

XII. Middle East and North Africa

Introduction

Throughout its 8 years, the Clinton administration worked hard to achieve just and lasting peace and stability in the Middle East. As the primary sponsor of the Middle East Peace Process, the United States encouraged the Israelis, Palestinians, and Jordanians parties to achieve progress throughout the decade. In the last weeks of the administration, President Clinton, Secretary of State Albright, and the other officials engaged in a final effort to resolve the outstanding differences separating Israelis and Palestinians. In addition, the Clinton administration pursued policies to contain the threats posed by Saddam Hussain in Iraq, and acted to thwart policies of terrorism and violence espoused by Libya and Iran.

The United States undertook these goals during a period of great transition in the Middle East and North Africa that saw the deaths of long-ruling and important leaders. President Clinton personally attended funerals for three leading figures in Middle Eastern politics: assassinated Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in November 1995; King Hussein of Jordan (who had ruled the country for 48 years) in February 1999; and King Hassan II of Morocco (whose reign spanned 38 years) in July 1999. In addition, the June 2000 death of long-time Syrian President Hafez Al-Asad, and the March 1999 death of Bahrain's ruler, Shaikh Isa, completed a significant transition from longstanding leaders in the Middle East to a younger generation.

The Middle East Peace Process

Upon entering office, President Clinton inherited an ongoing Middle East Peace Process marked by bilateral talks between Israeli and Palestinian representatives instituted as a result of the Madrid Middle East Conference of October 1991. Secretary of State Warren Christopher made his first official trip to the Middle East in February 1993 in an attempt to remove obstacles to these negotiations. In August 1993, Norwegian Foreign Minister Johan Joergen Holst facilitated an historic breakthrough, when the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel reached an agreement during secret talks in Oslo, Norway. On September 9, 1993, Israel and the PLO agreed to recognize each other as negotiating partners, with PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat signing a letter to Prime Minister Rabin. The following day, the Norwegian Foreign Minister hand carried this letter to Israel, where Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin signed a letter to Chairman Arafat. The Clinton administration culminated this progress on September 13 at the White House in Washington, D.C., as Prime Minister Rabin and Chairman Arafat met and watched Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and PLO Executive Council Member Mahmoud Abbas sign the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements. (Document XII-1) President Clinton, former Presidents George Bush and Jimmy Carter, and 3,000 dignitaries witnessed the signing on the same desk used in signing the Camp David accords 15 years earlier and the symbolic handshake between Chairman Arafat and Prime Minister Rabin.

Relations between the PLO and Israel continued to advance with the Rabin and Arafat signing in Cairo on May 4, 1994, of the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and Jericho Area. (Document XII-2) This new agreement set out terms for implementation of the

Declaration of Principles and included annexes on withdrawal of Israeli military forces and security arrangements, civil affairs, legal matters, and economic relations. Further negotiations led to the signing in Washington, D.C. on September 28, 1995, of the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip. (Documents XII-3 and 4) This agreement contained 31 articles and seven annexes covering troop redeployments and security relations, elections, civil affairs, legal matters, economic cooperation programs, and prisoner release. Attending the signing were Jordan's King Hussein and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. On September 29, 1995, Secretary of State Warren Christopher, Israeli Foreign Minister Peres and PLO Chairman Arafat convened the first meeting of the U.S.- Israel-Palestinian Trilateral Economic Committee. The parties agreed to promote cooperative efforts on regional issues including economic development and water resources.

