

Keynote Address

Apr 5, 1995



In-Depth Reports

It is truly my honor to be here with you on this occasion. It is hard to believe that The Washington Institute is already ten years old. It does not seem like that long ago that it was created. But it has been a splendid decade not only for the men and women who have built The Institute into a preeminent center for scholarship, analysis and dialogue, but also a great decade for your cause: peace and understanding in the Middle East.

We are grateful to you, and particularly thankful for having lent the nation the services of Martin Indyk. We are all very proud of Martin's appointment, and I know that all of you join me in wishing him, his wife Jill, and their children, Sarah and Jacob, all the very best. Knowing that the ambassador's residence overlooks the Tel Aviv beach, I dare say that we will miss him more than he will miss us.

I just returned from a trip to Egypt, Jordan, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and Israel, and also had the opportunity to meet with Chairman Yasser Arafat in Jericho, all in about six days, which prompts me to recall the old saying that jet lag is nature's way of making you look like your passport photo. I thought it might be useful to describe some of what I saw during that very short but productive tour.

Egypt's Role in the NPT and Regional Development While in Cairo, I had lengthy meetings with President Mubarak, who will be over at the White House very shortly to meet with President Clinton. As the president will today, I stressed to President Mubarak the administration's abiding commitment to the indefinite and unconditional extension of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), when the review and extension conference convenes in New York later this month. President Clinton has asked me to head our delegation to that conference, and I can report that we are making great headway. But Egypt's importance in achieving this particular goal cannot be overestimated.

The NPT is one of the key building blocks for any conceivable future structure of peace and stability in the world. Administrations past and present have supported it very strongly. It will strengthen our efforts to reduce proliferation threats that are now being posed by rogue regimes in the region. I know that The Washington Institute's Shai Feldman wrote just yesterday in the New York Times that nothing concentrates the mind so quickly as the specter of weapons-grade material falling into the hands of the Libyas, Iraqs, and Irans of the world. The NPT is a bulwark against that threat. It cannot and must not be undermined. I stressed to President Mubarak the strong view held by President Clinton, myself, and bipartisan leaders in the Congress that both of our countries have critical national security interests at stake in ensuring that the treaty is as strong and enduring as possible.

I also worked with President Mubarak in launching the new joint partnership for economic growth and development. We co-chaired the first meeting two weeks ago and we will be spending a lot of time working together. The joint partnership is devoted to our mutual prosperity and development, and while it was announced last September, this was the first opportunity to really formally launch it with its full structure and membership. It will promote bilateral cooperation between our public sectors and our private sectors. The partnership will also serve to promote a more mature, broad-based, and intensive economic relationship between the United States and Egypt that focuses on trade, investment, and mutual commercial benefit and promotes reform.

At a time when our foreign aid budget is under great pressure worldwide, it is even more vital than before that our foreign assistance programs in Egypt and elsewhere are highly efficient and productive and spur positive economic growth. I believe that our work with this joint partnership with Egypt -- which in some ways is modeled on a similar partnership that we established with Russia more than two years ago and has been quite successful -- and the high-level economic policy dialogue to which it has given rise, constitute important steps toward stability. This will benefit not only the peoples of the Middle East, but Americans as well.

In fact, later today, President Clinton and I will drop by a meeting at the White House of thirty CEOs from Egypt and the United States, who will be working together as part of our partnership's effort to promote trade, investment, and job creation both for Egypt and the United States. It is another sign of the high priority that we are assigning to economic development in the region. Working together -- public and private sector, Egyptian and American -- we are now embarked in making the promise of the U.S.-Egypt joint partnership a reality.

Debt Relief for Jordan From Cairo we went to Jordan. There, only six months ago, the hopes for peace with Israel became a reality. I was thrilled to see the incredible pace with which the relationship between Israel and Jordan is being normalized, deepened, and enriched. The genuine friendship -- not only between the governmental structures, but between the peoples of the two countries -- is so palpable and growing so rapidly, it is actually very heartening. In meetings with King Hussein I stressed again that our country will stand with those who work for peace.

Under the leadership of the king, Jordan has cleared a path toward peace for the entire region to follow. And as President Clinton made clear in July, 1994 at the signing of the Washington Declaration, we will support Jordan as it moves forward on that path. Our support must not be measured only in words, however, but also in deeds. Specifically, in Amman two weeks ago and in Washington last week, the president and I reiterated the administration's commitment to do all that we can to ensure that our nation keeps its commitment on debt forgiveness and our pledge to help Jordan meet its defense needs.

Given the current mood on Capitol Hill, doing so will not be easy, but we are finding bipartisan support for this important step forward in the direction of consolidating the gains of the peace process. Foreign assistance, in whatever guise, has become an easy target. But I am finding that members of the House and Senate in both parties, behind the leadership of people like Senator Joseph Lieberman, are saying that America must prove true to its word. Our credibility and our ability to lead are at stake. King Hussein has taken bold steps for peace, and we ought to keep our word and make sensible steps of the kind that can make a huge difference.

