

Keynote Address

Sep 9, 1995



In-Depth Reports

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to Amman for this policy conference. Many of you have come a long way to be here with us, which is entirely appropriate, for the whole Middle East has come a long way in the past five years. The very fact that we are here together for the first time should remind us just how far we have come in such a short time.

In a region that for generations has been riddled with conflict and torn by warfare, the conclusion of the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty in October 1994 was a momentous achievement. The treaty is a proclamation of our intent to shake off the bonds of the past and to sweep away the compounded legacies of hatred and violence. It heralds a fresh start in conflict-resolution and crisis-management. Indeed the treaty promises to transform the region and provide a historic opportunity to chart a bold new course for the future governed by mutual acceptance and respect, and founded upon a vision of peace and cooperation.

I would like to suggest to you that a definition of security and how it is to be achieved must be at the heart of our vision.

In the Middle East as elsewhere, security has traditionally been defined by military criteria. The history of the twentieth century graphically demonstrates the inadequacy of this definition. The pursuit of ever-more deadly weapons, and the amassing of ever-larger armed forces, has not enhanced regional security. Some \$200 billion have been spent on arms in the Middle East this decade. This phenomenal expenditure has fostered only insecurity as adversaries compete in an ever-escalating spiral, from one crisis to the next.

It is clear that security must be defined in a broader context. A better definition would include human resources, natural resources including land, and economic as well as military factors. Security can certainly be seen as covering a broad matrix of inter-connected issues such as food, water, energy, technology, finance, transport, and communications. It includes domestic infrastructure as well as foreign policy. A country's ability to provide jobs, housing, and services for its people can serve as an indicator of its stability. A country that is providing for the needs of its people is unlikely to jeopardize its own security and that of its neighbors.

The manner in which the Cold War ended proved beyond doubt that the power of human needs far outweighs that of conventional armies. In looking to the future of the Middle East, those same needs must be addressed if stability is to be assured, security is to be guaranteed, and peace is to prevail.

I recall that in 1986, Jordan tried to initiate a development effort to support the people of the occupied territories. The world did not heed our warning that the economic situation there was politically dangerous, and would have far-reaching consequences in terms of security. A year later, the intifada erupted. I would therefore suggest that an inter-disciplinary view of security is essential if the Middle East is to enjoy a peaceful and stable future.

Peace between Jordan and Israel comes within the context of regional transformation. In discussing security and economic co-operation, Jordanian and Israeli negotiators both realized that while talk of security could not be confined to Jordan and Israel, there was a lacuna at the regional level.

Regional security structures in the Middle East are relics of the Cold War era; they were certainly not developed to deal with Arab-Israeli or inter-Arab peace. Indeed, hardly any viable structures of cooperation exist at all.

Israel and Jordan therefore agreed to a number of regional concepts in the treaty. These included a commitment to the creation of a Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Middle East (CSCME), culminating in a regional zone of security and stability, the idea of a partnership in peace, and a commitment to human resource development at the regional level.

Such proposals embody the conviction that if peace is to succeed in the long-term, it must provide mechanisms which allow all parties without exclusion to discuss all issues without exception. These parts of the treaty therefore call for an inclusive, interdisciplinary approach, and I believe that it is this above all that must be developed if we are to vouchsafe the future of the region.

The first task is to define what we mean by "the region." The area including Jordan, the Palestinian Authority (PA), and Israel is at the heart of all notions of the region. This area forms a natural pivot between the eastern Mediterranean, the Red Sea, the Gulf, and the hinterland which includes the countries north of the Arabian peninsula. In building a definition of the region and a vision for its future, we may begin with the heartland and work outwards; to use this conference's terminology: "expand the circle of peace." However, in the long term, it will not be possible to confine the Middle East to this core. Unless a gradual plan is adopted to involve all the countries of a well-defined Middle East, the whole project may be in jeopardy.

