

**NATIONAL COUNCIL ON U.S.-ARAB RELATIONS**  
**19<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL ARAB-U.S. POLICYMAKERS CONFERENCE**

*“Arab-U.S. Relations: Going Where?”*

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**LUNCHEON KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

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## Keynote Address

*[Greetings in Arabic]* Ambassador Smith, when he was addressing you, he commented on being the speaker just before “Sesame Street,” as an introduction to them. Well, I lament the fact that I am following “Sesame Street.” Nonetheless, Mr. Ming, thank you very much for all you have done with your colleagues in bringing people together, especially children.

And Robert Lacey, thank you very much for the words that you had for me. I’d recommend to you, ladies and gentlemen, another book that he wrote which I liked very much. It’s called the “Year 1000.” It’s an account of the year 1000 A.D. in the British Isles. He went through the trouble of collecting not just documents and court rulings but also visiting all of the sites that he wrote about in those Isles. It really was a very inspirational book. I told him that I would write a similar book about the year 1000 Hijri in the Muslim calendar. Alas, I haven’t gotten around to it.

Regarding the previous commentators in the forum here, I was very much impressed with the Muppet Diplomacy presentation, and the fact that these were the genuine Muppets that bring laughter and fun for everybody. Unfortunately as one of the commentators reminded us earlier there are live human Muppets in Washington, D.C. who are run by AIPAC. Unfortunately what they bring is war and tragedy.

One other word before I begin. I showed this speech to a couple of friends of mine. They wanted me to be princely and not to deliver the speech that I wrote. Alas, I don’t know how one can measure being princely but I think being genuine is much more appropriate in what I am going to say, rather than princely.

The theme of this conference is much too grand for me to presume to cover all of it. I will confine my talk to the relationship between Saudi Arabia and the United States. The two countries agree on many issues, but they disagree on others. We agree on world peace; on removing the curse of nuclear weapons; on eradicating poverty and disease; on providing justice for all; and many other things. We disagree, however, on method, style, language, and perception.. sometimes.

Peace and nuclear disarmament are cases in point.

We agree on the two-state solution, on a viable Palestinian state, and on Israel living in peace with all of its neighbors. Saudi Arabia, ladies and gentlemen, brought all of the twenty-two Arab countries and all of the fifty seven Muslim countries and much of the rest of the world to accept King Abdullah’s Peace Initiative as the end game of negotiations between Israel and the Arab countries whose lands it still occupies. The United States, which considers that Initiative as a cornerstone of peace, has not managed to bring Israel to accept the Abdullah Peace Initiative, in any form. While the previous Israeli government mumbled words like “important,” “constructive,” and “helpful “ in reference to the Initiative, the present government has been conspicuously silent about it. Saudi Arabia brought Hamas and Fatah together in the Makkah agreement; on terms where Hamas confirmed its delegation of the PLO as the sole Palestinian spokesman on peace in negotiations. The United States, under the previous administration, purposefully set out to sabotage that agreement with success.

Saudi Arabia has continued to provide the Palestinian Authority with money and political support to buttress Abu Mazen. The United States, which is, thankfully, the largest contributor to the Palestinian Authority's budgetary needs has failed to curb Israel: in the brutal policy of collective punishment; arbitrary arrests and killings, even in the "A Zone"; illegal colonization; the merciless Israeli bulldozing of Palestinian homes; and the inhuman Israeli practice of uprooting Palestinian olive trees, for God's sake. Because of these things Abu Mazen's credibility with his people has been degraded to its lowest level.

Saudi Arabia agreed with the other Arab states to give peace negotiations between Israel and Palestine a chance, more than once, under the United States negotiated partial colony freeze. The United States failed to stick by its assurances and, to add insult to injury, offered the Netanyahu government more money, arms, protection from UN sanction, and, shamefully, the stationing of Israeli troops on Palestinian territory; as if this territory were part of the United States sovereign lands. All this was to get him to extend the partial freeze for a few more days. Now that the Netanyahu government has rejected that offer, we are waiting to see what else the U.S. will offer.

