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# BEYOND SECTARIANISM:
# THE NEW MIDDLE EAST COLD WAR

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P R O C E E D I N G S

DR. BARAKAT: May be the peace and blessings of God be upon you.

Good evening.

While I wait for the signal from Al Jazeera, can I start by saying that this is going to be broadcast live and I would really, really appreciate if you cannot just put your phone on silence but turn it off altogether; switch it off if you can? The event is going to be about an hour, an hour and 15 minutes, and it does interfere with their transmission.

(Pause)

DR. BARAKAT: Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for joining us and welcome to the Brookings Doha Center.

I would also like to extend a warm welcome to those watching us from home on Al Jazeera Mubasher.

My name is Sultan Barakat, and I'm the latest addition to the team here in Doha. I'm a senior fellow at the Brookings and Director of

Research in Doha.

And before that, I was a professor at the University of York in England for quite a long time, and I'm happy here to see some of my former students amongst the audience today.

I have the honor of moderating tonight's event, which is promising to be a very lively, very exciting event with very -- with three very distinguished speakers. The subject for tonight -- we're going to tackle the issue of sectarianism and conflict in the region.

Sectarianism has risen in the last few years in the media, across our region, and as a reason for -- given often for conflict, but there have been many explanations behind it. And what we're hoping today to do is to try and explore some of those hypotheses around the relationship between sectarianism and conflict across our region.

We live in a region where, until recently, we were very proud of mosaic it was made of in terms of religious makeup and ethnic diversity and so on.

And with the exception probably of the bitter civil war in Lebanon in the 1970s and 80s -- and I think many of us here are old enough to remember those days -- the whole issue of sectarianism and conflict was not there across the region.

Some would say it was suppressed; it was there, but it wasn't known. Others say it came with the extended degree of freedom that has been offered to the region, and so on.

In my view, I think we saw a major shift in the importance and the visual presence of sectarianism ever since the invasion or, depending on where you stand, the liberation of Iraq. From 2003 onwards, we saw an increased emphasis on the subject. It has entered the main vocabulary of our societies, not only in terms of defining conflict but also in terms of defining state-building, constitutions, et cetera, around the Arab World.

For tonight, we will be tackling some of those issues. The plan is very simple. For the first half an hour, I'm going -- after a very brief

introduction of our speakers, I'm going to ask each of them to give 10 minutes of an opening statement, a position on the subject, a certain angle on the subject, and then the rest of the time is really yours and, to some extent, mine. I will try and also add some questions to the discussion.

But the objective really is try and maximize the time in which there will be an active participation between the audience and our distinguished speakers.

First of all, please allow me to introduce Dr. Abdulkhaleq Abdulla.

Dr. Abdulkhaleq Abdulla is a professor of political science at the United Arab Emirates University in Al-Ain. He's a frequent commentator on Gulf and Arab affairs, has attended seminars and participated in teaching and lecturing in a large number of universities around the world, from North America, Europe, Australia and Japan.

And, more recently, he now teaches -- I learned just recently, actually -- teaches a course at

the Gulf Studies Center in Qatar University and has taught at Georgetown and many other distinguished universities.

He's the author of a number of publications, particularly focused on the politics in the Gulf and more so on security politics within the Gulf.

We're very much looking forward to hearing what Dr. Abdulla has to say, and I'm sure in his presentation he will bring in a badly needed regional perspective on this discussion.

In the middle, we have Dr. Gregory Gause, who I'm thrilled to finally meet in person. I've had the honor of working with him, reviewing his paper, when I first arrived as a director of research at the center, which was on this particular subject and has inspired us to hold this event and was entitled "Beyond Sectarianism: The New Cold War in the Middle East".

Dr. Gregory is a professor at the University of Texas A&M. He's the head of the International Affairs Department within the Bush School of

Government. And, before that, he had a very distinguished career at Vermont University in the U.S.

He has published extensively on the Middle East and has particular and very sensitive knowledge of the fine grain of the complex issues that we see in our region as a whole and in the Middle East and the Gulf, in particular.

Last, but not least, our third distinguished panelist is Dr. Mehran Kamrava, who comes not from such a far distance, just up the road from here, from Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, where he's a professor and a Director of the Center for International and Regional Studies.

Dr. Kamrava has written extensively on issues within the Middle East and, in particular, on the dynamics of ruling institutions and national security debates within our region. His most recent book, which again I had the honor of reviewing for one of the journals, is "Qatar: Small State, Big Politics," which has been very well received across the globe.

As I said at the beginning, I'd like to invite our speakers to start with a 10-minute statement, uninterrupted, and then we'll go into our discussions right away.

So, if I may, with your permission, start with Gregory given that his paper inspired us to hold this event.

If you can start with your statement, thank you.

DR. GAUSE: Thanks very much, Sultan. It's a pleasure to be here.

(Speaking Arabic) And now I'll go back to English.

I want to say a few things about the paper just to start us off, and I look forward to our discussion.

One of the reasons why I chose to write about what I'm calling the New Cold War in the Middle East is because I thought that there was a profound misunderstanding, particularly in the United States, about the nature of what was driving the international

relations of the region during this very difficult and sensitive period.

Almost anyone you talk to in the United States, and certainly most of the media representation, will tell you that this is a war between Sunnis and Shia, and then that would -- and then they would stop as if that was enough. Once you got that, you understood what you needed to understand about what was going on in the Middle East.

One of the most notorious things that I saw in this regard was a little article in the *Washington Post* that said the Sunni-Shia conflict "explained in two minutes".

And I thought, well, if they think they can explain it in two minutes, I better write something longer.

And the reason that I wanted to write this and Brookings suggested the title, "Beyond Sectarianism," which I think is an excellent one, is that I think that the sectarian tensions in the region, while real and undeniable, are not the major

driver of the regionwide crisis that we're seeing right now. They are, to some extent, a manifestation of that crisis, and they are part of that crisis, but they're not the cause of the crisis.

And my argument in the paper is that the cause of the regionwide crisis in the international politics of the Middle East is the weakening of state authority. Let me tell you what I mean by that.

I think that from the 1970s right up until the Arab Spring what we saw in the Arab World was a strengthening of state authority. From the weak states that were easily knocked over by military coups in the 1950s and 1960s, you saw, starting in the 1970s, the development of very strong regimes.

Now these regimes were, in many cases, brutal. They were stultifying in their control of social and economic and political life. They were not models of human rights or political freedoms. But they got control of their societies, and those societies were much more difficult to interfere in, to penetrate, than had been the case before.

But that project of strengthening the Arab State, which was assisted by the Oil Revolution in the oil-producing states but was not limited to the oil states, that project of state strengthening has, in many cases, been reversed or completely collapsed in recent years.

The cause of this New Middle East Cold War is, in my analysis, the exact same cause of the late Malcolm Kerr referred to as the Arab Cold War of the 1950s and 1960s. When you have weak states, when you have states where the central government cannot control its borders, cannot police its society, cannot obtain the loyalty of its citizens, you have a political vacuum in which outside powers can play.

And these outside powers can play not because they force themselves into the politics of these societies but because they're invited in by the players in those societies themselves. The factions that are trying to gain control within their own domestic environment look to outside allies for support and help.

Now, in the Middle East, there have always been these weak states that have been the arenas in which regional powers and global powers have played out their contest for influence.

Yemen has never been able to form a strong central government and has always been subject to external interventions.

Lebanon -- from the time of the civil war and even before, foreign powers, both regional powers and global powers, have made alliances with local factions within Lebanon in order to try to advance their interests.

But as long as the number of these weak states was relatively small, politics in the Middle East followed a more, if you will, classical model of state versus state.

But the weakening of the states in the Arab World -- the increasing number of these political vacuums -- has created the context for a New Middle East Cold War.

The Arab Spring didn't start this process.