The Clinton administration encouraged and supported bilateral talks between Israel and Jordan during 1993-1994 that also proved successful and led to the establishment of full diplomatic ties between the two countries. On September 14, 1993, the Israel-Jordan Common Agenda was agreed in Washington, D.C., establishing an agreed negotiating agenda. (Document XII-5). On July 25, 1994, Israel and Jordan signed the Washington Declaration, marking the end of the state of belligerency between Israel and Jordan. (Document XII-6). Three months later, on October 26, 1994, Israeli Prime Minister Rabin and Jordanian Prime Minister Majali signed the Treaty of Peace between the State of Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on the Israeli-Jordanian border. (Document XII-7)

The assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Rabin on November 4, 1995, following a peace rally in Tel Aviv dealt a serious setback to the peace process. For the next several years, despite several U.S. attempts to jump-start stalled peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, the parties made little progress. A new diplomatic push led by President Clinton in October 1998 resulted in landmark talks at the Wye River Conference Center in Maryland from October 15-23, 1998. President Clinton, Secretary Albright and other U.S. officials brokered intensive negotiations between Israel and the PLO. A final, all-night session resulted in the Wye River Memorandum, which was signed at the White House on October 23 by PLO Chairman Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. (Document XII-8) The memorandum contained specific steps to facilitate the implementation of the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip of September 28, 1995, and other related agreements. Steps in five areas were covered: 1) further redeployments; 2) security issues; 3) interim committees and economic issues; 4) permanent status negotiations; and 5) unilateral actions.

With forward momentum in the peace process restored, President Clinton hosted the Conference to Support Middle East Peace in Washington, D.C. on November 30, 1998. At this conference, approximately 40 nations pledged over \$3 billion in economic assistance to the Palestinians. President Clinton followed up on these achievements with an official trip to Israel and the West Bank/Gaza from December 12-15, 1998. During this trip, President Clinton gave an historic address to the Palestinian National Council in Gaza and witnessed a vote "fully and forever" rejecting conflict with Israel revoking articles of the PLO Charter calling for the destruction of Israel. (Documents XII-9)

Problems with implementing the commitments agreed upon in the Wye River Memorandum strained relations between Israelis and Palestinians during the beginning of 1999. A new period of optimism was ushered in with the election of Ehud Barak as Prime Minister of Israel on May 17, 1999. After taking office on July 6, Prime Minister Barak visited the United States from July 14–20 and pledged to President Clinton to make peace a top priority. Renewed negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians led to the signing of the Sharm el-Sheik Memorandum on September 4, 1999, paving the way for continued implementation of the Wye River Memorandum, increased cooperation between the parties, and the renewal of permanent status talks.

Peace talks between Israel and Syria also took on new significance in 1999. On December 15, 1999, President Clinton welcomed Israeli Prime Minister Barak and Syrian Foreign Minister Farouq Al-Shara to the White House prior to the resumption of direct negotiations suspended in 1996. The Israelis and Syrians held two days of talks and agreed to a second round that took place in Sheperdstown, West Virginia, beginning on January 3, 2000. After 10 days of intensive discussions, led by Prime Minister Barak and Foreign Minister Al-Shara, unresolved differences remained between the parties.

Israeli and Palestinian representatives continued to meet during 2000 to discuss a Framework Agreement for Permanent Status (FAPS). In July 2000, Secretary Albright met with Prime Minister Barak and PLO Chairman Arafat to discuss ways to advance the process. On July 5, 2000, President Clinton announced that the two leaders had accepted invitation to come to Camp David beginning July 11 to continue their negotiations. During the Camp David Peace Summit, held from July 11–24, the parties, for the first time, directly confronted and discussed the most difficult issues between them, including the status of Jerusalem and Palestinian refugees. Despite marathon sessions and progress in all issues, the summit ended without an agreement.

Simmering tensions among Palestinians frustrated with the slow progress in peace talks erupted into violence at the end of September 2000. Early attempts to quell the violence failed and the number of casualties, mostly Palestinians, from daily confrontations between Israelis and Palestinians mounted. Greatly concerned by the continuing violence and resulting loss of life, Egyptian President Mubarak and President Clinton invited Prime Minister Barak and Chairman Arafat to meet with him and President Clinton at Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, for talks on October 16, 2000. After discussions, both parties agreed to take immediate, concrete steps to end the violence and to resume formal negotiations. (Document XII-10) The President continued his 11th hour efforts to promote progress between the parties until his final days in office.