Certainly the steps taken by Jordan are readily apparent. Where there were bunkers and barbed wire, there are now bridges. We are working with Jordan and Israel and other interested parties to extend and develop infrastructure through the Jordan Rift Valley, to make it a focal point for tourism, commerce, and industry. President Clinton has said that he will continue to urge other countries to relieve Jordan's debt. In fact, just yesterday we talked with British Prime Minister John Major, who has taken such steps already. We are also urging other countries to provide economic assistance and support of its economic reforms. We intend to honor that commitment, and thus help ensure that Jordan's future will be built on economic development and regional cooperation.

The Persian Gulf To be truly successful, this vision of cooperation and growth must include the Gulf states. In my stops in Oman and Saudi Arabia, my discussions emphasized these themes and the need to maintain a firm stand against the continuing challenges posed by Iran and Iraq. That is why we have worked hard to maintain UN sanctions on Iraq. We continue to make clear to the Iranian government that support for terrorism will not be tolerated. The administration has pledged to remain engaged diplomatically, and to be ready militarily to help keep the region secure. As we proved in the Gulf War and since, the fate of the Persian Gulf is an abiding American concern and a vital national interest.

Israel and the Palestinian Authority In Israel and Jericho, the final stops on my trip, I saw both how much the peace process has accomplished, and the need to rededicate ourselves to the collective goal of a comprehensive and lasting peace between Israel and its neighbors. There is a feeling of hope and optimism in Israel in spite of all the challenges to the peace process and in spite of all the terrible difficulties. Nowhere is that more keenly felt than on Mount Scopus, where I had the opportunity to stand in that beautiful spot that so many of you have seen and address an audience at the Hebrew University against a backdrop of the Old City.

In that speech and in meetings with Prime Minister Rabin and members of his government, I made clear that America's commitment to Israeli security and well-being is and will remain unshakable. I stressed that the American compact with the people of Israel is unambiguous. Just to state it again, as Israel takes risks for peace, we will assist in maintaining its vital edge in military capability and in technological prowess. We will also continue to work closely with Israel as it builds toward peace, including a comprehensive and lasting settlement with Syria.

Finally, I met with Chairman Arafat during what was only his second trip to Jericho since his historic handshake with Prime Minister Rabin on the South Lawn of the White House in September, 1993. I stressed to him the importance of the Palestinian Authority doing everything legally possible to prevent the staging of terrorist actions against Israelis from Gaza, Jericho, and the West Bank, and to bring to justice those who perpetrate such acts. I was gratified at his public commitment to institute security courts to prosecute those arrested for terrorist acts. I believe that there is a very high likelihood that we will see the Palestinian Authority moving forward soon to meet those commitments. I know there has been some controversy over the security courts, but I personally believe that the accusations are misplaced and that they are doing the right thing in progressing with prosecutions.

The Momentum of Peace As I always do when I go to the region, I learned a lot. But I want to make one final point that does not always come through in newscasts or daily reports. I came away from this particular trip convinced more strongly than ever that the vast majority of leaders and peoples of the region are indeed committed to the peace process. The momentum of the peace process is itself now a palpable force: expectations are being adjusted, investments are being planned, relationships are being built, futures are being envisioned, and progress has been made.

Of course, we have only to pick up the newspaper to see that terrible threats to the process still exist. Nothing is certain; it is, as always, a delicate process. That is why it is now more important than ever to match our actions to our words. And, as has been our policy, the United States will be there to support all those who are serious about fulfilling the commitments that they have made to a lasting peace in the entire Middle East. For your role and contribution toward that objective and for your continuing dedication to move this process forward, I say thank you, congratulations, and best wishes on another ten years.

RECOMMENDED



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Iran Takes Next Steps on Rocket Technology

Feb 11, 2022



Farzin Nadimi

[\(/policy-analysis/iran-takes-next-steps-rocket-technology\)](/policy-analysis/iran-takes-next-steps-rocket-technology)



BRIEF ANALYSIS

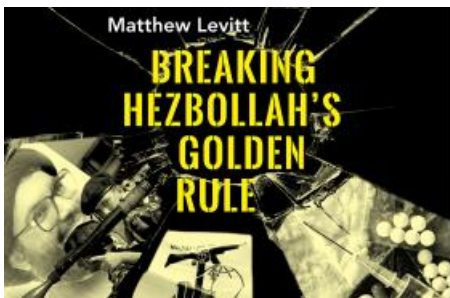
Saudi Arabia Adjusts Its History, Diminishing the Role of Wahhabism

Feb 11, 2022



Simon Henderson

[\(/policy-analysis/saudi-arabia-adjusts-its-history-diminishing-role-wahhabism\)](/policy-analysis/saudi-arabia-adjusts-its-history-diminishing-role-wahhabism)



ARTICLES & TESTIMONY

Podcast: Breaking Hezbollah's Golden Rule

Feb 9, 2022



Matthew Levitt

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REGIONS & COUNTRIES

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