Saudi Arabia has worked to bring harmony and political cohesion to Lebanon. The Taif agreement between all the Lebanese political factions is the result of Saudi action. A month ago, King Abdullah brought President Assad of Syria to Beirut with him to help the Lebanese political factions overcome their differences. They met last week to review the situation, indicating their pursuit to overcome the difficulties faced by Lebanon. The Kingdom has been calling for the removal of Israeli troops from occupied Lebanese lands. That removal will also remove with it the rationalization of the "National Liberation" slogan that Hezbollah uses to maintain its armed militia and disrupt Lebanese civil and political reconciliation. We've just witnessed the most palpable demonstration of that slogan during the Iranian president's visit to Lebanon. The United States overlooks the importance of this issue and won't even consider calling on Israel to adhere to all the United Nations Security Council resolutions on withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanon.

Saudi Arabia has supported Syria's efforts, despite continued Israeli expansion of colonies on the Golan Heights, to negotiate with Israel, whether under the aegis of the U.S. or Turkey. The U.S. has not pushed Israel to do so.

Saudi Arabia has continued to give political and moral support to bring peace and harmony to Iraq. During the last administration's disastrously bloody conduct of that occupation of Iraq, the Kingdom was the first country to send humanitarian aid, including a field hospital to tend to Iraqis in Baghdad. The Kingdom was the first in bringing together the contiguous countries of Iraq to discuss how to help the Iraqis overcome their difficulties. The Kingdom was the first to bring together all the Iraqi political factions under the roof of the Arab League to discuss political reconciliation. In August 2004, the Saudi Foreign Minister proposed to then Secretary Powell to replace U.S. and other troops with Arab and Muslim forces. Alas, he never received an answer. Would that have solved the problems of Iraq, today? Perhaps. But we shall never know.

Now, the Kingdom keeps an equal distance from all of the Iraqi factions. Saudi Arabia works for and supports the establishment of an Iraqi government that represents all of the Iraqi people. The U.S. has committed itself to withdraw from Iraq next year according to the wishes of the Iraqi people. I suggest before they leave that Ms. Rice seek a United Nations Security Council Resolution, under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter, guaranteeing the territorial integrity of Iraq. This

is the only way, ladies and gentlemen, to avoid civil war, ethnic cleansing, or the disintegration of Iraq. Internal political ambitions will be checked, and external territorial ambitions will be stymied.

Saudi Arabia supports the Afghan government of President Hamid Karzai. It has hosted meetings between his government and the Taliban. It has provided financial and humanitarian aid to the Afghan people. King Abdullah has publicly promised continued aid. Who has President Karzai turned to in seeking help to end the fighting in Afghanistan? He turned to Saudi Arabia. During and after the London conference, the President specifically asked King Abdullah to help the Afghan people to come together.

I have frequently proposed that the U.S. should bring together the Russian Federation, China, Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, and Egypt to put together a boots on the ground campaign to eradicate al-Qaida, with each country providing its best capabilities, whether financial, military, political, and intelligence. They would chase bin Laden and Zarqawi in the border lands of Pakistan and Afghanistan and, once they are captured or killed, then victory can be declared and the troops withdrawn from Afghanistan. That is the only credible way for the U.S. and NATO to justifiably withdraw their troops from there. The Afghan people don't want to return to the rule of Mullah Omar. The foreign invader, today, draws their enmity and anger. Without that, the Taliban will have to contend with the reckoning of the Afghan people.

The U.S. has declared that it will begin withdrawing next year. It continues to broadcast its military intentions, with the aim, presumably, of getting the civilians out of the combat zones. I am no military expert but I have read that surprise is the biggest element of success in any military campaign. That is precisely what the insurgency in Afghanistan achieves every time they ambush a patrol, or detonate an IED, or explode a suicide bomber. Surprise accomplishes success.

Saudi Arabia has supported Pakistan financially and politically. The Kingdom shares intelligence and skills in combating al-Qaida in Pakistan. Here, also, the Kingdom keeps an equal distance from all Pakistani politicians. But, ladies and gentlemen, as long as the U.S. continues its Predator attacks on Pakistanis, no matter how many Taliban or al-Qaida members they eliminate, the results are inevitably counterproductive. The collateral damage in human lives and Pakistani national pride is far greater than the benefits.