This process was really started by the weakening of the Iraqi State. The Iraqi State was weakened through the misgovernment and misjudgment of Saddam Hussein, his invasion of Kuwait which led to the international sanctions, his misgovernment of Iraq after that.

But, finally, the thing that really kicked off this new round of the Middle East Cold War was the American invasion -- and I'll say invasion, not liberation -- of Iraq in 2003. A weakening state in Iraq became a failed state because the United States, as a conscious matter of policy, destroyed the instruments of governance in Iraq, disbanded the army, outlawed the ruling party and gutted the bureaucracy in a wildly ambitious and doomed-to-fail experiment in rebuilding the state from the ground-up.

With the opening of Iraq, with Iraq ceasing to be a player in the politics of the region and becoming a playing field, regional powers began to play out their contest for influence in the field of Iraqi domestic politics, and Iran was the most successful of those players.

The Arab Spring added two more political vacuums to this growing number of weakening and failed states in the region -- Syria, with the onset of the civil war, and Libya, with the collapse of the Gaddafi regime.

And now the Middle East has multiple arenas in which ambitious regional powers and global powers are playing out their contest for influence, and this is where the Cold War comes in. It's Iran. It's Saudi Arabia. It's Turkey. It's Qatar. It's the United States and France and Britain.

But the thing that makes this a cold war rather than a hot war is that this isn't a war that's conducted by organized armies fighting each other on a battlefield. This is a war for influence conducted within the domestic politics of these weak Arab States.

And the tools of the game are not powerful armies. The Iranians are not sending battalions and divisions into Iraq. And the only reason Qatar can play in this game is because it's a cold war, not a

hot war, because Qatar doesn't have battalions and divisions to send into battle.

Rather, the tools by which you advance your interests and extend your influence are your ability to support your allies and your clients in these bitter domestic political fights in Iraq, in Syria, in Yemen, in Libya.

Now sectarianism is part of the tools that connect the patrons and the clients. It's natural that Shia groups would look to the biggest Shia State in the region for support. It's natural that Sunni groups would look to Sunni powers for support. But that's not the cause of the crisis.

The cause of the crisis is the breakdown of state authority that makes those sectarian identities, or ethnic identities like Kurdish identity, or regional identities like Al-Hirak Al-Janubi in Yemen, or tribal identities and regional identities in Libya -- it's the failure of the state that raises those identities and makes them the most important and salient elements of your political life in these

countries.

So this Cold War is being played out in the domestic politics of these weak Arab States.

And this is bad news, right?

This is bad news for the future because, while we can think of short-term military and political steps that might roll back the power of the Islamic State in Iraq or might lead to short-term truces in certain areas of Syria between government forces and those fighting the government, we don't have a blueprint for how to reconstruct state authority in countries where the bureaucratic administration of the state has collapsed, where control of the borders has disappeared, where majorities of the citizens not only feel disconnected from the official ruling authority but see it as an enemy that they want to fight against.

My fear is that, much as the Lebanese civil war lasted for nearly two decades, we're in a situation where the reconstruction of state authority in these weak Arab States, in these political vacuums

that draw in the intervention of outsiders, could take just as long, unfortunately.

Let me just say one more thing, and that's about what's changed since the paper came out back in July.

Obviously, the rise of the Islamic State, the so-called Islamic State, not just in Syria but now in Iraq with the capture of Mosul and other territories in Iraq, has called even further into question Iraq's state capacity. Of all the weak states that I've listed, Iraq probably had the best chance to reconstruct some amount of state capacity because of the oil money that it had.

But I think that the success of the so-called Islamic State is a blow to the prospect of the reconstruction of state authority in those parts of Iraq that are not under control of the Kurdish regional government.

I think the rise of the so-called Islamic State also exacerbates, makes worse, the intra-Sunni dispute that is part of this New Middle East Cold War.

If this Cold War were completely sectarian, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Al Qaeda, the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic State would all be on the same side, but as you know, they are not. They are competing with each other for political power and popular support across the Sunni Arab World.

There is no sectarian conflict in Libya, but Libya is a site of the New Middle East Cold War.

The rise of the so-called Islamic State has brought the United States back into Iraqi politics in a more direct way. After this administration, the Obama Administration, desperately wanted to remove itself from the politics of Iraq and did not want to get involved in the politics of Syria, the rise of the Islamic State has reluctantly brought the Obama Administration back into Iraqi politics.

The other two things that have happened since the publication of the paper -- and I'll end with this and thank you for your indulgence, Sultan, in letting me go a little over -- is that Yemen is no longer a Saudi success story.

Yemen was a success story for the Saudis at the outset of the Arab Spring in that the Saudis and the GCC were able to negotiate the deal by which Ali Abdullah Saleh gave up power, and it appeared that with the development of the national dialogue in Yemen there was a chance that Yemen would avoid the bad consequences that we had seen in other parts of the Arab World from the fall of regimes. But with the Houthi advance on Sana'a, it seems to me that we can't count Yemen as even a partial success for Saudi foreign policy.

And, finally, Libya is developing into an even more complicated theater of the New Middle East Cold War, not a sectarian theater; this is an intra-Sunni conflict in Libya.

And with the new government in Egypt and the United Arab Emirates military supporting Khalifa Haftar, the seemingly developing division in the country between Benghazi and Tripoli, I think we're going to see Libya draw even more foreign attention and foreign intervention as we go down the line.

Thank you.

DR. BARAKAT: Thank you so much.

(Applause)

DR. BARAKAT: So sectarianism is a reality. The tension is a reality; it's there. But it's not to say the cause of what we're saying today. It has a lot to do with the state failure which raised identities.

Abdulkhaleq.

DR. ABDULLA: In the name of God, the most compassionate, and I'm happy here, to be here for the second turn of the Brookings Institution in Doha.

And I always enjoy reading and listening to my friend, Greg, but I always love to disagree with him, too -- sometimes slightly, sometimes more so. So I am going to, this time around, vehemently disagree with most of the things he just laid out.

To call what is happening, the huge mess and confusion that we are seeing in the Middle East, as a case of cold war or hot war or new war or old war, Cold War, I think it just doesn't make much of justice

to the complexity of the landscape.

So I'm not very much in favor of using and borrowing the concept that is Cold War from 50 years ago or from Malcolm Kerr to try to explain 21st Century reality.

And I think also that to speak of a breakdown of authority, a breakdown of states, as the main cause of the many conflicts and the many tensions and the many wars we have also does not really give me the full story here because there are so many failed states around the world and there are so many weak authorities all over the place, from Africa to Latin America, and they don't have as much wars and as much hot or cold wars, whatever wars, sectarian wars, as we are witnessing today throughout the region.

And I don't -- definitely, probably, the point I agree with Greg is it's not a sectarian war in one depth, of a sense. Maybe there is an element in there, but it does not explain the breakdown of complete order in this whole region extended from Pakistan all the way to Morocco.

According to the latest Global Tracking Conflict Report which was, I think, the Foreign Council -- Foreign Affairs Council in New York produced between now and then, there is, at this moment, 12 active armed conflicts in this small region extending from Afghanistan to Morocco, more armed conflict in this small region than you would see in all of Latin America, all of Africa and probably all of Asia combined, by the way. Okay?

This region is today probably the most violent region on Earth as it stands right now.

We have to come up with some different explanation. We have to be much more creative than borrowing sectarian concepts or cold war discourse to apply it to what is going on -- the big mess, the huge jungle, the Hobbesian war of everybody against everybody.

So I want to disagree with Greg on the explanation power of the cold war concept and the sectarian. It doesn't make sense.

Why do we have such -- so much violence in

this region all of a sudden, and how do we explain it?

I have no clue, by the way. Okay?

I am not going to lay out a good concept, but let me bring to your attention two things.

