

Panel 4: After Gaza: Getting Back to the Peace Process

Shlomo Ben-Ami, Amb. Daniel Kurtzer, Khalil Shikaki, Khaled Elgindy

Moderator: Lara Friedman

00:00

Kate Seelye: We are, have a very exciting panel ahead of us, a very interesting panel ahead of us called *After Gaza: Getting Back to the Peace Process*. It is being moderated by Lara Friedman, Director of Policy and Government Relations for American Peace Now. Lara is a leading authority on US foreign policy in the Middle East, Israeli settlements policy and on Jerusalem. She's a frequent commentator and a former Foreign Service Officer who served in Jerusalem, Washington, Tunis and Beirut. Lara, without further adieux, I would like to hand the panel over to you, however you wish.

Lara Friedman: I want to first thank you all for staying for this late in the day for what I know is going to be a very uplifting and optimistic panel and happily afterwards you can all go and get drinks. So, my name is Lara Friedman. I am very grateful to the Middle East Institute for inviting me to moderate this panel. I am honored to be sitting up here with these four gentleman. I am going to very quickly introduce them and then we are going to engage in a discussion about various issues and eventually if we get bored talking to each other, we'll hand it over to you, but we will hand it over to you. Immediately to my left needs no introduction, but we'll go ahead.

It's Ambassador Daniel Kurtzer. Ambassador Kurtzer is a former US Ambassador to Egypt. He is a former leader on the peace negotiations for many years and he is currently a professor at Princeton and he is considered one of the great wise men of US Foreign Policy and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.

Immediately to his left is Khalil Shikaki. Khalil is the...he's best known, I think for most of us, for his work on Palestinian polling. He is a Director of the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research in Ramallah and he's a senior fellow at Brandeis University and currently a visiting professor, as well, in Michigan at Ann Arbor.

To his left we have Shlomo Ben-Ami, who is co-founder and Vice President of the Toledo Center for Peace in Madrid. He is also an advisor to the International Crisis Group. He was Israel's Ambassador to Spain and he has also led peace efforts on the Israeli side for many years and is the former member of the, let's see...sorry. This is a very long list. The Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee Minister of Public Security and, of course, the Foreign Minister of Israel.

And at the other end, we have my friend, Khaled Elgindy, who I am very happy to sit with. Khaled is a fellow at the Brookings Institute. He is one of the city's experts on

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Egypt-American relations and on Israel-Palestinian relations and if you live in the city, you are honored to get to hear him, I think rather often and you can learn something every time you do. So, without further adieux, and you have the full bios in your booklet. So I'll send you to that. So, I'm going to start this off with a round of questions. There's going to be three rounds of questions up here and we'll see how long it takes. The title of this panel is *After Gaza: Getting Back to the Peace Process*. When we first talked about this panel, this was over a month ago, I was asked, do you want to talk now about what questions you want to pose to the panelists? And I said, "Well, things change fast," and indeed they have. So, rather than go right into the topic of the title, I think we first have to address the current events, because the current events are challenging to say the least. So, we're going to start with a round focused really on Jerusalem and the crisis there and then we'll zoom out to domestic politics and then we'll zoom out further to the region and how that all deals with the Peace Process. I'm going to start with Dan. So, Dan, we're all watching the news, what's happening in Jerusalem this week, terrible news last week, week before. What is going on from your perspective and what can specifically, from your perspective as a US policy expert, what can the US be doing now about the situation in Jerusalem?

04:24

Daniel Kurtzer: Well, well we're seeing is a series of unmitigated tragedies. In this case, the invasion of a sanctuary, a holy place, the killing of people at prayer and we've seen that repeated in the past. We saw it in Hebron in 1994. We've seen mosques and churches burned. We've seen synagogues attacked. There is no way to discuss that rationally. What it represents though is, I think, an intensification of a reality which all of us, I think, need to bear in mind and that is that status quos in any conflict situation do not stay static and in this particular conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, now that it's taken on even a greater character of a religious ideological confrontation is only going to get worse and I don't want to be the Cassandra on this panel and tell you that the Third Intifada is upon us or about to be upon us, but the reality is that without some hope that both sides can have for an end of conflict, that the despair that will set in on both sides exacerbated by the radicalism of a growing number of people on both sides, will make the tragedy of this week and past years a recurring event. One analyst called this the beginning of an Intifada of individual initiatives and you can imagine that neither of the previous Intifadas are going to be of any use in learning lessons if in fact you have this popular manifestation of both hatred and futility, which manifests itself in these killings.

