

# SHEIKH MOHAMMED BIN ABDULRAHMAN BIN JASSIM AL-THANI

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First of all, good afternoon everybody and thank you very much for hosting me today with such a distinguished audience, from policy-makers and intellectuals to the business community.

I hope this session will be useful and informative to you all; but I will make myself very brief in my remarks and will give more time for the Q&A in order to address your questions or anything that needs to be clarified from my side. I would also like to thank the Government of Morocco for making this gathering happen and hosting all the people whom we had the honour of hosting last year in Doha. The World Policy Conference has become one of the most important events in the world of policy and international affairs.

I wanted to start today with one very simple question here: “Why is the Middle East an important region?” For ages, the Middle East was the source of civilisations, the root of languages and the origin of different faiths. It was an international trade hub connecting the East to the West and the West to the East, where the people could connect and engage. The key word for this was co-existence, and there was engagement of people from different backgrounds and different ethnicities. Now the situation has reverted. We don’t want it to revert to the dark ages. Before, we used to be a source of enlightenment and we do not want to become a source of turbulence for the world.

I believe most of the international challenges are now happening in the region, in the Middle East, where we have different on-going conflicts: the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Yemen and its humanitarian catastrophe, Libya’s situation which is spilling over into Europe, Africa and the sub-Saharan region. The ongoing issue in Iraq is another example. Unfortunately, the most horrifying situation in recent history is what’s happening now in Syria. It is a continuous seven years of conflict, which had started as decent demands from normal people asking for justice, rights and reforms. Unfortunately they were confronted with military action and bombardment and the situation has now changed from a crisis of the people to a crisis of terrorism and extremism.

If we are going to look at all these conflicts, we will find that there are different narratives. And they are usually using religion as a scapegoat. But if we look at all of them, we will find one common theme here, which is that those who want and seek power always create crises. When we are looking at the example of Syria, as I’ve just mentioned, we see that the government wants to preserve power. That’s why they are creating this crisis of people, where more than 500,000 people are being killed and more than 12 million are being displaced. All of this is just for the sake of power. Extremism is being nurtured there to achieve influence. Their vision is not to achieve a religious state. Their vision is a political vision; they are using religion as a scapegoat to achieve this political vision. It is all about a game of power and influence.

Under the same theme, we see that the most stable and most promising region in the Middle East was the Gulf countries, which had been the centre of stability. It was the role model and example for cooperation in collective security to achieve one common objective: maintaining the security of the region and having a prosperous future with better economic integration. I’m sure everybody will recognise that I’m talking about the Gulf region, which was like this until a few months ago.

The crisis started out of nothing, without any basis. Suddenly the Gulf countries, especially Qatar, appeared on the front page of every media outlet talking about the Middle East. A crisis, which is happening in one of the most stable regions; a region that is considered the source of energy in the world when it comes to oil, LNG, and economic prosperity. A region which is situated in a very complicated neighbourhood is just turning into another crisis.

What are the motives of these crises? If I ask anyone here, everybody will talk about different motives; even me, the Foreign Minister of Qatar. I should know well the reasons of this crisis, but I cannot give you a clear reason and I



cannot judge and assess on their behalf. I cannot keep guessing on behalf of countries who are not yet willing to talk to me. This crisis began with a cyber-attack. No one can imagine the effect of cybercrimes, which are now becoming a phenomenon in Europe, the US, Asia and now in the GCC.

There is something wrong in all those conflicts. Why couldn't the international system solve and prevent these crises from happening? Aren't we in the age of preventive diplomacy? Aren't we in the age of engagement and dialogue? Or we are we just reverting back to the age of confrontation and war?

Qatar has always been calling for dialogue in different conflicts. Qatar has always acted as a platform for peace and as peace broker. Qatar has brokered more than 10 peace deals in this region because we believe in dialogue. We believe that engagement is the best way forward to provide a solution to any crisis. Although the crisis has been created by those seeking power, we believe dialogue is the best way forward.

There is another failure in the international system: we found that it cannot address the needs of civilians and their protection from becoming part of any political conflict. We see that the civilians cannot be protected in the different conflict zones in Syria, Yemen, Libya and now in Qatar. Although our people are not facing the same difficulties that are faced by the Syrians, Yemenis or Iraqis; they are facing some difficulties when their families are being torn apart because of a political conflict. When we have more than 26,000 human rights violations, it is our role and obligation as a government to provide protection to our own people. So why is there no mechanism in the international order in the 21st century to prevent this from happening? Why is there no enforcement mechanism to protect our people, the Qatari people, the Syrian people, and the people of the world, to protect the humanity from such an escalation?

I believe this is a very important global challenge. And I hope that such a gathering with different politicians and intellectuals can come up with some recommendations for the international community to come together, face and confront the law of force with the force of law. To empower the law enforcement mechanisms, to empower the system itself in order to protect our people.

I don't want to take much time to explain our situation but we believe that our situation is similar to other situations, although not at the same level and we hope it will never reach such levels of tension. We hope it will be resolved very soon. Not because we see that there are lots of challenges within, but challenges are really faced by the entire region. And we believe that this region cannot afford a crisis. Especially a needless crisis without any foundation.

We hope that one day, wisdom will prevail and that the countries who are trying to avoid engagement, avoid talking and addressing any of the security concerns, will understand they are our concerns too. They have to come to the table and solve the issues. We have to learn from history, we cannot learn by experience.

The entire world witnesses the same conflicts, the same crises everywhere. These crises took years and years and in the end, none have been solved on a battlefield or through confrontation. All of them have been resolved around a table. And we hope that all crises in the Middle East will be solved around a table. Thank you.