

Middle East Alarmed Over Chance of a Republican McCain Win

Written by Robert ID4535

Wednesday, 29 October 2008 05:04 -

A unique Middle East debating forum has overwhelmingly warned America that a victory by Republican nominee Sen. John McCain in the upcoming US Presidential election would seriously destabilize already damaged relations with the Middle East.

In the largest voting margin yet recorded in the Doha Debates, now in their fifth year, an audience of more than 350 people voted 87%-13% against a motion suggesting that the Middle East would be better off with Republican John McCain as President.

Hafez al-Mirazi, the former host of Al-Jazeera's Arabic weekly television show From Washington said that just as President George W Bush had made the Middle East "worse than it was eight years ago" so his "hawkish Republican mate" would do the same.

He suggested John McCain was eager to "fight and engage in wars" against Iran, Syria "and anyone who would oppose America."

"Like Bush he wouldn't talk to his opponents and like Bush he shoots first and talks later."

In an opening statement that drew loud applause from the packed audience, Mr al-Mirazi warned that Sarah Palin, McCain's running mate, was from the same warmongering mould as Dick Cheney, Bush's vice-president "who happens to be a quail hunter."

Mr al-Mirazi asked the audience at the debate, to be broadcast by BBC World News on November 1 and 2, whether it could "imagine what would happen if Palin, a moose hunter, reached the White House? It would be the same thing.

"What did Palin do when she visited Kuwait on her only trip to the Middle East? She practiced shooting," Mr al-Mirazi said in reference to a visit by Republican Vice President nominee Palin to US troops stationed there.

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"A McCain-Palin victory would do to this fragile relationship what Lehman Brothers did to the markets."

Dr Michael Signer, foreign policy adviser to Democratic Senator John Edwards' presidential campaign in 2007-2008 and a highly respected foreign policy expert, also attacked the motion and the dangers a McCain victory would present.

Describing Barak Obama, the Democrat nominee, as "thoughtful and deliberate" he said such qualities were of paramount importance during the present troubled times.

"It is time we had a president who thinks before he acts rather than acts before he thinks."

He said Mr Barak Obama was an African-American who spent his formative years in Indonesia, a Muslim nation, and would be a president "who wants to understand and listen, rather than just talk."

Danielle Pletka, Vice President for Foreign and Defence Policy Studies at the American Institute for Public Policy Research, supported the motion, suggesting that Senator McCain was the only Presidential candidate who would not "walk away" from Iraq leaving the region to return to sectarian violence.

She said Obama was constantly changing his opinions and had even offered to negotiate "unconditionally" with Iran.

Dr Saad al-Ajmi, former Kuwaiti Minister for Information and Culture, said he supported the motion largely because he feared that Mr Obama would pull US troops out of Iraq prematurely "before they had cleared up the mess they created".

About the Doha Debates:

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The Doha Debates are a unique forum for free speech in the Arab world. Chaired by Tim Sebastian, the internationally renowned award winning broadcaster, the series has been broadcast on BBC World since January 2005. BBC World reaches nearly 300 million people in more than 200 countries.

The Doha Debates are hosted and funded by the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development. The Foundation is a private, chartered, nonprofit organization committed to the belief that a nation's true wealth is in the potential of its people. Chaired by Her Highness Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser al Missned, the wife of the Emir, it seeks to develop that potential through a network of centres devoted to education, public health and research.

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