

Trump Mideast Trip Marks a Shift from Obama

by [Dennis Ross \(/experts/dennis-ross\)](#)

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Dennis Ross, a former special assistant to President Barack Obama, is the counselor and William Davidson Distinguished Fellow at The Washington Institute.

A veteran U.S. diplomat assesses President Trump's message during his first regional tour and the implications for U.S. foreign policy.

President Donald Trump heads to The Vatican and Brussels on Wednesday, after wrapping up a trip to the Middle East, which started in Saudi Arabia and ended in Israel. The President delivered a speech on his vision for U.S.-Muslim relations in Riyadh, before heading to Jerusalem. There, he pledged to get Arab-Israeli talks back on track, after meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas. So, what was President Trump's message? And was the Middle East trip a success? The Cipher Brief's Leone Lakhani asked Ambassador Dennis Ross, Counselor at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and a former senior Middle East adviser to three U.S. presidents.

Cipher Brief: What would you say was the mission of President Trump's trip to the Middle East, and did he succeed? His first stop was Saudi Arabia. Was that an attempt to reset relations with the traditional Arab allies? Why is that important?

Ross: The trip was designed to symbolically demonstrate the difference from President Barack Obama, especially on showing that we are aligned with our traditional friends. This means the leading Sunni Arabs and Israelis. Re-establishing the link with and the confidence of the Sunni Arabs is essential for drawing them more into the conflict with ISIS. We cannot discredit ISIS – only Sunnis can do that...

[Read the full interview on the Cipher Brief website.](#)

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