

President Clinton's Doha Speech

Thank you very much. First of all, I would like to thank you for your comments, and for hosting this conference, as well as the leadership you have given and for your friendship to the United States before, during and after my Presidency. It is an honor to be back here. General Zinni, thank you for your service and your wisdom. I would also like to thank my friend Ron Burkle and the Burkle center at UCLA for their involvement here, and their continuing attempt to bring America's relations to other countries, peoples, cultures and faiths into the twenty-first century in a positive way.

I would like to begin my remarks with a basic premise and a confession of a President. Thoughts in people's minds in America, Europe, and Japan about the Middle East are invariably dominated by the price of oil; the conflict between the Palestinians and the Israelis, and of course lately the results of the more recent election, with the victory of Hamas over Fatah in the Palestinian elections; the conflict in Iraq and its aftermath; and the question of Iran.

Far below that, in my judgment, are potentially equally important stories about the other Middle East, about the rest of the Arab states, about the rest of the Muslim population here. There have been in the last year, two great stories coming out of Doha—first, about your long-term plans for liquefied natural gas. And second, about the visionary experiment you have here about bringing in people from around the world to improve the status of special education. These positive stories, as well as the occasional story that we get in the Western press about Dubai or what's going on in Bahrain or Abu Dhabi, are potentially as important, if not more important, assuming the security of the situation can be managed.

So for me, this is an important part of an ongoing process. I was recalling today that you hosted a conference a couple years ago in which I was privileged to participate where we had people from the entire Muslim world including the leader of the religious opposition to President Musharraf of Pakistan. We had everybody you could imagine here, and we actually found ourselves with much more in common than we thought—because we were in an atmosphere where we were expected to talk and not fight, where we were expected to think and not shout, where we were expected to build and not tear down. And so, I want to thank you for what you represent. And I hope that as we do this type of work we can remind the people who are looking at this region that there is a whole different potential future than the one they fear for this region and by definition the world, because it is so important to the twenty-first century world.

Now, having said that, it seems to me that security and prosperity for this nation and the other positive forces in the region are very important. Let's talk more about prosperity: how can we have an evolving economy? It seems to me that in all these societies we need the following things: we need a larger middle class, we need more entrepreneurs, we need the ability to create more jobs and higher incomes. That obviously requires an increase in productivity, an increase in economic diversity, and a large skilled workforce. How would we go about achieving that? I think that there are five or six obvious targets.

First of all, in every nation, the government must assess its policies and do whatever is necessary to find the land, infrastructure and capital necessary to create new business opportunities in areas beyond oil, gas and its related enterprise. Second, there must be a genuine effort to streamline regulation so that you don't have to be a big budget multi-national corporation in order to figure out how to start a business and stay in business successfully in any country.

General Zinni mentioned Vietnam successes he had with the United States, you might be interested in knowing that every year that I was President, we had more jobs created by small businesses than big businesses; that the United States Small Business Administration, which is charged with financing new businesses and, believe it or not, some of our biggest business—Intel, Federal Express and many others—actually started out with a small business loan from the government, or at least insured by the government. When I became President, most businesses had to fill out a form that was literally an inch thick and it took three months to get an answer. We changed the form to one page, front and back, and had to give you an answer in three days, and in no case longer than seven days. I think this is important. These are the little things that one fails to look at that often have a lot to do with how you can diversify your economy.

The second is that you have to setup a system of ongoing education and training—both to get as close to 100% of your young people in the general years of schooling as possible, and to increase the number of people going on to a university education as part of that education. I think the model you are about to hear is the truest and I hope it will be followed in other parts of the world.

Thirdly, you have to maximize the brainpower of each country, which means for most countries there will have to be more women in the work force than there are now, particularly in skilled positions.

Fourthly, if you wish to build a diversified economy that has a lot of small businesses, you will have to guarantee a significant and constant source of consumer capacity, which means that thought has to be given to whether there is a minimum wage in a country and whether it is accurate, whether there is system of unemployment insurance in the country when unemployment is high, which continues to catch people because you can't really build a small business economy unless you have a strong super base, with a more or less constant capacity to spend, which then puts funds into the economy, and then circulates five or six times—it is vitally important, it's almost impossible to have a vibrant explosion in this culture without it.

