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IS SAUDI-IRANIAN RAPPROCHEMENT POSSIBLE?

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## P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. FRAIHAT: Hello, everyone. I would like to welcome you today and thank you for being with us for this important conversation that we would like to have today with our good speakers coming with their extremely busy schedule that they made time for us. We have been working on this event for a long time and the biggest challenge was probably more than the rapprochement itself is to find one day that works for everyone. But we are finally lucky and we found a day that worked for everyone. And finally we are thrilled to have you all here and again would like to thank our great speakers for their time and effort to have this and to be with us today and to share with us their insights and this conversation about a very important topic that is important for everyone -- important for the region, important for the neighbors, and most importantly important for the different conflicts that we're having in the region and how this could be affected.

As you probably know if you watch the media  
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and you read about this issue of Iran-Gulf or Iran-Saudi or Iran region, you will find a lot of accusations and blame and a lot of negativity, let me put it this way, in the media. We try to look or to take another or a different angle to this, which that we can focus on what is doable, on rapprochement, on what is possible in order to provide more of a better understanding between the neighbors, and between the different players or the major players in the region. We're trying to provide or to advance a positive discussion, a positive debate, a constructive debate, on what is possible given this complexity of the political situation that the region is having. We hear also about parties talking about the need to talk, but despite the talks no talking is happening. So what is preventing talking and what are the obstacles, and what are different approaches to advancing more of a better understanding and rapprochement despite the political tension that has been prevailing in the past years?

So today, again, I would like to thank and  
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welcome our great speakers for being with us today and for sharing with us their insights. I would like to first to give each one of our speakers five minutes to talk about the rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia or, actually, it depends on the way you frame or you define it. I don't have to define it for you because we want to hear from you. Maybe it's about rapprochement between Iran and the Gulf or Iran and the region, or what. So this is your thoughts, your ideas, to tell us your definition and your understanding of rapprochement with the goal of reaching better relations and solutions to the conflicts that the region is having these days.

So I would like to begin with Jamal, to tell us is rapprochement between the neighbors is possible and how. What would you like to see or what's your definition of rapprochement and what would you like to see happening in order to advance rapprochement?

Everyone, many of you know Jamal very well. Jamal Khashoggi, he's the Director General Manager of Arab News Channel. He has a long history with

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journalism. Many of you know his history with journalism in Afghanistan, in Algeria actually, also with covering the democratic change or (inaudible) in Algeria and also in the Kuwait also war that also Jamal covered for the region.

So, Jamal, I would like to give you the floor to share with us your insights on this. Thank you.

MR. KHASHOGGI: Thank you, Ibrahim. Thank you, everybody, for coming. Yes, in principle we should be able to have rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Actually we should. It's good for all of us.

I will start with a point of optimism. The Saudi officials and the Iranians are talking now about arranging for the Iranians to perform their Umrah and their Hajj this year. So if things go well we're going to see Iranian pilgrims in Mecca and Medina this Ramadan. If not, for sure in Shah Alam there will be Iranian pilgrimage for Hajj. That shows that there is an interest between both countries to have an

ordinary, neighborly, brotherly relations. I'm from Medina, and we in Medina we like Iranian pilgrimage. They're good spenders, very much (laughter) -- yes, yes, yes, we like that about them. But we don't like the politics of their government. But each issue aside, when they come to Medina for Hajj we don't discuss politics with them. And maybe they don't want to discuss politics with us in order for the Hajj to go peacefully.

But the difference as I said is in politics. So what is the difference in politics? In principle there is also no direct confrontation, territorial differences or disputes between Saudi Arabia and Iran, not so ever. We don't claim any part of Iran, neither do they claim any part of Saudi Arabia. Even in the oil fields, in the Gulf, the offshore oil fields. Maybe some probably misunderstanding about the fields between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia and Iran, but it's not something serious. It can be resolved easily in any form of legal attributions. So it's all about Iranian's expansionism as it's seen by us. The

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Iranians have a different view of it, they see it as Iranians interest to fight or to stand for the Israeli threat. That is their perception. We're not convinced of that perception. We do not see the Iranian's present in Syria as legitimate and we do not buy their argument that they are to confront the Israelis. We see their presence there as mainly sectarianism, siding with the dictator for the wrong reasons.

So those differences are the making of the dispute, the anger, the exchange that we have with the Iranians. It's all about Iranian expansionism. If the Iranians free themselves from this expansionism policy I'm sure we will have an excellent relationship -- we tried that. Saudi Arabia had an excellent relationship with the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Islamic Revolution in the time of Khatami and the time of Rafsanjani. We had an excellent relationship in the '90s. It all fell to pieces when the Iranian appetite opened up to our region and they start coming to Iraq, and then they come to Syria, and then to

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Yemen, and then -- that's what Saudi Arabia -- and those mode of confrontation, maybe you could blame the Americans who brought down the system in Iraq and give Iraq on a golden plate as Prince Saud Al Faisal -- the late Saud Al Faisal put it in New York when he said to the Americans you handed Iraq in a golden plate to the Iranians. That opened appetite of the Iranians and they saw if they can take Iraq why can't they take Syria, and if they take Syria they will take Lebanon. And not only Syria, let's go to the south of Saudi Arabia and create a party there, a militia there, that will take over the government, not wait for the political process to end in Yemen, but to hijack the political process and control Yemen as a de facto state. Of course Saudi Arabia rejected that and a storm of resources started that wouldn't end. I'm sure the Iranians are not happy with what Saudi Arabia did, but most of the Muslims are happy with what Saudi Arabia did and they liked and Saudi Arabia became so popular throughout the Muslim world for what it did in Yemen. And most Muslims they appreciate -- they see

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Saudi Arabia today as the countering weight to Iranian expansionism.

Let me just go briefly what the Iranians are doing in Syria. In Syria they are siding with the dictator who is butchering his own people. And my Iranian friends admit that, but they have a different reasons and maybe my friend Kazim, my friend (inaudible) will bring their views and they will give different reasons why they are siding with the dictator. We see it as just a form of (inaudible), of sectarianism. That's why they are siding with Bashar al-Assad, who has no future. And they need to answer the question not of the Saudi Arabian people, of the Syrian people, why you are sending your own militias and your own army and your own military of grown men to kill us. A Syrian would be asking the Iranians that. In Lebanon they're blocked. The election of a president, the situation in Lebanon is hijacked totally. Lebanon is not a free country now. The Lebanese themselves, whether they are Alawite or they are Sunnis, are not happy with the situation and it

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just -- because of Hezbollah. The Iranians also tend to have a militia that is a lie to them. The Turks don't have a militia in Saudi Arabia or in Iran or in Syria. The Egyptians don't have militias, the (inaudible) don't have militias, but the Iranians, they have militias. Hassan Nasrallah swear allegiance to the government of Iran, to (inaudible) of Iran. In international politics this doesn't work, it's not acceptable in international politics.

In Bahrain, they even did a disservice to the Bahrainian opposition. The Bahrainian opposition received the best deal any opposition in the Gulf could have received for a Gulf country, but they raised the demand of the opposition and they made the opposition lose the opportunity to take part in a democratic transformation of Bahrain. In Yemen, there was a political process in Yemen, and Yemen has been wanting to find a solution for their country since 1948, to find some kind of (inaudible), some kind of a just government. And the revolution of 2011 could have led to that, but again the Houthis, who are

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supported by the Iranians, hijacked the process.

So what the Iranians are doing is not really helpful in the region and we need to talk more about it. If the Iranians free themselves from that and indulge in economic building of their own country I'm sure Saudi Arabia will be very much happy with that and will be even cooperating with them as much as we are cooperating with Turkey, are cooperating with any other country in the region.

Thank you.

MR. FRAIHAT: Thank you very much. Next I would like to ask Dr. Sayed Mohammed Kazen Sajjadpour; he is a professor at the School of International Relations in Tehran. He's a former Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations. Dr. Sajjadpour received his Ph.D. in political science from George Washington University and was a Post-Doctoral Fellow at Harvard. He has taught at the Iranian University as Azad University and Iran's National Defence University.

Professor Sajjadpour, thank you. You have

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five minutes.

DR. SAJJADPOUR: Thank you. First of all let me thank you for inviting me and it's a pleasure to be here this evening. And the subject that you have chosen also is very interesting, though it's very controversial.

I think to start with, first of all in your letter you referred to the blame game that we should not go to blaming. So I start by two basic assumptions that, first of all, blame game would not result to any rapprochement or understanding. And we try to refrain from that. Second working assumption would be that the existing situation between Iran and Saudi Arabia is not good, is not good for both of these countries and for the region, and it should be changed to a better one.

