



## **PANEL:**

### ***Positioning the Arab Region in the Next Decade: Is There a Roadmap?***

Who leads shaping the 2020s agenda for the Arab region? In light of fundamental challenges, what priorities should top the 2020s agenda? Are the geopolitical agents shaping the roadmap for the next decade, or is there a new tapestry of local and global forces evolving?

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***Moderated by Mr. Robert Nakhel, Senior News Anchor SNA***

#### ***Panelists:***

- Mr. Andrey Bystritsky, Chairman of the Board of the Valdai Discussion Club
- H.E. Ghassan Hasbani, Deputy Prime Minister of Lebanon
- H.E. Yang Honglin, Former Chinese Ambassador to Bahrain/Iraq/Saudi Arabia
- H.E. Brett McGurk, Payne Distinguished Lecturer Stanford University
- Ms. Sameera Rajab, Special Envoy for the Royal Court
- H.E. Hossam Zaki, Deputy Secretary-General of Arab League

#### **Highlights:**

##### **Mr. Andrey Bystritsky, Chairman of the Board of the Valdai Discussion Club**

Future of the Middle East depends on middle east.

Influence of Russia is not very high. We should not overestimate Russian influence. From my point of view, Russia is trying to find balance in this region. Russia is trying to find some sustainable situation. The main responsibility is on the middle east countries.

Middle East is extremely important region, what is the common identity? What kind of society should be here? There is significant diversity. This region are the countries, it is a serious challenge for this region.



The main interest of Russia is to help this region a solution, on its own way, to understand the world.

From point of view, Russia is to help find internal decisions. The problem is that could Middle East the subject of all politics. It seems now not because a lot of contradictions. But let's use modern technology terms maybe we should think about new middle east political network.

We should think about hierarchy of networks, no one wolf leader. There are a lot of voices, there is competition. Russia and the US are more of competitors. We can think and elaborate decisions, it is a conflict of interest. In this situation we can find the decision.

Will the situation would be worse? Of course we can say yes. But we should think about the next nobel prize winner, we should think about the future. There are a lot of fantastic opportunities. We should careful but bold.

### **H.E. Ghassan Hasbani, Deputy Prime Minister of Lebanon**

We should look at the social and economic as well as the political situation in the region. There are lots of ideas in terms of political ideas and religions. However, we are not at a time where there is a map or maps. We are no longer at times where states are formulated such as the 20th century. There is technology now, different world orders.

Today there are transformation within the present orders of the countries; the regimes, social contract and changes in the regimes in themselves. Are there interests of other countries? Yes of course, there are the interests of other countries. But we don't depend on superpowers to draw maps of our region. It is no longer the same as in the past. This is why the regime has to start working on reforming itself by itself.

Reform from within, bottom up. If there are any visionary people at the top of the pyramid. This will contribute to the region.

The first point that we have to take into account that our expectations are very high and low to others and we have to reverse it and not depend on others. We can start all these solutions by internal dialogue.

The intervention in the region is not a selective matter from one time to another. You cannot intervene in the region and then decide you don't want to and this creates imbalance.



We have to do on the Arab levels to have our influence on our economies etc. We must reverse the equation in the next 20 years.

We have to look at what is good for to be done and therefore there is international conflict of resources, we are still in the oil age in the 30 to 50 years. There is always a global economic conflict that is also translated into a financial conflict. We have to direct ourselves into a prospers and change it into something productive rather than destructive. We have to establish constructive relations between nations as possible.

### **H.E. Yang Honglin, Former Chinese Ambassador to Bahrain/Iraq/Saudi Arabia**

China and the Arab countries have their old and deep rooted relations and friendship. China entered into a new era, the same thing applies to Arab countries. Furthermore, they are making great efforts to preserve their own unity and security of the region.

We support the Arab countries because they are our partners, friends and brothers. We have long and deep established relation towards history and of course China to help the Arab countries. As for the existing difference in the region, we support the Arab countries to solve and sort out these problems through negotiations and consultation.

China always calls for equality whether small or big, poor or rich. There always should be equality. China is a developing country and despite that achieved a lot. The per capita income of China is still low because we have a large number of population.

In fact the Arab countries face a new age of reconstruction and development. We will continue to work together.

The cooperation is based on mutual interests of the two sides.

### **H.E. Brett McGurk, Payne Distinguished Lecturer Stanford University**

When you talk about a roadmap for this part of the world it is hard to say one because we have many variables. If Trump does a second term it will alter the direction and perception of the USA. Russia and China will then be seen as a more reliable partners for many countries.

The policy with Iran its been successful in placing economic pressure on Iran but its not thought so in terms of how Iran will react. There is a risk to have next year to have another provocation.



This dynamic between Turkey, Qatar, Arab States etc is a very dangerous trend. I agree that the USA is not doing diplomacy to decrease this risk. Very hard to have a roadmap when you don't know where you are going.

The pendulum swinging based on American presidential cycle, I think we all have to get back to forces of understanding what we are trying to achieve together because this pendulum swings makes roads for Russia and China.

The question is, how does China use its influence with Iran to try to make Iran act in a comprehensive way. How does China use that influence.

You have to remain somewhere optimistic. I am very concerned about the situation in Syria, we are likely to see a comeback from ISIS. What are we trying to achieve? Let's not be over ambitious and work together.

### **H.E. Hossam Zaki, Deputy Secretary-General of Arab League**

What combines the Arab is still strongly than what deunify them. From my practical experience there are many factors combining the Arabs such as the economic interests.

If the political dialogue among the Arab nations we would have a collective level.

Arabs do not want to help themselves and unify themselves.

We hope that the situation will change, there are factors of unification and closeness more than those disunity and division among the Arabs.

Undoubtedly the continuity or the length of any crisis would make the players fatigue. This fatigue and many would try to delegate it to someone who can find a solution. I personally do not think that it is an issue of mood. Everybody is trying to realise their interests.

The Arab stand is not built on interest, it is built on something else. Even if Syria is absent there was a clear stand from the Arab League to support the Syrian side. The political stance is to stress do not want to sell the political stand in return for gains.

The situation is dangerous at different levels and different countries but to count on the international agenda is not the right approach. What do you do in order to immune itself each country. Each country has its own internal responsibility.



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Unfortunately, yes the crisis will remain and make stand. But if the Arabs believe in their power they could succeed. But the problem is that the Arabs do not believe in their success, but if you believe in the power you will. But surrendering to the idea that we are lead by foreign power [wont lead us].