Building Security Through Sustainable Development

Event Transcript:

Featuring:

Prince El Hassan bin Talal

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

CSIS | CENTER FOR STRATEGIC & INTERNATIONAL STUDIES | MIDDLE EAST PROGRAM

Jon Alterman:

Good morning. Good afternoon. Good evening. I'm Jon Alterman, senior vice president, Zbigniew Brzezinski Chair in Global Security and Geostrategy, and director of Middle East Program at CSIS. It's my pleasure to welcome you to today's seminar, which is inspired by a report we put out in May, entitled "Sustainable States: Environment, Governance and the Future of the Middle East." For that report, we're grateful for the encouragement and support of the Embassy of the State of Qatar, Ambassador Sheikh Meshal Bin Hamad Al-Thani. I also want to thank the ambassador of Jordan, Her Excellency, Dina Kawar, for her help arranging today's program.

Today's guest is a very special guest. I have to say that as I read his five-page biography, it seems to me that even five pages didn't do him justice. His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan Bin Talal has been advisor to kings, an organizer and convener, and a humanitarian of the highest order. Much of his work has focused on human dignity, environmental sustainability, and youth.

As we think about the themes of the "Sustainable States" report, what is the role of environmental sustainability in the delivery of services, effectively and efficiently, to broad populations? For some of the larger governance issues we see in the Middle East, we couldn't think of a better guest than His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan Bin Talal, who has been working on these issues for decades.

Your Royal Highness, welcome to CSIS, and thank you for joining us.

Prince El Hassan bin Talal:

Thank you very much. I'm delighted to be with you. I'd just like to start by saying that in terms of human dignity, I've always been attracted by the acronym, "MAD," or "mutually assured destruction," versus "MAS," or "mutually assured survival." This of course, came to my notice in the context of weapons of mass destruction. However, I would suggest that as a point of departure, we should focus not on the Anthropocene, but on the "humirocene."

Preventing ecocide is more than the environment. It also involves people and sharing our relations with our habitat and with each other—rather than cultivating hatred and polarity, which is degrading our socio-sphere, our ability to think, and to reflect. I find this degradation extremely worrying, and new terminologies that have appeared because of all of this. These are tantamount to necro politics––a phenomenon identified by the Cameroonian intellectual Joseph-Achille Mbembe. He writes that in our contemporary world, various types of weapons are deployed in the interest of maximally destroying persons and creating "death worlds."

My question to myself every morning is, "are we really the living dead, or do we have something to contribute to the improvement of the sustainable development goals?" Remarkably, those goals—as old as they are—are still individual goals. We still talk about water individually from human beings–that is the migrants, nationals, and refugees–as though each is a silo meant to stay apart. At the same time, the climate pressures in the Arab Levant is great—with four other Arab countries most affected by water stress. I just wonder whether the World Resources Institute is not going to be proven right.

> ***Even in the best-case scenario… the Levant region will become uninhabitable in decades rather than in centuries.***

When they go on talking about water and stress, they talk about the top 30 countries. High levels of water stress by 2040 are in the Middle East—including all six countries of the Levant and Israel. Obviously, these countries have to be extremely concerned. We started in 2010 with the Mumbai Group in India. We can't talk to each other unless we bring an independent observer from another country and another region. We started what was then the Montreal process. Many of our members, however, have declined to participate or simply have been physically incapacitated because of internal war. As you know, I live in a rough neighborhood. An Israeli politician once said to me, "We are surrounded by enemies." I quipped immediately, "Well, you think you have a problem? We're surrounded by friends." Unless we can talk about a shared commons, there is very little that we can present in terms of mutual respect for each other's identity—and it is all about us and the others, isn't it? It's all about identity. This is something that really worries me. How can we move from talking about individual identities to collectively addressing water scarcity? According to UNICEF statistics, for example, we're told that the water sharing issue makes us the world's second water poorest country. At the same time, let me remind you that school children are suffering from the effects of climate change and pollution.

An Israeli politician once said to me, "We are surrounded by enemies." I quipped immediately, "Well, you think you have a problem? We're surrounded by friends."