Lara Friedman: Thank you. That's a very good segue. Khalil, I wanted to ask you, the most recent polling that you did, one of the questions that was asked, and this is polling from mid-September after the Gaza War. You looked at the interests of

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Palestinians in another Intifada and it seemed like the interest was dropping. Do you think this is a Third Intifada? We're hearing a lot of loose talk about that. If not, what is going on?

06:49

Khalil Shikaki: It was dropping compared to where we were just after the Gaza War, but it is much higher than where we were before the Gaza War. The Gaza War has the immediate impact of increasing support dramatically for violence among Palestinians and shifting the domestic balance of power, giving Hamas a great deal of support and decreasing Palestinian support for compromise. So, the Gaza War centrally radicalized the public. A month later, after the war when we were in the field, we've seen a reduction in the level of support for Intifada, but the levels are still very high. In fact, they are higher today than they were in 2000, just before the Second Intifada erupted. There is clearly a demand for violence amongst Palestinians and it clearly reflects the view that diplomacy has failed. It reflects the view that there is very little that Palestinians can do to change the attitudes of Israelis other than violence. There is a growing perception that the Palestinian authority itself and the Palestinian leadership is failing and that the Arab World is preoccupied with its own problems that the US has withdrawn from the region. So all these factors are essentially pushing Palestinians to think that they are on their own and that they have to do something if they want to change the status quo and they've been impressed by Hamas' performance during the Gaza War and they want to do, they want the West Bank to do what Hamas is doing in Gaza.

Lara Friedman: Passing it now to Shlomo. Shlomo, there's been a lot talked about what are the causes. Is it religious? Is it a religious war? Is this about politics? Is it about extremism? What can Israel be doing faced with this situation today, if it is as Dan said, an Intifada of individuals? If it's a whole multiplicity of reasons behind people going to the streets? What should Israel be doing? What can Netanyahu be doing to lower the flame right now?

Shlomo Ben-Ami: I think that we are maybe in an edge of each other and first collapse of the Peace Talk in 2000 and now the Gaza War. It is sort of in the perception of Israelis is giving credence to the discourse of politicians whereby every piece of land of Israel relinquishes is being accompanied by a new phase in the war against the Jewish State. This has to do with a radical shift of Israeli opinion in recent years away from trust in the very concept of a Peace Process. The Peace Process is practically an ugly or dirty word. It doesn't convince anybody from the spectrum from center to right and perhaps even slightly left of center and the so-called Peace Camp has been diminished and it's practically leaderless. So these are the conditions and if you add to it the regional conditions that, again, if you do not

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have pedagogically enlightened leadership, you can always give it the interpretation that suits you and the interpretation is again that these are revolutionary times when we need to be conservatives. We need not to move, not to budge because the whole concept, the whole notion of finality, which is what brought us into the Peace Process, is preposterous in this Middle East, because everything is interim. Everything is in flux and you want here to have something final, is that when the fragility of the Arab States is being exposed, or the concept of the Arab State is being exposed in such a way, is that such a brilliant idea to create another state? So that's the kind of discourse that is gaining ground in these conditions. Of course, an enlightened leadership, one has a vision that sees what lies ahead of us and sees the corrosive effect of the Palestinian problem for Israel within itself and with regard to the international community, can use the same conditions to say, okay, we have now a window of opportunity and the Arab World is now concerned with ISIS and Arab World is concerned with the rise of different threats and perhaps Iran, etc., what have you. And let us now create a regional coalition for to bring an end to the Israel-Palestinian dispute, but this kind of discourse is not a hegemonic discourse. It's not the most powerful one within the Israeli political system right now.

Lara Friedman: Thank you. Khaled, I want to go in a little bit more micro in terms of what's happening in Jerusalem. I was there two weeks ago. I was talking to friends of mine who have teenage kids and they're worried about their kids, not being able to keep them off the streets. What is going on? Why are people so angry and where does this take the Palestinians of East Jerusalem?