So based on these two working assumptions, in direct response to what you said and asked, how a rapprochement can be achieved, I have A, B, C, three points. A, assessments, B, about bridges, and C, about coexistence. I'll go briefly to each of them

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and I'll try to be in my timeframe.

Assessments and analysis is the base of everything. And I think the analysis and assessment that we have from each other should be revisited and reconstructed. What I hear, what I read from my Arab colleagues or Saudi colleagues, is that Iran is behind everything, that Iran is the source of any issue, any problem, and any, let's say, crisis in the region, and so on and so forth. I think this type of analysis is not helpful. Of course you may have some on the other side who also have some type of similarities in analysis, but I read today is that Saudi Arabia has one single concept in its foreign policy, and that is to fight with Iran. So anti Iranian has become the prism through which Saudi Arabia is looking at the world. And I find my own personal analysis why. I try to answer. And I hope I am correct. I think there is one domestic reason for it, that there is a generational change. There are so many social challenges and cleavages inside Saudi Arabia, there is democratic lack, democratic deficiency, and social

democratic deficiency. And the issue of modernization versus tradition, the issue of terrorism -- I mean extremism and so on and so forth. And also there is a fight inside different political areas. So if you focus on Iran you can't have a cohesive factor. And so there is no basis for what Iran is depicted as the source of everything unless you have a type of concept or (inaudible) you can cover the cleavages and differences inside your politics.

On the regional level there were many attempts from the beginning of Iranian revolution to contain the Islamic Republic of Iran, to really damage it, and not to sort by Iran-Iraq war, but Iran-Iraq war you have it supported by Saudi Arabia, other GCC member. I mean they supported Iraq and recently it is obvious, it's on the record, they tried to derail the nuclear negotiation; they couldn't.

So what I can really conclude on the regional level, that all attempts to contain Iran and to modernize it has been doomed to failure and Iran is there (inaudible). So there is a sense of loss

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regionally. And if you blame Iran for your own mistakes, including Saudi Arabia for the first time in its modern history is revolutionary -- anti revolutionary I say -- it is meddling, changing regimes, changing borders, and so on and so forth, and I think these are not (inaudible) strengths. It is based on a regional sense that they have lost to Iran so they have to blame Iran and they don't evaluate their own mistakes.

On the global level, the third level of analysis, there is an understanding that all this --

MR. FRAIHAT: Time. Sorry.

DR. SAJJADPOUR: Finish? I cannot  
(inaudible).

MR. FRAIHAT: You can take like one minute.

DR. SAJJADPOUR: But you didn't use it for my friend.

MR. FRAIHAT: Yeah, I didn't.

SPEAKER: (Inaudible). (Laughter)

DR. SAJJADPOUR: And I watched, he talked more than five minutes. So be fair to Iranians. We

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are guests of Arabs here and I think it is unfair, completely unfair. And I would just -- though I'm joking saying so, but if you do so again I would (inaudible).

But let me continue --

MR. FRAIHAT: I give you one minute to wrap up.

DR. SAJJADPOUR: No, no, give me two or three minutes. You can deduct from my (inaudible). Let me -- because it's a very important issue.

I think global level there is this assessment that Iran is not behind everything, that the reason -- and extremism comes more from Saudi Arabia than Iran, and (inaudible), all these groups who support them. September 11, (inaudible) these people. And I think it is not me. Read Jeffrey Goldberg, just in the recent issue of *Atlantic Monthly*, (inaudible). On the other side there is this appreciation that anti Iranian as a type of (inaudible) commodity is useless. It is not sold or bought -- it is sold, but it is not bought as it was

before. So if you put all this together you see that Iran is everything, we have to fight Iran. Correct my analysis, but I think my -- I need to learn more.

B, regardless of this, we don't have any problem with having this relationship bridged. So I can use the concept of bridge. I think there are many components to this bridge, including some of the GCC member states. Look what Qatar did last year, which was excellent, to try having repair, you know, this GCC, Iran and Saudi Arabia. It didn't work so it (inaudible). And I think there are other bridges. At least three member states of GCC, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, they can be used, and I think there are other bridges.

Finally, my C, coexistence, is a necessity. There is no way that you can, you know, fly from this region and establish yourself in another region. We have to coexist together. And coexistence requires talking to each other, not (inaudible). So I think talking is a base of coexistence, and we have (inaudible) for talk, and we are not for de-escalation and this is all Iranian policy that we are not going

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to de-escalate whatever they do. Of course we follow our interests as every (inaudible) and state does, but I think it's a must that coexistence be the principle of any rapprochement.

MR. FRAIHAT: Thank you, Dr. Sajjadpour.

Next I would like to ask Dr. Khaled Al Jaber to talk. He is an Assistant Professor of political communications at the Gulf Studies Program at Qatar University. He is also the Editor-in-Chief of *The Peninsula* newspaper, and works as a principal at the Global Media Consultants organization in Atlanta, Georgia. And he writes and talks to the media on political and Arab affairs. He has published extensively on this area and he has a very recent book that came out that I encourage you to look at, *The Impact of Social Media in Shaping the Politics of the Region*.

Dr. Khaled, the floor is yours.

DR. AL JABER: Thank you for this publicity for my book. I think this is good publicity, advertisement for my book. That's nice of you.

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I prefer to speak Arabic, although I can speak English, but I want to be clear in my message and to make sure that the other speakers might ask questions, also I can discuss it with them in Arabic.

Let's begin with the beginning. The beginning was in convening this event, which was supposed to be organized several months ago, but there were so many difficulties that led to postponing. If we count the time period since -- the time it was supposed to be convened and to now we find that so many things happened and so many events developed, many changes took place in the situation. First of all maybe is the diplomatic rapture between Saudi Arabia and Iran after which a number of GCC countries also followed suit and also some other Arab countries. In fact the problems -- well, the issue that we are speaking today is the relations between the two sides has become like a snowball. And day after day it's becoming bigger and bigger. And in fact within one year we have attended so many conferences and seminars to try to get them in touch with each other, to listen

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to each other, but I must say that it stalled. We speak about the problems, we speak about the crises, but we are unable to adopt solutions, to reach solutions, or any agreements or any ground floor that brings us together as Arabs and Iranians. Maybe the gentleman -- so Jamal spoke about Saudi Arabia in particular, but I would like to speak about this topic from a larger perspective. Gulf-Arab perspective.

I think the battle that is going on now is a big one. If you go back historically backwards, we find that the creation of the GCC countries comes as a result of the conflict between Iraq and Iran and there were some challenges that were imposed upon the GCC countries for several years. Development of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, which into September 11, 9/11, and of the war with Iraq, and then "the Arab Spring" and its consequences. So the region is on quicksand in fact and things are going to worse not to the better, and we have no other choice but to stop and each one should hold themselves accountable. But how can we hold ourselves accountable, how can we reach our hands

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to the others? The problem with Iran is no longer just with Saudi Arabia. We have a big problem, the GCC countries, the Arab countries, have a big problem with Iran. We were wishing in fact for four or five years, we were wishing the day that would bring us together. But many people have theorized on this and we went into conferences and seminars without any result. Even those who used to call for a dialogue run away and in fact they become adversaries and rivals.

The problem that is referred to by Obama in his lat speech, that the 1000 year conflict -- no, I don't think that it's -- no I'm not going to have a problem of Sunnis and Shiites. I think that the political agendas that were used played a big role in this and the exploitation of the principle of exploitation of the revolution made things worse and the concerns were growing and fear was growing. Year after year we saw that in Iraq, then it moved to Lebanon, then to Syria, to Yemen. And the problem in Iran is that you don't know who to speak with. Within

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Iran you don't know who to speak with. The regime with the rich establishment, with the military establishment, with the academic establishment, you see a lot of nice words, a lot of communication. But soon you see that this is followed by other statements from the other side that undermines everything that was said previously. So in Iran there are so many players in the political arena, who to sit with and who can make any understandings.

This is a problem by itself. Another problem is I think --

MR. FRAIHAT: One minute you have.