We live between two of the most polluting areas in the world: oil and related energy on the one side, and the Mediterranean, and Israel on the other. We see a large black cloud over Amman every morning—every dawn. My question to myself, and to you and your audience, is when and how can we move together like the European Union—in their case, from a community of coal and steel—to a community of energy and water? I think the two have to complement each other, both in the context of the Levant—the "land of the rising sun." Descartes said, "If everything in this world is West, where does the sun rise?" and, of course, that applies to us and points east. Last month, the International Panel on Climate Change made it abundantly clear that even in the best-case scenario the warming of the Earth's atmosphere at current rates is likely to exceed the threshold of two degrees—which means that the Levant region will become uninhabitable in decades rather than in centuries. The proposals that I would like to share with you today are those relating to Mutually Assured Survival. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to make these introductory remarks.

Jon Alterman:

Thank you very much. There's a lot to chew on there. As somebody who has been deeply involved in Jordan's development plans—its five-year plans—going back to the 1970s, what is the piece of the planning process that hasn't been there that needs to be there to meet the sorts of imperatives you're talking about? What needs to be baked in now that hasn't been baked in for the last 40 years?

Prince El Hassan bin Talal:

I could think of a number of points. Among them is cultural affinity: being able to talk to people in their own language, in their own idiom, to their own priorities. I go back to a born-again peacemaker, Bob McNamara, when he came out to see us as the head of the World Bank. We were talking about enabling and

empowering citizens. The fact is that in the last decades, we moved from 2.3 million people in my tiny country to 11 million people. That's not because of anything other than the open-door policy that we have for refugees. Syrians alone were in the order of over 1.5 million refugees in the country.

I would say that *ilm al-wujud*—ontological identity or ontological security—has to illustrate the consequences of rapidly changing environments. In 1967, up to a million refugees came over from the West Bank. We had the social order to address it and we went through a bumpy ride in 1970 and 1971. By the end of 1971 we were literally on our knees, but we had a good track record. We were aiming for economic takeoff in 1970 were it not for that costly 1967 war.

I think that what we do not emphasize today, as Anthony Giddens has put it very clearly: a person's fundamental sense of safety in the world includes the basic trust of other people. We cannot relinquish our safety however much we admire the ability of our military and security in the region as a whole, which is the best path forward, particularly since 9/11. Everybody talks about security in terms of working against something. In this case, we have to work *for* something.

I'll quote Chiara Bottici. He says, "in the light of the continual change in the present conditions, human beings are impelled to go back to their political narratives." Can we break out of Plato's cave? Can we break out of the political narratives? Can we look at revising these narratives in the light of new needs and new exigencies?

Jon Alterman:

How much of what you're talking about is principally a domestic imperative? How much is an international imperative? What aspect of that human security piece needs to be delivered to Jordanians in Jordan? What needs to come from outside Jordan?

Prince El Hassan bin Talal:

In terms of deliverables, I don't think that governments can do it without the judiciary in Jordan—or for that matter, the legislature. I certainly don't think they can do it without civil society. We have to bring a consensus of what has been called "being in the world in which we live." Jordanians have up to a million people in the diaspora, both in North and South America. We have to look at our relationship with their brain drain against the brain gain. I think that we are more specifically in a world where we have to give greater attention to talking to people—not talking down to them but encouraging dialogue. I think that the noble art of conversation is an art that has to be developed in Jordan. We have 1.5 million Syrian refugees, but at the same time, we have 53 different nationalities who have flocked to Jordan as a result of regional wars. I would like to say that constructing an era—as the Buddhist Ikeda has put it—of human solidarity, means moving away from antagonistic security. My security begins within my body or within my slum or within my suburb of the big city—Amman in this instance. We need to move to collaborative security. This means not only working against crime, narcotics, or the awful

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burden of a very young population. I see it as an opportunity.

> ***The kind of security we need to work toward is rehabilitating people to pursue their talent and their aptitudes.***

The kind of security we need to work toward is rehabilitating people to pursue their talent and their aptitudes. When the Europeans receive millions of refugees on their borders, they apply algorithmic weighting. They weigh the talents and aptitudes of the people coming in relation to the needs of their economy. It's about time that we started weighting the human value of individuals with their different talents. A professorial colleague of yours at Georgetown, Olúfẹmi O. Táíwò is quoted here as talking about, "the talent to produce by but to hold for all." It's wonderful to talk about the young Jordanian who sold this startup company for $205 million the other day. How much had the startup created in terms of a beacon for others to follow? The rich get richer, and the poor get poorer. This polarity has to end and this is why we are absolutely in need of empirical facts for the region.