12:50

Khaled Elgindy: Well I think it's not a coincidence that the two most, the areas that have been most prone to violence over the past year are Gaza and East Jerusalem, which are also the most isolated and in most ways, also neglected by the so-called Peace Process, or such as it was. The context for what's happening in Jerusalem is, of course, there's a historical, there's a history of separate and unequal treatment and there are numerous reports and analyses on the discriminatory policies by Israel in terms of housing, taxes, residency. One very dramatic statistic to put in perspective, I think the sense of an existential threat that Palestinians feel in Jerusalem is...we've had something like 14,000 ID residency revocations since 1967, since almost half a century of Israeli occupation. More than half of those have been in the last ten years. So we've had this history of discriminatory policies, but we've seen a great intensification of the economic and political and social isolation and internal fragmentation of Palestinians in Jerusalem. And part of that trend has been really the elimination of Palestinian institutions.

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Many of you might recall a document called the Road Map that had required Israel to reopen a number of Palestinian social and political institutions, cultural institutions in Jerusalem and, of course, that never happened. What's happened is quite the opposite. There's been a concerted effort by Israeli central government authorities and by municipal authorities to ban, prohibit almost any display or manifestation of Palestinian social, cultural, political identity, or any manifestation of Palestinian or Arab heritage in Jerusalem is manifestly you know sort of there's a severe crackdown on that very, you know, on any such manifestations. And at the same time, Palestinians I think feel abandoned by their leaders. The PA, of course, doesn't operate in Jerusalem and we no longer have prominent leaders like the late Faisal Hussein, can pick up the mantle of Jerusalem and actually be national leaders at the same time. So there's a real lack of leadership. There are no institutions. There are economic deprivations. There is social inequalities, discriminations at almost every level and, of course, the ongoing fragmentation and sort of internal colonization of the settlements and the Wall. So, Jerusalem is, Palestinians are somebody who is completely sort of isolated and economically suffocated and so in a way, all that's left for Palestinian Jerusalemites by way of institutions and identity is Al-Aqsa and religion. I don't mean to over-simplify, but you know, in the absence of other mechanisms or institutions or something to hold onto, there are no national institutions, those are you know targeted by Israeli authorities. So, religion and symbols like a Al-Aqsa become very central and I think people cling to these primordial forms of identity and it is part of a trend I think maybe mirrored on the Israeli side of a kind of religion-ification of this conflict in a way that is extremely dangerous, I think.

17:00

Lara Friedman: Thanks. Shlomo, I want to come back to you for a second. One of the ways Netanyahu has sold himself in office when there hasn't been much hope for progress on peace or much interest in it, is that it's sort of a bargain he's making, don't worry. I'll keep things stable. You'll be secure. Don't worry that settlements are continuing and all of that. With what's happening right now, this intensification, first you had Gaza and now you've got this intensification in Jerusalem, the sense of threat at home. People are talking about war at home. People are applying for gun permits in larger numbers. They're talking about guards at synagogues. How does that affect him domestically and also to go back to my first question a little bit, to sort of hone in, if he is responsible about trying to lower the flames in Jerusalem, not just around the temple, Mount Haram al-Sharif, but in general. What can he be doing, given what Khaled has just said is the mere image in Israel of anger and racism and all of that?

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Shlomo Ben-Ami: Well I think that Netanyahu is much more a politician than a statesman. His mode of thinking is one of a politician. He needs to cater to his political power base, to cultivate it, to go back to it whenever he makes any initiative that might be seen as too bold by his constituency and this is what he is doing right now. He came to office and he based his premierships on two assets. One, the claim that with him there was always security. Admittedly, he was always very averse in terms of waging war and the case of Gaza recently was not characteristic of his eight now nine years of premiership. But we saw that this asset has collapsed, because of Gaza, now because of Jerusalem and the signals of a new Intifada. And the second thing that he had always as an asset, as a political asset was the economy. So these two things are in crisis right now. Both the economy that for the first time in many years, the last quarter, gave negative growth, which was nothing of that kind helped with Netanyahu before. So now he has to deal with these two issues. He would try, in my view, to maintain the rhetoric. He is going to have to do quite a balancing act, a difficult balancing act; maintain the rhetoric to rally his constituency around him, but be extremely careful in not losing control. Because he's already now in electoral mode. Though the government is still there, all the parties are now positioning themselves to possible elections not too far from now. So, this is what you are going to see. You are not going to see any bold move. He's not the man of bold moves.