Iraq, Iran, and Turkey are essential components of this region and should not be kept out of our strategic plans. The inclusion of these countries will reduce the region's over-reliance on the United States and its Western allies for the security of the Gulf. I am aware as I speak that gathered in this room are some of the architects of the "dual containment" of Iraq and Iran. It may seem outlandish to suggest that unless such countries eventually take their places in a regional security order, it will be fatally flawed. It is, however, worth considering that the inclusion of Israel in a Middle Eastern security order was not so long ago thought impossible. Back in 1989, I went out on a limb and said:

The central spine of the Mashreq is contiguous to the non-Arab nations of the European rim of Asia such as Turkey, Israel, and Iran. Jordan's approach will hopefully make these borderlines with other nations a meeting ground of positive interaction rather than war zones of conflict and turmoil.

The same holds true today. Unless we devise a system that can involve all regional parties without exclusion in addressing all issues without exception, we will not succeed in guaranteeing security in the Middle East.

I said at the outset that it was important to define who and what our notion of security involves, and how it is to be implemented. I have addressed the who and the what: but I now face the rather more daunting question of implementation. Jordan has long called for the establishment of a forum along the lines of the Conference on Security Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), now known as the Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). We believe that such a forum could provide low-key institutional procedures to discuss the various inter-connected topics that bear on regional security and cooperation. A CSCME would provide a focus for a non-military perspective on security.

A CSCME would help us develop a common regional vision, founded on common goals and aspirations, and built on structures of inter-connection and mutual aid. We believe that the future of the Middle East depends on such a vision backed by appropriate instruments, and we are prepared to do everything possible to help implement it.

Looking ahead, a CSCME might dovetail with existing security structures and fora, giving the region the benefit of the international community's experience and support. There can be no doubt that dialogue within the region, and

between the region and the rest of the world, would play a significant part in countering extremism and enhancing the security of all. Jordan -- with its proven commitment to peace and stability, its pivotal position in the region, and its experience with these issues -- has much to contribute to such a dialogue.

We must ask ourselves what framework can presently promote security and development at the regional level. In February 1995, I discussed a similar theme with thirty members of the Knesset during their visit to Amman. I suggested that the multilateral peace talks, the Middle East/North Africa economic summit, and the forthcoming launch of the European Union (EU)-Mediterranean Partnership process in Barcelona were possible components of a framework for regional security.

I would like to go further today by posing a few questions. Can the multilaterals, launched by the Madrid peace process in 1991, evolve into a CSCME? Can we integrate the process, soon to be launched in Barcelona, with the multilaterals or the proposed CSCME? Or will these eclectic processes represent in their totality a CSCME? Can the arms control and regional security (ACRS) working group, still in its infancy, become a suitable forum for considering alternative future Middle Eastern security systems? What is the range of possibilities for such a security system?

I cannot provide the answers, but it is not too early to ask such questions. I hope that this conference might make some progress toward outlining answers that satisfy the concerns of all. For such a security system would help not only to ensure Arab-Israeli peace, but also to put in place credible machinery to tackle inter- and intra-state disputes. Such machinery is desperately needed, for the alternative to the Middle East state system -- ceaseless Balkan-style ethnic strife -- would jeopardize the security of all, both within and beyond our region.

As I have said, security cannot be viewed in purely military terms. Certain aspects of security must be considered in terms of regional development. Peacebuilding is now of the essence and it cannot be a "lip service" commitment. Slogans and photo-opportunities alone will not suffice. Our task is to build infrastructure relating to peoples' needs and to address the humanitarian content of the problems of the peace process.

It is our shared responsibility to conquer the fears and satisfy the misgivings of our peoples. We must show them that the sacrifices they have made have not been in vain. We must demonstrate to them the benefits of a new culture of peace and cooperation. For peace must be whole. It must be absolute to be real; it must be just to be lasting; and it must be tangible to be effective. Peace must touch the lives of all irrespective of age, gender, ethnicity, or creed. It must influence all circumstances -- physical as well as psychological -- and remove all barriers: actual as well as imaginary. Its maintenance will be as arduous as its making, and we must not fail the test or abandon the task. Our peoples will not forgive us and history will condemn us if we fail.