Next, I think a lot attention should be given to the capacity of the country to train people for business. There should be a healthy emphasis on business education and how to manage that information technology, which is key to our productivity levels. Most people, when they think about information technology in the United States, think about something like Silicon Valley, all these dotcom companies, all the big companies like Dell Computer or Apple Computer or something like that, but the truth is that the big contribution to information technology and to the work of the 1990s, came from its integration into every other aspect of our economy. In that case, I'm sure you know that here, if you make liquefied natural gas, to some extent it has information technology involved in it. And so, from the inventory management for small businesses to the maturation of information technology requires a knowledge of modern systems that can be taught, but requires a certain core number of people who understand these things in every nation if you really want to diversify an economy and increase productivity.

And finally, I think that you really have to make a deliberate decision to diversify an economy. And how would you do it? If you think about it, the decision you made to go into liquefied natural gas is an economic diversification. Gas is cleaner than oil, and the world is increasingly concerned about climate change and global warming. If you can—in cost effective ways, and you can certainly do it with the current prices of oil—provide liquefied natural gas, you not only create a new market and diversify the economy, people can buy it with a clearer conscious because they also believe that they are helping to fight global warming. You may have other options in that area.

Every time I give this speech in the Middle East—I have been giving this speech since 2001—people think I'm crazy, but I believe that every oil country should become an energy country. No natural gas should be wasted and you should not rule out any other potential energy development including clean energy sources like wind and solar. Why? Because there is nothing you can do to kill demand for the oil that is here. I want to say that again: no one

believes that we are all of a sudden going to quit using oil. We haven't found a way, as the General would tell you, to run tanks and jet planes without fuel that is somehow petroleum based yet. No one believes that no matter what commitments we make to cut out emissions of greenhouse gases in Europe, Japan and the United States, and even if China and India follow, that there won't be a long-term demand for as much oil as you can sell at a reasonably high price.

You will not undermine your own oil future by producing liquefied natural gas. And you will not undermine your own oil future if you decide to look around and say that this was one of the great shipping areas of the world when all boats ran on wind, and all shippers were sailors, literally. The American and English word "admiral" comes from "Emir". So, you could produce windmills just as well as the Danes do: twenty percent of their electricity comes from wind. You could produce and sell it all over the region for about three cents per kilowatt-hour at modern production techniques. And you would have a manufacturing base that would give people manufacturing jobs and provide all sorts of ancillary supply jobs.

There are a million people, most of them are not here, most of them live in Latin America, but there are a million people who live in poor villages that have no centralized electricity, but who nonetheless have power that turn on the lights in their houses and cooks all their food from small solar packs that are attached to the sides of their houses that cost about as much as a month's supply of candles to pay off for 18 months. It is an enormous consumer good in every place where they don't have centralized power.

It amuses me that in all this time since the end of the initial hostilities in Iraq, they have had trouble reconnecting electricity, but they have all sorts of options to do that. But there is no consumer market here, nobody makes that. And these things are as cheap as dirt, but they can be sold all over the world. There could be a billion of them as well as there are a million of them, and it wouldn't cost you any money. Those people are not using oil today. All over the world there are people who don't use any oil and have no access to energy. They don't use any natural gas. The point I am trying to make is that you shouldn't confine yourself to believing that because your economy has operated in a certain way for a long period of time that it can only operate in that way, but only slightly differently to have a more prosperous future. You could become the world's energy center just as you have been the world's oil center; just as you hope to become the world's liquefied natural gas center. The more of this you do, the better.

Finally, let me say that I think it is quite important to continually bring the rest of the world into this region in a positive way; more foreign partners, more foreign investments, more partners for broad security, and more general understanding. There is still I think an appalling level of ignorance in the rest of the world about what I call the positive picture of the Middle East and including about your faith. We all know that none of us are totally free of stereotypes about people of different races, different ethnic groups and different religions. There was this appalling example in northern Europe and Denmark which you may be familiar with in the last several weeks of these totally outrageous cartoons against Islam. In Europe most of the struggles we have had in the past fifty years have been to fight anti-Semitism. So now what are we going to do, replace the anti-Semitic prejudice with anti-Islamic prejudice because people see headlines that they don't like and apply that to a whole religion, a whole faith, a whole region, a whole people? Keep in mind, every time you bring in people from around the world and create new partners, you chip away at that sort of ignorance and the possible destructive consequences that it can bring to the twenty-first century. So again, your Highness, I thank you for having us here. I thank the Burkle Center and UCLA. General, I thank you because you have given a lot of your life to building that new Middle East—first, to securing its future and now to building it. I thank you for that.

These are my ideas and you can take them for what they are worth. Thank You.