In the last five years, since the Arab Spring or the Arab revolutions of 2011, up until today, in the span in the last four or five years, you have two forces that are at work -- two huge forces that are at work that probably explain some, not all, of the confusion and of the realities and the violence that we have seen.

The first force is the forces of change. Force of change. Forces of change have been unleashed in the strongest way possible during this Arab Spring, throughout the Arab World, definitely in the five core Arab Spring states.

And the unleashing of forces of change came all of a sudden, without any preparation. Nobody knew how and when and why.

It is all still, you know, debatable, but forces of change came and put an end to six decades of

political stagnation in this place. Six decades, sixty years of political stagnation, of dictatorship, of authoritarianism, of corrupt government.

And the intention there was to bring some kind of democracy, probably, freedom and dignity to the Arab World.

But we know now that things didn't go the right way. We are still in these forces of changes in places like Libya, places like Egypt, Yemen, et cetera.

And I think forces of changes came not to weaken government, which is a really strong argument, strong enough, but they came to -- you know, to deliver some noble causes, and things just went wrong.

Probably, we are still in this transition period of democracy. And all transitions to democracy throughout history are always long, messy, and it's not going to be tidy. And I think we just have to go through this mess for a while.

We don't know what's the end result of it, but we are still in the first 10 minutes of it at

least, not the last 10 minutes of the power generated by forces of change.

That's one force that came in a strong way during the past four years.

The second force, much more destructive -- it's the forces of Islamic radicalism, forces of chaos, forces of instability, forces that we have not seen, forces of -- forces of calamity.

This came about as a result of, probably, American invasion of Baghdad or American inaction in Syria or whatever you call it. But this force of radicalism, Islamic radicalism, Islamic extremism, is at work, and it is profoundly different from forces of change.

Forces of extremism -- the intention is to end nation state as such, not end government. They want to get rid of nation state as we know it, as it has developed in this region in the past 150 years, since World War I or so to speak, whatever.

They want to just get rid of something called nation state as we know it. No more borders.

No more nation states.

Islamism, Pan-Islamism, Caliphate Islamism, Islamic State, et cetera, which extends from Morocco all the way to Indonesia -- that is forces of radicalism, extremism, which is much more destructive, by the way, and much more challenging, not just to --

DR. BARAKAT: Slow down.

DR. ABDULLA: Slow down?

DR. BARAKAT: Slow down a little bit.

DR. ABDULLA: Maybe I'm talking too loud also?

DR. BARAKAT: No.

DR. ABDULLA: Okay.

DR. BARAKAT: Loud is good, but speak --

DR. ABDULLA: Speak slower, okay.

So we have, at work here, forces of destruction, forces of extremism. And this force of extremism does not have any noble, I guess, goals, such as forces of change. They really want to get rid of nation state and play havoc in the region, and that's what they're doing.

And they're going to be around for a while. Once again, we are in for the first 5 minutes of the hour, not the first 10 minutes of the hour.

This thing is going to be around for a while, and it is going to play -- bring a lot of destruction to cities in Iraq, cities in Syria, especially Sunni cities -- Fallujah and Tikrit and Mosul -- as Sunni cities in Syria.

Jableh, Homs and Hama, et cetera, has been completely shuttered. We're going to see probably the same amount of destruction and agonies that we have seen over the last three years in Syria.

So we have two forces at play, and they are changing the entire dynamics, the entire landscape, and they are bringing so much dynamics of their own.

We don't know; nobody knows what is the end result of all of this.

We don't know where this force of extremism and radicalism is going to end. What is the end result of it?

We don't know also what is the end result of

the forces of change.

What we know for sure at this moment -- that these forces of extremism has been all of a sudden globalized, with jumping in of the American and with other 50 states.

And never -- whenever the American come, they make more mistakes and they bring more problem than solve problem.

So I'm a bit pessimistic here, and I'm not seeing anything in the horizon that is good news. It is definitely glass all empty, not even half empty.

And I'm sorry to end my talk about what's going on -- this messy jungle, Hobbesian war, not cold war or hot war.

There is going to be civil war over sectarian war on top of hot war on top of global war, all combined in this stretch of land between Pakistan and Morocco. It is not a very happy place at this moment.

Thank you very much.

(Applause)

DR. BARAKAT: Thank you very much, Abdulkhaleq.

So it's -- you agree it's not a sectarian war. But the answer cannot be found in the theory around failed state and cold war, and one should examine in more detail those forces of change and forces of extremisms that you're referring to. We'll come back to them in a few minutes.

Mehran.

DR. KAMRAVA: Thank you.

Let me start by thanking Brookings Doha Center. It's an honor and a privilege being here. I've been here a number of times, and I've always learned, as I am learning now.

I happen to be one of those political scientists who thinks that states fundamentally base their foreign policies on their interests, and although they might express those interests in terms of identity and ideology, fundamentally, states pursue foreign policies that serve their long-term and short-term interests in terms of strategies and priorities

that are calculated in terms of maximizing benefits.

And, as Greg alluded to and so did Abdulkhaleq, this region of ours has been one in which we've seen intense strategic competition and conflict for a number of decades, and this strategic conflict and competition has been nothing new.

But since the Arab Spring, since late 2010-2011, this strategic competition in between countries has assumed a much more intense and a slightly different form, and in a number of places that framing of strategic interests and framing of foreign policy agendas has assumed a very sectarian form.

We also should remind ourselves; remember that oftentimes public -- the public, people are extremely susceptible to how states frame issues.

And so when a state frames an issue in sectarian terms of in terms of identity and in terms of ideology, if not everybody, a majority of the population, even if not an overwhelming majority of the population, but certainly a majority of the population tends to buy into that framing, the way

that states frame certain issues.

So, if a state frames an issue in sectarian terms, then it does tend to have some level of resonance in -- among the population.

Going back to the strategic competition, as it's been already mentioned, it's nothing new. And, if we look at our own region here, for example, we know that there's been strategic competition between Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirate (sic). We know, for example, that the GCC doesn't have its much promised central bank because Riyadh and Abu Dhabi can't decide, or can't agree on, where they want the bank to be located.

Currently, for example, we see the strategic competition between Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

Or, if you happen to follow Dr. Abdulkhaleq's tweets, you know, for example, about the strategic competition between Qatar and the United Arab Emirate.

UAE and Iran compete strategically, and of course a number of others -- other regional actors.

Again, these competitions are not sectarian although sometimes states frame their competition in sectarian terms, but we see from what's happening in our own region that the strategic competitions have a different root cause.

And, since 2011, the competition has been -- or, the strategic competition and strategic debates have been much more intense.

And here, after 2011, in our own Gulf Region, we see that a number of countries have been fundamentally worried about their own domestic stability. When the tremors of the Arab Spring reached the shores of the Gulf, in Bahrain in particular, we see all of a sudden the state seeing the Bahraini uprising, the national uprising in Bahrain, as an existential threat and then framing it in sectarian terms.

And, of course, we have in our own region Saudi Arabia, one of the -- a country which, by virtue of its size, its history, its self-identity, sees itself as a fundamentally important actor, not just in

the Gulf Region, not just in the Arabian Peninsula and within the GCC, but in the larger Middle East. And it sees that it has a fundamental role to play in shaping the direction and the influence of the 2011 Arab uprisings.

And the way that the Saudis go about this results in either temporary marriages of convenience. For example, Saudi Arabia and UAE set aside their strategic differences of opinion and begin to cooperate whereas -- and Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. But then it also creates fundamental disagreements within the GCC between Saudi Arabia and Qatar, for example, which we see now.

And, if we look at the broader landscape of the Middle East, we see that there are a number of tension areas, as Greg very articulately outlined, that really give substance and an edge to the strategic competition that didn't exist anymore.

Now this is all happening; this competition is happening within the context for the first time in 35 years of the possibility -- possibility, not a

reality, but a possibility -- of a rapprochement between Iran.