Iraq

U.S. policy toward Iraq during the 8 years of the Clinton administration was premised upon containing the tangible threat Saddam Hussein posed to regional and global security and to the Iraqi people. Hussein's threat was based upon his history of aggression, record of deception and defiance, efforts toward regional domination, and clear refusal to give up weapons of mass destruction capabilities. Working with its allies and the United Nations, the United States successfully contained Saddam through a mixture of deterrence, economic sanctions, and humanitarian assistance to the people of Iraq via the oil-for-food program. These efforts successfully prevented Iraqi rearmament

by diverting 90 percent of Iraqi oil revenues from military programs, including production of weapons of mass destruction, and toward oil-for-food humanitarian assistance. Iraq earned \$15 billion from oil exports in 1989 and spent \$13 billion on its military. Iraq was projected to earn \$20 billion in 2000 under the oil-for-food program, but could spend none of that on military procurement. Since 1998, the United States supported the Iraqi opposition's goal of a change in the regime.

U.S. policy toward Iraq during the Clinton administration rested upon four pillars: (1) maintenance of international sanctions in order to deny the Iraqi leadership access to resources with which it could rebuild its military apparatus, (2) support for United Nations Special Commission on Iraq (UNSCOM) and its successor, the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), to help ensure that Iraq fulfilled its disarmament obligations pursuant to UN Security Council resolutions, (3) maintenance of the no-fly-zones in northern and southern Iraq, and (4) maintenance of a credible threat of force in the region to deter Iraqi aggression against its neighbors or own people. Since the end of the Gulf War, the United States prevented Iraqi aggression and forced Saddam to back down from threats of military action on numerous occasions. In spite of Iraqi deception throughout the period of UNSCOM's existence (1991-1998), UNSCOM successfully forced Iraq to destroy or declare missiles, warheads, chemical weapons and production agents, a nuclear centrifuge program, and a plant designed to produce anthrax.

Early in his administration President Clinton was confronted with evidence of an Iraqi plot to assassinate former President Bush while the latter was in Kuwait. On June 27, 1993, the President ordered a cruise missile strike against Iraq's intelligence headquarters in retaliation for the foiled assassination attempt.

A little more than a year later, Iraq began large-scale troop movements toward the Kuwait border while at the same time threatening to cease cooperation with UNSCOM and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). On October 7, 1994, President Clinton ordered the buildup of U.S. forces in the region in response to Iraq's actions, and on October 8, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 949 condemning Iraq's deployment of military units toward Kuwait. On October 20, the United States and the United Kingdom sent a *démarche* to Iraq warning against "enhancement" of its military capabilities south of the 32nd parallel, thereby creating a no-drive zone in the south to augment the already existent southern no-fly zone. As a result of these actions, on November 10, 1994, Iraq formally recognized Kuwait and the UN border demarcation in compliance with UNSCR 833, in addition to withdrawing its troops from the border with Kuwait.

Although the United States had for 5 years advocated creation of a mechanism that would allow Iraq to sell controlled quantities of oil in order to purchase humanitarian goods, and supported UN Security Council resolutions to do so since October 1992, Iraq had refused the initiative. Nonetheless, on April 14, 1995, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 986 that offered Iraq another opportunity to export petroleum and to use the proceeds to meet the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people. (Document XII-11) Iraq rejected UNSCR 986 on April 15, but more than a year later, on May 20, 1996, Iraq finally reversed itself and accepted the resolution. Implementation of the oil-for-food program under UNSCR 986 began in January 1997.