DR. AL JABER: Okay. I give my minute to my colleague and then I will continue discussing this in areas that we can --

MR. FRAIHAT: Thank you, Dr. Khaled, for the commitment to strictly to five minutes. So we thank you for that. And next I would like to ask Dr. Nasser Hadian to speak. Dr. Nasser, he is a Professor of Political Science at the University of Tehran. He was the Director of the Political Development Program at

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the Center for Strategic Research, and we as a Visiting Professor at Columbia University. He recently authored several articles on the nuclear debate in Iran for Contemporary Security Policies, Political Quarterly, and the Research Letter of Political Science. And also something to add about Dr. Nasser, he's been active for a long time on Track II and dialogue and talking to different parties through informal ways. So this is an opportunity that we have Dr. Nasser with us also to help us understand the possibilities of rapprochement and improving relations.

Thank you, Dr. Nasser. Five minutes.

DR. HADIAN: Thank you very much, Ibrahim. I wish to thank you and (inaudible) for inviting me to this forum and I hope our exchanges can help the rapprochement between our countries and (inaudible).

What I would like to discuss is basically -- because I had a good talk with Jamal before the meeting and, you know, it had impacted the talk which I'm going to give now. Because I believe the

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misunderstanding between even the elite of our societies are really deep and we need to work hard to overcome this misunderstanding and misperception. If the elite have such a kind of misperception that's really unfortunate and that's difficult to address the issue. Sometimes, you know, the issue is basically the public of both countries, so it's expected that they have such a kind of misunderstanding existing in the public of both countries. But if elites have such a kind of misconceptions, that's to me -- somehow we should blame the elites of both societies, why they have not worked hard enough at least to have basic understandings of one another.

So I'll try to present then an Iranian view of our activities, our behaviors, basically, outside Iran. Of course I'm talking about in the region. So I would like to begin with our threat perceptions. I mean as I talked to Jamal, you know, my government -- of course my government's view is not necessarily my view -- in fact my view is different to be frank with you, but I'm not presenting my view here. I'm trying

to say how my government would look at the issue. My government perceives U.S., Israel chaos in the region and world order as a threat. That's the way they would prioritize the threat. On the basis of that threat perception they have defined their strategic depth and have tried to build infrastructure to deter Israelis and Americans from taking any actions. Maybe their perceptions are wrong, but we cannot blame them why they have that perception unless we provide some evidence to convince them to change their threat perceptions. But every county, and like every individual, would act on the basis of their threat perception.

So if Iran is in Lebanon, if Iran is in Syria, if Iran is in Iraq, which Iran is in those places, they are there basically in order to deter the Israelis and the Americans. So we believe in Iran we have two important source of deterrents. One is our own missiles, which are mostly weapons of terror rather than strategic weapons, because first of all they are conventional, second, they are not precise

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enough. Thus they cannot be conceived or perceived as strategic weapons. And the second source of deterrents are Hezbollah's missiles and rockets, which are more significant and important for us than our own.

So we have to know it's good for (inaudible) to know that the value of Hezbollah, Syria, Lebanon, Afghanistan, they are all different from one another for us. Syria has an instrumental value, not inherent value. Lebanon has an inherent value for us. It's good to now. I mean it has a lot of implications which hopefully in the question and answer part I would address it if you want, what are the differences for us and what are the implications of each one of these.

So we are not in these places to compete with Saudi Arabia. And our threat perception, that's the point we should have. I think we have not done a good job. And also our elites have not -- or Saudi Arabian elites have not done a good job. It is important that they know that in our threat

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perceptions Saudis are not there. We don't perceive them as a threat, thus we have not oriented our foreign policy or military policy in order to contain Saudi Arabia, because we don't perceive them as a threat. But I know that Saudis would perceive us as their number one threat. To that extent you have to give us the credit, that I recognize the Saudis would perceive us as their number one threat. Thus they have oriented their military and foreign policy in order to contain Iran.

So what I would like to talk a couple of more minutes if you permit me.

MR. FRAIHAT: Yes.

DR. HADIAN: So the point is how we can bridge this gap of misunderstanding. To overcome this issue there are a number of ways which I would address them in the question and answer part that what can be basically what can be done.

One more issue and I'll stop. Okay. And the other issue is the sectarian issue. In fact, I have argued for a long time now that there are two

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criteria which you can explain are actual foreign policy behavior. And these two criteria are a country or a movement or an organization should be revolutionary. Being revolutionary means among the Iranian decision makers as being anti Israel or anti America. That's the meaning of it. That's not my definition; I disagree with it, but that's the definition. Then number two is the movement, the country, the organization to be friends with us or at least not to be hostile toward us. If you apply these two criteria you can explain our foreign policy behavior since the revolution. You know, Azerbaijan and Armenia, in the fights we more predominantly sided with Armenia, although Azerbaijan is a Shia country. But because we perceive them as not being revolutionary and being hostile to us, not friendly to us, thus we sided predominantly with the other one. Hugo Chavez and Venezuela, they are Christian, but still we sided with -- we supported that one. Hamas is a Sunni organization, but Iran was support Hamas. So it not being Shia or Sunni, it is rather being

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revolutionary or not revolutionary on the basis of the definition of the decision makers in Iran.

MR. FRAIHAT: Thank you.

MR. HADIAN: And do we friend or not friend? You can say why Iran is not support Daesh. Daesh is a revolution, Daesh is anti American. Why Iran is not supporting Daesh? Because Daesh is not -- is hostile to Iran.

MR. FRAIHAT: Thank you.

MR. HADIAN: So I said two criteria, not one.

MR. FRAIHAT: Thank you.

MR. HADIAN: Sorry.

MR. FRAIHAT: Thank you. Jamal, what is Saudi Arabia -- Saudi Arabia always talks about Iranian intervention, same that we're talking about now. My question is to what extent Saudi Arabia is willing to tolerate like from Iran? Is anything or foreign policy that Iran does in the region or any relationship builds with the region, would that be considered an intervention? Like where do you draw

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the line between a legitimate in the eyes of Saudi Arabia as a legitimate Iranian foreign policy, or what is considered an intervention? Because we all hear this from Saudi Arabia that Iran needs to stop intervening or meddling, but we don't have a definition to what is considered an intervention, and where do you draw the lines?

MR. KHASHOGGI: No, there is a definition, a very clear definition. It's called international laws.

MR. FRAIHAT: Okay.

MR. KHASHOGGI: International laws of diplomacy, international laws of relations between neighboring country. And intervention is a style of action taken against a foreign country or meddling on the affair of a foreign country. So the definition is what we have, what you know. We are here at a gathering of science. This is the Brookings Institution. So to say that we are in Syria and Iraq and Lebanon because we see Israel as a threat, that doesn't go with international laws. Conventionally

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the hypothetical question of Israel as a threat to the Iranians contradicts with the reality that the Syrian free people who are being bombed and fought by Iranians is very contradictory. The threat of Israel to Iran is hypothetical, but the threat of those dirty bombs that are falling on the heads of the Syrian people (inaudible), civilians, is real. So this the threat we feel in Saudi Arabia. If the Iranians are willing and ready to go and fight people in Syria, then there could be end of fighting also in Saudi Arabia one day, and assuming that we are doing that because they see Israel as a threat. It's just an argument that cannot be sold by international laws.

My friend, Professor Kazem, said Iran is not behind everything. You are right, Iran is not behind everything and we need to work together. We are in the most significant time. It is the most serious transformation happening in the Middle East since 1918 with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The Middle East is torn apart; we need to work together to fight chaos, to fight extremism. Is Iran helping there?

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Let's assume that we accepted to have a talk with the Iranians, and let's make a round table on how to approach the situation in Syria. What the Iranians have ideas for Syria other than sending militia, sectarian militia that are bombing people and killing people under sectarian banners? That illustrates the difference between what Saudi Arabia is doing that is supporting a Geneva talk based on UN resolutions, and Iran that is sending militias to kill civilians in Syria.

MR. FRAIHAT: Thank you. Dr. Sajjadpour, here in the region there is no clear understanding about what does Iran really want. What is the Iranian agenda, what is the Iranian objective in the region? What you hear in the media that Iran, as also Dr. Nasser said, supporting the revolutionaries, supporting the oppressed, which is -- I mean frequent statements we heard also from Mr. Khamenei. Now this is the region cannot be explained by supporting the Assad regime in Syrian, and **Ali Abdullah** Saleh and Houthi alliance in Yemen.

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So is this still the goal or the object of supporting the oppressed or supporting the revolutionary? And more importantly that we would like to hear, because this helps in a better resolution, is to try to understand what this the Iranian agenda, what is the Iranian objective in the region, so that people can deal with it.

Thank you.

DR. SAJJADPOUR: It's a very good question, but I'm afraid whatever I say it would be said that look, this is one Iranian voice, this is the academic one, it's different from let's say the (inaudible). I have two quick points then I would go to the (inaudible).