This region has no crisis prevention center. This region has no barometer. West Africa has a regional development barometer. The Arab League is sleeping on the job, I'm sad to say. ESCA, the economic and social commission, is focusing on projects rather than a regional vision for change.

We need an ECOSOC: an economic and social council that meets every month, of the four months of every quarter, to develop our priorities. To do that we have to speak to each other. The president of Syria is in Moscow today, the king of Jordan is in the United States. We're all regulating our priorities in terms of our relations with others outside the region. We should be encouraged to talk to each other.

Jon Alterman:

Thank you. I want to remind our viewers that if you do have a question for His Royal Highness, there's a button on the web page, on the CSIS web page, that you're viewing the event on. You can send a question and it comes to us and we'll ask His Royal Highness. In that sort of approach, to changing your relationship with people, the poor getting poorer, what is the role of public utilities that governments provide in reshaping that conversation in changing the relationship between governments, the governors, and the government, in creating patterns of trust, in creating patterns of honesty?

Where do you see public utilities, which people in public policy don't like to talk about? As you say, everybody likes to fly around the world, and go to conferences and talk about the great and the good. Where did the daily issues of water, electricity, sewer, and waste disposal go? Where do those issues fit in to this equation that you're talking about?

Prince El Hassan bin Talal:

I think there is an optimal commitment to what the international community has described as below the poverty line. The question of absolute hunger, of course, is real. If you compare the Visegrád four countries—Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Hungary—with the countries of the Levant, including Israel, you're talking about $38,000 per capita in their region. That number applies to Israel, of course, and it applies outside our immediate region to the Gulf states. The best we can achieve in our region is short of $15,000, given the fact that we spend so much on defense and services.

I personally think that the time has come to recognize that water policy—which is a continuing theme, with the World Bank report—talks about ebb and flow. Can we talk about ebb and flow in terms of services without talking about the old adage, the attracting population to urban centers and pushing deliberately into other regions of the country? Water deficit explained 10 percent of the increase in global migration between 1970 and 2000. ~~So,~~ as we were sitting, planning for ourselves, looking at the census figures, how many were above and below the poverty line, we have found that in terms of water alone as a utility of public service, climate change induced a 10 to 20 percent reduction in water supplies. This impacts Jordan's GDP by negative seven percent, on Iraq's GDP by four percent, Lebanon by negative two percent, and Syria by negative 10 percent.

I have been calling for the creation of a land bank. I've been calling for the creation of a water bank, whereby people become stakeholders in their future. We are no longer talking down to them and telling them what their priorities should be, but that they should take the future in their own hand. Bearing in mind, that man against nature is so unpredictable. Syria has been a cautionary tale in this respect with over a million people who lost their livelihoods. We tend to forget this point, when drought precipitated the failure of crops in Syria between 2006 and 2011.

Those who studied the wider Near East will remember—from over a century ago—that the mass exodus of people from the eastern Mediterranean to the Americas came from our part of the world. In fact, Arabs are still referred to in certain Latin American countries as *Turkos*, because they carried Turkish travel documents. It's a huge task to address the subject of services versus development, but we have to move from a vulnerability-based approach—Band-Aid solutions—to a development approach. "We need to develop capabilities in embedded energy and invite the young to participate in every possible way to create the stability that we seek."

Jon Alterman:

Can I ask, what's the vehicle for that? Is it as individual citizens with a relationship to the state? Is it on the municipal level with municipalities trying to organize and then bargain with the central government? Is it tribal? In Jordan, the tribes, as you know, have significant sway in many issues. What is the vehicle by which individuals plug into institutions that serve their destiny?

Prince El Hassan bin Talal:

I think that in terms of local government and regionalization, these are only words on paper, unless we recognize the three basic challenges that we are facing. One the question of governance—with over 30 percent of our population under the age of 15—we simply have to begin with education, and with the relevance of educational syllabi to development priorities and heritage priorities. You have to understand the past if you want to understand the present.

Secondly, in terms of a national census—or opinion poll—it would be unreasonable to continue to call it that given the polarity of the so-called opposition of the Hirak, which is the young today who call for reform. I say, "Yes, but what kind of reform?" I don't say it publicly because I'm a

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has-been, but I like to say, "Well, look where I *has been*." I happened to be on the bridge in Paris in 1968, and actually I was crossing the bridge to help a French friend who had been a paratrooper in Algeria to find the Dominican priest who would accept that a Muslim could be the Godfather to his son.

