Conference Report

Al Sharq Region in a New Phase: Opportunities for Integration

AL SHARQ FORUM

الشرق في طور جديد:
فرص التكامل

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**Al Sharq Region in a New Phase:
Opportunities for Integration**

AL SHARQ
STRATEGIC
RESEARCH

للأبحاث الاستراتيجية

(This text was translated from its original Arabic version.)

The world order is currently facing a critical transition at the strategic and political levels, in addition to major changes in the global economic structure. These rapid transformations have sparked extensive discussions about the possibility of moving to a multipolar world order in which hegemony is no longer monopolized by a single power but is distributed among several new centers of power. However, with its diversity and historical depth, the Al Sharq region remains largely marginalized in these global shifts, except for a few events that temporarily drew attention to the region.

Amid these changes, the «Al-Aqsa Flood» Operation and the subsequent Israeli war on Gaza redirected attention to the Al Sharq region and highlighted profound political and social repercussions at the regional and international levels. This conflict sparked a large-scale social and student movement globally and began to create noticeable cracks within the international community, bringing the Al Sharq region back to the center of global attention after a period of marginalization.

The Al Sharq region comprises four major nations: Arabs, Turks, Kurds, and Iranians. However, these nations have been historically disconnected over the past century, with their interests diverging and communication channels diminishing. In light of the current global transformations and the challenges and opportunities they pose, it has become imperative for these nations to engage in a deep dialogue aimed at reviving their historical integration. This dialogue must be supported by practical steps to bridge the rift and promote cooperation to serve the region›s interests within the framework of the new world order.

Based on this vision, Al Sharq Strategic Research organized a conference in Istanbul, Türkiye, from July 6 to 7, 2024. The conference aimed to gather a group of experts, researchers, and decision-makers to discuss these issues and exchange visions around three main axes to enhance the discussion and work to lay new foundations for cooperation between the region›s nations at this critical stage.

Themes:
- The Al Sharq Region and Restoring Historical Continuity
- Challenges That Prevent Integration of the Al Sharq Region
- The Al Sharq Region from the Nation-state to the Regional Space

This report is a summary of the discussions and topics raised by the speakers and participants during the two-day-long conference.

Global Transformations Opportunities and Challenges

This year›s Al Sharq Forum Conference took place at an exceptional time and in unprecedented circumstances on several levels. Although the term "exceptional circumstances" is often used to describe the challenges faced by international events, this particular conference was held in truly exceptional circumstances. These circumstances are not just about fleeting events but are rooted in four key contexts that profoundly affect the present and future of the region and the world.

The first context is international change. We are witnessing a radical shift in the global balance of power, as the current international system is no longer able to continue as it was. This shift is expressed in the decline of the traditional hegemony of Western powers and the rise of new powers that have begun to directly influence global decision-making. This change comes at a time when the countries of the Global South are beginning to take a more independent stance, gradually freeing themselves from Western hegemony and pressure. These countries, which have historically been on the margins of strategic action, have begun to play a more effective role in the international arena, enhancing their self-confidence and ability to influence the course of global events.

The second context relates to the Arab situation, as the Arab region is going through a period of turmoil and profound transformations. This context includes political, social, and economic changes in several Arab countries, which increases the complexity of the scene and poses new challenges for decision-makers. These changes highlight the need to rethink current strategies and develop new approaches that are adapted to the changing reality.

The third context is that of the Palestinian issue, which has returned to the forefront of the international scene as the situation in the occupied territories worsens and tensions escalate. The Palestinian question has long been a central issue in global politics, but the recent war has made this issue even more urgent and re-emphasized the importance of finding a just and comprehensive solution.

The fourth context is the global shifts toward regions that, until recently, were considered to be outside the realm of real strategic action. The Global South, which has long been dominated by the major powers, is now beginning to break free from this pressure and build more independent policies. This shift makes the global South more capable of influencing the emerging international order, opening up new opportunities for inter-Southern state cooperation and new challenges for traditional powers.

