

**CENTER FOR
STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES (CSIS)**

THE MIDDLE EAST: END THE PROCESS, MAKE THE PEACE

**WELCOME:
JOHN HAMRE,
PRESIDENT,
CSIS**

**INTRODUCTION:
LT. GEN. BRENT SCOWCROFT (RET.),
COUNSELOR AND TRUSTEE,
CSIS**

**SPEAKER:
HIS MAJESTY KING ABDULLAH II,
KING OF JORDAN**

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JOHN HAMRE: Ladies and gentlemen, ladies and gentlemen, could I ask that you – please, sir. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you all for coming. We’re delighted to have you here. My name is John Hamre. I’m the president of CSIS. And this is a big day. This is a wonderful opportunity for us. Your Highness, thank you. We’re very honored to have you here. You are a very welcome figure in Washington. People love having you here, and we really love having you here at CSIS, so I just want to say thank you. Thank you for making it possible.

We have a splendid opportunity. I don’t know if you all enjoyed your conversations, but we’ve been talking about whitewater canoeing down the Grand Canyon. (Laughter.) And his majesty is an avid outdoorsman and he earlier this week took his Harley up to Gettysburg. So just to give you a sense of how he’s probably the most down-to-earth royal I’ve ever met. And I must tell you, it’s really a privilege to have a chance to welcome him. Today, I want to turn to one of my bosses, Brent Scowcroft, who is going to introduce his highness, and Brent, thank you so much for joining us today. Ladies and gentlemen, General Brent Scowcroft.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL BRENT SCOWCROFT: Thank you very much, John. I can’t duplicate that jollity, but thank you. And I add my welcome to John’s to the center for this, I think, great event. We are very honored to have, today, His Majesty King Abdullah with us. He’s, as you all very well know, he is the leader of a country that is right at the very epicenter of perhaps the most turbulent area of the world. And in Washington, he’s already very well-known and respected.

King Abdullah was born in Amman, 1962. He’s the eldest son of the late King Hussein and Princess Muna al Hussein. He began his primary education in Amman, later went to England. And he went to secondary school in the United States, I believe at Deerfield Academy. Then he entered the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in 1980, was commissioned as a second lieutenant, and served as a reconnaissance troop leader in the British Army.

He went on, went back home, went on to a distinguished military career with a focus, not surprisingly, on special forces. Among his particular talents in this pretty exotic field itself, he’s a frogman, he’s a pilot and he’s a free-fall parachutist. That scares me to even read them. (Laughter.) He continued his career and, at the time that he assumed his present position, he was special forces commander in Jordan. When his father died in 1999, he assumed his constitutional powers as monarch of Jordan.

Since then, I think he has clearly demonstrated that he is a worthy successor to his wise and courageous father. He’s continued his late father’s commitment to create a strong and moderating role for Jordan within the Arab region and, indeed, in the world. Under his reign, Jordan has been admitted to the World Trade Organization, ratified agreements for a free trade area with the United States, the European Union, European Trade Association countries and 16 Arab countries.

King Abdullah has also been involved in a drive for national administrative reform and government transparency and accountability. He's been working on the advancement of civil liberties and has been involved in enacting the necessary legislation that guarantees women a full role in Jordan's social, economic and political life. King Abdullah married the lovely Queen Rania in 1993. They have two sons and two daughters.

The king has had a very busy week in Washington. He's met with President Obama and Secretary Clinton, as well as a number of congressional leaders. And as John mentioned, he found time for a motorcycle ride to Harper's Ferry and to Gettysburg, I believe. Incidentally, at the time of their joint press conference, yesterday I guess, President Obama commented that at the conclusion of his visit to Jordan, the king personally drove him to the airport. And the president declined to say at what speed they went to the airport. (Laughter.) Anyway, it is a great honor to introduce him. We're very grateful that he's agreed to come and speak to us today at CSIS. His Majesty King Abdullah.

(Applause.)

KING ABDULLAH: Bismillah al-Rahman al-Rahim. Thank you very much, sir. I'm delighted to be with all of you this afternoon. CSIS has had a tremendous impact on me as a source of understanding about the important relationship between the Middle East and the United States. And it is an honor to be invited to join you in your dialogue. My friends, today I want to talk about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which has almost defined the modern history of my region. But I do not want to talk about missed opportunities.