It is partly interfaith dialogue that I was trying to develop. I think that the issue basically is that so many hateful issues have clubbed together; the continued occupation of Palestinian lands; the whole issue of the involvement in the destruction of Baghdad; and the massacres in Cairo in the last few decades. The main seats of Caliphates, if you will, have been destroyed. There's a lot of pride in this part of the world, but it is misdirected in the sense that we have to get people down to basic issues. They can't only be aspiring politicians by talking about the glories of the past.

There's a lot of pride in this part of the world, but it is misdirected in the sense that we have to get people down to basic issues. They can't only be aspiring politicians by talking about the glories of the past.

The secondary issue, of course, is that I think church related organizations and mosque related organizations have to be more aware of the priorities of development and human dignity. I think that they have to stop preaching from the pulpit only in terms of a religious narrative. But they also have to pick up day to day issues. Lastly, I think the time has come to recognize that the positional elites are not in step with a regional dialogue, and the result is that so few people turn up for elections. The percentage of participation in national elections is pitifully low. There's no indication of a pulse driven, democratic process as yet.

Jon Alterman:

Can I ask you about the second one you described—the role of religious organizations in providing services and economic development? That's been one of the criticisms of Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Muslim Brotherhood—that these organizations have taken on a combination of religious roles, social and economic roles, and political roles. Is that something you think is basically good, or that they should leave politics at the door? Or is there something about the whole enterprise that you think corrupts the enterprise?

Prince El Hassan bin Talal:

I think that the second part of what you're saying is certainly true from the point of view of the security establishment, and for that matter, the judiciary. You have Sharia Law, you have civil law, you have tribal customary law, and you have humanitarian law. It's very difficult to get them to see the nexus between what is good in this proposed value system. I mentioned not only Muslim—or so-called Muslim initiatives—that's not what I intended when I refer to the church related organizations. In Palestine for example—let's say the territories and in Israel—there is a big role for church related organizations. We have at least 14

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different denominations in Eastern Christianity alone.

I love the progression that they make. Rowan Williams, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, wrote a brilliant book called *Looking East in Winter*, in which he described the values of Eastern Christianity as summarized by Olivier Clément, a philosopher of last century. Personhood—we have to develop *al-insaan al-kuli*, as we would say, in terms—the whole human being, the holistic approach and liberty, which means that we have to develop self-discipline.

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Declaiming from the pulpit is not a form of self-discipline, nor is it an invitation to work with other related disciplines, health, education, youth modeling, and certainly not women participating in the workforce. Women graduates of universities are over 54 percent of our university graduate, but our women in the workforce are less than two percent. This is absolutely outrageous. We can't continue to talk about voters and women's rights being pushed by pressure groups unless the attitude of society itself changes, and they begin to recognize the relevance of inclusive law.

Jon Alterman:

I want to go to audience questions momentarily, but it does seem to me that, in a way, what you're talking about is profoundly political. It doesn't really have a political correlation. You don't talk about a system into which a different kind of political relationship exists. How should we think about how this translates into politics in political framework?

Prince El Hassan bin Talal:

I'd prefer to talk about policies which are absent rather than politics which are all pervasive. If you talk about education reform, for example, you need at least a decade before you begin to see the returns. If you talk about agricultural land use in terms of the waste that is, at the present time, in terms of geography, and geology, and mining, and different parts of the country, turning the country into a dust bowl, there are many issues that have to be addressed with the holistic view.

If you talk about the Colorado River as a comparison—or the Imperial Valley as a comparison—with the Jordan Rift Valley, which runs through Jordan, this rift can only heal by an overall view of better management. If at the peak of the Cold War, the Danube Commission could manage that mighty river, why is it that a regional commission cannot address the issues which are otherwise frittered away by futile political discussions? One will never know.

The two canals being suggested by the Dead Sea have been taken off the agenda for political reasons. Within countries, there are constituencies that blatantly ignore the policy drive that is needed to stabilize what is a major feature of our part of the world. For other mighty rivers there is a Danube Commission. There is a Mekong Commission. There's a Senegal Commission—even an Amazon Commission. Why can we not take policy—which is thematic—out of the political sphere? It's because we have nothing better to do. All we do is to talk politics, and until we enable and empower people to become stakeholders—as in the sea of constants where since 1954, 300

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towns have owned the water and managed it. I don't think that we're going to make the progress we need. Patronage and vested interest—which you call politics, rightly—will always be there first.

