

Round Table Discussion on

Current Situation in Middle East & Fears of Sectarian Polarization in Muslim World

Organized by
MUSLIM Institute

Research think-tank MUSLIM Institute organized a Round Table Discussion on the topic “Current Situation in Middle East & Fears of Sectarian Polarization in Muslim World” on Thursday 12th September 2013 in Islamabad Hotel, Islamabad.



Sahibzada Sultan Ahmad Ali

Chairman MUSLIM Institute

While dilating upon the objectives of the a Round Table Discussion, Sahibzada Sultan Ahmad Ali stated that the Middle East is facing multiple internal and external challenges as every country in the region has its own stakes. These challenges and interests cannot be covered in a short span here. We would today primarily focus on how current tensions in the Middle East would further fan flames of sectarianism in the Muslim world. This sectarian fire in the Muslim world is not new. However, the real question is what the Muslim Ummah has collectively done to extinguish this fire. For want of any serious effort in this regard, the entire Muslim world is now engulfed in its flames. It is difficult to single out any one who is responsible for containing it. We collectively need to discuss and deliberate on this issue to agree to strive to control it. Regardless of our affiliation with any school of thought, we need to think how we can surmount this challenge. Solution to the same lies in research, foresight and prudence, not in emotionalism, irrationality and intolerance.



Dr. Sadollah Zarei

Prof. of Allameh Tabatabai University - Tehran, Iran & Director: The Thought-makers Study Center

Expressing his views, Dr. Sadollah Zarei stated that the current situation in Syria is not like as if it is at war with another country. It is not a conflict of sect or religion but continuity of our opponents' designs of crippling Muslim countries politically and economically. They are trying to occupy resources of the Muslim world. The Muslim scholars and intellectuals need to understand these challenges and should not remain quiet. To confront the prevailing challenges, academicians and intellectuals should come forward. Rising above sectarian and territorial divide, we all need to accord priority to the interests of the Ummah and devise collective and consensual strategy in this regard. The Muslims should get themselves acknowledged at international level as a politically united entity and need to formulate policies for attaining it. Solution to our problems lies in the same.





Prof. Amir Anwar Shadani

Former Ambassador

Addressing on the occasion, Amir Anwar Shadani said that dangers of a deadly war are looming large on the Middle East. Current crisis in Syria has a relation with the Arab Spring that originated in Tunisia and also affected Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain and Syria. The Middle East is divided into two camps: on one side are Iran, Lebanese Shiite, Hezbollah and Syria, while in other camp are Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Syrian Rebels. He further stated that the Middle East, in fact, remained divided in two blocs after cold war.

On one side, there are countries having friendly ties with America and soft approach towards Israel, while countries opposed to America and Israel, like Iran, Syria and Palestinian Hamas have been in the other bloc. Nonetheless, current Syrian crisis has added another very critical dimension to this divide i.e. sectarian conflict. This sectarian dimension is so intense that even Sunni Hamas appears to be moving away from the Iranian camp. Shifting of its central office from Damascus to Doha (Qatar) is indicative of the same. This sectarian wedge is a challenge not only for Syria but also for the entire Muslim world. Though current situation in Syria is alarming but newly elected Iranian President's indications of improving ties with Saudi Arabia and easing tensions are positive omens.



Ambassador Rtd. Gul Hanif

Chairman of Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad & Former Ambassador

In his concluding remarks, Ambassador Rtd. Gul Hanif stated that the opponents have always used sectarianism to weaken Muslims. It is the need of the hour to discourage all such forces and their toadies. It is imperative to formulate collective and consensual strategy to counter the same.



Interactive Session



Recommendations

It is evident from speeches and analysis of honorable speakers that sectarianism is one the deadliest challenges confronting the Muslim Ummah. The opponents have always tried to exploit the same to divide and weaken the Muslims. Situation in Middle East indicates that the anti-forces are once again resorting to similar tactics for fulfillment of their nefarious designs.

To thwart the same, following recommendations are put forth:-

- Scholars and intelligentsia of Iran and Gulf countries should come forward in promoting tolerance, restraint and respect on both sides.
- Pakistan should take cognizance of Middle East situation and play its role to defuse growing tension. Pakistan too has been victim of sectarian violence and situation in Middle East has potential to further aggravate the same. Our government should take necessary measure to control it.
- The entire Muslim Ummah needs to realize dangers emanating from the menace of sectarianism. There is need for consensual strategy and collective efforts to tackle this challenge.
- The Muslim scholars, intellectuals and academicians should play active role in this regard.
- We should strive to promote research, discourse and dialogue within Muslim world as solution to sectarian polarization lies in the same and not in emotionalism, irrationality and intolerance.

- The Muslims need to rise above sectarian and territorial divide to accord priority to the interests of the Ummah.
- The Muslims should realize the need and importance of getting themselves acknowledged in international arena as a united entity and need to strive to attain the same.

The Round Table Discussion was attended by academicians, researchers, analysts, students of different universities and research associates of think-tanks.



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