

A mutually beneficial relationship

INTERVIEW WITH SHEIKH MOHAMMED ABDULLAH MUBARAK AL-SABAH

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holds a bachelor's degree in Political Science from the University of Nottingham and an MA in International Studies and Diplomacy from the University of London. Sheikh Mohammed also studied at Eton and Oxford. He has worked for the Government of Kuwait for 15 years holding different positions, including the Council of Ministers and the Ministry of State for National Assembly Affairs. Sheikh Mohammed was the Kuwait government's liaison officer with the British army during the Gulf War in 1990. He is the grandson of Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah the founder of Kuwait.

Kuwait and the United Kingdom have a long history together. How does this shared heritage inform the current relationship between the two countries?

The United Kingdom has been a close friend of Kuwait in terms of commerce, trade and industry and education for many years. From our long-standing friends in the United Kingdom we have drawn inspiration for the thriving modern democracy we have today. With common aspirations for peace, democracy and progress our two nations have developed a special bond spanning generations.

This special bond was tested in the dark and difficult days when Iraq invaded our nation in 1990. As it has stood by its friends around the world in their hours of need, the United Kingdom proved itself to be a strong and loyal ally of Kuwait in our darkest hour. Forty seven brave troops lost their lives on our soil protecting our freedom and their families and the British nation's support will never be forgotten.

This week we will proudly witness the embodiment of that freedom as Kuwaiti citizens go to the polls to elect a new parliament. The democratic rights that so many fought for are alive and well in modern Kuwait.

Our vibrant democracy includes men and women from across the political spectrum coming together in civil discourse to chart a course for our nation. It is my hope that when the new parliament is convened they will turn some of their energies to further cooperation with the United Kingdom.

Kuwait and the United Kingdom enjoy strong economic relations. How is the economic cooperation between the two countries likely to evolve in the future?

Currently Kuwait is one of the largest investors in the United Kingdom in terms of liquidity, investment portfolios and property, both by government institutions as well as private sector companies and private industries.

Our economy is thriving and we have much to offer the world. Many savvy investors from the United Kingdom are beginning to take note of the tremendous opportunities the State of Kuwait's stable and growing economy provides and I look forward to these investments flourishing in coming years. With our strategic position as the gateway to the emerging

markets in Asia we are uniquely positioned to provide British firms a base of operations from which to enter these new areas.

Another example of cooperation between the two countries is in the sphere of education. Can you elaborate on the nature of this cooperation?

Many hundreds of young Kuwaitis travel each year to the United Kingdom to take advantage of the world-class educational opportunities available there. When they return to Kuwait they are better prepared to become the leaders of our nation in business, government and industry. Some of our nation's current leaders benefited from study in the United Kingdom and have benefited ever since from the friendships they formed while there.

The bonds of personal friendship our students return with strengthen the bonds between our two nations. Kuwait and the UK share an entrepreneurial spirit and we look forward to our strong ties growing stronger yet in the years to come.

What can be done to increase awareness both in Kuwait and the United Kingdom of the opportunities for growth through cooperation between the two countries?

As the Minister of Information of the State of Kuwait I am pleased to support a number of initiatives which will raise awareness in the United Kingdom and Kuwait of the myriad of collaborative ventures that our two countries undertake together and can undertake together in the future. As these joint ventures become more widely recognised it is my hope that this will spur creative thinking into new potential projects in both commerce and industry, as well as in the civil society sphere, on which our two peoples can work together.

What do you hope will be the outcomes of His Highness The Amir's State Visit to the UK?

During His Highness' State Visit to the United Kingdom I anticipate that more trade and commercial agreements are announced, as well as new education initiatives between our two great nations, as we both look forward to a future that will deepen our relationship and develop the mutual philosophies that we both cherish.