Jon Alterman:

Let's go to audience questions. Our first question is from Reem Haddadin from the WANA Institute. How do we create mutual interests on a regional level in a region that is infected with conflict? This is going to the policy question, as you said. How do you get out of the politics on a regional level?

Prince El Hassan bin Talal:

Once again, I think that the regional issues have never been sufficiently articulated to build trust. I would suggest that maybe articulating regional issues is to bear in mind what Finland did so successfully since 2011. They started a Helsinki Citizens Assembly, whereby the Baltic countries and their neighboring Central European countries deserved and got a commission for the regions devised by the European Union. In that sense, they don't meet to personalize issues as we do. The minute you start talking about improving relations with Iran—or improving relations with Israel or Saudi Arabia—you irritate somebody and please somebody. This judgmental attitude of public opinion is basically a very difficult burden to be carrying while trying to manage issues of regional concern. This is why I think that in terms of the regional information base, I've lived through data in the 1970s—which was called informatics 20 years later and is now Industry 4.0. Essentially, you have to have a keen awareness in terms of the managing and the administration of regions for the purposes for which they are intended. Yet we continue to destroy our environment by pushing roads and pipelines through areas that need greater attention to social participation. It's the same case with desert tech to bring sunshine from the Gulf across North Africa to desalinate water as in marginalized communities—rather than bringing hydrocarbons from the Gulf, simply to sell them here and there. How can we optimize the value of our Earth minerals—of agriculture. Most importantly, how can we optimize the value and the return on our human capital? That's the basic question, I think.

Jon Alterman:

Related to that, Henry Lee, from ABC Energy asked what are the principal strategies to prepare for the accelerating global transition from petroleum-based resources to renewable energy? Is there a special role for Jordan? Is there a special impact that Jordan can have in that challenge?

Prince El Hassan bin Talal:

In terms of the Blue Peace, this Mumbai Strategic Foresight Group supported by the Swiss Agency and the Swedish International Development Corporation, is managing an initiative in transportation to our region in 2018, and it has become the first regionally

owned water cooperation mechanism in the history of the region—with Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, and Iran represented.

In Baghdad, only a couple of months ago, I addressed a conference, speaking about the Tigris Euphrates basin. Now, we're talking about the Nile basin, and not very successfully. We're talking about a basin approach, which I would like to see in the Rift Valley. In terms of Blue Peace, it's now moving into the Green Blue Peace concept, a water and energy community. I would like to say that also across lines, there is a lot of interest that I hear from time to time from EcoPeace Middle East—environmentalists from Jordan, Israel, and Palestine—who're trying to work against all odds from all sides, because after all, settler colonialization has meant that the water table has been affected. The water table that the Palestinians derive their livelihood from.

Regional water and energy community, of course, is still debated by the different conflicting projects. I think Southern Lebanon is waiting for tankers to bring oil from Iran to give them electricity. At the same time, you'll find discussions about providing that between Egypt, Iraq, and Jordan. The different sources of power have to be addressed, and what's particularly interesting was the contention that although both Palestinian and Israeli negotiators link water to sovereignty—and to borders and water quantities needed for refugees and settlements. This is the beautiful line. The fungible nature of water as a resource where technological advances have altered the very rationale for why water was considered a final status issue in the first place means that water quantities can be agreed upon in a manner which takes into account complexities and still represents agreement. Water is a human right. This is a development that we have to recognize, and I hope that a critical mass of initiatives—including the World Bank, the Ebb and Flow report—could lead to a World Bank Trust Fund someday where we can talk about linking far-flung regions to one another. I hope that that's enough of an answer.

Jon Alterman:

Yes. Thank you very much. What are your thoughts on opportunities and challenges for the Middle East and North Africa—for multilateral collaboration to confront climate change? Is there a leadership role in that for Jordan?

Prince El Hassan bin Talal:

I think that Jordan can act as a catalyst and possibly as a thought provoker and a convener, but I always take inspiration from the ASEAN region. The ASEAN region, according to Pascal Lamy, is probably the most successful example of cooperation despite the heterogeneity of regime types, which of course, you have in this part of the world. I kind of connected this, which stays clear of the interference, which in West Asia has so often consumed our attention.

I think that Jordan can act as a catalyst and possibly as a thought provoker and a convener.