And this possibility of the rapprochement has thrown into utter confusion and panic many of the regional players in the GCC, who for the last 35 years have been accustomed to capitalizing on U.S.-Iranian tensions in order to use that as leverage in relation to the United States -- getting American security guarantees, ensuring that the United States looks the other way in terms of their own violations of human rights and their own domestic political shortcomings.

And now that there is a possibility of a rapprochement and the regional calculus might change, that, of course, creates an utter confusion. And we've seen this in terms of the op-ed pieces, for example, that Saudi ambassadors have written in the *Washington Post* and in other American media outlets, saying, you've got to take us seriously, Americans, or we're going to fundamentally change our posture.

So, within that context of a possibility of a rapprochement and the regional perceptions to this

possible rapprochement between the United States and Iran, there are certain very critical developments that are happening -- for example, Libya.

And in relation to Libya, we don't know yet if what we're witnessing in Libya is a state-building process or, as Greg mentioned, the process of implosion or collapse of the Libyan state. And that political vacuum has created opportunities, for example, for Egypt and the United Arab Emirate to go and try and shape Libya's destiny to their own liking and in accordance to their own strategic objectives.

Same thing in Yemen. The backlash by Houthis against social and political marginalization has created a worst case scenario for the Saudis who have long considered Yemen their own backyard and their own success story.

In fact, if you remember, in the mid-2000s the Saudis -- when Qatar wanted to mediate in Yemen and to replicate in Yemen its successful mediation practices in relation to Lebanon and the Sudan, the Saudis told Qatar to back off; this is our backyard,

and we're the dominate hegemonic power in Yemen.

And, of course, we're seeing Yemen in unfortunate utter chaos.

And, of course, Iraq and Syria -- there's been a dismemberment and a meaningful absence of central authority, and this has created a situation similar to Afghanistan of the 1980s, where Iraq has now become the perfect petri dish for the growth of all sorts of unsavory characters such as Da'esh and other groups, both Iraq and Syria.

And all of this is, of course, happening at a time of profound unease in regional capitals, not just because of what is happening regionally, at the regional level, but also at the domestic level.

And what we are seeing is that, in particular, in Saudi Arabia and in the United Arab Emirate, we have the emergence, not in Saudi Arabia for the first time but in the UAE for the first time, the emergence of murmurings among national populations in terms of their attraction to non-state actors.

You know that, for example, in Saudi Arabia,

the second largest foreign contingent joining Da'esh is -- or, the second largest contingent joining Da'esh is Saudi. According to some reports, the largest contingent of foreigners joining Da'esh are Tunisians, approximately 3,000, and then the second group are the Saudis, that number around 2,500 in terms of estimates -- an estimate of 2,500.

But also, for the first time, we have in the United Arab Emirate the appeal of the Muslim Brotherhood among Emiratis. And this, of course, is cause for profound unease and a sense of discomfort among the Emirati political leadership.

And this domestic challenge for the first time, at a time of profound regional changes and strategic competition, is, of course, one of the main driving forces of some of the extreme reactions that we see coming out of Riyadh and Abu Dhabi.

So let me end by mentioning that regional tensions, unfortunately, are not going away and neither are divergent strategic interests and competition, which is likely to remain a dominant

characteristic of the region, but neither are domestic political challenges.

I know our focus here has been on regional developments, but domestic regional challenges, particularly in places that we have perceived as immune to domestic political instability, not just Saudi Arabia, but the UAE, these, of course, are issues that we need to take into account.

Thank you.

(Applause)

DR. BARAKAT: Great. Thank you so much.

So it's about strategic competition between regional forces driven by regional interests and fed, or maybe also motivated, by some domestic challenges across region.

I'd like to go back to Greg, if I may.

It struck me, the statement you made about the failure of the state has led to the rise in those identities, in the sectarian identities.

Now some would argue the other way around; say it's the failure of the state to recognize those

identities that has led to us having, for many decades, hollow states. There was very little connection between the citizen and the state in many of those states that existed.

And in some cases they went to the extreme of asking people, not even referring to their family name, the tribal association and so on. We have the situation in Somalia with Aidid. We had the situation in Iraq with -- under Saddam, and so on.

So the identity, the cultural dimension of it, has been suppressed. I don't know if it was based on an understanding of the dangers it holds or it was just this is how the ideology at the time demanded it to be.

But some would argue that it's that failure to recognize identity that has led us to where we are today, where suddenly all the covers are out, the pressure is off, people have the freedom to express and, combined with that, maybe some of what Abdulkhaleq was referring to in terms of the forces of change around us, the change in terms of

telecommunication, access to knowledge, knowing what's happening across the other side of the border and even as far as the United States and America, how people have the opportunity to live, and so on.

What would you say for that?

DR. GAUSE: Well, I think that the issue here isn't that states tried to deny basic cultural identities. It's that they played a double game, right?

A state like the Ba'athist regimes in Iraq and Syria, for example, at their official level, propounded an identity of Arab nationalism but, of course, at the level of real political power, reserved it for minorities -- sectarian minorities in each of these cases.

And so it's not so much that they denied these identities. It's that they spoke as if they were denying them but actually were privileging them.

And I think that as the -- for example, in Iraq, under sanctions.

Before sanctions, I think Saddam Hussein and

the Ba'ath Party had enough money and enough ambition that -- well, really before the Iran-Iraq War, I should say -- that they tried to build a state in which ethnic and sectarian identities were played down. The vast majority of the members of the Ba'ath Party in Iraq were Shia Arabs. Kurdish issue is a different story because of the nationalist issue there.

But when the -- when Saddam Hussein invaded Iran and started playing the sectarian card there, and then when he invaded Kuwait and failed and the sanctions were put on, he relied more and more on the Sunni minority within the Arab community in Iraq for his regime.

I think this is true to a lesser extent of the Assad regime in Syria as well.

But I think acknowledgement of these identities doesn't necessarily lead to a peaceful result.

I mean, we know the Lebanese political system was built on an open acknowledge of sectarian

identity, right? The President has to be a Maronite; the prime minister has to be a Sunni, all the way down to basically every government job being distributed according to a sectarian basis.

I mean, that's a state that built sectarianism into its very fiber, and yet, it couldn't prevent a civil war.

The way I see this is that when the state ceases to perform its basic functions of providing the citizens, security, a basic level of economic activity and wealth, when it ceases to be able to control its borders, people look to communities that will provide these things for them. People look to the communities in which they will be protected, in which their needs will be taken care of, in which they'll be respected.

And because of the historical development of the Mashriq, these communities are frequently sectarian, not in Libya, not necessarily in Yemen all the time, and I think that's where we get sectarianism.

I mean, the state exploits it, but then when

the state collapses you have no option but to look to these communities that will protect you.

DR. BARAKAT: Thank you so much.

Abdulkhaleq, you spoke eloquently about those forces of change.

And one that wasn't maybe clearly articulated is the economic change that took place and the global recession in 2008-2009, which I don't know if it has played a role at all in exposing the vulnerability of a lot of economic systems.

And, as you know, for the last 20 years ago or so, there has been a lot of calls for restructuring economics in the region, particularly in the middle and lower-income Arab countries, and they have for many, many years floated on international aid and assistance and regional assistance, and so on. There have been extreme cuts introduced in those decades. People have really felt the pressure, economically.

Was that an element that added to the level of frustration that led people to display it in a sectarian form, or was it -- is it not related at all?

DR. ABDULLA: Short answer, probably not related.

DR. BARAKAT: Not at all?

DR. ABDULLA: Well, I mean, the short answer is -- you know, I mean, the 2008 financial crisis, et cetera, probably has very little to do with the forces of change that was unleashed in Egypt, Tunisia, throughout the Arab World.

