



"How to reduce Gulf tensions with Iran" - HE Dr. Anwar Gargash Op-Ed

1 message

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Good morning Colleagues,

I wanted to make sure you saw the op-ed published on Sunday in Financial Times by HE Dr. Anwar Gargash, UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs. The piece [‘How to reduce Gulf tensions with Iran’](#) addresses current regional dynamics with Iran.

Dr. Gargash commends the joint statement issued by the UK, France, and Germany last week holding Iran responsible for the airstrikes on Saudi Aramco’s facilities in Abqaiq, and he welcomes further European engagement. The op-ed also outlines the UAE’s push for diplomatic discussions to reduce tensions in the Gulf, end Iran’s destabilising behavior throughout the region and normalize relations.

Please take a moment to read Dr. Gargash's op-ed below and don't hesitate to reach out if you have questions or would like to further discuss.

~Hagir

How to reduce Gulf tensions with Iran

Financial Times
September 29, 2019

ANWAR GARGASH

The leaders of the UK, France and Germany made a very welcome intervention in the Gulf last Monday, helping to lower tensions and open a new path for diplomacy. Boris Johnson, Emmanuel Macron and Angela Merkel issued a joint

statement holding Iran responsible for the missile attacks on Saudi Aramco facilities in Abqaiq. They also called for new comprehensive talks to address Iran's nuclear weapons programme and other destabilising activities across the Middle East, including its support for violent proxies.

Seizures and sabotage of European ships, attacks on global energy supplies and the potential for rapid escalation have roused European concern and stirred it to collective action. "Iran bears responsibility for this attack. There is no other plausible explanation," the statement said. "The time has come for Iran to accept a long-term negotiation framework for its nuclear programme, as well as regional security issues, which include its missile programmes."

The United Arab Emirates welcomes this initiative. By holding Iran to account, the "E3" countries can discourage future attacks. By showing common resolve, the Gulf states, the US and others can demonstrate there is room for diplomacy.

What can that diplomacy offer? Most immediately, the E3 leaders can reduce the potential for miscalculations, mis-steps and retaliation on all sides. It can help convince Iran that further hostility will be counterproductive and only prolong Iran's isolation. The E3 can help dismiss the false impression that the only choice is between war and the well-intentioned but imperfect nuclear deal, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

With persistence, the E3 can open up a new channel of communication and establish greater trust. They can help Tehran understand that the Gulf has achievable expectations — we only want Iran as a normal neighbour.

Moving towards a productive relationship with Iran would require us to address its worrying and destabilising behaviour. Iran must permanently end its pursuit of nuclear weapons, cease the development and proliferation of ballistic and other missiles, end support for violent proxy groups and respect the sovereignty of other nations.

For us, these are the essential elements for any discussions towards a new and enhanced agreement. Such discussions would go beyond the JCPOA and include the Gulf states, who have so much at stake. We believe that there is an opening for Iran to reach a new understanding with its neighbours and the world. Tehran should see that a new agreement could offer it the space, confidence and resources to refocus its attention on its own people rather than on its proxies abroad. A deal would be a ticket to re-enter the global trading system, build

prosperity and expand opportunity. It is a blueprint for a new, shared and more stable regional order.

Such stability has been a central objective of UAE foreign policy. To encourage a “normal” Iran, we have historically engaged with Iran — in trade and commerce, in exchanges and visits, in managing energy, maritime and aviation rights in the area. We have always seen enormous potential in the relationship, and we believe that no country would benefit more than Iran itself.

At every turn, the UAE has avoided conflict with Iran. We will continue to take all measures to de-escalate tensions and reduce the potential for hostilities. When necessary, we are prepared to act in self-defence, but always proportionately, judiciously and with restraint. We seek a pragmatic, diplomatic path to lowering tensions and creating an opening for meaningful talks.

Our objective is to end this perpetual crisis. The UAE, Iran, and other states can share the Gulf as normal neighbours, if not as the best of friends. There is a long road ahead, but European engagement is a timely and welcome step in the right direction.

The writer is the United Arab Emirates’ minister of state for foreign affairs

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