We are at an unprecedented time of transition, where a new international order is taking shape while the old one is dying. This transition will not be easy; it will be accompanied by a lot of pain, but it also carries with it great hopes and invaluable opportunities. These transformations require us to be both bold and wise, to seize the opportunities and overcome the challenges that will arise during this phase.

In light of all these circumstances and profound changes, our conference was held this year not only to exchange visions and ideas but also to present new approaches that can contribute to the formulation of a more stable and just future for the region and the world.

Participants at the conference elaborated on the challenges facing the world today, emphasizing that we are living in a period of great turmoil, where the dynamics provided by the existing international system are unable to meet the needs of security and peace for all countries and peoples. This apparent inability reinforces the existing state of conflict in the region and the world and pushes many countries and peoples to search for a new world order that is more just and sustainable and addresses the imbalances inherent in the current system.

Participants also noted that since the COVID-19 pandemic, the world has witnessed two major events with profound effects on the international arena. First, the Russian-Ukrainian war which reshaped global alliances and raised questions about the future of European security and the international system. Second, Operation «Al-Aqsa Flood» brought the Palestinian cause back to the global forefront after it had been pushed back by normalization agreements, such as the Abraham Accords, which gave the impression that the Palestinian cause had been pushed to the bottom.

This battle has had a major impact on global public opinion, especially in the West. We witnessed a wave of demonstrations and protests in many Western cities and universities. These protests were not only an expression of support for the Palestinian cause but also an intellectual earthquake that raised questions about justice and human rights in international politics. Despite this great reaction in the West, the Al Sharq region, especially the Arab countries, are still suffering from political schizophrenia. While Arab peoples strongly support the Palestinian resistance, many ruling regimes adopt policies in line with the Israeli occupation and support it indirectly or directly, reflecting a disconnect between the will of the people and the policies of the regimes.

This gap between the Arab peoples and their ruling regimes highlights the internal challenges facing the countries of the region. Participants pointed out that these regimes have been living for decades in constant conflict with their people, a conflict that is one of the main reasons for the delayed renaissance in the Al Sharq region and the failure to realize people›s aspirations for freedom, dignity, and development. This disconnect between the ruler and the ruled makes it necessary to rethink how to deal with these functional regimes, which continue to adhere to policies that reinforce authoritarianism and impede the process of reform.

The panelists believe that the solution to this crisis begins with repairing the relationship between the ruler and the ruled, but they also emphasized the importance of addressing the sectarian conflict between Sunnis and Shiites, which has cost the region so much over the past decades. This sectarian conflict has been and continues to be a major cause of tearing apart the social fabric and weakening regional powers. For this reason, some speakers suggested organizing a conference calling for a comprehensive reconciliation between the two communities, aiming to unify efforts and direct energies toward achieving common goals for the region instead of continuing pointless internal conflicts.

At the end of the session, participants agreed that the Al Sharq Region has tremendous potential to capitalize on the current opportunities. The first is the emergence of a multipolar world order, which opens up a wider field of movement and political maneuvering, providing new opportunities for Arab countries to secure their interests. The second opportunity is the «Al-Aqsa Flood,» which could be a new starting point for unifying Arab and Islamic efforts in support of the Palestinian cause.

But to make the most of these opportunities, Arab countries must overcome the obstacles that have hindered their progress: internal conflict, the inability to achieve sustainable development, authoritarianism that suppresses freedoms, and an alliance with external powers that oppose the interests of the people of the region, led by Israel. The required change starts from within, but the question remains: Can this change be achieved through reconciliation between the ruler and the ruled? History shows that ruling regimes are often intransigent in the face of real reforms, making popular pushback an inevitable necessity.

Therefore, the participants emphasized the need to establish a general current for the ummah based on a strategic vision prepared by an elite group of scholars and intellectuals, supported by a broad popular movement that pressures governments to adopt this vision. This current must be strong enough to face the challenges posed by the current regimes and must work to unify the efforts of the people to achieve the desired change in the region.

What is Holding Back the Al Sharq from Seizing the Opportunity?

