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# Maintaining the Momentum for Peace in the Middle East

By

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Father O'Donovan, ladies and gentlemen: Thank you, Dean Krogh, for that introduction. Few institutions have done more to train and test the future leaders of our foreign policy than Georgetown. There is, of course, President Clinton. Only in America could one go on from the high office of undergraduate Chairman of the Georgetown Food Service Investigation Committee to become Commander-in-Chief. Georgetown also provided a home for Professor Madeleine Albright, our superb ambassador to the UN. It has sharpened the minds of countless other past, present, and future ambassadors and other diplomats.

Much has changed in the world since the cruel divisions of the Cold War disappeared. Containment of the Soviet Union need no longer be the focal point of American diplomacy. The United States has a new opportunity to build a more secure and integrated world of open societies and open markets.

But some things do not change. Four decades ago, in his final State of the Union address, President Truman captured the abiding nature of our national purpose:

Circumstances change, and current questions take on different forms, new complications, year by year. But underneath, the great issues remain the same—prosperity, welfare, human rights, effective democracy, and above all, peace.

The extraordinary events of the last few weeks remind us once again that our nation's enduring interests do not shift with the times. And neither does our obligation to pursue those interests through persistent and steady diplomacy, backed by a willingness to use force when necessary. That kind of diplomacy does not seek immediate results at the expense of long-term goals. As we have seen so far in this remarkable autumn, the pay-off comes over time.

In Haiti, President Aristide's triumphant return capped a three-year commitment to restore democratic government. When every avenue for a peaceful resolution was exhausted, we mobilized military action. Our willingness to back our commitments with force allowed us to meet our initial goals with maximum speed and minimum bloodshed. The coup leaders are gone. The legitimate government is back in place. Refugees are returning. We have sent a powerful message to would-be coup plotters: democracy, the key to stability in the Americas, cannot be overturned with impunity and cannot be stolen from the people. In Haiti, as elsewhere, we must not be complacent. But we have made great strides.

Our determined diplomacy on the North Korean nuclear issue has yielded an agreed framework that advances long-standing American objectives. As implemented, it will lift the specter of a nuclear arms race from northeast Asia. Over 16 months of negotiations, we consulted closely with South Korea, Japan, and the International Atomic Energy Agency. We worked with

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China, Russia, and the other Security Council members and made real the threat of economic sanctions. The result is a broadly supported, verifiable agreement that preserves peace and stability in a region vital to our interests.

The recent achievements in Haiti and on the North Korean nuclear issue were the direct result of sustained American leadership, coalition-building, and diplomacy backed by force. That same consistent purpose and engagement have been the hallmark of this Administration's policy toward the Middle East. Today, I would like to focus on the dramatic changes that are occurring in this vital region. The Arab-Israeli conflict is coming to an end, with American leadership playing a critical role. What I want to do is to set the scene for the President's trip to the Middle East, which begins tomorrow morning.

The day after his election, almost two years ago, President Clinton reaffirmed America's enduring interest in the Middle East. He vowed to make the pursuit of Arab-Israeli peace one of his top priorities. And he put in place a comprehensive strategy to accelerate progress.

Diplomatically, the United States has helped to energize and sustain negotiations launched in Madrid and based upon UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 558. Economically, we have marshalled international support for the Israeli-PLO Declaration of Principles. We have established the U.S.-Israel-Jordan Economic Commission. And we have pressed for an end to the Arab boycott. Strategically, we have strengthened our security ties with Israel and our key Arab friends, and thus formed a bulwark against aggression by the region's rogue regimes, especially Iraq and Iran.

Today, this strategy is producing historic results. In 24 hours, the President will embark on a trip that will reinforce every element of the basic approach he laid down almost two years ago.

**First**, to advance the peace process, he will witness Jordan become only the second Arab state to sign a full peace treaty with Israel. In Damascus, he will seek to build on this momentum by pressing for progress in negotiations between Israel and Syria.

**Second**, in his meetings in Israel, Jordan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, the President will preview next week's economic conference in Casablanca. There, 900 chief executive officers and senior executives from Israel, the Arab states, and around the world will explore the opportunities being created by the transformation of the Middle East and North Africa.

**Finally**, in Kuwait, the President will visit with American soldiers-part of the force he deployed there two weeks ago to turn back Saddam Hussein's threat to his neighbors.

Throughout his trip, the President will deliver an unmistakable message: The United States will do everything in its power to advance the opportunity that exists to build a new future for the Middle East. We cannot allow the terrorists of Hamas and Hezbollah or the rogue regimes of Iraq and Iran to kill the prospects for peace. Standing shoulder-to-shoulder with Israel and our Arab partners, the United States will stay the course to ensure that the forces of the future triumph over the forces of the past.