I don't see a direct causal relationship, but you could stretch your imagination and probably put things together, and maybe there is a link.

The forces of change we have seen that change the status quo, the stagnation, the 40 years of stagnation in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and traveled all the way to Yemen and then to Syria and all over the place, has their origin inside each of these countries and little related to the financial crisis that took place in New York and the financial sector. However, you could always make, you know, a link of a sort.

So the first forces that I was referring to specifically surprised everybody, came out of nowhere

sometimes, and they have their own roots in the grounds inside each one of these five Arab Spring countries.

DR. BARAKAT: The force of extremism -- I mean, we go back to 1979 and the Iranian Revolution, and the fear on this side of the Gulf was of exporting the revolution.

Now we're talking about a different form of fear.

Meanwhile, it was this side of the Gulf that helped maybe export some form of extremism to Afghanistan, to try and liberate Afghanistan from the Communist rule.

Now there's been this dynamic going on.

Could it not be explained as it has just come back home? I mean, what we invested a lot of money and time in the 1980s has come back to haunt us.

DR. ABDULLA: The main support for the Afghan Taliban or before that was coming from the United States of America and not from this region to start with. Okay.

That's the main -- where the main aid and weapon and aid came from. So they should go to the United States of America, not come back to Saudi Arabia, although there are fighters who came from the region.

Most of their recruits were not from Saudi Arabia either. They were from all over the place.

So it's not really a Gulf thing, that we went over there and we fought and now they are back here.

Most of these guys today are in Syria, not in Saudi Arabia. They are in Yemen, not in Qatar, UAE or Oman, et cetera.

I mean, that kind of talk sometimes does not really resonate very well with the facts on the ground just as much as what Mehran said.

I thought I was going to disagree with you, Greg, but I have thousands of disagreements with what Mehran have just told you here and the audience, including what he said about the fact that UAE and Egypt are shaping Libya's destiny to their own liking.

I don't know where you bring this from.

I don't agree also with the fact that you're saying that the second largest contingents fighting with Da'esh are from Saudi Arabia. Your numbers are wrong, Mehran. I'll give you the proper number when we go out if you want.

I don't think that you are anywhere close to say that Muslim Brotherhood in UAE have a vast support and have a vast appeal. I don't know where you bring that from in your analysis to make a case which doesn't stand the analysis.

So, you know, I hope there is something more interesting that I could respond to here so far.

DR. BARAKAT: Well, I mean, I disagree on the Afghanistan thing because the Gulf countries, particularly, financed quite a lot of it at some stage.

And the ideology wasn't just cooked in the United States. It had to have some source -- the jihadi ideology.

DR. ABDULLA: It was an anti-Soviet thing.

The anti-Communist union was cooked in the CIA --

DR. BARAKAT: The jihadi ideology was put together in collaboration --

DR. ABDULLA: -- and that is where it is started from so far.

It's an anti-Communist, anti-Soviet union, and that's where it came from.

DR. BARAKAT: Sure.

DR. ABDULLA: It was from Washington, not from Riyadh or any Gulf capital.

DR. BARAKAT: Okay. We'll come back to this. I think we'll hear from the audience in a minute.

But before I open the floor to questions, I'd like to ask Mehran another question related to interests.

I mean, when the rest of the world, when they fight over strategic interests, you can sort of identify what the interests are -- economic, political, and so on.

But within the Arab World, people are quite

confused -- at least, I'm confused -- as to what is the real interest behind, say, the alliances that exist today, the division that was described by Greg between the Sunni states. It's not really clear. There is no sort of net public good at the end of it that they fight for.

And is it related to the fact that we have a lot of personality-driven politics, that people could be at the personal level. Two guys get upset from each other. They exchange words in an Arab League meeting, as happened in the past. They turn their shoulders to each other, and that's it.

And we now talk about strategic interests.

Or, is it something deeper than that.

DR. KAMRAVA: I think there is certainly an element of personality-driven politics that has long shaped Middle East international relations, and I don't think that can be denied. But I think we cannot reduce regional politics to often personality conflicts or personality whims.

Sometimes we don't pay enough attention to

personality issues. For example, the lack of clarity over the issue of succession in Saudi Arabia, no doubt, has consequences in the way that Saudi Arabia as conducted its foreign policy over the last couple of years -- who's calling the shots in Riyadh insofar as, for example, Syria policy, Saudi's Syria policy, is concerned. And therefore, those are issues that are, no doubt, important.

But at the same time, as we pay attention to those, we've got to also be mindful of the -- some of the strategic calculations that countries have insofar as, for example, their support of certain groups is concerned. And those groups could pose a domestic threat to some other country.

Let's say, for example, if you have a hypothetical country in the Gulf Region that supports, or is accused of supporting, the Muslim Brotherhood, and the Muslim Brotherhood is seen as a domestic threat in a neighboring country. So, of course, that strategic calculation comes into play.

DR. BARAKAT: Great. Thank you so much.

We'll open now the floor for questions. What I'll do is I'll take four questions at a time, if you'll allow me, and then we'll take another four, please.

If you could please introduce yourself as you speak.

QUESTIONER: Dr. Hadeep from the Identity Studies Center.

I would like to ask -- I would like to ask; should we be taking theories and then connecting these three presuppositions or theories that (inaudible) had begun with -- first, that there is a sectarian conflict in the region; second, that this region is (inaudible) Afghanistan; and third, speaking about the failure of the state, of the weakening of the state.

There's a difference between the state and the regime. When we speak about the failure of the regime, especially that most of the regimes in the Arab countries are (inaudible) democratic regimes supported by the rest.

So my question is about the presupposition

that I disagree with, that this region has (inaudible) Sunnis and Shias together without any sectarian conflict.

And I also have some reservations about the information presented by my colleague. We must distinguish when a media person speaks about news but while an academician or a researcher must speak something documented.

You spoke -- you said that there's a sectarian domestic conflict in Iraq and that Iraq (inaudible) was based on sectarian.

No, the leaders of the Iraqi army were all Shias.

So this is the question I'm asking, and these are the (inaudible) question. Who gave Iraq to Iran? Is it U.S.A. or the international order?

Who has given free hand to the agreement between Iran and the West, and who has given a free hand to Iran in the region (inaudible) act freely and has given a blind eye toward what it's doing there?

We must know that the Iran project is a

political one, using identity for its political purposes (inaudible) about the studies and that (inaudible). This is what the international (inaudible) is trying to say.

DR. BARAKAT: We'll take another question.

QUESTIONER: Thank you very much. I thank all the speakers, the panelists here, and I would like to ask two questions, related one to the other.

Mr. Gregory spoke about the weakening of the state and the vacuum that led to the intervention of -- or attracting foreign intervention as if there was any sense that these forces came without a (inaudible) plan.

This is contradictory to what we've heard from the American leadership for the past two decades, speaking about building (inaudible) Middle East or a bigger Middle East and speaking about the relation of the region and the spread of democracy and by using creative chaos as one of the means for this.

What we have now is a creative chaos. This all led to a setback (inaudible).

And let us speak about the new threat in the region, which is the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian and Arab territories and Israel's launching (inaudible) was on its neighboring countries as was the case several times in Gaza and south of Lebanon.

And also speaking about -- saying that the main characteristic of the conflict is a sectarian thing -- how can this explain the lies that we've seen recently in the leadership of U.S.A., which were (inaudible) to by Sunni countries in the region against Da'esh, which many people think is the spearhead of the fight (inaudible) threats.

If these countries want to destroy Da'esh, it doesn't mean that they want Iran to expand its influence (inaudible). Everybody knows that the Iranian is the strongest threat in the region.

QUESTIONER: I am a friend of Dr. Mehran -- Dr. Zachary Matar, Egyptian revolutionary against the military (inaudible) of Egypt.