The Al Sharq Region is characterized by persistent instability, a complex reality resulting from a set of deep and interconnected causes. The opening paper of this session examined these causes in detail, highlighting three main themes: Artificial geography, the collapse of regional consensus, and the crisis of the nation-state. These factors have combined to create an unstable environment. Artificial geography is linked to the borders created after the First World War, which did not take into account the cultural or ethnic affiliations of peoples, resulting in internally heterogeneous states and others that suffer from ongoing border rivalries and disputes.

The panelists also argued that the current order the Al Sharq region is a direct product of the post-World War I arrangements, a system that carries the seeds of disaster on two levels: The internal level, where the peoples of the region suffer from marginalization and oppression, and the regional level, where relations between states reflect a state of constant hostility and negative rivalry. This system was not the result of internal developments stemming from the needs of the region but was largely the result of the intervention of Western powers that sought to achieve their own interests at the expense of the people of the region.

Participants in the conference reviewed some of the major obstacles that prevent the people of the Al Sharq region from effectively participating in building a new political system that meets their aspirations. The most prominent of these obstacles is the political fragmentation that the region suffers from, as power is distributed among multiple factions and forces without a unified leadership capable of steering things toward stability and development. In addition, the legacy of colonialism continues to cast a shadow over the region. Colonialism left behind fragile political and social structures based on segregation and hegemony.

Participants also pointed to the shrinking commonalities among the peoples of the region, which has deepened the gap between them and made it difficult to unify their visions and interests. This divergence, coupled with the absence of a clear strategic vision that could unite the peoples of the region around a common goal, has made it difficult to achieve real progress. The lack of ideological unity among the peoples of the region, with religious and sectarian

differences posing an additional obstacle to unification. In another intervention in the session, additional obstacles to the region›s renaissance were addressed, most notably the absence of a "project for the Middle East" that could provide a comprehensive vision for the future. On the other hand, the region›s enemies have a clear vision that aims to perpetuate conflicts and further divide its countries and peoples. In addition, the ruling regimes in many Arab countries rely on minority rule, which increases internal tensions and weakens the legitimacy of these regimes. Participants also noted the absence of major social forces that could challenge these regimes and push for change, making people unwilling to make the sacrifices necessary to seize opportunities.

One of the central issues discussed in this session is the question of the modern nation-state in the Arab context. Despite all the talk about the negatives of this state, we should not lose sight of the fact that it still possesses the ability to control the national identities that grew up under this state and are deeply rooted in the consciousness of a large segment of citizens, which requires actors to consider these facts when thinking about any change. Relying on the contradictions in the existing state system to lead to its self-collapse may be a wrong bet, requiring more realistic and flexible strategies in dealing with this system.

It is clear that the challenges facing the Al Sharq region are complex and multidimensional, and require the region›s people, leaders, and thinkers to adopt bold and realistic new approaches to overcome the stalemate and build a more stable and prosperous future.

The panelists talked about the role of people as the key factor in creating and seizing opportunities. They emphasized that successful leadership is not a product of chance but rather the result of accumulations of experience and knowledge that are accumulated over time. Such leadership, which is considered capable of guiding people to capitalize on opportunities, relies heavily on the ability of individuals and groups to learn from the past and prepare for the challenges of the future. Therefore, participants emphasized the need to focus on the internal factors hindering the Al Sharq region's renaissance, rather than just blaming external factors. Global opportunities are not a monopoly; they are available to those who have the will and the power to exploit them.

Participants also made it clear that the debate on the ongoing transformations in the international political arena must be aware of this fact: The beneficiaries of opportunities are the living, the actors who have the ability to respond to changes. The people of the region must be constantly vigilant, ready to turn challenges into opportunities, and equipped with the leadership that can guide this transformation.

As part of this discussion, participants noted that understanding contemporary transformations requires a deeper understanding of the changes in the world today. We have moved from a simple reductionist model of understanding reality to a more complex model known as the "Complex Adaptive System." This model recognizes that the world is no longer simple or

compartmentalized, but a collection of interconnected systems that interact in complexity. Dealing with contemporary challenges requires a deeper understanding of these complexities and the ability to adapt to them.