First of all, I think Iranian agenda is clear, it is not a hidden agenda. Iran is for security and security of the region surrounding. Our security is linked to the security of the region. We are living in this region and we know that it is an interlinked security and it is security over all of us collectively. So you cannot separate. And I think

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the Iranian agenda is clear, it is not hidden or so on. There are different files with different readings and assessments and analysis, and I think we have to really change views and not to go to blame game.

The second point, I would say that Iran is a pluralistic society. It has different voices, yes, but it has a state. When the state speaks and acts and commits it's really committed by its legal obligations and so on and so forth. And the diversity, the pluralism should be understood. So you cannot look at Iran from let's say a different country's angle, you have to understand it from its own logic, but it is a state and when a state is there it means the pluralism is solved. Look at recent elections. You had different -- elections is very common Iran and elections are placed where different voices are debating. And finally when there is a vote for a group of delegation they are accepted and there is a civic way. So I think we have to understand.

Now with all this I think I'm afraid that whatever Iran is saying, whatever their announcements

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in the legal, international framework, since there are cognitive misperceptions and ideological anti Iranianism in some quarters here, it will be understood, and I think it may be misinterpreted and misread. Put all this together, Iran is for security of the region, for the prosperity of the region, and for really containing the conflict.

The Syrian fight, look, here is where I think Saudi Arabia is breaking your international legal frameworks because in Saudi Arabia you have still a political system which is recognized internationally by you and the United Nations and it has a representative there. Now Saudi Arabia is for the overthrow of this government. How you can combine this contradiction that my colleague is offering international law as a base, then you are for the overthrow of a -- and we know that -- you know, we are not elementary students -- we know that behind this humanitarian pronouncement are strategy directions and tendencies to cut the neck of Iran as they say in some of the literature. So it is a strategy game to do

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something against Iran rather than really to  
(inaudible).

I'm sorry I'm very -- because I'm not talking officially, a country which doesn't have any election and which doesn't have any democratic institution, how it can dare to talk about changing of another political system by force and intervention and supporting terrorist groups like (inaudible). I mean it is a real contradiction here.

MR. FRAIHAT: Thank you.

DR. SAJJADPOUR: Yes. You have to think because it's very difficult. (Laughter)

MR. FRAIHAT: Dr. Khaled, what do you see the role of the Gulf Countries in terms of promoting better understanding and resolving this?

DR. AL JABER: So planned in my first intervention, and I want to insist on that especially after what we listened to in the conversation, as I said there is different discourses coming out of Iran. It makes one wonder really who are you meant to believe, the soft talk or the hard talk, or the

mixture of the two. I think when we speak now about Iran, revolution, et cetera, we have listen to what Iranian elite are saying, Dr. Nasser and the other gentleman, they should try and understand how people view their fallacies outside their country. I have three opinion polls, one which involves some 40 countries in the world, 30 countries that they view totally negatively to Iran. And the vast majority of these countries are countries surrounding Iran, like Arab and Islamic countries.

Secondly, another opinion poll in Wisconsin and American University, which was also conducted at the level of the Arab world, I think these are important figures that the Iranian elite should take seriously because we are meant to talk to these people, meant to understand. The opinion poll shows that the real threat which really frightens people in the region, not their governments, number one is Iran, number two is Daesh, number three is Israel. Look how the scene has changed. Ten years ago the situation was totally different.

The third opinion poll was conducted by Al Jazeera and published about one month ago. Sixty to seventy percent of the Arab and Muslim people desire that a coalition should be established to face the Iranian threat. Isn't this something frightening, that people are talking about, they discuss these things? Why has the perception of the Islamic Republic in Iran moved from defending most of our friends, the oppressed, exporting revolution to this dire situation? This problem is not being discussed. In conferences we see that the Iranian elite is trying the reverse of discourse and blame the Arabs and defend the Iranian position. I think ball is in the Iranian court. There is a change there in the Gulf Countries, in the Arab countries. There are real fears of Iranian foreign policies. We do not have a problem with the Shiites as a school of thought. We do not have a problem with the Iranian Culture. We love to go to Iranian restaurants and have kabab or Iranian salad, and have falafel, but we're talking about the foreign policy. Let us talk about it in a

transparent manner. Let us hear clearly to understand and deconstruct.

There is an attempt by the elite to defend the Iranian government, the fatwa here and there, the policy. At the same time, the fear is spreading. This area is exploding. We see -- everyday we see a new problem which adds to the problems instead of reaching real stability.

I thank Brookings now. They gave us the opportunity to sit down and talk, which means the independent Americans sometimes will leave us and disappear like the administration has done, especially in view of Obama's latest statements. But we as academic elites and political elites in the region, we have to face up to these challenges, these problems, and sit down and exchange ideas not defend the policies of the states.

MR. FRAIHAT: I thank the (inaudible) again for mentioning the U.S. because the U.S. here is the elephant in the room that we need to talk about. So Iran signed a nuclear deal with the U.S. How do you



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see the U.S. role here? Does the U.S. role have -- does the U.S. have a role in or contributing to hostilities, or to rapprochement? You know, to improvement of relations, or the cause of conflict or rivalry in the region? Where do you see the role of the U.S. here, and how this can contribute to better understanding, especially after Iran signing the nuclear ordinance?

MR. SAJJADPOUR: First of all I would like to say that we are here, Ibrahim, as an elite, and, I guess, you know, we are not here to repeat the cliché answer, or basically to do the polemics. I mean, we are here to find ways, alternative ways to address important issue for us. I don't think I'm wrestling with you. I'm here to help. I have, you know, come from Tehran. You have come from Saudi Arabia for a long time not to here to repeat the cliché.

And let's see the problem, all of us. This is -- the way I would say it is a house in a fire which belong to all of us. You have to find ways all of us cooperatively rather than blaming on another to

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contain this, these flames. What's the use of wrestling here, and just basically exchanging cliches and rhetorics? Believe me, I have not come here for that.

And I try to find alternatives ways to address the issue. Answering your question, basically, U.S. -- you know, the significance of Middle East in general for U.S. have been adduced. Middle East is being viewed as an area which is significant, less significant, of course, than before, but are still with crisis. They are in the mood of crisis management.

They shouldn't think, you know, all part of the world that, you know, the significance of Middle East is not China. No way. China is a rising power, has a potential to the challenge the U.S. in next 25 to 30 years. And it has a lot of resources. It has a surplus that can finance a big army, China. So that's why the U.S. is going to allocate it's major resources to the Pacific.

But in the region, you know what they see I don't see. I'm not one of those who would think that the cause of everything back in the region is because of the U.S. No, it is not the case. Colonialism have been important. No doubt about it. And, you know, their past behaviors have been important. No doubt about it. But many of the problems which we are facing now is independent of U.S. actions.

I mean, for recognizing that -- first of all, it is important to recognize that. And second is, okay, to isolate the problems, to have a good understanding of the problem, and try to address the problem.

So each one of them, yeah, U.S. has some role. It can continue positively, or it can continue negatively. But as someone who has followed U.S. policy for last 37 years very closely, I don't think so. I don't think, at least the Obama administration, or many administration, they haven't a bad intention.

The want -- they have their own interests. They would pursue their interests. That's natural. I

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don't blame them why they are pursuing their interests. But the point is (inaudible) identified the common interest, support it, and manage the difference, the differences of the interests. To me as an analyst, this is the most important issue to address.

MR. FRAIHAT: Thank you very much.

MR. SAJJADPOUR: You're welcome.

MR. FRAIHAT: Thank you all. Let's take questions.

You can't speak without the mike.

SPEAKER: It's coming. It's coming.

MR. FRAIHAT: Yean, it's coming. It's here too.

SPEAKER: I was prevailing the whole speakers, but --

MR. FRAIHAT: Just one question.

SPEAKER: Only, only, only. Of course, one question for the first respected speaker. He said that one of the main problems with Iran, he's blaming Iran because they are supporting the dictator, Bashar

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al Assad. Great. So I am asking him what is the -- I agree with him. I blame Iran for supporting Bashar Assad. I asked him what is your opinion about states who are supporting a dictator in Egypt who is killing and exiling people, and on the brink of collapse they give him the supplies --

MR. FRAIHAT: Let's talk about the subject there on Saudi, please. Okay? Jamal.

MR. KHASHOGGI: Thank you. Thank you very much. In fact, I am Syrian, and I am against the regime of Bashar al Assad because of the heinous crimes that are being committed by the regime.