Dr. Abdulla, I think that the root causes of

extremism, religious extremism, began in the first war in Afghanistan when the American intelligence services used the young Muslims and mobilized them to fight the Soviet Union, saying that (inaudible) is the keys to the paradise isle of fighting (inaudible).

The U.S.A. spent $20 billion, and the Gulf States spent $70 billion. You have equipped these people, and then these people became stray dogs that are biting you now.

These are the root causes of the (inaudible).

I want also to know (inaudible) has the advantage of the good thing that you have stopped the building of a Kurdish state and stopped the building of a Shia state and all the money that's spent to fight it.

I think this is enough, and I will leave the rest to the other guy.

DR. BARAKAT: We'll take the next question, and then we'll come back in a second round.

QUESTIONER: Thank you.

Fareet Ablusi. I'm a communication expert. I just want to make a few notes.

We talk very much about the micro scene, not of the macro scene.

And I agree with the Ambassador; Israel or Palestine was never mentioned.

We know Ben-Gurion; in '52, he said that the three states in the region -- Iraq, Syria and Egypt -- are the biggest threats. We started with Iraq, with Egypt, now with Syria.

Number three, Martin Indyk here in Brookings and -- sorry, Martin Indyk, in his -- when he was here in Brookings this year, Dr. Zachary asked him, what is the axis of American policy in the Middle East?

He said four -- security of Israel, oil, oil and oil.

So I agree with the Professor Abdulkhaleq when he said that with the Americans, they come, you know, with a certain idea.

Again, in '78 December, President Carter passed the Christmas with the Shah of Iran. In March

'79, Khomeini was in Tehran. The reason was, a think tank in Washington said and Professor Abdulkhaleq said, it's the religion against Communism.

In three months -- when he toasted in December the most stable regime in the region, three months later, in March '79, Khomeini was in Tehran.

Just one last thing, when the Crusaders came to the region in the 10th Century, or 11th, who was ruling was the Fatimids, the Shias. And their lead, the head of the army, was Salah ad-Din, the Sunni. In all the literature of that time, we don't have a conflict of Sunni and Shia.

I think what's happening now -- they want to change the direction of the enemies, from Israel to Iran. Iran's conflict with the Arabs is more of a cultural Farsi versus Arabic, using the ideology against this.

And there are many other comments on this in our study, but I think we talked about the micro. We should see the big scene against the small scene so we can understand it much better.

Thank you.

DR. BARAKAT: Thank you so much.

Let me go back to our panelists. I'd like to start with Abdulkhaleq on the issue of extremism and the statement made there that agreed with the fact that it was exported, financed from this region.

I know you disagree with it, but could you say where actually it has come from and articulate what you think, what you disagree with exactly with that perception?

DR. ABDULLA: I don't know whether I disagree or if he just preempted my -- but I think -- look, there is plenty of extremism here and there and everywhere. Extremism is not just a Middle East and Arab/Islamic thing. There is plenty of extremism back in Europe -- Fascism extremism. Communism has extremism, et cetera.

So extremism is not an Islamic product or an Arab product or a Middle East product. Let's just settle that to start with. Okay?

We do have our own share, and we have a

problem with it at the moment, but just to pretend or to assume that this is the only and an Arab or Islamic phenomenon just doesn't make sense.

Two, if you look at our now extremism, meaning ISIS and all of the above, where they come from, there is, of course, roots right in the region here.

Probably, you go back to Islamic Revolution in Iran. It set -- a lot of it opened doors for Islamists of all sorts to become revolutionaries and to become armed and to become anti-status quo.

Khomeini have set in motion in 1979 all sorts of Islamic craziness, I would call. Okay? Throughout the region. Revolutionaries who thought, you know, here is the model and here it is.

So you go back to Tehran; you go back to Iran.

Second, I think you go back also to people, ugly leaders, like Assad. And, instead of being rational enough or realistic enough to deal with the problem as it is, it went into, you know, dealing in

an armed -- trying to militarize the situation in Iran -- in Syria, and we got where we got.

And when Iran jumped in and when Hezbollah jumped in, the Sunnis just went crazy, and they came to the rescue of the Sunni population who are being slaughtered -- 200,000 Sunnis literally killed in Syria. And that, you know, brings a lot of anger from extremists.

And that's one.

You look at Maliki and what he has done in Iraq for the past six or seven or eight years and the kind of sectarian politics that he followed. That's a ground for extremism, too.

Having said all of this, there is a lot of -- I'll now speak Arabic.

Extremism is related with Muslim Brotherhood; we must be very clear about this.

The Muslim Brotherhood during the 60s and 70s (inaudible) and to call for violence (inaudible) from the Muslim Brotherhood. And all the jihadists came from under the cloak of the Muslim Brotherhood.

So they are one of the leaders of the extremism that is in the region, if you pretend that you understand them.

Muslim Brotherhood in Iran and everything.

Everybody -- American inaction and American action, American invasion, American stupidity, whatever, is responsible for extremism in the region.

So everybody is responsible.

I think at the moment we shouldn't go into searching for the blame game. Okay?

We really need to tackle the extremism. It's one of our problem in this region, and I think we have to fight it squarely and in the best way possible. And it doesn't have to be just militarily.

DR. BARAKAT: Thank you.

Greg, is this part of a larger project of a new Middle East project, and is there a systematic thinking behind it that's been going for some time?

Has it led to the chaos that is needed in order to settle a new arrangement?

DR. GAUSE: Well, first, I want to apologize

on behalf of my friend, Abdulkhaleq, to the poor translators because he goes between English and Arabic from sentence to sentence, and I think that you're putting far too much of a burden on the translators here.

So there's no question in my mind that American policy in the region has created many of the problems that we see.

I think that the destruction of the Iraqi State, as a matter of direct policy, intentional policy, is something that has led to disastrous results on many levels. And America is responsible for that. We did that intentionally.

Now there were some -- from the American policymakers' point of view, there were some unintended consequences to that. Believe me; the people who made the Iraq War weren't thinking, if we do this, we'll really help the Iranians.

They had the Iranians in their sight next, and if Iraq had gone well, I think that they would have turned their guns on the Iranians.

But, without a doubt, one of the unintended consequences from an American point of view of the failure of America's Iraq adventure was to increase the power of Iran in the region. This was true in Afghanistan as well.

When the United States went in against the Taliban and Bin Laden after the attacks of September 11, 2001, believe me, no one in Washington said, and by doing this, we'll really help the Iranians to increase their power in Afghanistan.

They weren't thinking about that. They were thinking about getting the Taliban and Bin Laden, but without a doubt, there have been unintended consequences that have benefitted Iran.

I would not look at this as a deal between Iran and the United States or an effort by the United States to turn Sunnis against Sunnis for the benefit of Shia.

The best argument against this notion that there's a secret, or even a semi-public, U.S.-Iran deal is, in fact, America's very close relationship

with Israel. Given that Martin Indyk said here in Doha that the security of Israel was if not the number one priority, one of the top four, the other three being oil, in U.S. policy, no American policymaker can think about a strategic relationship with Iran the way we had a strategic relationship with the Shah for decades in the Cold War unless the Iranian regime profoundly changes its position towards Israel. And I don't think that's going to happen.

So I would say that there's a -- there are intended consequences to American policy, but there are unintended consequences as well.

Believe me; you've seen plenty of Americans come through here, and I'm just the most recent one. And you can tell from the way we talk, we don't know everything. And we certainly can't do everything.

Abdulkhaleq pointed out all of the mistakes, or at least half of the mistakes, that Americans made in the region.

I just don't think we're capable of putting together a huge plan where everything fits in

together. We couldn't even reconstruct the state in Iraq where we had 150,000 troops and we were committing billions of dollars of American assets. And we failed; we failed utterly to do that.

It seems to me that there are plenty of unintended consequences.

Can I say one more thing?

