction. No reaction, he will escalate. He was using the bullets, then tanks, then airplanes, then rockets, then chemicals. So it's testing; what is the level and where to stop.

You said don't send the weapons or help the other while there are countries helping him. For me or for Qatar, we did not support any troops or any bad guys that you mentioned. We did not give any aid, financially or any other kind of aid, to these people. As you know, there is an operation room. Everybody knows it. It's not secret. In Jordan and in Turkey and we are dealing through these operation room with our allies, including United States.

So this rumor again it's between families, which sometimes jealous, sometimes we tease each other. Don't go to this business, Martin. You know this business for 20 years.

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MR. INDYK: You said that he's used chemical weapons. What do you think that the United States should do now about that?

SHEIKH HAMAD: I think we've been talking with your administration the last two days. Do you think we should say it publically? But I think we should say we need to do something, and I don't mean a military action, but we need to do something. And I'm sure your government knows what they should do and what they can do.

MR. INDYK: Iran, heavily involved in supporting the outside regime and continuing to pursue its nuclear ambitions. You, of course, are just across the Gulf. They are your neighbors. Are you worried about the way things are developing there on the nuclear front and how do you see that developing?

SHEIKH HAMAD: You know, my friend, we always worried from everything.

MR. INDYK: It's a dangerous neighborhood.

SHEIKH HAMAD: From everyone, not from our neighbors, but we have a good relation and good

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understanding with Iran. We don't agree with them in all their policies. They don't agree with all our policies. That's fair. If we talk about the nuclear, they have some rights, but we have some rights as a neighbor and we don't want to see any nuclear weapon in the region. That's something that is important for the stability.

Officially, they say they don't have any ambitions to have a nuclear weapon, and I hope that this is the case. If that's the case, they have the right to have the know-how. I believe the only way to solve this problem is by sitting directly together. I know there is five Class I meetings, but I think these meetings around the tables and with the photographs I don't think it will work. There is a lot of meetings could be done and a lot of progress could be done, but as you know, there is redlines for everybody. And you know their redlines, and they know your redlines. What is important now is both sides have to be serious and have to know that this has to be solved through peaceful talks, through serious talks, and with a

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timetable, setting a timetable, not to leave the timetable like this.

What I am worried about is that this will escalate in a moment where we'll have a clash. Seriously, we don't want to see a clash in our region. We cannot afford another clash in the region. As you know, over the last 30 or 40 years, from Saddam when he start first of all with Iran and the region from war to war. And I think you don't want the shock of energy. We don't want the shock of instability in the region. And for that reason we have to find a way. I know that you will be free from the energy things within the next 10 to 15 years, but still there is 10 to 15 years.

MR. INDYK: I promised Sheikh Hamad that we would have him out of here at 8:00. He's got to take his --

SHEIKH HAMAD: You said before 8:00.

MR. INDYK: My watch is not working properly. I have one last question for you, if you will allow me. In a similar conversation we had

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together in Doha a couple of years ago, I asked you about the Arab League peace initiative. And you said then that in order to make peace you have to talk to your enemy, just like you suggested now. The United States should talk to Iran. By the way, the United States is happy to talk to Iran. It's Iran that doesn't want to talk with us bilaterally.

But anyway, you said then that you have to talk to your enemy if you're going to make peace. And the Arab League peace initiative needs to deal with Israel. You're coming back to Washington this weekend to meet with Secretary Kerry. Secretary Kerry is putting an incredible amount of effort into trying to restart negotiations, trying to move this process forward. He's genuinely concerned about the window closing on peace between Israel and the Palestinians. And, frankly, he needs help of everybody who wants to see peace between the Israelis and Palestinians. What is it that the Arab League can do to help this effort?

SHEIKH HAMAD: Let me first start, Secretary John Kerry came to Doha and we met for a long time

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about this subject. And we talked over the phone and we will see him Monday, myself as the Chair of the peace initiative. Unfortunately, every problem they put me the Chair of.