On the other hand, I am very much against Israel, so I don't know how can I constitute a threat. If I constitute a threat to Iran because I feel I do not because I am against Israel, but maybe because I am against the regime of Bashar Assad.

I want to ask Iranian colleagues, how many Israelis did Iran kill over the past 57 years, because I can tell you how many Syrians Iran killed over the past four or five years.

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My third point, actually, and the final one is that we are talking about democracy here in Iran. I think we are talking about engineering elections in Iran because this is what the expidenci (inaudible) council did last time. In Saudi Arabia, and I'm not defending Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is not claiming to be a democracy, so it doesn't need actually to engineer elections.

But I can't actually describe the engineering of election a democracy. I thank you very much.

MR. FRAIHAT: Thank you. Please bear with me. I know there are so many questions, and that's why I cut on my time, actually, of asking my questions to give the audience time to ask because I really want to take this opportunity for you all to hear from them directly.

So let's -- we'll take rounds. Let's take question from here, and we'll take a number of question here, and then go back. Yes, please.

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SPEAKER: I will speak Arabic. In fact, I have a idea that the conflict, in fact, is not an intellectual one. It is in fact, a political conflict, but the conflict now on the ground is a military one. And I think there is no solution to the military's conflict unless by the balance of power, because the Iranians say, will say we will reach Israel, and we cannot reach Israel unless we have -- allowed to be those who appoint the rulers of the Arab countries. And Iran says that there is a void, a security void in the region, and Iran will fill the void. That's why Saudi Arabia and its Arab partners are now filling this void to defend their own territories.

MR. FRAIHAT: Let's hear from him. I'm sorry.

Let's take a woman voice.

SPEAKER: (inaudible) mentioned something about a link between terrorism and Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia being responsible for terrorist attacks, and you mentioned 9/11, for example. I think it's

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inaccurate to blame a country on terrorist attacks because Saudi Arabia itself suffered from terrorist attacks since Jiman in, you know, 1970s, the (inaudible) all the way until this year with Isis, you know, and Isis affiliates and sympathizers initiates and attacks against Saudi Arabia.

So how do you explain that South Arabia is responsible for a terrorism attack from terrorist attacks where Saudi Arabia is suffering from terrorist attacks?

MR. FRAIHAT: Thank you. Okay, next question, please. Yes, go ahead.

SPEAKER: The problem was Iran -- not Saudi Arabia only, but all the GC countries (Arabic). The problem is not with Saudi Arabia only. But Iran must stop this war by proxy in the Arab world, and addition to Arab countries such as n Iraq, or Lebanon or Syria, Yemen.

Also this creates a general atmosphere for dialogue. I mean, whatever you speak about



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(inaudible), we cannot do a war by proxy. This is something against any dialogue.

My question is to the Iranian gentleman. What is the -- what point of view of the political elite in Iran about the decision Iran (inaudible) have (inaudible) to have a good dialogue with GC countries?

SPEAKER: My question is to Mr. Khashoggi. In fact, I wanted to know where the initiative, the good initiative that was taken by his, the emir of Qatar for cooperation between GC countries and Iran, knowing that Iran -- that Saudi Arabia did not accept this initiative, but Iran welcomed the initiative. Does this mean that this is a good opportunity now to have such a dialogue between the two governments to stop they said the blame game?

MR. FRAIHAT: Take a question here, and then give the speakers time to talk.

SPEAKER: Thank you, sir. The speaker seems to have admitted to the value and importance of the U.S. role in the region, and started from Mr. Khashoggi when he spoke about how the U.S. handed Iraq

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to Iran on a silver platter to Dr. Nasser ere, who says that the U.S. is pursuing its own interests in the region. Can't you all see that if the entire region is actually being played by the U.S. And if we look at the current conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia in particular, or the other Gulf States, or the rest of the Sunni Muslim world as the U.S. has planted the seeds of division within the Muslim world into this sort of problem, and it started from there, and it's growing. That then we can actually work together to try and counter that from a Muslim point of view rather than a Shiite-Sunni or because we all read the Koran. And at the end of the day, we read something else.

But they have done this, and they are successful in doing this. The division, the seeds are actually working. And now they have moved to the Pacific and they let you play or fight each other just to stall any progress, any development in the region.

Can't you take it from this angle --

MR. FRAIHAT: Okay. Thank you very much.

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SPEAKER: -- the U.S. is actually taking this to their advantage? Thank you very much.

MR. FRAIHAT: We'll take another round, but let's hear the speakers. We'll take another round.

SPEAKER: I want to speak about the notion of dialogue, because our friends Nassid and Sargit all talk about we should work together in bringing peace and scalability to the region.

Iran's understanding of dialogue is to dialogue with us while they continue in what they are doing in Syria and in Yemen, which is militarily you said dialogue. The Iranians are not in dialogue in Syria, are not in dialogue in Yemen. If they would allow it, if it wasn't for the (inaudible) Resolve, Yemen would be flooded with Iranian (inaudible). This is their form of dialogue.

So Saudi Arabia had to take the initiative independently (indiscernible). If Saudi Arabia waited for Obama maybe Mr. (inaudible) will be (indiscernible) Naval Base in (inaudible) today (Indiscernible) took initiative in his own hand?

Changed the rule of the games in Yemen. Yemen now is about (inaudible) to resume of political process.

This (inaudible) stands in Yemen and Syria, and where Iraqi stands. Saudi Arabia stands in Yemen and in Syria with the forces who seek democracy, who seek political transformation through dialogue, through diversity while Iran in both countries stand with sectarian militias, with terrorists in both countries, (inaudible). in Yemen. Bashar al Assad in Syria.

It is not Saudi Arabia, Professor Sajjadpour, who initiated the revolution in Syria. It is not Saudi Arabia who wanted to change the regime. Saudi Arabia patiently waited for Bashar al Assad to inject reform into Syria for six months before it made it public that it is asking for its removal. When Iran from day one, they were supportive of Bashar al Assad.

So it is not Saudi Arabia alone. Most of the free world is standing with Saudi Arabia because they are standing with the Syrian people who about ten

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millions of them have left that country. So we should not speak about a legitimate government in Syria. Only Iran see a dictator like Bashar as a legitimate government.

Yes, he is in the United Nations. But who would dare today in Europe pay him a visit except an irrelevant parliamentarian. Bashar al Assad is no good news to anybody. So that's -- if you want dialogue, just apply the rules of international rules. That so we can work out the differences in Syria and in Yemen, which, of course, again, Iran is not doing that. (inaudible) militarily not through dialogue in both countries.

MR. FREIHAT: Thank you. Sayed Sajjadpour.

MR. SAJJADPOUR: I'm afraid that we are not following what you said in your letter invitation that we have to refrain from blame game, but we are getting to blame game. Iran is behind everything. Iran is --

SPEAKER: It's directly behind it.

MR. SAJJADPOUR: Iran is Syrian crisis, whatever. Yemen is Iran. Syria is Iran. I think

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let's be frank. We are going to live in this region. We are going to live. And we have to live together. There is no other option. And we cannot exclude each other. There cannot be a zero sum game. Iran is not going to be deleted, and the Arab states are not going to be deleted.

So what we need is, as I said, assessment, understanding, exchange of views, and let's be even more frank. Let's understand what we say. And I also (inaudible). Let's understand what you say. I really try to understand. I try really to bridge the gap. But I think I'm not understood then. Why? Because there are so many misperceptions accumulated. My colleagues referred to the (indiscernible).

Who are making this -- who are responsible? I think there is a tendency to depict Iran as the main threat while it is not. It is an artificial threat. It is really not engaging any interests in the Arab world.

You referred to Saudi Arabia. I have sympathy with all those who are victims of terrorism,

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including Saudis, Arabs, Afghanis, Iraqis, and the others. But let's be clear. I didn't blame Saudi Arabia. What I said was that today in international, in (indiscernible) as Jamal is saying, there is a high discussion, a tense discussion that the threat of Iran is not marketable anymore. Don't forget that Saudi's GCC members states during the last two decades were using the this card that Iran is the threat.

Now the Americans are coming, and I'm not defending American position, but I read what they say. In this article that I mentioned (inaudible), Goldberg is not buying this arguments anymore. Why? Because they see that those people who were committing this suicide attacks on September 11th, they always stop Iranians -- yes. Okay.

MR. SAJJADPOUR: It stopped. It stopped.

MR. FRAIHAT: If you can, just in the second

--

MR. SAJJADPOUR: Iran cannot be stopped.