After Iraq's August 31, 1996 attack on the city of Irbil and surrounding region in Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq, the United States and the United Kingdom expanded the southern no-fly zone from the 32nd to the 33rd parallel on September 3, 1996, and launched cruise missile strikes on selected targets in central Iraq. The Iraqi attack on the Kurdish region was facilitated by a long-standing quarrel and consequent bloodshed between the two major Kurdish factions administering the north, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). The Clinton administration worked to reconcile the two sides and deprive Saddam of another avenue to engage in nefarious activity. As a result, on September 17, 1998, the PUK and KDP signed the Washington Agreement thereby bringing to a close five years of fighting between them.

Iraq's next major challenge to the United Nations began on August 5, 1998, when it halted significant cooperation with UNSCOM and the IAEA by, among other things, refusing to cooperate with "no-notice" inspections. On October 31, 1998, Iraq ended all cooperation with UNSCOM. Following intensive efforts by the United Nations to resolve the impasse, President Clinton ordered air strikes against Iraqi targets. However, on November 14, 1998, after US bombers were already in the air, Iraq announced its readiness to allow UNSCOM to resume inspections. With only minutes to spare, the President called back the aircraft. However, the Washington and London warned Baghdad that strikes would occur without further warning if Iraq did not fully cooperate with UNSCOM's inspections. Nonetheless, Iraq did obstruct UNSCOM's activities and UNSCOM so reported to the UNSC on December 16 that it was unable to perform its disarmament mandate and was withdrawing its inspectors. Thus, the United States and United Kingdom began four days of air strikes on Iraq from December 16-19, 1998, in Operation Desert Fox.

Following Iraq's December 19, 1998, declaration that UNSCOM would never be allowed to return, the Clinton administration led the way for creation of a new mechanism to achieve Iraqi disarmament and, at the same time, improve the living conditions of the Iraqi people in spite of Saddam's actions. Following year-long negotiations, UN Security Council Resolution 1284 was adopted December 17, 1999. (Document XII-12) The resolution specified conditions under which sanctions would be suspended, established UNMOVIC to continue UNSCOM's mandate, and eliminated the prior cap on Iraqi oil exports.

UNSCR 1284 also significantly streamlined the operation of the oil-for-food program and offered Iraq several new avenues to improve its effectiveness. After only six months of unlimited oil export capability, the UN Secretary General found and declared on June 8, 2000 that Iraq had sufficient revenues to take care of food and nutrition and solve the health problems of its people, notwithstanding the Iraqi administration's failure to do so. In northern Iraq, where the United Nations administered the distribution of the oil-for-food humanitarian goods, there were substantial improvements in health conditions. By contrast, in central and southern Iraq, where the Iraqi regime managed the distribution, there were much smaller gains.

After 1998 the United States supported Iraqis who sought the removal of Saddam Hussein's regime and its replacement by a new government under which Iraq could resume its rightful place in the Arab and international communities. Accordingly, the

United States provided assistance to the Iraqi National Congress (INC), including non-lethal training under the draw down provisions of the Iraq Liberation Act (ILA), services and cash. This assistance helped the INC to build its organization, undertake international advocacy missions, take advantage of the USG ILA training program, start up media programs, and plan for delivery of humanitarian assistance inside Iraq. As of January 2001, Saddam Hussein remained in power and only time would tell if regime change policies would bring about his removal.

Also, since 1998, the United States stepped up efforts to hold accountable the top Iraqi leadership for crimes against humanity, genocide, and war crimes. The Clinton administration laid the groundwork for accountability in several ways by gathering evidence from U.S. Government files, declassifying the relevant ones, and releasing them to the public. The United States is supporting important efforts by non government organizations (NGOs) making contributions to holding the Iraqi regime accountable. The United States has also encouraged those governments who can bring appropriate cases under international conventions like the UN Convention Against Torture to do so within their laws, while exploring diplomatically the possibilities of an international war crimes tribunal or committee of experts.