This is also the message that Jordan and Israel will send at their signing ceremony on Wednesday. King Hussein and Prime Minister Rabin are committed to building a "warm" peace. These two courageous leaders are determined that their border will become a gateway rather than a barrier. Already, there are ads in Israeli papers for tours of Jordan's great historical sites in Petra and Jerash. Through the work of the U.S. Jordan-Israel Trilateral Commission, plans are underway to develop joint economic projects, to share water resources, and to develop the Jordan Rift Valley. These projects will build bonds of human contact and common interest. They will cement an enduring peace.

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Over the last year, the Middle East has begun a broad transformation that I believe is fundamental. The changes have been so rapid and constant that, today, we take for granted developments that two years ago seemed fantastic.

The Israeli-PLO Declaration of Principles is giving more than 800,000 Palestinians in Gaza and Jericho control over their lives. An agreement has been reached on early empowerment for the West Bank, and negotiations have begun for Palestinian elections. Of course, great difficulties remain. But Prime Minister Rabin, Foreign Minister Peres, and Chairman Arafat are determined to make peace a reality.

Economic development is essential to the Palestinians' success. Palestinians need proof that peace will improve their lives. That is why the United States has mobilized the donor community to support Palestinian self-government. That is why we have worked so closely with Chairman Arafat to allow aid projects to begin in Gaza and Jericho. But more must be done to facilitate the flow of assistance and maximize its effect so it can be felt by people on the ground.

If the Palestinians' greatest need is economic development—and it is—the greatest threat they confront is Hamas terror. As surely as last week's bus massacre was targeted at Israelis, it was also aimed at destroying Palestinian aspirations. If peace brings nothing but more terror, the process of reconciliation surely will not succeed. Palestinians, more than anyone, will suffer. It is imperative that Chairman Arafat fulfill his responsibility to root out terror in the areas he controls. The same courage he has demonstrated in making peace must now be shown in fighting the enemies of peace.

The Israeli-Syrian negotiating track also has undergone important changes in the last year. For the first time, these once bitter enemies are engaged in serious negotiations to end their conflict. I have spent dozens of hours in intensive discussions with President Asad and Prime Minister Rabin. I can tell you that both men are deeply engaged in addressing the central issues of a settlement. We have succeeded in narrowing differences, but important gaps remain.

In my view, the time is fast approaching when some very difficult decisions must be made. If these talks are to succeed, if they are to produce the "peace of the brave" of which President Asad speaks, then the deliberate pace of the current negotiations must give way to a bolder approach.

We understand the risks and costs involved. For Syria, peace requires overcoming decades of suspicion and ending policies geared to confrontation. In an environment of genuine and comprehensive peace, in which there will be no place for terrorists on Israel's borders, we can look to the day when relations between Syria and the United States will improve. For Israel, peace with Syria will require difficult decisions. But the promise of peace is powerful: an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict, an end to the threat of war, and Israel's full integration into the political and economic life of the Middle East.

There are stern tests for peace between Israel and Syria. **First**, it must be a real peace that reflects an active commitment to reconciliation. It is significant that President Asad has said that Syria has made a strategic choice for peace with Israel and is prepared to meet its objective requirements. The requirements of real peace are clear to all: agreed-upon withdrawal, full diplomatic relations, borders that facilitate the movement of people and goods, and a commitment never to threaten each other again.

**Second**, peace between Israel and Syria must provide security for both sides. After decades of hostility, each side needs to be sensitive to the security concerns of the other. If requested, the United States stands ready to participate, in an appropriate form, in the security arrangements negotiated between the parties.

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Let there be no doubt on this point: America's strategic commitment to Israel's security is unshakable. We will maintain Israel's qualitative military edge and its ability to defend itself by itself. As President Clinton has pledged, the United States will do all it can to help Israel minimize the risks it takes for peace.

Finally, peace between Israel and Syria must open the way to a comprehensive peace. An Israeli-Syrian agreement will inevitably widen the circle of Arab states making peace with Israel. And it will build the confidence of all that peace will endure. This is why we say an agreement between Israel and Syria is a key to a comprehensive peace. Our vision is simple: on the one hand, an Israel that is secure and at peace with every Arab and Islamic state of goodwill; on the other hand, an Arab world liberated from conflict, able to devote its resources to economic development and the needs of its people.

We are making dramatic progress toward a comprehensive peace. In just the last month, with American encouragement, Morocco and Tunisia established official ties with Israel. And in a meeting with me at the UN a very short time ago, Saudi Arabia and the other states of the Gulf Cooperation Council announced an end to the secondary and tertiary boycott of companies that deal with Israel. This opens enormous trade and investment opportunities both for Israel and American business. Very soon, we hope to see the entire boycott relegated, as it must be, to the history books.