Iran is a (inaudible).

SPEAKER: It is only -- it is not only --

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MR. SAJJADPOUR: Always I stop Iranian, but you are here. You have invited us --

MR. FRAIHAT: In the second, please. Yeah. We'll take as second It's all valid.

MR. SAJJADPOUR: Arabs are really (inaudible).

MR. SAJJADPOUR: Sir.

MR. SAJJADPOUR: You invite us and then you stop us.

MR. FRAIHAT: No, no.

MR. FRAIHAT: Well, you took more than time than Jamal. Well, you can comment in the second part.

SPEAKER: Briefly, I think more than 50 years we have lost a lot, a lot of possibility of development because of our right or battle with Israel. Development plans were first drawn. Democracy was frozen in many Arab countries until the situation that even after changing the dictatorships, we were not able to have a system or regime that is based on the modern state concept.



And then further, we lose the (inaudible) also in the conflict between Arabs and Iran, and this will take from us several more years of dismantlement and other things. And, while we see that in that there are some linkages saying that Syria will be divided. Iraq is no longer (inaudible). Yemen will be divided. As if we have reached a new (inaudible). What was said (inaudible) that you put all the blame on Iran, and let's share the blood, the responsibility.

Yes. Right. Yes, we are guilty in some things. But let us discuss our problems and differences. Let's sit together and say it, and put our differences on a paper, and then we agree upon them. First, let's condemn all interventions in GCC countries such as in Yemen, Bahrain, and let's reach an understanding about the three Isles of the Emirates which was a cause of conflict with the Emirates for 30 years.

Let's stop sectarianism in Iraq and in Syria. Let's reach some understanding, and speak of

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the future about democracy, about development, about future projects. Let's vest in this side that we think is that is the government side of Tehran. There's lot of vestment by the government in sectarianism, and nobody -- Iran is still wanting to export the revolution.

This is something not convincing. This is something no longer convincing. And the elites of Iran must understand this. And this is what you wish when we speak with you. We don't want you to say, yeah, this is a political government point of view. This is what the government thinks. No.

Then why are we are here? Is we are here to reach some understanding and the common ground between us all.

SPEAKER: First of all, regarding the term they use, I mean, of international law to me is very much polemical. You know, you are invading another country. You said, okay, that's --

SPEAKER: What country?

SPEAKER: Yemen.

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SPEAKER: We're not invading Yemen.

SPEAKER: Yemen. What?

SPEAKER: We are not invading Yemen.

SPEAKER: Whatever you want us to think, you have invaded Yemen. But to me that is, I mean, use of you say, okay, because we have been invited by the government, (inaudible) the government so you are there. You have done the same thing in Bharain. Why? Because Bharaini government (inaudible), they have invited you.

But you don't give us the same privilege that, okay, Assad has invited Iran to go there, or the Iraqi government has given us -- has asked us to go there.

My point is we are not going to get anywhere with such a kind of exchanges. Let's put this polemics aside. We don't want to rest -- we are not going to compete. Let's go for the solution. You know, we can to the morning and I guarantee we can provide all sorts of reason for one another to engage in such a kind of polemics. I don't want to get into

these polemics. Let me address the real issues and my solutions which I think it's good for that.

First of all, I take Khaled's point about public opinion points. I guess that's a very good one. We have to take it seriously. Such a thing exists, and we have to take it. Thank you for that.

And that's a very good point. And you can be sure, I mean, personally I'm going to engage in it. I'm going to discuss with anyone. In the policy circles, I don't think the public -- also in the public. Okay. Such a perception exists among Arab countries, and we have to deal with it. That's real. Okay. Number one.

Number two, (inaudible) with the GCC. That's good. I mean, that should be done. In fact, we have a different relationship. We have a very good relationship with Oman. We have a very workable relationship with Kuwait and Qatar. And we have a lot of problem, of course, with the UA, but thanks God tactically, realistically, we have the most relationship with Dubai. If I'm not mistaken, there is

20 flights a day to Dubai from Tehran, which we have to (inaudible) to fly to any other city in Iran. Okay.

So -- but the point is that the point is good. You have to work on it. Each one of them you have to push much harder and to work with it.

And also regarding Syria, very quickly, you know, against -- you know, I'm afraid that, you know, I mean, this is not engaging in debate which I have with my friends in Iran, with many of my colleagues, friends, and some of the public that, you know, they think America is behind everything. It's a conspiracy theory. And the positive thing about conspiracy theories are, you know, it provides very simple answers for very complex questions. Satisfy the mind.

If you think Iran is not anti-Israel, I'm afraid I cannot help you that much. You know, it is so obvious that it is difficult to argue that Iran is against Israel. If you look at the history, how much cost Iran has paid for that, for that antagonism, you can easily understand. So if so far --

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MR. FRAIHAT: Thank you.

MR. SAJJADPOUR: (inaudible) to do it, I'm afraid I cannot help you that much. My last point about this gentleman about America. I disagree with you. I don't think, yes, America has been involved in the region. Yes. Some of the things which has happened is because of the America. But I'm not from the view that blame America for everything.

You know, we have our own problems. Many of them are independent of America. We have to address it. So, again, I see a short of a conspiracy there, you know, America is behind it.

MR. FRAIHAT: Thank you. Nasser. Let's take this again around, please. Okay.

SPEAKER: Mr. Nasset on the same point of American (inaudible). How you say that in the presence of the Palestine conflict, and the open love affair of America with this fight, and the presence of the American heavy military in almost every continent in the area, how we can say that America doesn't have the interest in this region?

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MR. FRAIHAT: Thank you. Sir. Yes.

SPEAKER: Thank you very much, (inaudible).

I am here to convey an impression from social networks, and the kind of discussion that is prevalent amongst the Arab League which goes to say that American policymakers have really gone beyond the dialogue with the west. They are happy with their relations with the west, and they are happy to squeeze the Arabs under the banner of terrorism, and Iran is no longer worried about the sanctions. This period of history is over. Thank you very much.

SPEAKER: Short comment and a question. And the comment is that, you know, everything said, I read that. So there's nothing new. And actually, I came here just to listen what should be done to get the both parties, you know, understand each other. I mean, everyone (inaudible) Turkey ones, is a great speaker, but when talked about you are not here for the blame game, but you are doing this as well, I mean, so what is it exactly that should be done to get both nations, let's say, the Saudis and the (inaudible) and the

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Iranis -- I'm not finished. And this is -- second thing is that I don't think that Iran is in a position to lecture about democracy. I mean, Iran is supporting a butcher in Damascus, so what is that democratic deficient as if Iran is a full-fledged democracy? I mean, this is kind of irony here. We can say that.

And my question to Khaled Jabber (Arabic).

SPEAKER: I agree with you that it all depends on whom you talk to in Iran. By the same token, the Arabs approach Iran differently. There is no unified front by the Arabs against Iran.

MR. FRAIHAT: Questions. Yes.

SPEAKER: My question is for the four of you. Do you think that the escalation of hostilities between Iran and Saudi Arabia would have reached such a point if Iran hasn't signed the nuclear deal, and so Saudi Arabia feeling scared of losing an ally which is the west in favor of Iran which is no longer isolated by the international community? Thank you.

MR. FRAIHAT: Thank you. Yes, sir.

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SPEAKER: Thank you. Just two points.

Professor Sayed, you mentioned certain elements that you said that it reflects Saudi Arabia foreign policy, which are internal issues in Saudi Arabia, such as democratic deficiency, modernization, generation change, the fight within the political elite. Don't you think those issues also apply to Iran, and the issue of Iranian-Saudi Arabia relations is also a reflection of the domestic politics?

The second point related to Dr. Khashoggi. Don't you think the rapprochement between Iran and United States of America reflects the failure also of Saudi Arabia to address those internal issues such as generation change?

MR. FRAIHAT: Thank you. Thank you. Let's take a question here, please. Yes.

SPEAKER: First of all, let me thank you for coming here. I just have one particular questions to Mr. Nasser Hadian, and Mr. (inaudible) and all in general. Bu my particular question is you talk about the elite as -- and Mr. Khashoggi talk about economic

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elite as well. What about the (inaudible) societies, and do you think they have (inaudible) of you to say rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran? And if, yes what Iran and Saudi Arabia has take measures to sustain that approach because we don't hear any youths or any, what you call, media, or any comments from the youth elements.

MR. FRAIHAT: Thank you.

