

Reform and Stability

Address by
HRH Prince Saud Al-Faisal
Minister of Foreign Affairs
to the
Forum of the Future

Rabat, Morocco
December 11, 2004

**H.E. Colin Powell,
the U.S. Secretary of State,
H.E. Muhammad bin Isa,
Moroccan Minister of Foreign Affairs
and International Cooperation,**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for providing this opportunity to exchange views and ideas between the advanced industrial countries and the countries of the Middle East and North Africa.

At the outset let me state firmly that I believe there can never be a clash of civilizations between us. It is a contradiction in terms. Civilizations are not competing products in the marketplace but rather the collective effort of human genius built on cumulative contributions from many cultures. We are all indebted to the ingenuity of great men like Bacon, Locke, Rousseau and Goethe. Who can deny the effects of the great Greek philosophers on our civilization, or the role of such Islamic thinkers as Avicenna, AlRazi, Ibn Al-Haytham and Ibn Rushd in keeping the flames of human knowledge during the darkest ages, let alone the shining beacons of knowledge, from India and China. So civilization cannot be monopolized by any single nation or group.

There is no argument between us either regarding the universality of the values of liberty, equality, and fraternity, or the Jeffersonian democratic ideals or Wilsonian principle of self-determination. Our own Arab and Islamic heritage incorporates most of these values. And, considering our myriad differences, this unity of vision is quite extraordinary.

If the advanced countries are to help in bringing about the transformation of the Middle East, these principles are far more powerful in their sublime inspiration than any weapons of war in inflicting fear and intimidation. By returning to these values you can win the hearts and minds of the Arab and Muslim peoples.

Modernization, through gradual and cumulative reforms, will indeed enhance our stability and security, while importing solutions from the outside, with no regard to the particular conditions of each country, may actually threaten the very stability and security we wish to preserve.

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Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We in Saudi Arabia firmly believe that modernization and comprehensive political, economic and social reforms are badly needed in our part of the world. We are fully aware that partial, minor and isolated reforms or cosmetic changes are not sufficient in this regard.

Our reform efforts include municipal elections and expanding the authority of the Consultative Council. The Center for National Dialogue was established to encourage diversity, tolerance and the strong participation of women. Its latest round of discussions dealt with the issues of our youth, male and female. Also recently a group of Saudi activists of both genders formed an independent Commission for Human Rights to which all organs of government will be accountable in case of any breaches or complaints. An independent Public Prosecution Authority was also established.

Along with the political reforms, we are pursuing an ambitious program of economic reforms. Although Saudi Arabia is fortunate in this regard, many countries in the region are in dire need for a collective effort to solve their economic problems. The industrialized countries can show the same generosity the United States showed Europe after the Second World War through the Marshall Plan. They can play an effective role in this regard by allocating direct foreign investments, liberalizing trade policies, opening new markets and facilitating the transfer of technology.

The West also can encourage social interaction and exchange between the youth of our nations. Within the confines of the legitimate requirement of security, the impediments against the free movement of persons between us must be eased. To encourage shared values we need to facilitate direct contact.

As representatives of the global community, let us be pragmatic. Any modernization and reform must face strong forces pulling in opposite directions. Our leaders know that properly managing the dynamic tension between change and continuity is not only the wise road, but also the only road to pursue.

Let us face it, our differences are neither religious nor cultural. We perceive no clash of civilizations or of competing value systems. The real bone of contention is the longest conflict in modern history. For too long, Arabs have witnessed the Western bias towards Israel. We have come to understand the Western, and especially American, guarantees to the security of Israel. What the Arab peoples cannot fathom is why these guarantees are transformed into unrestricted backing of unrestrained Israeli policies contrary to international legality.

The beast of extremism, terrorism and hatred remains with us because we are not true to our commitments. So it remains to be seen whether we can for the first time be honest with each other and commit ourselves to settling the Arab-Israeli conflict. Let us leave this meeting with the hope that finally we will realize our aspirations of building a true partnership for progress and common future.

Thank you.

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His Royal Highness Prince Saud Al-Faisal bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud is the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Born in Talif, Saudi Arabia in 1940, he is the son of King Faisal bin Abdulaziz. He is married, with three sons and three daughters.

Prince Saud graduated from Princeton University in 1964 with a Bachelor of Science in Economics. He joined the Ministry of Petroleum as an economic consultant and a member of the High Coordination Committee. In 1966, he was assigned to the General Organization for Petroleum and Mineral Resources (Petromin). On February 22, 1970, he was appointed Deputy Governor of Petromin for Planning Affairs. The following year, he was appointed Deputy Minister, Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources.

On October 13, 1975, he was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Prince Saud is also Vice President of the Supreme Council for Information and a member of the Supreme Council of Petroleum as well as Managing Director for the National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development (NCWCD).

As Minister of Foreign Affairs, he has been a member of numerous committees for Arab and Islamic affairs such as the Lebanon Arab Committee, the Arabian Solidarity Committee, the 7-Member Arab Committee, the Jerusalem Committee and the Tripartite Committee for Lebanon.



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