The first questioner, our colleague who had the first question, raised a very interesting point about the difference between the state and the regime. And I think that that's a really important distinction to understand.

I was talking about the failure of states. I was talking about the failure of the state, the collapse of the bureaucracy, the collapse of the security services.

We have a case in Egypt where the regime fell and then another regime fell whereas the underlying infrastructure of the state remained the same. Right?

The bureaucracy did not collapse. The

police force did not dissipate. The army did not collapse, divide, take off their uniforms and go home.

When the regime changes but the state remains, you don't have a crisis. You have a political crisis, but you don't have a profound social crisis.

But when the state collapses -- the state collapsed in Libya. In Yemen, the army divided. In Syria, the state has lost control over vast parts of the territory.

I think that that's a very important distinction, and I'm glad it was brought up.

Thank you.

DR. BARAKAT: Thank you so much.

We all, obviously, hope that this time the U.S. has a plan --

DR. GAUSE: Don't count on it.

DR. BARAKAT: -- and there will be less unintentional consequences than in Afghanistan and Iraq and many other interventions.

But, Mehran, the issue raised about Iran and

its influence in the region and the Iranian agenda, I mean, if you take a crude calculation of events since 1991, one could probably say there would be three gainers, if you like, in the region -- Iran, Israel and, to some extent, Turkey -- in terms of everybody else has lost, including the United States; they lost a huge number of people who were killed in those different interventions.

What is the Iranian position, you think, from this? Is there a calculation there?

Is there an agenda to spread Shiism? What is it?

Is it about influence?

DR. KAMRAVA: I think you ask an excellent question. We've got -- let me answer this with a couple of points.

First, we have to remember that we're looking at very fluid regional scenario -- a region in which from year to year, if not month to month, things change in a way that no one can predict and no one can assume.

And Iranian foreign policy, similar to the foreign policy of any other regional or extra-regional actor, has tried to either react to circumstances as they evolve or try to capitalize on circumstances as they have developed.

And, if you look at 2011, 2012, Iran was actually one of the losers as a result of the Arab Spring, where you had a situation in which Ahmadinejad's rhetoric was out of date insofar as the so-called "Arab Street" is concerned.

And according to the annual public opinion poll that is conducted in six Arab countries, all of a sudden, you have a sudden decrease in the popularity of the Iranian state insofar as the rest of the region is concerned.

Then you have, of course, the recent election in Iran and a determined effort on the part of Iran to resolve the longstanding nuclear issue with the United States. And, if you look at Iran right now, that is where all of their energy is concentrated.

They're also trying to, of course, like anybody else, capitalize or react to circumstances as they develop around them, particularly the threat posed by the utter collapse of the Iraqi State or the steady collapse of the Iraqi State right in their border.

And, of course, they're worried about the ever-present threat of a preemptive attack on the part of Israel; hence, Iran's almost ceaseless attempts to forge relations with Hamas which, incidentally, is not a Shia organization and is -- has never been a Shia organization. Therefore, those who talk about the Shia boogeyman or the sectarian -- the threat of sectarianism need to take that into account.

And so I think, like anybody else, the Iranians don't necessarily have a larger game plan but have been trying to respond to circumstances as they develop.

I will also again, insofar as Iran is concerned, similar to any of the other regional actors, call attention to domestic politics within

Iran, which in many ways either enable or handicap the state insofar as its ability to respond to evolving regional circumstances is concerned.

Right now, Rouhani has been able to forge a somewhat tenuous consensus within the Iranian body politic around a nuclear issue, and that, in many ways, frames the way Iran has been able to react to regional developments and regional circumstances, pretty much in the same way, for example, that Saudi domestic politics or Emirati domestic politics shaped the way in which each of these actors are able to react to circumstances as they evolve around them.

DR. BARAKAT: Thank you so much.

We have a few minutes to take a second round of questions.

Please introduce yourself and, if possible, direct the question to one of the panelists.

QUESTIONER: My name is Abdullah Bahboud. I am from Qatar University, from the Gulf Studies.

Is the microphone working? Can you hear me?

DR. BARAKAT: Yes, yes, we can hear.

QUESTIONER: I agree with some of what has been said, but I just want to extend the debate, if you like, and bring in some new dimension to it.

I don't think sectarianism is because of a lack of a strong state although I would agree with a certain aspect of that.

I think I would say sectarianism is -- has arisen in this area is because of the very nature of the nation state itself. The nation state is very new to -- globally but also to us in the region.

And the whole idea of a nation state is not yet accepted and contested. The Caliphate now is a manifestation of this rejection of the nation state.

But also this nation state was immediately captured and dominated by regimes that did not really create a state, a modern state, but created a bunch of thugs that started to rule these countries.

And they did not build any institutions. There's a lack of institutions. There's a lack of civil society and middle class. There's a lack of rule of law, social justice. And, overall, there is a

lack of any regional order.

And I think this is what creates most of these problems.

Of course, there is no initial -- there is no one answer, but I think I just wanted to kind of extend the debate and look at the nature of nation state and how it has affected politics in the region.

DR. BARAKAT: Thank you very much.

We'll take one here.

QUESTIONER: (inaudible) Bashkan, Georgetown University in Qatar.

Building up on what Dr. Bahboud said, I guess I understand your problem with journalists taking sectarianism as the cause of all of this trouble, but also, I find instrumentalization of sectarianism as the other extreme of the same approach.

I guess the truth probably is between two.

I mean, the modernization theory predicted that sectarianism would be just gone, as being modernized, but it doesn't.

Definitely, there must be something with humans that their sectarian identity or their ethnic identity are so dear to them.

So it's not just instrumentalization of this. I guess it's not helping a lot to understand the concept.

And I guess the title of the workshop is also going beyond sectarianism. I guess we should not go beyond sectarianism.

We should understand sectarianism first. Then maybe we can go beyond sectarianism.

Thank you.

DR. BARAKAT: Thank you so much.

Can I take the lady behind me?

QUESTIONER: Given the funding of IS -- I mean any kind of organization, in order to maintain power, needs funding, especially for arms and fighting.

If it is truly the destruction of the state -- and it seems slightly more anarchic but also a situation where it seems like women are often on the

roughest end of the stick here.

I guess I'm trying to understand the motivation behind the states or individuals that are continuing to fund IS and its continued spread because, if we talk about combatting extremism, one of the biggest ways is to choke the funds to it.

Or, what are our other options?

DR. BARAKAT: Thank you very much.

And then take one question at the back, please. Either of you.

QUESTIONER: He helped me to get a question.

My name is Omar Crickly. I'm assistant professor at Department of Defense Studies at King's College here in Doha.

I have a question to the panelists regarding the end state of your analysis.

To Professor Gauss, you talk about the weakening of the state and -- what are your prospects for the future of the nation state in the region?

Has the nation state a future here as a form of governance in the Middle East?

To Professor Abdulla, you mentioned these two forces.

So do you think that at the end one of these forces will prevail over the other? If so, what kind of environment should we expect to live in the region if it is either of these forces that prevail?

And to Professor Kamrava, the question is about strategic competition. And I think you are the closest, in a sense, to the theme of the evening, in terms of the Cold War because what we are witnessing in your analysis is, in a way, a New Cold War.

So who would be the main player in this strategic competition? Who might win this competition?

DR. BARAKAT: Right. Thank you very much.

Well, let's start with the question from our colleague from King's College but very brief answers. If you could, each of you, please just respond to his question quickly.

DR. KAMRAVA: I don't think anybody is going to win this strategic competition. The people of the

Middle East are going to lose.

DR. GAUSE: I think that the big players in this are the players that we know. I think it's Iran. I think it's Saudi Arabia. I think it's Turkey.

Israel can't play in this game because it doesn't have the connections within these societies, which is where this conflict is being played out.

