

Charting the Winds of Change:

America and the Middle East, 2005

Sep 1, 2005



In-Depth Reports

When The Washington Institute was founded in 1985, the Middle East was a critical front in the Cold War, Ayatollah Khomeini was at the vanguard of the Islamic revolution, the Arab-Israeli peace process was stagnant, and America was still reeling from the ignominy of withdrawing its Marine contingent from Lebanon. Much has transpired since then, for good and for ill.

For the United States, the challenge to advance security, peace, and freedom in the Middle East is no less daunting now than it was then. What has changed are the stakes. Given the memory of the September 11 attacks, the specter of nuclear terrorism, the ideological challenge of Islamist radicalism, and the palpable yearning for peace, security, and change in every corner of the region, the reward for progress is greater than ever before, as is the price of failure.

With these great hopes, high stakes, and deep fears in mind, The Washington Institute convened its special Twentieth Anniversary Soref Symposium in May 2005. More than just an opportunity to take stock, it was an occasion for Americans and Middle Easterners to assess a wide range of regional issues in order to answer two questions: What is possible? And how can it be achieved? With the participation of visionary leaders, courageous reformers, experienced diplomats, and thoughtful experts from the United States and abroad, the symposium sought to chart the winds of change sweeping the Middle East. The resultant proceedings contain edited transcripts and summaries of remarks delivered by the various distinguished participants, including World Bank president Paul Wolfowitz, Egyptian prime minister Ahmed Nazif, Israeli minister Meir Shitrit, Palestinian Authority minister Hassan Abu Libdeh, Iraqi minister Barham Salih, UN representative Terje Roed-Larsen, and a host of others. ❖

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