

Saudi-American Forum



SAF Item of Interest

October 11, 2003

Strengthening Arab-US Relations: What is Required?
A Saudi View of the Palestine Problem
Amr Khashoggi Talks About Regional Political Dynamics
12th Annual Arab-U.S. Policymakers Conference Washington, DC

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen: I greet you in the name of peace, equality and human co-existence.

I offer my thanks to Dr. John Duke Anthony and the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations for inviting me to be part of this most distinguished panel that is led by Dr. Ziad Asali. I thank the sponsors, who made this great conference possible. I am also grateful to you all for joining us here today. I hope that at the end of this conference we will have succeeded in sharing thoughts and ideas and we take home stronger relations between Arabs and Americans: people, government and media.

Three days from now will be September 11th, bringing with it a strong reminder of the extent to which a bunch of misfits are prepared to go to succeed in their murderous and frightening plans. I am very sad for the families of the victims of those atrocities as I am equally sad for the families of innocent victims of atrocities committed against mankind everywhere else in the world, especially in our part of the world. I am also extremely angry that those misfits have hijacked my religion, tarnished the reputation of my country, and might just succeed in driving a wedge between our countries unless we act quickly and decisively in preventing them from carrying out their hateful objectives.

Terrorists have no nationality, and terrorism knows no borders. We must pull together all our resources and fight, shoulder to shoulder, against this global disease.

I am almost 51-years-old, and I have lived through **all** the kings of Saudi Arabia. Ever since I remember, Saudi leaders have been ardent advocates of Palestinian rights. In fact, our King Abdulaziz Ibn Saud, founder of modern Saudi Arabia, spoke at length about Palestine with President Roosevelt on the *U.S.S. Quincy* on February 14, 1945.

Our King Faisal, who ruled Saudi Arabia from 1965 to 1975, never tired of emphasizing to Saudi Arabians, Arabs, Moslems, Westerners, including Americans, and many others the need to achieve a just, durable and comprehensive settlement of the Palestine problem.

In the 1980s, the kingdom offered the Fahd Peace Proposal, which was unanimously endorsed by all the League of Arab States and became the Arab peace plan, which acknowledged the right

of all states in the region to live in peace and security. This was a major milestone.

Crown Prince Abdullah's peace initiative is anchored in, and an extension of, the same strategic objective of his father and brothers. On March 28, 2002, a summit of the 22-member League of Arab States in Beirut unanimously endorsed an Arab-Israeli peace initiative submitted by Crown Prince Abdullah. The proposal requires that Israel withdraws from all Arab territories it has occupied since June 4, 1967, that it recognizes an independent state of Palestine with its capital in east Jerusalem, and that it agrees to a just resolution of the Palestinian refugee problem through repatriation, compensation or a combination of the two.

In exchange, the proposal includes everything Israel has sought for many years. Included are peace and normalization of diplomatic and commercial ties with the Jewish state, pan-Arab recognition of Israel's right to exist and to security, and a guarantee of regional defense in which there would be no attacks against Israel, or by Israel against an Arab country, of any kind.

This initiative is the most momentous and far-reaching one ever offered Israel.

In the words of the U.S. Department of State, the end result sought in the roadmap to peace is a settlement, negotiated between the parties, that will result in the emergence of an independent, democratic, and viable Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbors. The settlement will resolve the Israel-Palestinian conflict, and end the occupation that began in 1967, based on the foundation of the Madrid conference, the principle of land for peace, UN Resolutions 242, 338, and 1397, agreements previously reached by the parties, and the initiative of Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah - endorsed by the Beirut Arab League Summit - calling for acceptance of Israel as a neighbor living in peace and security, in the context of a comprehensive settlement. I am still quoting the U.S. State Department. This initiative is a vital element of international efforts to promote a comprehensive peace on all tracks, including the Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli tracks.