In addition, the speakers discussed that under the current circumstances, Arab states are in a state of "divergence" and face fundamental challenges to their viability and resilience. In the face of these challenges, participants emphasized the importance of building strong internal consensuses among the various components of society. These consensuses must be built on a foundation of continuous and inclusive dialogue while developing social and economic safety nets to protect societies from potential shocks. To achieve this, action must be phased and continuous, so that achievements accumulate gradually and continuously.

At the end of the session, the participants agreed that the role played by scholars, intellectuals, and social actors is pivotal in launching effective and sustainable debates about the future of the Al Sharq region. These debates should address in depth everything that hinders the progress of the region, and then move on to establishing a new political meeting. This meeting should be based on a minimum level of consensus, forming a solid base on which to build for the future. Launching an integrated process of discussions and dialogues, based on minimum consensus, is the way that can help the Al Sharq region overcome the obstacles and impediments reviewed during the session and move towards a new phase of stability and growth.

Regional Power Politics

The opening paper of this session aimed to examine the policies of the major regional powers in the Al Sharq region and how these policies can bring us closer or further away from achieving integration among the countries of the region, which is the main objective of this conference. To understand the policies of any state, it is necessary to look at three main determinants: Imperatives, constraints, and sources of power. These determinants play a pivotal role in shaping countries› strategies and directing their regional and international policies.

The countries of the region have been suffering from political and economic imbalance for decades, and this state of affairs directly affects the nature of their relations. How can these countries regain the lost balance? Some countries in the region have resorted to external solutions to create a strategic balance, such as establishing military bases for major Western countries on their territories or joining regional blocs that appeared in previous periods but did not achieve the expected continuity or effectiveness. On the other hand, some countries have resorted to strengthening their internal capabilities, whether by developing their military capabilities or by building strong and independent economies.

What is striking is that these different strategic choices have led to the emergence of different "strategic traditions" among countries in the region, resulting in a state of strategic asymmetry. This means that countries have come to rely on disparate and contradictory strategies, making it more difficult to achieve any kind of effective integration or cooperation between them. Instead of being a source of strength and complementarity, these diverse strategic traditions have become an obstacle to exploiting the opportunities that may arise in the region to promote cooperation.

In this context, the experience of the European Union is often cited as an example of successful integration between states, and some try to emulate this experience in the Al Sharq region. However, it is important to pay attention to the fundamental differences between the context of the EU›s genesis and the current context in the region. The European Union was formed after World War II as a direct result of the reconciliation between two major states, France and Germany; one was victorious, and the other surrendered. This historic reconciliation, which was based on a shared desire to avoid future wars and establish an integrated economic and political system, is what allowed the EU to succeed in building a strong and stable bloc.

In the Al Sharq region, the context is quite different. The main powers in the region, such as Türkiye, Iran, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, are still in a state of intense rivalry, and no historic compromises have taken place between them that would lead to one party accepting defeat or making substantial concessions. This ongoing rivalry hinders any attempt to replicate the European experience because it is difficult to find common ground on which to build economic or political integration in the absence of a victor and a vanquished party.

In addition to that, the current regional tensions weaken the possibility of building any long-term strategic alliances, limiting opportunities for fruitful cooperation. Each of these four countries sees itself as a regional power to be reckoned with in any future arrangement of the region, and this belief increases polarization and competition rather than cooperation and integration.

Therefore, the panelists emphasized that replicating the EU model in the Al Sharq region at this time is too challenging and unrealistic. Instead of trying to replicate models from other regions, Al Sharq region countries should adopt a model of their own that is in line with their current realities and takes into account the complexities of their interrelationships and regional rivalries. Achieving integration in the region requires consensus among these major powers, which can be reached through long-term dialogue and gradual confidence-building, taking into account each country›s historical and political sensitivities.

The Al Sharq region can only progress toward true integration if its major states can overcome their rivalry and start working together to achieve common interests. This transformation requires strong political will and the adoption of a common strategic vision that takes into account the challenges and opportunities facing the region.

