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by



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on

**"Global War on Terrorism and its Implications on
Middle East Region and Beyond"**

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Thank you for your kind invitation and warm welcome. It is a pleasure and honour to be here with you and to speak to such a distinguished audience at an institution associated with great minds and spirits as Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sarojani Naidu, and Sir Tei Sapru, for whom this iconic building [Sapru House] is named.

For decades, your council has provided an impressive platform for dialogue and thought, making it one of the most prominent foreign policy think tanks in Asia. I hope that my visit can contribute to the dialogue on-and with- the Middle East, as at no time has there been a greater need for mutual understanding and cooperation.

While I find myself increasingly avoiding this talk of “mutual understanding”, for fear that lately it is starting to sound like a cliché, however I am encouraged to make the exception here, because if there is any country in the world that can understand this concept and that has *lived* the interconnectedness of civilizations and flourished as a result of the interactions of people, cultures, and religions...then it is India.

Amongst your citizens, I believe you count the second largest Muslim population in the world [180 million out of a population that is upwards of 1.3 billion]. Your interaction with Islam and Muslims goes back over a thousand years, and we Arabs have known India even before Islam: through trade, and later, through pursuit of knowledge.

In fact, India is not credited enough with its contribution to what we consider the golden age of Islam. While history shows that translation of Greek works was taken up in the 9th century, Arabs had translated Sanskrit texts from India much earlier. As early as 771 the Caliph of Baghdad was amazed by the brilliance of Indian texts such as *Surya Siddhanta* سريا سيدانتا and the works of Arya-bhata and Braham-gupta, ordering their translation into Arabic by Al-Fazari. This singlehandedly revolutionized the study of mathematics and sciences all over the Muslim world, including Spain, from where it travelled to Europe and led to replacing Roman numerals. We also find numerous translations in *Kitabul Hind* كتاب الهند by Al Biruni, the brilliant historian who lived with Brahmins, learned Sanskrit and wrote his extraordinary work on India.

This rather long introduction is not intended as a history lesson, but rather as context on what can be achieved collectively, and as a focal point for what I believe we should unite to aim for once again: cooperation, understanding, knowledge exchange and dissemination, so that we may advance together without oppression or fear of “the other”.

Sadly, today, we are witnessing the effects of the exact opposite of this and we are all paying for it. In Syria, we are seeing tragedy and destruction unfold on a historic scale. We in Jordan feel it more closely than most, as at least 1 in 5 people in Jordan is a Syrian refugee.

The war is not only that which is being waged in Syria, or by the international coalition against the outlaws of Islam known as Da'esh, but rather the war fought for hearts and minds the world over.

How we deal with this collective challenge at *this* critical juncture in history will shape the future of our world.

Today, no continent has been spared the scourge of terror, regardless of the names or banners that its corresponding groups act under. Whether it is an attack targeting a Christmas market in Germany, a Hindu priest in Bangladesh, or a historic fortress hundreds of thousands of miles away in my own hometown; the message is clear: this is a collective threat that sees no borders and no religion.

We must act together in a holistic manner; one that looks towards all hotspots, and more importantly, to the root causes that allow this cancer to flourish, be it political, social, economic or other.

Winning or losing this global war will define our security and way of life for generations to come. This is why there is no alternative to synchronized action; focusing resources, coordinating responsibilities and dividing tasks in a truly global alliance.

Our success hinges on our ability to deliver on this and on us winning hearts and minds. History has taught us that battles may be won militarily, but the war cannot be won without securing the ideological front.

This is what His Majesty King Abdullah II meant when he was the first to state that as Arabs and Muslims, we have a responsibility and duty to lead in the fight against the *Khawarej*, or outlaws of Islam. This is a war to protect our religion, our values and the future of our people.

However the rest of the world must also recognize that these outlaws are but a small fraction of the 1.7 billion men and women [a quarter of humanity] that are good and decent average people. Here, I am reminded by Mahatma Gandhi's saying "You must not

lose faith in humanity. Humanity is an ocean; if a few drops of the ocean are dirty, the ocean does not become dirty”.

In this fight, all people and countries must come together in shared respect for each other and collective action. Jordan is doing its part.