Israel is the most powerful military force in the Middle East, no question. But when it went in and tried to reconstruct the Lebanese State back in the 80s in a way that it liked, it failed utterly. And it just doesn't have the connections to the parties in these countries that are where this conflict is being fought out.

I think that small states like Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, that are trying to play a much bigger role in this New Middle East Cold War, will fail because the only thing that they have to offer is money. And money can go a long way, but it can't cement the kinds of relationships that you need to actually have an enduring amount of influence in these

kinds of conflicts.

So I think that what we're going to see is, obviously, the global powers, but the main regional powers are going to be Saudi, Iran and Turkey, and Egypt, if it can get its act together.

DR. BARAKAT: Thank you.

Abdulkhaleq.

DR. ABDULLA: I think just two answers here.

One is which one of the two forces -- forces of change versus forces of darkness or extremism. For which one is going to fail, I think ISIS and forces of darkness have no chance to win. They are defeatable, and they will be defeated. They are forces of destruction, and because they don't have any model in mind, they don't have any noble causes in mind, I don't think they're going to win.

Now they have to fight all this huge fight, and they are really losing here and there. So, eventually, I think that's the force -- forces of darkness and chaos and havoc -- is going to go away but after a lot of destruction, after a lot of misery

of this region.

The chances is that, you know, forces of change will have a better chance. Today, we have an election in Tunisia.

If there is in this region, one, just one single good model of a stable, prosperous democracy, which we do not have throughout the region, from Morocco to the Gulf -- okay?

If we have one single successful, prosperous, stable democracy, that will resonate throughout the region, and I think maybe Tunisia would be a case to emulate. And maybe since it started the Arab Spring, maybe if they did it together, we might have a better chance for forces of change, which is not the forces of destruction, which is not forces of extremism. Very -- they are forces of moderation.

Coming to the lady in the back?

DR. BARAKAT: Yes, I was about to ask you to actually do that.

DR. ABDULLA: Yes. Is that right?

DR. BARAKAT: Yes, please, go ahead.

DR. ABDULLA: The funding issue is very complex. Okay?

And let's be here a bit frank and honest and candid about it.

I think at the earlier stage, when everybody knew the massivity of slaughter and genocide committed by Assad -- again, his own people. In the first six -- in the first one year, there was some good intention. All those who fighting Assad needs to be supported. There was a lot of funding coming from all over the world. Okay?

And I think some of that funding went to ISIS and went to these extremism unintentionally -- a lot of it, unintentionally -- as a good friend has said.

And I think that is probably regrettable, and we have to, you know, just say it frankly. Nobody really wanted to support ISIS in any way possible.

None of the Gulf probably are supporting it right now. They know now what kind of beast is this ISIS. So no funding is going to it.

However, you see, ISIS and all these jihadists really don't want funding. They don't try for funding. They come here to go heaven. Okay?

And they want to do it in the cheapest way possible -- kill themselves. So they really don't need any funding.

So this fixation over who's funding ISIS sometimes is just -- you know, it's not taking us into the right direction to understand this -- the nature of this beast and the nature of the dark forces that we're confronting at this moment.

DR. BARAKAT: Thank you.

Kamrava.

DR. KAMRAVA: Yeah, I respectfully disagree with my good friend, Abdulkhaleq.

States fund IS because they try to fish out muddy waters. They try to use the vacuum and the lack of central authority in a way that would serve their interests -- short-term interests and long-term interests.

And what we're seeing is history repeating

itself. We're seeing the repeat of the 1980s, where we had a similar pattern of development happening in relation to the other state that didn't have central authority, namely, Afghanistan, and of course, we saw the consequences of that. And we're seeing that history, unfortunately, repeat itself today.

States are trying to compete by having their own clients in these fragile political systems.

DR. BARAKAT: Thank you so much.

I'm going to accept Dr. Abdullah Bahboud's statement, his question, because it was related to the fact that we have those hollow states structured around us that led to their failure.

But I'd like to ask Greg, please, to try and respond to the issue of tackling sectarianism head-on.

I mean, there seems to be a lot of unintentional consequences to policy in this region and things are just falling apart, unintentionally.

But sectarianism is a reality. It may not be the cause of conflicts, but it has been used to recruit young men and women in various areas. It's

used as an excuse to feed those conflicts.

What do you think?

DR. GAUSS: Right. Dr. Bahboud is absolutely right that we can go too far on the other end and deny sectarianism is important at all. That just runs against what we see before our eyes.

You can't create identities for people. Right?

You can't create from nothing a political identity that will then mobilize people to fight.

This sectarianism is real, and it's deeply felt.

But the question I think we have to ask analytically is, when does that particular identity become so important, become the dominant -- your dominant political identity, that it leads you to view people who have lived next door to you for generations as your enemy?

And so you couldn't evoke these sectarian feelings without them having a basis. They're there, but they've been there forever. Right?

And it's the question of how salient they become.

I'm a Roman Catholic. If I had been born in Northern Ireland in the 19 -- in the late 1950s instead of being born in the United States in the late 1950s, it's entirely possible then in the 1970s I would have been carrying a gun against the British.

The context of me growing up in a relatively well ordered, relatively stable, relatively -- I say relatively -- well governed society made it much less likely that that particular sectarian identity of mine would define my entire political identity.

So much of this has to do with the state. I'll come back to the state.

I never use the term, nation state, when I talk about the Middle East. Never.

I think there are plenty of nations in the world.

There might even be nations in the Middle East.

We could say that maybe Tunisia is a nation

in that the vast majority of the people there privilege that; they feel they're Tunisians before they are anything else.

I don't know. I don't know Tunisia that well.

Maybe Iran. Maybe Egypt. But none of the rest of the states are nations.

Saudi Arabia is, self-consciously, not a nation. They say we're not a nation. The thing that holds us together is Islam and this family. Right?

That's what the family says anyway.

These are states, and we should look at -- we should analyze these states in terms of the functions of states.

Do they provide security?

Do they have a near monopoly on the legitimate use of force -- a classic definition of a state?

Do they provide basic goods and services that, in the modern world, we've come to expect from states -- education, a certain level of education, a

certain level of economic activity, certain level of other public goods? Do they provide them?

That's the way we should judge these states.

States that provided those -- not every state blew up in the Arab Spring. Some of the states in the Arab World provide those public goods better than others do. And while that's not -- that wasn't a perfect predictor of where you had explosions and where you didn't, it helps to explain why in a place like the UAE or in Qatar there was no explosion.

Now it's easy here because, you know, you have lots of money and small populations. But it can perhaps help explain why Jordan didn't blow up or why Morocco didn't blow up.

It's not a perfect explanation, but a state that can provide these basic, fundamental things then can -- people can explore other identities. Right?

People can be comfortable in their state identity, and they can let these other identities, you know, govern, you know, who they marry, where they go to church or mosque or what sports team they root for.

Right?

In the United States, what state you grew up in now basically defines what sports teams you root for. In the 1860s, it defined you picking up a gun and shooting people who, you know, were part of your country.

So the salience of these identities, including sectarianism, changes, I think, with the political context, and we begin to understand that by looking at the state.

DR. BARAKAT: Thank you so much.

I'm afraid we've run out of time, and I need to bring this to a conclusion.

We've had a fascinating debate. Thank you to all three of you -- very interesting different views on the same subject.

For those of you who are interested in learning more about jihadism and who finances it and how it works, particularly in Syria and Iraq, please do join us next week on the 29th of October in the same -- no, sorry. It's not in the same place. It's

going to be at the Diplomatic Institute?

Diplomatic Club. Diplomatic Club, where we have a number of distinguished speakers who will be tackling this very important subject.

For now, please join me in thanking our speakers and then we will --

(Applause)

DR. BARAKAT: And then please us for some drinks and a reception next door. We can continue our conversation.

Thank you very much.

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