Saudi Arabia has a deep understanding of the conflict and its implications from the outset for the region's legitimate quest for stability and prosperity. This stems from our intricate and compassionate identification with the conflict's international and domestic repercussions. The conflict has generated half a dozen wars. It is the oldest, largest and most pervasive factor explaining why regional peace is likely to remain elusive for sometime yet to come.

Ladies and gentlemen: the suffering of the Palestinians must stop immediately. The humiliation of the occupation must end. The settlements must be removed. Take Hebron, for example. You cannot suffocate 130,000 Palestinians cramped in a small squalid area and imprisoned in what is left of their homes, for the sake of 450 intransigent settlers. One road for the occupier, one road for the occupied. Apartheid policy by Israel in the West Bank and Gaza must come to an end.

As you all know, if perceptions are repeated enough and long enough, they become realities upon which people will act.

Today, America is the new and undisputed ruler of the world. This leadership comes with the heavy responsibility to extend the American sense of justice and equality beyond the borders of

the United States. America must be perceived and must act as an honest broker, in order to succeed in furthering the road map to peace in the middle east.

At issue here, is the degree to which Arabs and Israelis have been led to believe President Bush's often stated vision of a two-state solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, whereby a state of Palestine, with east Jerusalem as its capital, will be brought into being by 2005, and enabled to exist side by side with Israel, with each having secure and recognized boundaries. The timing and intent of the Saudi proposal stems from a wish by Prince Abdullah, other Saudi Arabian decision makers, the Saudi people, and the leadership of practically the entire world to put this seemingly endless morass as decisively and effectively behind us.

The world cannot afford more costly mistakes resulting from the world's repeated inability -- or rather its leaders' unwillingness and timidity, in face of the challenge of doing whatever is necessary -- to settle the conflict. Especially when, in this case, the initiative, which offers peace and normalization in exchange for peace and normalization, has the full, unqualified support of all 21 Arab countries, the Palestine authority, a great many Israelis, and, except for key elements within the Israeli leadership to date, practically the entire world.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mr. Amr Khashoggi is CEO of the Amkest Group, a holding company with interests in building materials manufacturing and services, food packaging, hygienic and medical products, and land transportation. He also serves as Vice-Chairman of Modern Computers & Communication, a provider of e-business services, consulting, and training, and is President of the Khashoggi Foundation, a family-based philanthropic organization.

Mr. Khashoggi is a former CEO of DITEvents and a former CEO of Tanmiah Commercial Group, both of which provide event management of major conferences. He is also a former Managing Director of Triad Holding Corporation.

Mr. Khashoggi is a member of the Saudi Committee for the Development of International Trade (CIT) in the Saudi Chambers of Commerce and Industry. He is a former Chief Advisor to the CIT and Chief Coordinator of its Outreach Program. In addition, he is a Board Member of the Jeddah Marketing Board, a Member of the Committee of International Relations, and a Member of the Information Technology Committee of the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Mr. Khashoggi holds a B.Sc. from Menlo College and an M.B.A. from Yale University School of Management.

ABOUT THE ANNUAL ARAB-US POLICYMAKERS CONFERENCE

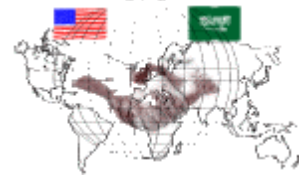
The 12th Annual Arab-US Policymakers Conference was held in Washington, DC on September 7-8, 2003.

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For more information about the conference -- including the agenda, speakers' biographies and links to press reports and more -- visit: <http://ncusar.org/auspc/index.html>

ABOUT THE SAUDI-AMERICAN FORUM

The Saudi-American Forum is an information service designed to provide you timely information -- background and current issues - - impacting the Saudi-U.S. relationship.



The Forum is a resource for Americans who value the relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia and who want to act in response to erroneous and misleading depictions of the relationship in the media and elsewhere. The Forum is a vehicle for stakeholders in the Saudi-U.S. relationship to contribute their experiences and their ideas and opinions on the issues of the day.

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CONTACT INFORMATION

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Thank you for your support of the Saudi-U.S. relationship and the Saudi-American Forum.