On nuclear disarmament. The Kingdom is a signatory of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. It has publically endorsed the aim of a world free of nuclear weapons. At the recent review of the NPT Treaty the Kingdom, along with all the Arab states, called for a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. I have called for a United Nations Security Council Resolution to set up that zone with an incentive regime that rewards the countries that join, economically and technically, should they wish to acquire peaceful nuclear energy; and a nuclear security umbrella to protect them from any nuclear or conventional military threats. The resolution should also include a sanctions regime that economically and politically boycotts any country that does not join, and more crucially, it would militarily sanction any country that develops or seeks to develop nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. Having military teeth will ensure the success and viability of the resolution. Saudi Arabia has called on

Iran to be more vocal in supporting the establishment of the zone free of weapons of mass destruction, rather than to follow their present provocative policy of nuclear enrichment. The U.S., under President Obama, has made universal nuclear disarmament its goal. It has thankfully pushed forward on all issues of nuclear disarmament. Distinguished American institutions and individuals have publicly endorsed that view, creating momentum in the public sphere that has not been seen since the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty was signed.

This is all good and well. But, and there is always a “but” in U.S. policy and practice when it comes to Israel. When the review conference declared its support for the establishment of a Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone, the United States supported the declaration. But, and here it is, ladies and gentlemen, the U.S. declared that the declaration is premature and will require more discussion. The U.S., Russia, Egypt and the United Nations were designated as custodians of the proposal by the conferees to arrange for a conference next year to deal with this issue. Instead of using the proposal to incentivize Israel to conclude peace with her neighbors, the U.S., by word and deed, voided it of any value, leaving it up to the whims and ambitions of an already nuclear armed Israel whether the Zone will be established or not.

Conclusions. Saudi Arabia has had a clear view of where it is going and how to get there. In 1981, the late King Fahd issued what came to be known as the Fahd Peace Plan in which he called for the establishment of a Palestinian state in the occupied territories which Israel seized in 1967. He also called for the recognition of the de facto borders of all countries, prior to June 4, 1967. That meant recognition for the first time by all the Arab states for Israel in pre-1967 borders. All the Arab countries agreed to the plan. Israel, on the other hand, did not even say that it heard of it. The U.S. totally ignored it.

What followed? The tragedies of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982; the continued Lebanese civil war, which was brought to an end by Saudi action, as I mentioned before; the Iraq-Iran war; the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, thanks to joint Saudi-American-Pakistani- Mujahedeen action; the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and subsequent liberation, thanks to Saudi-American action; the Madrid talks, thanks to Saudi-American action; the Oslo agreements and the initial euphoria which was alas deflated by the assassination of an Israeli Prime Minister by an Israeli terrorist who publically stated that he was inspired, at the time by the rhetoric of the present Israeli Prime Minister; the officially published stripping of bin Laden of his Saudi citizenship, and his departure from Sudan to Afghanistan, where he was given refuge by the Taliban; the first terrorist act by al-Qaida at the Saudi National Guard building in Riyadh, drawing the first blood in its continuous campaign against the Kingdom and her friends; the subsequent efforts of the then newly elected Prime Minister of Israel, Netanyahu; you can see him on You-Tube promising to derail the Oslo Accords; the Camp David talks and Taba Accords, the elections of both George W. Bush and Ariel Sharon, one with the aim of turning his back to the Middle East, the other with the aim of destroying the nascent Palestinian Authority; then Crown Prince Abdullah’s letter to President Bush, alerting him to the dire and probable bloody consequences of ignoring the Palestinian issue; the vicious and cowardly attacks of September 11, 2001; America’s anger and hurt at the loss of human life and her need for succor and support from the world community; Saudi Arabia’s soul searching and introspection in dealing with the reality of that criminally inhuman act; Saudi Arabia’s continued resolve to meet the al-Qaida challenge, head on, by police work and by educational and cultural revisions of where we were and where we wanted to go.

While working to overcome the psychological and political difficulties of having fingers pointed at us from everywhere, King Abdullah boldly decided to cleanse Saudi society of any stains or stigma of extremist thought by overturning our educational system, religious discourse, and cultural practice. He publicly declared his opposition to any rationalization of extremism, and he guided religious discourse to the middle way.