He's not the...and he's not sufficiently opportunistic. When, you know, the kind of Sharon that was not an ideal or it was somebody that would change political colors that would change coalitions, would change political bases. With Netanyahu it is always, always the same political base. If you want to make peace, you need to shift your political power base and he's not built to do that. Sharon did it. Forgive me if I give you an example from another latitude. In Columbia, for example, now there is a Peace Process and they have a president that was elected by the right of center and now that he is in the middle of the Peace Process, he was reelected by the left of center. He lost his traditional constituency and he changed it. Netanyahu is not that kind of leader. He would stick to his constituency and this doesn't promise much for the Peace Process.

21:35

Lara Friedman: Khalil, following up on that, so Bibi's in a tough position as he faced this crisis. Where is Abbas? Again, your polling showed that in the month after the Gaza War ended, you had increased popularity for Abbas and Fatah and yet, and decreased for Haniyeh and Hamas and yet still support for Hamas and Haniyeh higher. You have today Abbas seemingly in a very difficult position of being unable to exert any real leadership in Jerusalem and always being accused of incitement if

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he tries to in any way appeal to Palestinian public opinion on that. Where does this go for him?

Khalil Shikaki: Abbas has lost significant legitimacy as a result of the Gaza War. Hamas certainly has gained a lot of popular support. Hamas today is more popular today than it was in 2006 when it won the elections. If Palestinians go to elections today, it is certain that Hamas would win these elections. It is certain that Haniyeh would win a presidential election against Abbas. And so, without negotiations or viable negotiations, Abbas is forced to...and, of course, since Abbas is strongly opposed to violence and he sincerely believes that violence is destructive to Palestinian interest, he's only left with one choice, which is to go to the UN. His attempt to go to the UN essentially is paradoxical, because if he is indeed successful in pursuing this in terms of gaining popular legitimacy out of it, it will be because both the US and Israel will oppose it and it looks like both Israel and the US will indeed oppose it. Assuming that he continues with this approach and at this moment, it doesn't seem that he has any other alternative. This could very well bring about American and Israeli sanctions, economic sanctions, which means the PA will not be able to continue to pay salaries or to gradually function and it will be in a similar situation where Hamas has been for a while since Sissi has been closing the tunnels. This will weaken the capacity of the Palestinian authority; this will weaken Abbas and it will certainly increase the appeal and support of more radical factions within Fattah. Abbas' loss of legitimacy is effecting his ability to control Fattah, not only to influence Hamas, but also to control Fattah. Fattah grassroot today are certainly behind most of the tensions that are taking place in the West Bank against Israel, the efforts to demonstrate against Israel occupation are organized mostly by Fattah, not by Hamas.

This is also true in Jerusalem, although Jerusalem does have and the Holy Places, do have a certain religious aspect to them, it's actually more nationally religious aspect. The Israel de facto attempts to change the status quo as perceived by the Palestinians in Haram al-Sharif is certainly something that is leading nationalists. You know that the attack on the synagogue has been carried out by two young men who come from a background that is extremely nationalist and secularist. They do not belong to Hamas and it seems that their behavior is a reflection of this growing, heightened threat perception about Al-Aqsa and the Holy Places. So, we are in a situation where I believe Abbas does not have too many options without someone...he still controls the Palestinian Security Services, which means that the likelihood that there would be a Third Intifada similar to the second Intifada is not very high, as long as the PA exists, as long as the Palestinian Security Services and the Israeli Security Services continue to cooperate, which is something that I believe will continue to be the case until or unless Israel and the US decides to cut off funds. If and when that happens, then this security coordination will cease and the

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Palestinian Authority's capacity to be able to use a security service effectively will diminish over time and we will see ourselves in a Third Intifada. In that case, Abbas will become totally irrelevant. So without legitimacy, he's seeking a UN approach that might give him legitimacy, but it could very well bring about the end of the Palestinian Authority and put us back on the road to a major violent confrontation with the Israelis.

26:48

Lara Friedman: So, Dan, that brings us to you and the US piece of it. Shlomo's explained by Bibi is really not politically in a position to do anything daring on the peace issue. Khalil has explained by Abbas doesn't have a legitimacy, even if he has the desire, which is not clear to do something. The question this city always is, is the US about to launch a new peace initiative? I get the question every day from journalists and I tell them, "I could tell you, but then I'd have to kill you." But the question is, are we on the verge of seeing something? Should the US get involved again and if it were to get involved, what does it hope to achieve with the circumstances that have been described here?