I want to focus on the urgency of not missing any more, and on why and how the United States can lead. The U.S. has a stated strategic interest in ending this conflict. Few crises in history have presented such a potent mix of threats from the regional instability and violence it promotes to the worldwide divisions it has caused, divisions actively exploited by extremists. But there have been equally few situations where a just solution could bring such powerful benefits, not only to the parties, not only to the region, but to the world as a whole.

Yet time, my friends, is not on our side. Every day we lose makes the conflict much harder to resolve. And that is a danger to all of us. I know this is understood by President Obama and his team. The president gave early signals that Middle East peace will be a priority for the United States, and we in Jordan welcome his commitment and engagement, and we're not alone. Every country in the Middle East, and perhaps in the world, sees the United States as being the key to achieving peace.

America's strategic interests will be advanced by a peace settlement. And in the eyes of the world, American credibility will be advanced as well. Tackling the issue head-on is now imperative. Success urgently demands not more process, but more results. And that means a clear plan to reach a comprehensive peace, one that builds on the achievements of previous negotiations. And it must also be a vigorous leadership commitment to ensure negotiations move fast towards reconciliation on the basis of the two-state solution.

Friends, we do not have time to engage in yet another open-ended process. We have seen what comes of process without progress. Every missed opportunity has alienated more people on both sides. And such a course increases distrust and difficulties and fuels those who seek to carry the parties down the path of confrontation. Yet this path cannot help either party get where it needs to be. For Palestinians to reap the promise of the 21st century, for Israelis to achieve the enduring security they seek, there must be an end to occupation and confrontation, to settlement-building, to unilateral actions in Jerusalem. There must be a settlement that fulfills the legitimate rights of both parties – the right of Palestinians to statehood and the right of Israelis to security.

One of the vital functions the United States can play right now is to help its friends think and act in these strategic terms. And that means keeping the focus on where the parties want to be in 10, 20, 30 years and more – the hopes and horizons for themselves and their children – and then setting a direction towards that future now. Through its own focus, through its own resolve, the United States will set the standard. Events are already testing American credibility.

These include the Israeli voices for turning back the clock on negotiations, to de-establish the established agenda for peace, and they also include extremist voices in the Arab world that preach war. I hope that the United States will make it clear that it will not accept retrograde movement. The elements of a settlement are known; the agenda for negotiations is agreed; there is a clear objective – two states, each sovereign, each viable and secure.

And such a settlement is a vital U.S. interest. And it is equally vital to your interests that the world see the U.S. lead the way. Indeed, the groundwork is there. The two-state settlement has been agreed by the parties and the entire international community. And for seven years, against all provocation, the landmark Arab Peace Initiative has held. Now this initiative lays out the parameters of a comprehensive settlement: ending the occupation, creating a Palestinian state and providing security guarantees and normal relations for Israel.

Muslim countries around the world have also expressed their support. And this offers Israel a place in its neighborhood, but more, its acceptance by the one-third of the U.N. members – and that's 57 countries – that still do not recognize Israel. By its unanimous voice, by its serious approach, the Arab Peace Initiative is the most important proposal for peace in the history of this conflict. We've made our choice: a comprehensive peace that meets the legitimate needs of all. Israel now has to make its choice to integrate into the region, accepted and accepting, with normal relations with its neighbors, or to remain fortress Israel, isolated and holding itself and the entire region a hostage to continuing confrontation.

And let me be very clear: Any Israeli effort to substitute Palestinian development for Palestinian independence cannot bring peace and stability to the region. The path for peace can only go through the two-state solution. No other solution can offer the justice that people demand and expect. And no other solution can give people a reason to take risks peace requires. Israel must know that attempting to delay this solution will be serious and disastrous for its own future as well as for the future of the Palestinians.

And I cannot emphasize enough how important U.S. partnership is to help Israel accept the opening the Arab world has offered. Work with us and move forward. Now is the time for

the United States to lead, to ensure that no more time is wasted. And failing to act means that we all lose. The status quo is simply untenable. The dangers are too many and too big to ignore. A moment of truth is here for all who claim to seek peace and justice. And it is a time for partnership, for courage and action.