MR. INDYK: Well, there are four of you so it's your own fault.

SHEIKH HAMAD: But it will not be for a long time. So I am encouraged with the way that Secretary John Kerry wants to deal with this problem. He's taking it seriously, the priority. He wants to do something. He knows that the window is not long. And I think he knows what needs to be done.

The problem is the parties. And I want to be very frank. The Arab is one of the parties, an important party. Israel, when they want to have a peace between them and the Palestinians, they want to have a peace between them and the Arabs. I understand this and it's legitimate. And for that, I don't see any problem that the Arab talks with the Israelis. But we talk when there is a real proposal on the table or real idea, actually, on the table. Yes, everyone

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could say this is accepted or this is not accepted, but the mediator has to come with an idea.

All of us we know what is the solution. All of us know the solution. The land of '67 will literally some swaps of same value. I think there are a lot of drafts. Some of it we know about, some of it has been hidden somewhere else about the solution. It needs leaders, strong leaders, to do and to have the guts in this. And I think it needs a mediator who should be fair and insisting to finish this in a timetable.

I am worried that this is like the Arab situation when I say 30 or 40 years with everything going. After '73, the war of '73, we have almost peace in the region. But how long could this peace stay? Today we have reasonable people. Maybe within 20 years we don't have reasonable people either on this side or this side and then we have a big war and then we have a clash. And Israel wants to live in peace. The Arab, they want to live in peace. But everything, their rights, have to be given to their

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own people, and the right to give the Palestinians the land of '67 as I mentioned with some swaps, agreeable swaps, between both sides. That's the beginning of the solution. Then we understand security has to be said and done, a lot of issues.

Also, financially we have to give the Palestinians prosperities to build their cities, to build their place. We cannot tell them to take this land and stay where you are and you have to behave or else. They see the people, their neighbor, in Israel living a certain life. They want something similar to that life, so we have to be also practical.

What is the solution? How can we come to the solution? And I believe the solution needs leaders locked in a place and finish the job. And if they don't finish the job, I think the United States has to say okay, go to the Security Council. That's the place, I'm finished. I know the tie between the United States and Israel, and I respect this totally. I know the commitment. But within 50 years, 30 years, the American people will start thinking. We have at

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that time maybe more than 200 or 300 Arabs, 2 billion Muslims. We are having all these conflicts with them because of Israel. Somebody will come and say okay, let us leave anyway, economically, politically, security, whatever the situation. What will you find? You will find different values for the two.

Still my advice as a guy who likes to see the peace and you know, Martin, we worked a lot for that. I worked a lot. I have a lot of criticism by working for the peace. My country has a lot of criticism by working for the peace. I would love and I would be so happy to see the peace in our region. You know, I am at the end of my career, and I would like to see the peace because I know economically prosperity in the region could be different. We can live and be -- you know, when I go to Europe now, my plane have to tear around Israel. Why? I lose fuel. Israel loses \$400 or \$500 to be paid to them for my -- you know, that's a small example. The Israeli have the same problem. Why they have the same problem? So

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we need to live together, but to live together it has a price from both sides have to be done.

MR. INDYK: So just to press this point. What is the Arab League going to do to help Secretary Kerry make that happen?

SHEIKH HAMAD: We would like to show our willingness to work with the administration here as a partner for the peace. And we have the Arab initiative. That could be a base to start working in it. And we are ready to hear, to listen, but there are principles that have to be respected between both sides.

MR. INDYK: Sheikh Hamad, I'm not sure what you mean by your career is coming to an end, but --

SHEIKH HAMAD: Coming to the end.

MR. INDYK: Well, so is mine, but that's not for a few years. Well, I hope it won't be for a few years. And whatever happens, I know that you have been a great friend of America and a great friend of Brookings, and we hope that this will last well into the future. Thank you so much for everything you've

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done for us, for the United States, and for the Middle East.

SHEIKH HAMAD: Thank you, Martin. I appreciate this.

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