In the same context, the participants emphasized that the reconciliations and rapprochement between some countries in the region are masking conflicts and issues, not addressing the roots of those issues; thus, those issues will explode in succession and create a state of chaos. For example, Jake Sullivan, the US National Security Advisor, stated at the end of September 2023 that the Middle East was witnessing a state of calm not seen in two decades. Only eight days after this statement, Operation «Al-Aqsa Flood» was launched and the region ignited, and US forces returned to the region, despite Kushner›s diligent efforts - in the past - to pacify the region, and this trend did not stop with Biden›s arrival to the presidential chair, but «Al-Aqsa Flood» and the events that followed proved that this proposal was seeking to bypass the real issues of the region by burying them instead of dealing with them, which proved to be a failure; this is what requires a fundamental and rational solution to the issues of the region.

One of the important issues through which the conflict between different states emerges is the issue of identity and the state. This issue is often one of the causes of conflict, and the proposed solution to this issue is to work to separate identity and the state, and another idea to overcome this issue is multiple identities; because the attempt to reduce people to one identity has brought many calamities to the region, whether it was identity-based, religious, ethnic or national, while states are actually based on recognizing and managing multiple identities in societies, even many societies have more than one identity and more than one official recognized language.

The Economy is a Gateway to Building Integration in the Al Sharq Region: Potential, Opportunities and Challenges

The economy is an opportunity to build integration in the Al Sharq region. On the ground, despite the existence of several agreements and unions that have sought to promote economic cooperation in the region, data indicate that the volume of intra-Arab trade is still low, much lower than in other parts of the world.

The economic literature talks about stages of economic integration, starting with preferential trade zones, then free trade zones, a customs union, a common market, and an economic union. However, the Al Sharq Region is still lagging behind in many of these steps, and this has many reasons, but the main reason cited by the participants is the lack of political will because politics undoubtedly plays a pivotal and fundamental role in determining the shape of economic policies, as the region does not suffer from a shortage of technicians or a shortage of ideas.

Participants pointed to other obstacles to economic integration, including that: Countries in the Al Sharq region do not have a large industrial capacity, and the total production of countries in the region is in what can be described as low-technology products. In addition to the abovementioned obstacles, the trade structures built in the countries are mainly aimed at serving the ruling groups, and some countries - even if they have the will - cannot confront these interest groups.

Another interesting point is that when talking about economic cooperation/integration, there is a lot of talk about the benefits of such integration for each country individually and for the region as a whole, but what may be missing from these discussions is that some integration projects may increase tensions between countries. It is important to pay attention to such tensions and try to address or contain them if they occur.

In terms of integration opportunities, participants discussed several constructive ideas, such as the idea of creating an inter-country platform for the cultivation and trade of wheat, which is a strategic commodity, and the consumption of wheat by the countries of the region is very large. In addition, e-commerce is an opportunity, but there is an obstacle that the resident of one country cannot know the products in another country, which calls for

the creation of platforms that bring together products from different countries and facilitate individuals or institutions to browse and purchase these products, which the countries of the region can benefit from. In terms of areas of economic cooperation/integration, participants discussed the idea of focusing on four areas: energy, water, food and medicine, and defense industries.

At the session's conclusion, the participants agreed that nowadays, we need think tanks that seek to promote economic interdependence among the countries of the region, as well as take advantage of the shared values among the peoples, because achieving economic cooperation/integration between competing countries will reflect positively on them, and economic cooperation and its promotion are possible, even if there is no strategic alliance at the political level.

Global Experiences of Integration: The Case of the European Union

We can consider the topic of this session as an extension of the topic of the previous session by recalling that the European Union model is one of the models of economic cooperation that has evolved over time to become a more comprehensive form of integration and interdependence. The term "EU model" was mentioned in the previous paragraph, and in fact, the participants at the beginning of the session emphasized this terminology. The EU experience is a "model, « not "the model." The purpose of bringing it up for discussion is to benefit from this experience as part of the human experience. We can still develop our own model as the countries of the Al Sharq region.