Iran

From 1993 to 1995, the Clinton administration concentrated its Iranian policy on countering increasing Iranian support for terrorism and preventing Iran from obtaining weapons of mass destruction. On March 16 and May 6, 1995, President Clinton signed executive orders substantially tightening economic sanctions to prohibit virtually all trade and investment activities with Iran by U.S. citizens. On August 5, 1996, President Clinton signed into law the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act, which provided for sanctions, unless waived in the interest of national security, against foreign companies investing in the Iranian petroleum industry. (Document XII-13)

In 1997 Iran ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention and held relatively free and fair elections resulting in the victory of Mohammed Khatami, a reformist cleric, as President of the Islamic Republic. In January 1998, Khatami was interviewed by CNN and expressed a desire to see the United States and Iran "break down the walls of mistrust" that had separated the two countries for 20 years. In response, Secretary of State Albright in June 1998 addressed the Asia Society offering a direct dialogue with Iran aimed at developing a "road map" to better relations, as well as increased people-to-people exchanges. The United States cited terrorism, the Middle East peace process, weapons of mass destruction and missile development, and human rights as issues the United States hoped to pursue. Iran did not agree to the dialogue offer, but a series of cultural, artistic and academic exchanges began, which included the exchange of wrestling and soccer teams, musicians, artist and academic researchers. In July 1999, the United States undertook a general sanctions reform that had the effect of allowing exports of U.S. agricultural and medical products to Iran.

Iran held parliamentary elections in February 2000. The Iranian people overwhelmingly voted for pro-reform candidates and provided a strong popular mandate for change. On March 17, 2000, Secretary of State Albright announced a shift in U.S. sanctions policy to allow certain imports of Iranian food and carpets as a signal of

support to the millions of Iranians who earn their livelihoods in these labor-intensive industries. She also called on Iran and the United States to overcome the troubled history between them. (Document XII-14) The months following that announcement saw renewed bitter factional struggles in Iran, whose outcome was still unclear at the end of the Clinton administration. The U.S. offer of an unconditional dialogue with Iran remained valid, and without a positive response from the Iranian Government.

Libya

Clinton administration policy toward Libya was shaped by evidence of Libyan involvement in the tragic 1988 Pan American Flight 103 and 1989 United Airlines Flight 772 bombings. In 1992 and 1993, the Security Council passed a series of resolutions calling on Libya to surrender the suspects, accept responsibility for the actions of its officials, pay appropriate compensation, disclose all it knew of the crime and cooperate with the criminal investigation, cease all forms of terrorist action and assistance to terrorist groups, and prove its renunciation of terrorism by concrete actions. The Security Council imposed civil aviation, financial, and diplomatic sanctions against Libya. On August 5, 1996, President Clinton signed into law the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act, which provided for sanctions, unless waived in the interest of national security, against foreign companies investing in Libya. (Document XII-13)

Over time, faced with UN and U.S. sanctions, as well as the attendant political isolation, Libya reduced its support for terrorism and sought to distance itself from terrorist groups. Libya was not implicated in any international terrorist act for several years and took some significant actions, including expelling the Abu Nidal Organization (ANO), uprooting its infrastructure and seeking to eliminate any ANO presence in Libya.

Throughout the Clinton administration, the United States made every effort to bring the perpetrators of the terrorist bombing of Pan Am 103 to justice. In the fall of 1997, along with the British and the Dutch, the United States developed a detailed plan for a trial before a Scottish court seated in the Netherlands, applying Scottish law. After the plan was unveiled in August 1998, the UN Security Council unanimously endorsed the initiative and again urged Libya to surrender the suspects.

Libya finally turned over the suspects on April 5, 1999, under the terms had laid out in the plan. The U.S. engaged in no negotiations and placed no restrictions on the prosecutors' freedom to follow the evidence. The Scottish trial in the Netherlands would be a genuine criminal proceeding, conforming to the rules and traditions of Scottish jurisprudence, and the prosecution would follow the evidence wherever it led. The trial began on May 3, 2000, and was still proceeding at the end of the Clinton administration.