27:28

Dan Kurtzer: Well it appears from outside Washington, where I now live, that the town is beset by a severe case of paralysis on four issues related to your question. Number one, on an analytical side, which is, is this situation amenable to trying to bring about negotiations toward peace? On the one hand there are those who argue that there has to be a process and there are others, and I subscribe to this view, that believe we are not going to be able to bring about negotiations with the current constellation of political forces in the region. It's just not going to happen now. The second issue which is governed by paralysis here, is politics, which you all know as well as I, everything has now become politicized. If the administration thought about doing something, even well intentioned and even brilliant, it would be subjected to tremendous pressure politically, especially as control of Congress changes. Third, it's a town beset by paralysis over priorities. Is this an administration that really does want to pivot away from the Middle East? Can't, but if it's thinking about deemphasizing what we're doing in the Middle East, can it afford to even do that when you have ongoing negotiations with Iran over a nuclear program, when you have the challenge of ISIS, when you have the unfinished business of the Arab revolutions and when you have the unfinished business of this Peace Process. And what that leads to is the fourth area of paralysis, which is policy and that gets to your question, Lara. Clearly we have a Secretary of State, even though we've been at a pause for the last six months or so, believes that the application of additional diplomatic effort might actually bring about a breakthrough, believes that there might

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be a case for persuasion to bring Netanyahu and Abbas to the table. But that's going to be a hard case to prove.

It's hard to prove for the reasons that we've heard from my three colleagues here and it makes no sense under current circumstances that the United States would invest a tremendous amount of effort to do a diplomatic initiative that is almost guaranteed to fail. There is an alternative. Now, there are a lot of alternatives. There are Plan B through Z, none of them works. You have nutty ideas out there, such as those propagated by some within the Israeli Cabinet, an ex-part of the West Bank and give every autonomy and then they'll be happy. You have other ideas of One State Solution, which is not going to work. This may be a time in which we forego process and we think about fixing our own policy. In other words, to articulate what it is we stand for, 47 years after the '67 War, we don't know what we stand for on the core issues. Secondly, it may be an opportunity without expecting to get to negotiations in which we actually exact consequences for the behaviors that we criticize verbally. We talk about how bad incitement is on the Palestinian side or how bad violence is or how bad corruption is, but in practical terms, we don't do anything. And on the Israeli side, we talk about how bad settlements are and we don't do anything. And so if you want to talk about one of the main reasons why our credibility, not just in the Peace Process but across the board has tanked in this region is because we are talking too much and not doing anything. So it may be a point to which we can articulate a policy; we can talk to exact consequences for the behaviors that we don't particularly support. We might start thinking about what I call deconstructing the occupation. Right now after 47 years, there is a dependency of the Palestinian economy on Israel, which is terribly debilitating and if we're thinking about creating a Palestinian state that will be viable and can basically walk on its own two feet, you have to start now before you get to a point where you launch that state where you think about Palestinian jobs and Palestinian investment and Palestinian export capacity, and, and, and. So there's a lot of things to do, but I don't think in my own personal view that this is a moment to launch a new initiative. I think such an initiative would be predicated on bad analysis and it would ultimately fail. It is a time to fix American policy, however.

32:27

Lara Friedman: Khaled, that's a good segue to you. You're allowed to applaud. That's fine. Khaled has a piece yesterday, I believe, about this very much what Dan is talking about and Khaled, I actually took a note from it. You said you actually didn't despair completely of the Two State Solution, but you said if we're going to go in that direction, first and foremost any new architecture, this is a quote, "for the Peace Process must include genuine mechanisms of accountability." And I thought about this and I thought about what Shlomo said about Peace Process having become a

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dirty word for Israelis. I think it has for Palestinians, as well, at least empty words if not dirty words. Do you want to expand a little on the idea of what accountability would mean?