The European Union is characterized by several features: It was created by a group of modern nation-states that voluntarily decided to give up part of their sovereignty in favor of a higher entity, in order to benefit from greater benefits. The second feature is that the Europeans always had in their political imagination the model of the Holy Roman Empire; hence, the European Union was a purely Christian union, which means that we, as the Al Sharq region countries, are fine to have the model of ummah in our imagination.

The word ummah refers to an important difference between the countries of the Al Sharq region and the West, as the relationship between the countries of the West is mainly based on interest and benefit, while the countries of the Al Sharq region should be guided by the concept of the nation, and the multiple values it carries, which undoubtedly contribute to bringing countries closer together and making the bonds of relations stronger.

Participants reported that the bloc of Arab countries in the Al Sharq region is the most homogeneous due to the common language and culture, but despite this, it remains the most crisis-ridden, and to get out of these crises, and to achieve a state of cooperation/integration between these countries and then in the Al Sharq region as a wider framework; three paths were proposed, namely: Focusing on constitutional reform that does not lead to the overthrow of the state, emphasizing that reform projects need strategic rationality, and paying attention to rebuilding the Arab man on a civilizational level.

Participants noted an important question: Is political will the only obstacle to any integration projects among the Al Sharq region countries? If we accept this, we would be minimizing the objective factors that are absent from the discussion. The historical experience of unification/integration attempts among the Al Sharq region countries proves that objective factors may be the reason for the failure of these projects. For example, the conflict over the interpretation of Islam is the reason for the continuation of the conflict within the ummah; therefore, the question should be: How can we do better than these objective factors in order to serve integration? The answer to this question requires us to read more deeply into these factors so that they do not become a reason for the failure of any future integration attempts.

Lastly, the Arab states in our time are indeed in crisis and full of contradictions, but this should not make us lose sight of their ability to control people, and that the identities they created are real identities. The goal is not to abandon these identities or clash with the nation-state but rather to rationalize them and create some form of integration/cooperation between different states that accommodates this diversity and does not exclude anyone.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Al Sharq region has witnessed rapid and sudden transformations in recent years, some positive and some negative, as the region has gone through various stages of turmoil and change. These transformations, characterized by dynamism and uncertainty, have presented the peoples and countries of the region with new and sometimes unexpected challenges. However, the Al Sharq Forum has always sought to anticipate and respond to these shifts by developing a common perspective aimed at effectively managing the region›s political and strategic affairs.

The pursuit of a common perspective is not just a theoretical desire, but a practical and necessary response to changing realities. The Al Sharq Forum recognizes that the region needs a coherent and comprehensive vision through which it can face the current challenges and realize the aspirations of its people. This conference, which took place amidst the enormous transformations transpiring in the world, was part of the Al Sharq Forum›s ongoing efforts to steer the region towards an integrative path, bringing together different forces and promoting cooperation between them.

In addition, the Forum aims to capitalize on these global transformations in the region›s favor by reformulating its internal and external relations on new bases that ensure its strategic position in the emerging international system. Recognizing these global changes and adopting policies in line with them is an essential part of the Forum›s strategy to achieve its goals.

During the conference sessions, participants presented a set of ideas, recommendations, and visions, from which the conference recommendations paper was drafted. After reviewing the items of this initial paper, the participants shared some suggestions and recommendations to develop this paper while emphasizing that the goal is how the ideas mentioned in the conference can be turned into practical reality. The suggestions and recommendations were as follows:

■ Determining what battles we will not fight, because this will save time and effort in what is useful and beneficial.

■ The discussions were dominated by political engagement, with little presence of social, cultural, and intellectual aspects, which is what needs to be developed and worked on.

■ Emphasizing the importance of the idea of dismantling authoritarianism, because it is the way to achieve all the goals contained in any renaissance project in the region.

■ The institution based on this project should bring together the elite and decision-making centers in the countries of the region; this means inviting ambassadors as well as heads of parliaments and others, with the aim of reaching a common understanding, knowing that this dialogue does not have to be a formal one.

■ Launching a series of more in-depth specialized workshops on the topics discussed in the previous sessions, and other workshops with a larger number of young people in attendance because they are the makers of the future.