And this begins with an effective peace plan for 2009 and beyond – a plan of negotiations that can achieve concrete results quickly and stop a drift towards confrontation. And I say a plan, not a process, for a reason: The very term “peace process” is an artifact of history. When it was coined in the 1970s, the idea was to break the decades of deadlock by taking an incremental approach.

And in the following decades, we did see breakthroughs. Great leaders like my late father, His Majesty King Hussein, and Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin gave their all to make progress happen. Today, I do not diminish those achievements when I say that this old idea has seen its day. The peace process must end because we have reached the time for the end-game, in which all sides can win. Now, allow me to touch on some areas where creative U.S. leadership can advance that goal.

First is in understanding the region-wide framework for action. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict does not take place in a vacuum. Regional crises and events are deeply interconnected. Successful policy must be part of a holistic approach. And this includes division of labor with regional partners. And one example is the work Arab states are already doing to encourage Palestinian reconciliation. International support will advance this effort. In this and similar actions, U.S. policy can help empower the region’s forces of moderation.

A second key area of U.S. leadership is reinforcing the foundation for peace. Development aid will not succeed if it is designed as a substitute for Palestinian independence. But independence will be most successful when it delivers opportunities for fruitful, normal daily life. Benefits and incentives need to be devised that will create and sustain the conditions for coexistence and progress.

A third area of U.S. leadership is in the powerful messages your actions can send, especially by your response to Palestinian suffering. Signals are delivered when the U.S. ensures relief and rebuilding in Gaza and provides humanitarian aid in the West Bank. But signals are also sent when your country acts, or fails to act, against the daily hardship of West Bank life, against illegal settlement-building, against Israeli actions to force Jerusalem’s Arab Muslim and Christian population out or threaten Muslim and Christian holy sites.

The U.S. commitment to Palestinian statehood must be unambiguous in deeds as well as words. And this is central to America’s standing, not only in the region, but the entire Muslim world. And let me say Arabs and Muslims throughout the world took note of the president’s inaugural pledge for a new partnership based on mutual respect and mutual interest. His outreach since then has been well-received in the Arab world.

This good beginning needs to move forward without any break. A high-level U.S. effort is needed to regenerate bilateral negotiations. And when the parties get to the table, U.S. support

must continue. Where there is a deadlock, let the U.S. break the impasse by proposing its own creative solutions. Beginning to end, the focus must be a final peace agreement – one that reflects the only viable solution to this conflict, a two-state solution which will open the door to comprehensive Middle East peace.

My friends, this year marks 60 years of diplomatic ties between Jordan and the United States. Our partnership has been tested by crises; we have talked truth to each other, listened to each other and worked together; we've had our differences, but this is the way of friends; but we have never lost sight of the value of our strategic partnership, or the vital goals we share – peace, prosperity, security.

And today, we stand together at yet another critical moment. The regional problems are complex and real, but in our world, we have seen rapid positive transformations when strategic interests are clear. The parties, the region, the world all deeply need this peace. And all are watching to see how America will lead. I personally believe that peace can succeed, and we should settle for nothing less. And in that effort, I continue to pledge Jordan's continued partnership.

And just as we ask the parties to do, let the friends of peace, too, think ahead to the strategic picture. Ten years from now, meeting here, we could be – or we should be – talking about the challenges of life after peace, and how to advance our new era of global coexistence. But to do that in the year 2019, we must also be able to say our countries did what needed to be done back in 2009 with courage and with action. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MR. HAMRE: Ladies and gentleman, I think we've all been very fortunate to hear this very strong, forthright presentation. Sir, many of the questions that we got from the audience were about the prospects for peace in Palestine. So I'm going to ask a different question to begin with if I could first.

And we're going to have a very pivotal election in Lebanon in – later this year. And of course, on the balance is the role that Hezbollah and Iran will be playing in this region. Would you speak to that? Would you tell us your perception about it and then what you and what we should be doing?