Khaled Elgindy: Yeah. I mean I think, you know, people used to, the main critique of the Peace Process was always that it's all process and no peace. But the reality today is actually much more dangerous. There is not even a process. There is nothing that people can point to, you know, for all of their flaws and I'm an enormous critic of the Oslo Process, which was deeply, deeply flawed and imbalanced, as well as the Road Map. But at least there was a modicum of mutuality. There were mutual obligations. There were some albeit sort of, I guess, ineffective mechanisms of accountability. There were at least benchmarks. Today, there is nothing of the kind. It's a free-for-all. The parties are really just at the mercy of sheer power. It's just a situation on the ground where power dictates everything and, of course, the stronger party is capable of pretty much doing just about anything and because of the politics, because of the limitations imposed by American domestic politics, there's a real reluctance to try to prevent those things. I mean, I was struck during the Gaza War how not only ineffective American diplomacy was, but how muted American criticism was in the face of massive, massive civilian casualties and, you know, even George W. Bush during that period was far more critical and far more assertive and far more willing to tell the Israelis enough is enough. He even used that sort of language and the Obama Administration has been far more timid. So when you don't have any mechanisms by which to constrain the parties and they're not staked in any process together, then you get this sort of free-for-all and I think that's the process that I think is missing. The non-dirty word, or the non-negative aspect of process. Because we've had these kind of vacuous processes, you know, for their own sake, but we haven't had real genuine mechanisms of accountability that when one side is doing things against the stated goal of two states, there's a consequence.

On the contrary, we see the opposite. We see the weaker side, the Palestinians being punished for actions that are perfectly in line with a Two State Solution, like going to the UN and depositing the Two State Solution with the UN and reaffirming it, while actions that go completely against the Two State Solution are tolerated and even acquiesced in. So that's sort of an imbalance and it may not be possible to correct it, just given our own politics in this country, in which case then, there needs to be much more creative thought about bringing other actors into the process. But, I, you know, I don't want to put all of the onus on the United States. I think there is a real leadership failure on the part of the Palestinians and if I were advising the Palestinian leadership, which I'm not, but if I were, I would say now is not the time for diplomacy and negotiations. Now is the time to fix the domestic house, your own house. Reestablish some sort of Palestinian national consensus on these core issues. Reestablish these institutions that have been eviscerated or abandoned.

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Reform them. Learn some lessons from the Arab Awakening and its failure, internalize some of those lessons to avoid going down those same, you know, falling in the same pit holes.

37:18

Lara Friedman: Well you gave us a good segue. I want to take us now to the question of the way forward and at least two of the people on this panel, both Shlomo and Dan, have written in very great detail about what they see as a way forward, which requires expanding the diplomatic table, the US giving some of the leadership. Shlomo, why don't you talk about this first, but I want to engage both of you and then I want to ask for reactions. So why don't you go ahead?

Shlomo Ben-Ami: Okay. Thank you. I am convinced, in fact I have been convinced since our failure to reach a settlement during the Camp David process, that our failure was a defining failure, i.e., it is something that is built into the nature of this conflict and that these two parties negotiating around the same table, cannot reach a settlement. They simply cannot reach a settlement. It has to do with political constraints of both parties, the dysfunctional political system that Israel has is such that if a prime minister is able to square the circle between his coalition and the minimal requirements that the Palestinians have for a settlement, he will get a Nobel Prize in Physics, not in Peace. That's impossible to square that circle. It has never been possible, even when we had left wing governments. So let us be frank and honest with history. Netanyahu might be labeled as one of the bad guys and I would second the proposition, if he's labeled as one of the bad guys, but the good guys also failed. They also failed because of what I said before, the practical impossibility of reconciling what the maximum that the political system can produce with a minimum that is required for the core issues or the core essence of Palestinian nationalism and, therefore, we need to change the paradigm. The solution is the Two State Solution. The Two State Solution, in my view, the salvation of the Zionist Project. Without it, there is no meaning to that project.

It would be diluted into something else unacceptable, some kind of South African situation, but without a South African solution. Because I do not see that Israeli minority would accept what the white minority accepted eventually in South Africa. And, therefore, the idea is good. The idea is important. The idea is the only salvation of the Zionist Project, but you need to change the paradigm. It cannot be direct negotiations under American supervision, given the constraints that America operates under within its domestic politics. The recent Kerry process, one got the impression that the Secretary of State or the US as such, treats diplomacy and force as distinct faces of foreign policy. They are not distinct faces of foreign policy. You

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need to create a synthesis between the old diplomatic initiatives and the leverages that you might have. Otherwise, why have the US as mediator?