■ The issue of Palestine was referred to as a central issue that unites the ummah around it, without forgetting other countries and their difficulties, such as Sudan and the ongoing war there.

■ Establishing a fund/endowment for freedom and liberation (proposed name) that seeks to sponsor the initiatives contained in these recommendations, and this fund also seeks to hold an expanded conference and be the gateway through which to communicate with rulers, thinkers, intellectuals, activists, and others.

■ Including important issues on the agenda, inclusive of what our region has witnessed over the past decades, such as reconciliation between the peoples of the region, resolving the differences between Sunnis and Shiites and other issues, as well as working to open up to the people of the free world, as the war on Gaza has shown that many people in the West are capable of solidarity with just causes, which we should take advantage of.

■ Thinking about ways to make society a source of knowledge, and how living forces can learn from it; translating the accumulated historical experiences into patterns of thought that will, in turn, form the guide for thinking about the nation-state and other big questions we are currently facing.

■ Launching a research track to study four issues, namely: Successful and unsuccessful experiences, both ancient and modern, related to integration experiences. Analyzing the reality and the surrounding environment. Research and study the entities related to the project. Researching and studying the scenarios of the unity of the ummah. In addition, for the project to turn into a practical plan, it must have three aspects, namely: Theory, Implementation, and Timeline.

■ Moving to regional planning, i.e. as an ummah, because the current entities - the Arab League, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and others - have failed to achieve this goal, and the Al Sharq Forum may be a party to this project with other parties.

Speakers at the conference:

■ Wadah Khanfar, President of Al Sharq Forum.

■ Nuh Yılmaz, Deputy Foreign Minister of Türkiye..

■ Abdulaziz Al-Horr, Ambassador and Director of the Diplomatic Institute at Qatar›s Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

■ Abdullah Al-Ashaal, Former Egyptian Assistant Foreign Minister and Professor of International Law and Political Science at Cairo University.

■ Hassan Ahmadian, Professor of Middle Eastern Studies at Tehran University.

■ Yassin Al-Saadi, PhD in Economics and Former International Consultant at the European Bureau of Consulting.

■ Ahmed Atawnah, Director of the Vision Center for Political Development.

■ Basheer Nafi, Associate Fellow at the Al Sharq Forum and Research Fellow at the Al Jazeera Center for Studies.

■ Khalil Ibrahim, Co-Founder of the Kurdistan Islamic Union, the Union of Kurdistan Parliamentarians, and the Internal Peace Movement.

■ Suhaib Dawood, Director of Asbab for Geopolitical Affairs.

■ Taha Özhan, Academic and Writer, Director of Research at the Ankara Institute.

■ Abdulhafez Al-Sawi, Researcher and Writer specializing in Economic Affairs.

■ Abdulmuttalip Arpa, Researcher and Academic at Sabahattin Zaim University, Department of Islamic Economics.

■ Ammar Fayed, Director of Research at Asbab, PhD Candidate at Istanbul Aydin University.

■ Amr Darrag, Egyptian Politician and Academic, President of the Egyptian Institute for Studies.

■ Galip Dalay, Senior Consulting Fellow at the Chatham House.

■ Mehmet Asutay, Professor of Political Economy and Islamic Finance at Durham University and Director of the Durham Center for Islamic Economics and Finance.

■ Mohammad Affan, Director of Al Sharq Academia, holds a PhD in Middle Eastern Studies.

■ Yehia Hamed, Former Egyptian Minister of Investment under President Morsi.

■ Ahmed Mawlana holds a Master›s Degree in International Relations and is interested in the field of Security Studies.

■ Osama El-Mourabit, holds a Master›s Degree in International Relations from Humboldt University and is currently a Doctoral Candidate in International Relations.

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(Note: Al Sharq Strategic Research intern Habiba Ali translated this report from its original Arabic version into English.)

ABOUT AL SHARQ STRATEGIC RESEARCH

A think tank that looks to undertake impartial, rigorous research to promote the ideals of democratic participation, an informed citizenry, multi-stakeholder dialogue and social justice.

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