SPEAKER: Only from the elites. You talk about the elites. And my question to Mr. Khashoggi, the last question, you wrote a book about the effects of the social media and politics. What do you think about the youths today? Okay, we understood your question.

SPEAKER: We'll have another (inaudible).

SPEAKER: I'd like the question was to be that what should be then that Iran should leave militarily the region? Go back to Iran, but leave -- no more militia, no more warfare in Syria and Yemen. The problem that it's not only the Iranians who got their role in the area wrong. It is also Mr. Obama

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did. When Obama to Goldberg said that the Saudi and the Iranians must learn how to share influence, or a cold (inaudible), he put it this way, that is very imperialistic. This is like we, the Saudis and the Iranians sitting across a table and dividing (inaudible) with no respect to the Syrians or to the Yemenis.

Often people use the term, "Iran's legitimate interests," in Syria. There is no such a thing as legitimate interest in Syria for the Iranians, nor for the Saudis. There's only interest for the Syrian people. They are the one who decide. We cannot dictate what the Syrian choose for themselves. It is very much insulting to bring this (inaudible) mentality in the age of the Arab Spring and we, the Saudis and the Iranians share influence over role the Saudis should be to help the Syrians, help the Yemenis reach their aspiration of freedom, but not to dictate on them whom to choose or to fight with the dictators in any country in the region.

We should carry on that mission. That's the opportunity that our Iranian friends are losing, and they are making things more difficult. Nobody is going to gain (indiscernible) by spreading more chaos. I'm sure the Saudi will be able to at least make it difficult for the Iranians to achieve a win in Syria. Maybe we will not force them out, but there is no way they're gonna be allowed to reestablish the region of (Arabic). It's not going to happen.

The most probably the could do which will be very damaging for Syria is to partition Syria, and that would not be for sure accepted by Saudi Arabia or Turkey. It will be (inaudible) for some time. It's bad news for the Syrians, but we should listen to the -- we the Saudis, you the Iranians, listen to the people of the region. We should not listen to ourselves.

MR. FRAIHAT: Thank you. Thank you very much. Yes. (inaudible).

SPEAKER: I think that there was the questions what should be done. I'm insulted by this.

And I say first you have to exchange our understanding and analysis. So first, there's a cognitive gap. You have to understand how we understand Syria. How you understand it. We have to understand difficulties, challenges of the region.

And I think the problem mostly starts with understanding cognitive exchanges and so on. So what should be done? You have to breach gaps (inaudible).

Second, I said there are bridges that should be used. I mentioned Atta's initiative. I mentioned others (inaudible). Finally, I said there should -- coexistence should be the base. We are doomed to live together. This is a reality. Whether you like me, or you don't like me, or whether I like you, or I don't like you, we have to understand that there is a common destiny, and it is not just (inaudible). It is the daily reality of life.

Now, on the question of Iran has its own social problem. Iran has its own challenges also. Social, economic (inaudible) ignores. But there are two points in response to your question. First, we

don't blame Saudi Arabia, and we don't use (inaudible) as a pretext that (inaudible) is behind every problem.

Actually, we don't care if -- one of the questions was at least we don't much care about the details of what's going on here and there, because we're also engaged with our own problems.

The second point is, believe it or not, whether it is as (inaudible) as the Syrian colleague was saying, which I don't agree, whether it is Iran is lecturing the other. I think Iran is not lecturing the other.

The second point is that Iran, in Iran you have debate. There is a transparent debate on all social issues, all economic issues, and we have find, we find ways in different way. And I think the social debating, economic debating is very tough, and very challenging, but we discuss it.

My third point or question is --  
(inaudible).

MR. FRAIHAT: You can save that point. You always take more than the others, and complain.

SPEAKER: We are keeping on dialogue and we are not for fighting.

No. I think that was a very good question on this (inaudible) and the increasing of tension, so after this and there were some references to the U.S., and (inaudible) and Iran.

SPEAKER: I think first of all, Iran is internationally accepted. It's not just the U.S.

SPEAKER: The third point, not first of all, please.

SPEAKER: Last point is about U.S. and international issue, and the (inaudible) issue. This third point has two points. First is that Iran is (laughter) that Iran is accepted (inaudible). Second, second is that I'm afraid that what we hear from Sunnis is really shocking. Were they for more confrontation between Iran and the United States --

MR. FRAIHAT: Thank you very much.

SPEAKER: And the third point --

MR. FRAIHAT: Thank you.

SPEAKER: --is that they (inaudible).

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SPEAKER: Thank you very much.

SPEAKER: I too want to focus on the future. After the nuclear deal, there were different scenarios. We -- in fact, we were hoping we were maybe rather ambitious that Iran will engage in the international game. They will commit to international agreements. They played that game with Europe and the west. Why don't they play the same game with their neighbors, Arabs and the Gulf people?

This was the first scenarios. The second scenario, and, in fact, this is what we saw in reality was contrary to our ambitions. Their antagonism has increased. Maybe Syria has exposed a lot of real Iranian policy. Maybe Iraq did not expose them strongly enough because it was covered by statements and rhetoric. But Syria was the real shocker, especially Hezbollah, who established a long reputation always saying that we are a resistance movement. We are fighting them. I mean, all of this was destroyed when it was used as a proxy in the war.



And a brother asked about the Arab world not having a unifying, unified front. I think our intentions are honest. And in 2005 when Iran reached out to the Arab world, there were exchange of visits, there were cultural, commercial delegations, exchange of visits. The Arab and the GCC countries have no problems with that. There were problems, meetings with Khomeini, but when Ahmadinejad came back it was another setback.

We must remember that Iranian -- sorry -- GCC countries did not export revolution. We do not support sending groups inside Iran. We do not support Sunnii groups against other groups. We do not have antagonistic discourse which is always being used in international forums. This is not present in our side.

On the contrary, we see the opposite on the other side. Dr. Sayed talked about laying bridges. We want bridges from yesterday, but not according to Iran's conditions. It should be -- it should be conditions of everyone. We have issues in Iraq, and

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the UAE, and Bharain. They say Iraq is our  
(inaudible). So what conditions should we enter into  
any dialogue to reach an agreement which can be of  
benefit to everyone?

MR. FRAIHAT: Key.

SPEAKER: First of all, I did not say  
America is basically, doesn't have any interest here.  
Of course America has interest here. But, you know,  
the significance of the region has been reduced for  
America. That's what I said. And that's what I  
believe. And I think, you know, we should not think  
that we are the center of the world.

(inaudible) in general because there are  
many people in Iran who think that Iran is the center  
of the world. You're not. You know, there are far  
more important countries in the world who America has,  
who have taken America's attention.

That's the same thing in the region. We  
should not overvalue the significance of the Middle  
East. Basically, that's was what I was telling, not

they don't have interests, or Middle East is not important.

Point number two. In fact, I tried to begin to address the question. But, unfortunately, (inaudible) is in a way do not give us enough time to go to (Arabia). You know, I have proposal, basically, at three different level --

SPEAKER: Can I interrupt? I'll give it back to you, but can I interrupt, because I want to end the questions from the audience, and that's actually my question, my ending question to everyone. That we'd like to move on from the, what is happening from the past, and would like to ask all of you to please outline in bullet points, tell me in terms of a future perspective. And again, please don't talk abstract that we need to understand each other, and we need to coexist, and -- we know that. Right. Tell me --

MR. FRAIHAT: But you said (inaudible).

SPEAKER: Tell me -- that's why, that's why we're here. Okay. I would like to hear from you --

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and I thank (inaudible) again for getting of this thinking before I asked that question.

Tell me in bullet points what would you like to see happening in terms of a future from the other side, especially, in order to move rapproachment forward, and better understanding, and de-escalation, not escalation, please.

MR HARDIAN: Thank you very much. First of all, I agree with Kazem that, you know, misunderstanding is the key, particularly I came to this conclusion after talking to Jamal. I think that the key is you have to remove this misunderstanding. But for doing that, to be like you said, bullet point, I think we have more exchanges of scholars --

MR. FRAIHAT: One.

MR. HARDIAN: -- elite --

MR. FRAIHAT: Two.

MR. HARDIAN: -- and youth, basically, as I said. You know, there need to be more exchanges, particularly among the youth being even more concrete. At Tehran University, we are very glad to invite our

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colleagues from Saudi Arabia, and the students from Saudi Arabia to come there for a semester. To have these kind of exchanges can lead to reducing the misunderstanding.

Two, we need to work on the public. For working on the public, thanks God Jamal is going to having a good, basically a news agency, so we can use his news agency to exchange views which is directed to the public. Bring with a good language trying to work to remove these misunderstandings which exist. We have to do the same thing in Iran.