KING ABDULLAH: Well, I think it's clear to all of us that we all want and need to work for security and stability in Lebanon, and I believe because elections are in June that all the parties on the ground there want their country to be stable and quiet. I think all believe that they will make great strides forward when elections come. So I expect there to be a – I think – a common sense approach by everybody to make sure that elections happen under an atmosphere of a relaxed, stable environment.

MR. HAMRE: Sir, Jordan has carried a great deal of the burden of the instability in Iraq, and our perceptions here is that the situation is now better in Iraq. How does it look from your

standpoint? And what does it still mean for you and for the people of Jordan to be coping with that instability?

KING ABDULLAH: I think Iraq is one of the few good stories we can say in our part of the world. I think it's, in a way, work in progress. It's going to take a long time. Iraqis need the support of all of us in the international community, especially Arab countries, to support its move forward. I believe Prime Minister Maliki has come a long way in bringing his nation together, but he can't do it alone.

And I think that in many cases we as Arabs should have done and need to do more to help our Iraqi brethren, and as Iraq goes into transition, especially with coalition forces moving out, I do hope that we as Arab nations do step up to the plate and offer whatever support we can in the critical years ahead of Iraqi reconciliation and rebuilding. But I am optimistic about the future of Iraq and the Iraqi people.

MR. HAMRE: Thank you, sir. Let me – there are many people who are with us today who are from the business community. And obviously, the economic well-being throughout the region is such a primary factor in people's outlook for the future. What would you like to see from the international business community and from the American business community, both in Jordan and throughout the region?

KING ABDULLAH: Well, I think Jordan is situated today in a very strong position. We, I believe, have positioned ourselves very strongly for what we initially we were going to say back-office work but back-office and front-office work. I think the skill level of Jordanians, the special industrial zones that we have for manufacturing and industry makes Jordan very lucrative for major corporations that are in the region looking at a competitive country.

So from that point of view, we have a tremendous opportunity to position Jordan over the next two or three years – without sending – in a bad way, to take advantage of the economic world crisis. Obviously I think that – I'm not an economist, but – this is a time where countries need to sort of reach out even more to each other to create business opportunities and investment opportunities, to combat the insecurity that's out there in the economic market. And Jordan is in a position to be a very attractive country for people to look at.

MR. HAMRE: Sir, there's a great deal of talk in Washington about a potential engagement with Syria, both by the United States as well as other countries in the region. Could you give us your perspective on the prospects for that engagement?

KING ABDULLAH: Well, I think the Syrians – and I had met with President Bashar and his foreign minister recently – are very keen to move relations to negotiations with the Israelis, but it also comes down to what clear commitments Israel is willing to give for those negotiations.

Where we don't want to find ourselves in is a position of both countries in dialogue that goes on open-ended. This is why here in Washington we're looking at the regional approach, and this is where I believe President Obama is also in agreement, in that what we want to see in

2009 is Israelis sitting down with Palestinians but also sitting down with Lebanese, Syrians, and equally as important, with Arab and Muslim countries that do want – as part of the Arab and Muslim initiative – to solve their problems with the state of Israel.

And I think when it comes to a regional approach that shows a serious commitment. So, in other words, there's limited likelihood for parties to play by themselves off against each other. So my hope is that, working very closely with the United States, we will hopefully see circumstances that bring Israelis together with the Palestinians and Arab partners to look at a comprehensive peace settlement.

Any piecemeal approach, I think, gives those that are considering mischief a tremendous opportunity. So we're here to say, a regional approach – I believe that is the way that President Obama is thinking and Secretary Clinton. We have a lot of homework as Jordan and as a series of Arab countries. You'll see a series of visits by Arab leaders over the next month or so, and you will hear the same thing from them as I have just said. That this is the golden opportunity, this is the opportunity for Israel to finally have peace with a third of the world that doesn't recognize it.

MR. HAMRE: Ladies and gentleman, we've had a remarkable opportunity, and I would like to – on behalf of this audience – say thank you to you, Your Majesty. It's been a fruitful discussion. We've learned a lot from you.

We'd like to say a word of – just a small token of thanks. In the American West, there is the habit of two tribes when they meet they offer as a token of respect what's called an American peace pipe, and so, sir, from one tribe to another, as long the wind shall blow and the grasses grow, we wish peace for you. Thank you.

(Applause.)

(END)