Next week in Casablanca, the Middle East's progress toward a new future will take a leap forward when Morocco's King Hassan convenes the Middle East/North Africa Economic Summit Conference. Just as the Madrid conference shattered the taboo on political contacts between Israel and the Arabs, so too will Casablanca shatter the taboo on private sector cooperation.

Our message there will be powerful: the Middle East is open for business. Through investment, trade, and joint ventures, private commerce can build the ties that will transform peace between governments into peace between peoples. Only a vibrant private sector can generate the growth and integration needed to undergird an enduring peace. I am pleased that American companies will be well represented at Casablanca, and that they are poised to take advantage of tremendous new opportunities in the Middle East and North Africa. Governments, too, must do their part. They must reduce economic barriers and help build the infrastructure that joins the Middle East by road, air, fax, and microchip.

Redefining the Middle East from a zone of continuing conflict to one of expanding reconciliation is the opportunity that we must seize now. And that is the opportunity that we must protect from the enemies of peace. The recent wave of terror against Israel has been undertaken by desperate forces who know that their extremism has no future in a region moving toward peace. Their only hope is to fight a rearguard action of violence designed to return the Middle East to a tragic past of fear and conflict. We will not let them succeed.

The international community must reject the terrorism of Hamas, Hezbollah, and other extremists. Strong condemnation of terror, especially from Israel's Arab partners, is an essential starting point. But condemnation is not enough. A real penalty must be imposed. We must join together to turn off all foreign sources of funding for terrorism, both public and private. Front organizations based abroad that are linked to terrorism must be shut down. And the perpetrators and organizers of terror must be punished.

That is the course we are urging upon governments in the Middle East and around the world. And that is the course we are pursuing. We will do everything we can—and seek legislation where necessary—to ensure that Hamas and other terrorists do not get support from inside the United States. Of course, radical groups could not continue their atrocities without the support of

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rejectionist states. Iran and Iraq remain the region's most dangerous actors. Through our policy of dual containment, the United States is leading the world in combating the threat they pose.

Iran is the world's most significant state sponsor of terrorism and the most ardent opponent of the Middle East peace process. The international community has been far too tolerant of Iran's outlaw behavior. Arms sales and preferential economic treatment, which make it easier for Iran to divert resources to terrorism, should be terminated. The evidence is overwhelming: Iran is intent on projecting terror and extremism across the Middle East and beyond. Only a concerted international effort can stop it.

In recent days, the rogue state of Iraq has tested our resolve, and we have met the test. In a scenario chillingly like that preceding the 1990 invasion of Kuwait, Saddam Hussein moved troops to the Kuwaiti border. Within hours, President Clinton deployed U.S. forces to Kuwait. Saddam got the message, stopped dead in his tracks, and pulled back.

The UN Security Council—acting under U.S. leadership—passed a unanimous resolution demanding that Saddam withdraw the forces he had moved to the south. It barred him from taking any actions in the future to enhance his military forces there. And it warned Saddam never again to threaten his neighbors or UN operations in Iraq.

Saddam has shown himself to be a repeat offender, trusted neither by the international community nor by the Arab world. We have put him on notice that any repetition of his recent threats will be met by all means necessary, including military force.

The Iraqi people should understand that Saddam's brutal regime bears full responsibility for their suffering. Saddam has continued to waste Iraq's resources on military ventures. He has refused to take advantage of UN resolutions that would permit humanitarian needs to be met. I assure you that Saddam will not intimidate the UN into lifting sanctions. He knows that sanctions can only be eased after Iraq complies in full with all, relevant Security Council resolutions. Not surprisingly, that is the only approach he has not tried.

Saddam's continued aggression and Hamas' recent campaign of terror underscore that forces of hatred and extremism still stalk the Middle East. But we will not allow their violence to blind us to the broader sweep of history at work in the region. Amazing change is under way. As this century draws to a close, Arabs and Israelis stand on the threshold of a new future—one of hope and peace, not despair and war.

American leadership, power, and diplomacy, through Administrations of both parties, has been indispensable in bringing us to this moment of promise. If the United States had not stepped forward, Iraqi forces might today be back in Kuwait City, North Korea would be proceeding to build nuclear weapons, and Haitians would still be suffering under military dictators. Our recent achievements remind us that only the United States has the strategic vision and the global capabilities to lead.

Now more than ever, American leadership is critical to ensure that the promise of peace becomes a reality. We cannot—we will not—allow the forces of the past to destroy this historic opportunity. The momentum for peace must be maintained.