The National Dialogue was established and his direction led it to openly discuss terrorism, human rights, women's rights and all of the culturally difficult issues that any conservative society, like Saudi Arabia, faces. It is a typical Saudi method of confronting controversial issues by public discussion in public audiences, or Majlis, as we call it; only now it is done in front of television cameras and involves men and women, old and young. Internally, the King has galvanized all Saudi citizens in this public airing on where they stand, and the Kingdom's successes in bringing down al-Qaida has made it the premier dismantler of that evil cult. By 2002, when he had set the agenda internally, he then moved on the international sphere with his Peace Initiative, and in 2008, he proposed the Dialogue between Cultures by first bringing Muslim religious leaders of all denominations to agree on how to address the issues that bring the other faiths and cultures together. Then he carried their message to Madrid, where representatives of all faiths and cultures endorsed his call and delegated to him the carrying of that message to the meeting of heads of state, prime ministers, and representatives from all the countries in the United Nations. The King continues in his pursuit of peace and prosperity for all, regardless of faith and color; and while admitting that Saudi Arabia still has a long way to go before achieving the full aims of his endeavors, nevertheless, he set the bar very high. The sweat and toil of all Saudis will bear him right.

The King Abdullah University for Science and Technology, which is a marvel of his communal thinking, bears witness that he not only speaks but acts on what he says. The more than thirty thousand Saudi students who study in American universities today bear witness to Saudi Arabia's will and determination to continue the strong and fruitful relations with the United States. It is not only because America has shown the capability to bring Israeli craven ambition to heel, in many instances, as in forcing Ben Gurion to withdraw from the Sinai after the Suez war in 1956, brokering the Camp David accords in 1979, lifting the Israeli siege of Beirut in 1982, forcing Yitzhak Shamir to come to the Madrid conference in 1991, but because the United States has been a beacon of goodwill and progress to the rest of humanity, and will continue to be so. However, and there is always a however as well, when dealing with the United States, there has grown, over the years, a web of very tight and strong strings that bind the US to her client state, Israel. When Israel talks about economic, scientific, and even military successes, the American role is hardly mentioned.

Today, as the people of the United States reel under the heel of the worst recession, more money, knowhow, and economic advantage is ceded to Israel by the American people. Within the make-up of this administration, there are officials who rationalize, excuse, and condone Israeli intransigence while seeking to put more pressure on the Palestinians to concede even more. These same officials believe that the Palestinian problem is not the root cause of Arab and Muslim antagonism to the United States. It is these officials who proposed that the Netanyahu government should be rewarded for its intransigence, rather than sanctioned. In the public sphere, there are journalists whose view is so distorted by the neo-conservative mantle, or as I call it, a burqa that they wear, that they cannot see that the call for independence from Middle

East oil is a canard. It defrauds the average consumer of energy by promising him clean energy which is non-existent, and to pay a higher price for that energy, regardless of the abundant availability of the secure source of energy which comes from the Middle East, and at a cheaper price.

To these media pundits, ladies and gentlemen, who want Saudi Arabia to do more, I say that we have done more to further the cause of peace than any other country. We have stood up to the challenge of terrorist nihilism promoted in the name Islam and cast its cult and ethos to destruction. We will continue to push for a more just application of American policy and practice in our part of the world. Israel is a drain on the United States and not an asset, and foreign policy should follow national interest and not that of moneyed political lobbyists and journalist hacks.

Yesterday, my friend Ambassador Ford Fraker remarked that in this town there are so many experts on everything. To which I replied that I am therefore puzzled at how your government gets it wrong on most issues in our part of the world. When we are asked, ladies and gentlemen, to put into practice what the Arab Peace Initiative calls for, in order to reassure Israel of our good intentions, I reply by asking, how about getting Israel to accept the Initiative? When there is a demand that the Israeli soldier, Shalit, should be released immediately, I say, how about the 10,000 Palestinian prisoners incarcerated by Israel in camps without trial and without legal representation?

The Arab world has chosen the path of peace. Let Israel join us in that path, and may the blessings of Allah be upon us all.

Thank you.