Peace must be seen to work for everyday men and women. Many Jordanians do not yet feel that they have a real stake in peace. It is true that some in Jordan feel that making peace with Israel was a terrible mistake; indeed, that the very peace process is misconceived. Likewise, there are Israelis and Palestinians who reject the process.

We believe that the doubters will not be silenced by repression but by the tangible benefits of the peace dividend. Those who disagree with the peace must have their say. The politics of hints, innuendoes, and whispers is out of keeping with the culture of peace. A public debate about the implications of peace is on and it will continue. We call for an informed debate. The opponents of peace must spell out to their public the implications of continued conflict. They must explain the alternative to peace and what it would mean for all of us. They must make clear that to reject peace is to embrace war, and that war offers no future but fear and death.

We believe that peace will be strengthened by rapid, sustainable, widely shared economic growth. A partnership entailing joint commitments based on common interests will be central to achieving this goal. Our strategy is to harness a trilateral partnership of governments, businesses, and international finance.

One of the most positive steps in this direction was the economic summit held last year in Casablanca. The Middle East and North Africa economic summit in Amman, which will be held in October 1995, goes one step further. The Amman summit will seek to connect the right business groups with the right projects, and to outline specific joint investments. It will discuss trade liberalization and industrial policy, infrastructure and resource development, and investment and financial mechanisms. The proceedings will be strongly business-oriented, and we hope that businesses of all sizes from all over the world will attend. With your involvement, we can ensure that the summit succeeds even before it convenes.

We are also considering mechanisms to institutionalize peacebuilding and to stimulate trade and investment. We are working on arrangements for a Middle East development bank, and a regional body patterned on the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). These should not be considered as ends in themselves, but as contributions to comprehensive security.

Our region must tap the global private investment market if reconstruction is to succeed. Lehman Brothers estimates the need for regional infrastructural investments at \$45 billion by the year 2000. We have projects lined up in fields as diverse as tourism, health, industry, and export-oriented agriculture. All are viable, and will help to consolidate the peace, but all require investment, which will assist in tackling such legacies of the conflict as debt. However, the major role in this regard belongs to governments and financial institutions.

Our domestic priority is to continue liberalizing our political system and our economy. Pluralism, accountability, and increased respect for human rights remain the goals of our democratization process. On the economic side, the EU has described Jordan as the most advanced country of the region in implementing market-friendly reforms. As an emerging market, Jordan has the largest stock exchange in the Arab world and we are planning a far-reaching privatization program. We are developing a progressive, transparent regulatory system while ensuring macroeconomic stability. Under new legislation, we will treat all foreign investors equally, protect intellectual property rights, and guarantee the repatriation of foreign capital and dividends.

Our long-term goal is to liberalize and dismantle all barriers in the region including trade, investment, labor, capital, and services. We recognize that a non-discriminatory approach must be the cornerstone of a new economic order. In pursuing this goal, we are working to establish specialized economic zones to provide a fully deregulated environment for investment. Such "free zones" can form the nucleus of inter- and intra-regional free trade, investment, and growth.

Jordan looks to the future with optimism tempered by realism. We are not seeking charity but investment in a common future. We call on all those who have an interest in the Middle East to help us to rebuild now, allowing us to help ourselves and our neighbors in the future. By this I mean not only finance but also creative thinking. The questions I have posed today about security -- who and what it involves, and how it should be achieved -- will directly shape the future of the region. The United States can play a vital role in this process by promoting stability on a comprehensive matrix of themes. Issues such as land and resources, identity and demography, and terrorism and weapons of mass destruction are only the most prominent of those that should concern us.

The security of the Middle East is not a short-term strategic objective, but a long-term commitment. I want to make it clear that Jordan is committed not only to its peace treaty with Israel, but to a new inclusive Middle Eastern order of peace and security for all. Its leadership has consistently worked for reconciliation in the region. The penalty for our beliefs has been high at times, but we have always maintained their integrity. I want to leave you with the assurance that we will honor our commitments and hold fast to our vision of a Middle East at peace with itself and with the world outside.

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