Number three. We can have, in fact, a joint project. No higher institute can be. Good base. Inviting some Iranians, some Saudis. Let them concentrate and work in the, for instance, (inaudible) among both countries. That can be extremely important.

So joint research project can be very influential and important. Then there is at official. So you have it at the official level. You have to try, work hard to convince our officials to get in touch with Iranians, to talk one another.

And as Jamal said, you know, we are at least for the Mecca, they have already begun that. Let's hope it can be enhanced to other levels. So that an official level.

Then at the elite, at the think tank level, you have to increase the exchanges. You know, I'm sure Kazem basically from his institute, RPIS, and also the center which, or the bureau which he's directing, you know, they can be important exchanges, basically, at that level, and also at the think tank level in Iran and in Saudi Arabia.

And the third level is a public level. So what a public level, as I mentioned, news media, I mean, the television, writing joint article, writing op-eds, for instance. That would be good if Jamal or Khaled write op-eds, and we can publish it in Iran, Iranian newspaper as an op-ed, front page. That's a view from Saudi Arabia. And we do the same thing. I write an op-ed --

MR. FRAIHAT: In the Peninsula.

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MR. HARDIAN: In the Peninsula or -- I mean, in Saudi Arabia. For the public. This is not for the officials. This is rather being written --

MR. FRAIHAT: Thank you.

MR. HARDIAN: -- for the public.

MR. FRAIHAT: Thank you, Nasser. Again, please. Yes. Jamal. More on bullet points. What would you like to see happening?

MR. KHASHOGGI: Okay.

MR. FRAIHAT: For the future.

MR. KHASHOGGI: First of all, I like what Nasser said, but it will not help much. It will make us understand each other better, but, actually, the Saudi Arabia and Iran don't have much of differences. Saudi Arabia does not have territorial differences with Iran. Nor Saudi Arabia is concerned with the way the Iranians choose to run their own country, and what kind of Islamic revolution they have. It all matter to Iranian expansionism (inaudible).

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That is a problem. If we and the Iranians sit together, and the Iranian convince Saudi Arabia of their so-called legitimate interest or right in Syria, and we accept it that legitimate right in Syria, what about the Syrians themselves? What if the Syrian people refuse that legitimate rights? Because there is no such a thing as legitimate rights for Iranian in Syria, or for Saudi Arabia in Syria. The rights only belong to the Syrian people. They are the one who would decide.

So it will be just a waste of time for us to debate Iranian interventionist policy to convince us of the good reasoning, whatever, if there a good reason for their intervention in Syria or in Lebanon, and why it is so important for Iran to send more weapons to Hezbollah, and why it is more important for Saudi Arabia to lift its blockade on the Yemeni port so the Iranians will resume sending more weapons to the Hausi.



Even if we accepted that, it will be unfair for (inaudible) people, and for the Syrian people, and for the (inaudible) people. What matters is that Iran must (inaudible) by international laws which prohibit then from intervening or sending weapons, and hiring politicians and militias in foreign countries.

MR. FRAIHAT: Thank you, Jamal. Future. Bullet points. What needs to happen.

MR. SAJJADPOUR: I'm afraid if I have bullet points, you would say it's abstract. But I think I have --

SPEAKER: Keep the bullet simple.

(Laughter.)

MS. SAJJADPOUR: And you don't have (inaudible).

(Laughter.)

MS. SAJJADPOUR: Now, I have three more on what should not be done, and three points on what should be done. If I have time, I'll go to the tape, but, first, and they are in, let's say, (inaudible). First, the emotionalization of relations. Tonight, I

noticed there are too much emotion in this relationship.

Second, I think you have to de-escalate the tensions. Let's find ways to de-escalate, not increase it. Third, I think you have to de-construct a recognition system. And I'm talking about myself also. Deconstruction is the key. We cannot sound like you share by repeating what you have been exposed to.

Now, on the positive side, Three E's. First, I think you have to focus on extremism. Extremism is the common threat. We have to have a joint definition, joint (inaudible), and I think it is really a major security threat for everybody. My second E is economy. Let's take economy more serious. And I think there are areas of economic interactions.

Actually, it was not Iran which was inattentive to the Arab world. Of course, we have always been interested in the Arab worlds, but I think the response of some of the Arab actors, I don't talk about Arab states together, (inaudible) was not very

helpful, but I think still there are economic spaces which can really be (indiscernible). My third positive note is, Environment. And I think environment is address three of may politicized areas, and I'm alone I go just because there is many references to Syria. I would say Syria cannot be a problem dividing us. Why? I have an example.

Turkish position in Syria is absolutely different from ours, and it is on the record. But Syria have good relationship with Turkey. So it means coexistence applies here. You can (inaudible) on even some major issues, but still live together. And I think coexistence is very key.

MR. FRAIHAT: Thank you.

MR. SAJJADPOUR: And I thank you for listening.

MR. FRAIHAT: Okay.

MR. SAJJADPOUR: Now, I have two long (inaudible). One is a short one. The other one is a long one. The long one is thank you very much. The short one is thank you.

MR. FRAIHAT: Thank you.

MR. JABBER: I hope to be an optimist. I was an optimist, but after the Arab Spring, I'm no longer that optimistic. The feels I harbor is that the current government in Iran is they are chest players. They are long-term. Iranians are very cleaver in playing chest, and this is what distinguishes them. They have a hard stomach. They can deal with kababs and other things. So, therefore, the think the Gulf area is an easy bite to swallow. They can take it, swallow it, and carry on.

But there are some determinants, nonetheless, that we can build on even with a little bit of optimism. I think political realism, and especially in the soft area to come will determine our relations with Iran as Gulf countries and Iran specifically what happens in Syria, if Bashar goes to Bashar stays. If the situation changes or not. This will rearrange this area.

Historically, there were some sort of a convergence, and we talked about mid nineties 'til

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2005 there was stability. There was development in the relationships, until something changed. So there are historical witnesses to this.

I think solving this outstanding issues with the Gulf countries and other countries in the region will contribute positively to a more positive relations with Iran, but the ball is in Iran's court, and I think, for example, they should stop really this campaign of the governments and states. Now, nobody buys that. Everybody understands the situation now. The Arab Spring and Iran had one discourse. Until Syria came, it exposed their real intentions.

And, also, in my personal opinion, we understand that there is a youth in Iran which is pragmatic, and politicized, and geoliticized which wants openness with the west. I think in days to come, I hope we don't have to long for a long time, this youth generation will be a strong player in both Iran's internal and external policies. We saw them in 2009, and the Twitter revolution is (inaudible) to that.

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I hope that we end up being more optimistic, not pessimistic.

SPEAKER: Want I do more or --

MR. FRAIHAT: Okay. All right. Go ahead.

SPEAKER: First of all, regarding the Khaled's last point. I mean we have a lot of problem in Iran. And I guess we have to recognize that. And we have problem with the human rights. We have problem with democracy. We have problem with the political freedom. You have to address it. If we don't recognize it as a problem, we are not going to address it. We are not going to try to find a solution for it.

What I hope, all of us, the elite of our societies, recognize these things, these problems, in our own country. You know, if I blame everything to the Arabs or to the Americans, or to the Israelis, or you blame us on the Americans, you know, for every problem we have, believe me, we are not in the right direction.

We are better -- all of us are better off to know that you have problem with these issues. We have a problem with the woman's issue. Period. If we don't recognize it, they're not going to address it.

We have problem in Iran? You have problem in many part of the Middle East. Thus, we have to address it. We no longer can say that, okay, things are good. We don't need to address them, it's just matter of time. You have to address it.

And one last one in regard in defense of Obama. Obama never said that the Saudis and Iranians sit together and divide the region, so forth and so on. You know that he didn't say that. Had he said that, okay, many of the problems is because of the rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia. It's better for you two countries sit together and address these problems. (inaudible).

It doesn't mean that if someone like Obama has said something so it should be deceptive or wrong. I don't think it is. I mean, unless you want to do a polemic again using the international law (inaudible)

I think his recommendation is good, and I guess, I mean, if our countries get together, we can address some of the important issues of the region. Thank you.

MR. FRAIHAT: Thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you all for being with us.

(Applause).

MR. FRAIHAT: And to end this peacefully give us hope for existence and for better understanding have rapprochement in the future. So thank you for our great speakers, and for (inaudible). And thank you all. And we have reception area. Please help yourself. Thank you.

\* \* \* \* \*



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