We are proud to have spearheaded global initiatives for tolerance and dialogue. The Amman Message, A Common Word, and five years ago, we helped create the UN's World Interfaith Harmony Week, an annual event to focus people, especially youth, on tolerance and co-existence.

We all have a role to play: we must focus on the essence and shared spirit of our respective faiths and creeds, and integrating their values into our daily lives.

We must work to change the discourse of fear and hatred and instead amplify the voice of moderation that has been drowned out in the noise and chaos of recent years.

We must understand that the real fight is between all moderates, of all religions, against all extremists and fear mongers in all religions, everywhere.

Without this comprehension we will not prevail. In our inter-linked world today, there is no border to hide behind and no power that can tackle the threat alone.

Our only hope is coordinated international action and amplifying our collective humanity.

This significantly means addressing injustice, occupation, poverty, and inequality- the building blocks of extremism-wherever they are found.

In the Middle East this means delivering the yet unmet promise of justice to the occupied Palestinian people, it means inclusive political systems in Iraq and Syria, it means donors fulfilling their pledges to refugees and their hosts, and for “the other” not being synonymous with “danger”.

We cannot deliver an effective blow to extremism without addressing rallying calls such as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict; the core defining crisis of the modern history of the Middle East.

There is a misconception that this conflict takes place outside the context of the fight against ISIS. It is in times of despair that these groups find refuge; the continued incitement and feelings of injustice provide ammunition for ISIS and other groups, as we have seen in recent propaganda videos.

Left unresolved, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has the potential to become a religious conflict of a global dimension. This is why reaching a two-state solution should remain a priority for us all.

There is no viable nor practical solution other than the internationally backed two state solution. The framework is in place from countless UN resolutions and the unprecedented Arab Peace Initiative. It is time that we move from peace process to “progress”, and finally, a solution.

Few crises in history have presented such a mix of threats - from the regional instability and violence it promotes - to the worldwide divisions it has caused, actively exploited by extremists. Every day we lose makes the conflict much harder to resolve.

We all have a duty to help both sides of this conflict think and act in these strategic terms. This means keeping the focus on where the parties want to be - in ten, twenty, thirty years and more; the hopes and horizons for themselves and their children - and then setting a direction towards that future, now.

There is power in the messages our actions can send. Signals are delivered when we act or fail to act against the daily hardships of West Bank life ... against illegal settlement building ... against actions that threaten Muslim and Christian holy sites; fuelling those who seek to wage a religious war.

Unilateral measures which threaten to impact the outcome of final status issues can have catastrophic outcomes. What happens in Jerusalem does not stay in Jerusalem, and has the potential to incite and provoke billions of people around the world. This Holy City- unlike any other in the world- has the ability to unite us all and by the same token, to engulf us all in more crisis.

As such Hashemite Custodianship over the Holy Sites is one of Jordan’s premier national policy priorities. We take this responsibility seriously not only because of the religious and historic aspect, but also because it is the tinder box that can impact security on a global scale.

While the Middle East Peace Process has been described as the “deal that cannot be done”, allow me tell you, based on my experience as part of the Jordanian negotiating team that finalized a peace treaty with Israel: yesterday’s enemies can be tomorrow’s friends, and this can be repeated with political will and courage.

Such will is also needed to move forward on issues such as Iraqi national reconciliation; a key tool to ending marginalization that has contributed to fuelling terrorism. Jordan has been at the forefront of supporting efforts towards this goal, and seeks to prioritize it as a key agenda point at the upcoming Arab Summit in Amman in a few short weeks.

Jordan will continue to do whatever it can to stabilize its region and to fulfil its responsibilities as a key player in the international system. But this is not something that should be taken for granted by the international community. We need global support to continue the important work we have ahead of us, and to show the rest of the region that there is hope and a different option.

I believe that if we do what needs to be done, the dominos will fall into place; hearts and minds are won; expanded defence budgets can be rerouted towards tackling building blocks of terror: poverty, youth, job creation, and education. The end result is security, stability, and a Middle East that can once again contribute a lot more to humanity than terrifying statistics.

The road is long and hard, but with courage it is not impossible. I am certain that together we can and must reach our destination: a safer, stronger future for the people of the world.

Thank you