I've been invited to meetings conducted at Oxford University on oil policies in the region—which have been cancelled twice—and this is something that should be taken more seriously. In fact, what we seem to need in terms of Jordan's impartiality, in a sense, but also deep dependence in another sense, is an ability to turn Jordan as a country that understands and is qualified to make the necessary progress. We're a semi-arid to arid climate, and we are on the periphery.

I'll just tell you that years ago, I visited Japan and Shinzo Abe, and he was still a member of the Japanese Diet or had just become one of the leading figures in his party. He said, "We understand that you are part of the Western zone of influence." I said, "That is very true, historically. I've been asked by the Western zone of influence to look for Japanese support, because we are also a hinterland country." The Levant that I'm talking about is the hinterland to oil. If the hinterland is unstable, if the quality of its manpower is unreliable, then that has an immediate effect. We must discuss the hinterland complementing, in what I call intra-independence. I respect your identity, and you respect mine, regardless of whether you're stronger or weaker. The trick is to work together on regional commons. We've worked very hard—and for a very long period of time—to achieve this understanding. Maybe we will achieve it in my lifetime or in later years. The main thing is that we've sown the seeds of better understanding of the present and the future.

> ***Whether it's climate change, drought, or urban livability, the United States knows all of these different forms of stress.***

Jon Alterman:

Is there a U.S. role that needs to be played that isn't played correctly, is being played inadequately? You're talking to at least, partially, a Washington audience today. There's been a lot of commentary about the US view of the Middle East and how it's changing. Is there something that Washington needs to hear and take away from your views?

Prince El Hassan bin Talal:

Well, let me put it this way. I was talking about the issue of mental health today. We hear about trauma and about the returnees from war zones. I went to New Zealand to visit after the mosque was attacked with the people in prayer in 2018. I asked them, "What about trauma?" They said, "Motor accidents." I said, "No shooting, and bombs, and whatever." We established some form of cooperation.

The UK and the United States, unfortunately, do not want to get involved in issues relating to trauma. That is to say, they don't want to be involved in official programs. I think that that is a crying shame because whether it's climate change, drought, or urban livability, the United States knows all of these different forms of stress. The United States has faced fires, drought conditions that might be invited by climate change, and loss of crops. Global warming of two percent is global warming. It's not just Californian warming or Arizonan warning. It is governed by the Arid Lands Consortium.

I remember years ago sending a couple of Bedouin to New Mexico and the local paper said, "Arab terrorists arrive in New Mexico." I said, "Well, can you and USAID help us produce a short film?" We produced a film called "Potatoes without Borders". Here were these Arabs in the "towel heads"—or whatever derogatory statement is made about them—and their corresponding American Mexican, with their enormous hats working together on producing potatoes. I think that we have to get down to actually working together if we want to build a better future for our use.

Jon Alterman:

We've gotten a couple of questions, one from Rula al-Attar, and one from Faris al-Attar, about corruption. Rula asked, what extent can really development take off and be sustainable in the absence of good accountable governance, and

the vast prevalence of entrenched corruption in the Middle East North Africa region? What can we do with enhance governance?

Faris al-Attar, asks, given that you have rising citizen distrust and decision-making centers in government exacerbated during COVID, how can you reduce this feeling of distrust to get positive input from fellow citizens? How do you change that part of the relationship?

Prince El Hassan bin Talal:

I had the opportunity of working with Transparency International and Transparency Extractive Industry International—which deals with minerals. In terms of actually bringing the chickens home to roost, it's very difficult for me to comment given the fact that I have the basic handicap of carrying a title—which I have had all my life. It's not in our best interest for me to rock the boat and to become the champion of a lost cause. I say it's a lost cause because everything that we do in terms of corruption is to judge from a distance or to take judgmental attitudes towards a particular section of society. I think that the accountability of the legal system simply has to come into play, and the judiciary has to develop a better understanding of what is expected of them—if we are going to address the subject of the law or address cases of corruption.

I also describe corruption as poor governance. That is where I'm really worried. In terms of the Intellectual Property Organization, I can't tell you whether the Lacoste crocodile is on the left or on the right. In terms of the sweatshops I saw, I said to my colleagues in the International IPO, "can't you help bring some of these products online and recognize the fact that you are creating employment, instead of looking at the very narrow returns of excluding them?"

