

America and the Middle East:

Meeting the Challenge

Oct 27, 1999



Brief Analysis

On October 22, 1999, Vice President Al Gore delivered the keynote address to The Washington Institute's Inaugural Weinberg Founders Conference. The following are excerpts from his speech. [Read a full transcript. \(templateC07.php?CID=180\)](#)

"Our engagement in the world has a huge impact on the peace and prosperity of the Middle East and a huge impact on every part of the world. . . . America desperately needs to be reminded that our national security depends on America's wise and well-informed action in the world . . . We have the capacity to rise above our limitations and shortcomings and see clearly the challenges that we face today. And today isolationism runs counter to our national interests, contradicts our core values, and poses great dangers to our friends and allies around the world. It is the wrong direction for America. Deeply wrong.

"The next century must see a strong, stable, and secure peace in a region that has known too much war and human suffering. That means the next century must see an America willing to lead in the world, an America capable of bridging the partisan divides and holding up the values that bind us together; values that must be asserted in a world that looks to the United States for leadership. An America unsure of itself, withdrawn from the world, entangled in politics, unwilling to bear any burden at all or pay any price at all to promote security and prosperity would endanger our friends and allies abroad and undercut our security and prosperity at home. But a strong and prosperous America, conscious of its power, confident of our mission, and agile in the pursuit of our interests, can make a decisive difference in the spread of peace and prosperity at home and around the world."

The Arab-Israeli Peace Process "The goal of a permanent status agreement by September 13, 2000, seven years to the day since the historic signing on the White House lawn, is, of course, an ambitious one. Having met with the [Israeli] prime minister and with [Palestinian Authority] Chairman [Yasir] Arafat, I believe their commitment makes it a realistic one. . . . This is an agreement that will not and cannot be made in America. But rest assured, the United States will be there every step of the way to support this goal, to facilitate progress by the parties, and to assist the Syria and Lebanon tracks as well, so all parties can achieve a comprehensive peace in the new millennium. Should the coming year bring peace agreements among the parties, it will be a tribute to their remarkable courage and determination.

"But we should all lift up our eyes and recognize that, as triumphant as this would be, peace will take hold only after all of us, Arabs, Israelis, Americans, and others who are willing to join us, prove together that peace is not just a noble sentiment of saints and songwriters, but a way of life that is better and safer and fuller for all of the families of the Middle East. . . . We can't stop once agreements are signed. We must be ready to move on with the rest of the agenda for making the Middle East a more stable, secure, and prosperous region."

Future Challenges "The Middle East faces four sets of core challenges [that] will shape this region as we look beyond the year 2000."

Security in the Middle East: "The United States must continue to maintain a strong military presence in the region to help deter aggression and defend our friends and allies. We must keep our word. We must stand by our commitments. This is not charity; it is national security."

-
- Iraq: "One of the region's premier threats comes from Saddam Husayn's Iraq. The United States is committed to getting rid of Saddam Husayn and, in the interim, blocking his efforts to acquire weapons of mass destruction. . . . We are determined to continue sanctions against Baghdad until it meets its commitments to the international community, and at the same time we will continue to support United Nations-supervised humanitarian aid for the Iraqi people, even as Saddam continues to hinder the program and cynically deprive his people of its full benefits. That's just one more reason why we support the Iraqi opposition and will work with them toward the day where Iraq has a government that is worthy of its people and trusted by its neighbors."
- Iran: "The pressures for liberalization within Iran have been growing stronger, and yet we still see the repressive arm of fundamentalist rule as used against Iranian students last summer, and in the case of the thirteen Iranian Jews falsely arrested on trumped-up charges. In the area of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism and opposition to the peace process, we have seen no real change. And if Iran wants to build the international ties that can help expand its economy and improve its security, it must be a force for peace and not a source of terror. And it still is. Meanwhile, I have repeatedly pressed the issue of Russian weapons of mass destruction transfers to Iran with every prime minister from [Viktor] Chernomyrdin to [Vladimir] Putin. . . . And with the latest one I've already addressed this matter. We will continue to make this urgent issue one of the key priorities of our bilateral relations."
- Security Cooperation: "We also have the opportunity and obligation to foster greater regional antiterrorist activities. . . . Realism not only demands vigilance against such threats, it also demands that we recognize and seize new opportunities for security cooperation. This is the reason behind the multilateral arms control and regional security track of the peace process. This represents a regionwide opportunity for confidence-building measures, arms control, and other areas of shared interests. While official talks have been inactive for the past few years, significant progress was made earlier on, and I think the time is right to reenergize such efforts."

Economic Growth: "We seek to help the Middle East become more fully integrated into the global economy. We seek a Middle East where every child will have enough to eat, where the new generation of Arab youth will have more and better job opportunities, where more and more families at all levels of society can share in the global prosperity. Clearly we need to work harder to invigorate economic growth. We can all remember the great enthusiasm surrounding the first economic summit in Casablanca in 1994. . . . The high hopes that came from the success of that summit have unfortunately not been fulfilled. We need to resume these efforts, expanding the private sector involvement and relying on the economic interests of business to drive the process forward. Broad-based prosperity is the world's best protector of peace."

Water and the Environment: "Historically, water has often been a source of conflict. We must work to make it a fountain of peace. . . . Ten years ago it was unusual for policymakers to acknowledge that the environment is a national security issue. Today the world is beginning to understand that a healthy environment is essential to a higher quality of life, sound economic growth, and long-term security. We will continue our efforts to work with all countries of the Middle East to cooperate on this essential cornerstone of peace, and water, especially because of the continuing long-term drought, is a critical issue in Israel right now."

People-to-People Relationships: "As we expand the circle of peace, we need to deepen it as well. . . . Positive personal relationships can destroy negative stereotypes, accelerate joint projects, and help build a culture of peace. And they need to be backed up by a systematic effort to encourage a climate of tolerance and mutual respect in the media and the schools."

This report was prepared by Rania Al-Shirawi.

Policy #420

RECOMMENDED



BRIEF ANALYSIS

[Bennett's Bahrain Visit Further Invigorates Israel-Gulf Diplomacy](#)

Feb 14, 2022

◆
Simon Henderson

[\(/policy-analysis/bennetts-bahrain-visit-further-invigorates-israel-gulf-diplomacy\)](#)



BRIEF ANALYSIS

[Libya's Renewed Legitimacy Crisis](#)

Feb 14, 2022

◆
Ben Fishman

[\(/policy-analysis/libyas-renewed-legitimacy-crisis\)](#)



BRIEF ANALYSIS

The UAE Formally Ceases to be a Tax-Free Haven

Feb 14, 2022



Sana Quadri,
Hamdullah Baycar

(/policy-analysis/uae-formally-ceases-be-tax-free-haven)

TOPICS

Democracy & Reform (/policy-analysis/democracy-reform)

U.S. Policy (/policy-analysis/us-policy)