The same applies to plants, and we've had a run in with the help of Vandana Shiva from India who deals with over 400 plants that have been taken out of South Asia—with brand names assigned to them by international pharmaceutical agencies. Of course, it's very difficult to talk about the regional role of a tiny country. We talk about regional wheat and drought in Syria, and we see all the weed seeds going to Svalbard—the famous reserve there in the frozen North—for a day when Syria might come back online and Syrian seeds would be used. You wonder whether the lifeblood of agriculture as we know it in this region is being spirited away. In return for what? As we've seen in certain parts of West Asia and Central Asia, are drugs going to be the new phenomenon?

Corruption is obviously there and in different forms. I think we need to sit down and have a solid conversation on the spillover of instability in the region—the new rich, the war rich and many of these issues which are cross-cutting even in terms of an American audience.

Jon Alterman:

The other component of that, as Roses Stary asks, is about how you gather high-level political will. There's a corruption problem. There's a political will problem. How do you begin to build a political conversation that creates either an imperative or even a pathway toward different distribution of resources like that?

Prince El Hassan bin Talal:

You want me to say how do you draw? I would say, “how do you also do so correspondingly?” It is you and I together that can address this issue. It is you and the think tank community that can move from recommending and reflecting to actually proposing that cooperation can be considered.

Let me give you an example. When the late Cherif Bassiouni, who was one of the founders

of the International Criminal Court, invited us to Syracuse in Sicily, there was participation from judges from different parts of the world, many parts of the United States, and so forth. The issues, of course, between what I would call a mature institutional perception of corruption were discussed in immature institutional manner.

When corruption was believed to be a criticism became a non-conversation. We see those non-conversations even in the International Criminal Court in The Hague, because either you have a system of laws, or you don't. Therefore, taking people out of the blue and presenting them to the Hague criminal court, you simply sometimes wonder what is going on?

We need an idiot proof toolbox of understanding what it is that we're talking about. I go back to the earlier question about corruption. We need the citizens' advice based on that toolbox.

I honestly think that the way to begin is to have solid, accountable conversations between respectable universities, think tanks, chambers of commerce and industry and so forth. We are an entire group thinking about the issues of ethics in religion. We produced a document a few years ago, out of St. George's house, Windsor, where believers of different faiths—I think we were nine faith groups—came up with a code of ethics and industry. Either there's an ethical approach to industry or there's not. If we want to talk about weapons of mass destruction, chemical and biological, are they ethically approved? Or do they have a corruption tag to them in the sense of the broader picture? This is a very interesting subject, and I don't think it should be pushed under the carpet.

> ***The way to begin is to have solid, accountable conversations between respectable universities, think tanks, chambers of commerce, and industry.***

Jon Alterman:

This was a central theme in Sustainable States. How do you create trust in these daily encounters between people and government services? Is there a way to build a different pattern of relations?

Prince El Hassan bin Talal:

I couldn't agree more.

Jon Alterman:

We're running out of time, but there is an interesting question from Ian Stewart from the Royal Scientific Society. What's the role of science in reimagining or revitalizing political narratives in the region? Does science provide a way to come from outside the equation and change the equation in a really positive way?

Prince El Hassan bin Talal:

I recently visited one of our labs in which enabled young people from different universities in Jordan participate. Participation in this exercise was thrilling for me because here are young people from different parts of the country, not there because of their belonging to this family or that family—we didn't know anyone—apart from recognizing their universities and working in scientific experiments.

They even got me to put on a blue robe and to fill a test tube with something. I have no clue what I did, but apparently I did something scientifically important. These are kids who are actually going to produce copyrights and papers in the international community. This is where I feel that enabling people scientifically is one aspect of the great scientific debate.

Coming up with miracle solutions is not about necessarily making stakeholders. I think the best approach for stakeholders to create a scientific and professional barometer to know exactly what our universities are doing. If they're not doing something relevant, why shouldn't they be doing something else? Science is not a profit-making exercise.

Jon Alterman:

Your Royal Highness, thank you very much for honoring us with your wisdom today. Again, I would encourage our audience to download Sustainable States from the CSIS website. Thank you for joining us. Thank you, Your Royal Highness, for joining us.

Science is not a profit-making exercise.

Prince El Hassan bin Talal:

Thank you.

Jon Alterman:

I look forward to seeing you.

Prince El Hassan bin Talal:

Jon, may I also remind your viewers of the importance of winning the human race.

Jon Alterman:

Perfect. Thank you very much. Have a good day. Thank you very much.