We can have Norway. We can have San Marino. If you don't have power, you do not use your leverage, than what's the point of mediating? I mean, if you look at the history of peace processes where America was involved in the region, i.e., with Israel and the Arabs, the only successes that we had or you had, was when you used the art of manipulation and arm twisting. That was done with Kissinger in the first disengagement agreement with Israel assessment stuff. Every kid of a ten year old, kid in Israel knew suddenly they were reassessment. It became very, very famous for everybody. So this is one. James Baker and George Bush brought, dragged the Shamir against his will to the Madrid Peace Conference and Carter was practically deaf and blind to all kinds of lobbies around and brought to us, which is one of the major strategic assets that Israel has today, and that is the peace with Egypt.

So I think if America is not capable of superseding or overcoming that paralysis that Dan Kurtzer spoke about, why keep the monopoly of the process? Open the table. Why is that Iran can be addressed through the 5P +1 and North Korea by the six party talks and Israel-Palestinian, which is a major conflicts that affects the region, that affects a close, intimate ally of the US and the US would like to see a solution for this intimate ally, why does this continue to being a monopoly of the US when you do not have the tools in the sense of your domestic political constraints? So I think that I frankly feel embarrassed when I see Israel's Prime Ministers in the Oval Office teaching a lesson on camera to the President of the United States. How can this be accepted and, therefore, I think that if you do not change your ways, relinquish, drop the monopoly and bring in others, maybe inject a sense of life, an elixir of life to the quartet. Go the UN. Go the UN Security Consulate. I do believe, for example, that at some point since I do not trust direct negotiations because of many reason that I say and you yourself just say, Khalil, about the Palestinian leadership and others, let's go to the UN. When the British got fed up of the Middle East in 1947, they went to the UN and created a partition plan. So I think that a UN Security Council resolution that turns the Clinton Peace, it seems that the Clinton Peace parameters are a peace initiative, into a Security Council Resolution that would be the internationally accepted interpretation of 424 is, might not bring immediately a solution, but would change the internationally accepted paradigm and also for the parties afford a solution to this conflict might be. And it would create, it would unleash all kinds of reaction and processes. It would move the process somewhere and then decide on ways for the implementation. You can bring the parties to negotiate around this UN Security Council resolution and then come forward with bridging proposals. I mean, there is no, nothing is moving and I do believe that you should not, we should not internationalize the conflict. We should

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internationalize the solution because there is no other solution. That is, there is another one, unilateral. A convergence plan was the ticket upon which Olmert was elected as prime minister and it is a very popular idea in Israel. Why? Because people want peace but they don't want to negotiate. They don't want to negotiate. They don't trust the Palestinians. That's a different matter than negotiating with an Arab State.

The problem with negotiating with the Palestinians is negotiating with a movement. With a movement, it's a different stuff. When you negotiate with a state, there was no, almost no problem when it comes even to Assad. What trust did we have with Assad? I mean the Oslo, the Oslo people say you need to build trust. You do not to build trust in order to make peace. You need to have respect for the other side. What trust did the Germans build with the French before they made peace? What trust did DeGaulle make with the, develop with Algerians before he decided to abandon the territories? You need to respect the other side and there is no respect. You respect states with armies. You do not respect the Palestinians. That's the problem here and also, there is this fear that seems to negotiate with a movement. You don't know what will happen with a movement later on. It might develop into something else, whereas we understand it's different. Many reasons why I don't believe for a moment that there is the possibility of reaching a peace settlement between Israelis and Palestinians around whatever. Forget it. So let us find a different paradigm. The solution is the same. What was so bad with Upomazan's initiative for a UN bid for settle? It was great, if the US would have accepted that and lead the Israelis into seeing the real meaning of that. I mean creating a Palestinian state and then negotiating between the two states, that so far unsolvable or irresolvable issues of narrative. We need to change. This is a tractor that is stuck in the mud. By giving, pushing for more gas, it only sinks deeper. You need to take the tractor, move it to another track and start the engine once again.

48:01

Lara Friedman: Thank you. I'm guessing that everybody at the table is in violent disagreement or violent agreement with you on that subject. Dan, I want to pick up on the issue of expanding it. You wrote an article about this recently, sort of laying out a plan, which was very interesting. You may want to talk about that. What I'd actually like you to pick up on was one of the things at the very end of that article, which was the question of Hamas, which is you know, we've tried over and over to go forward keeping Hamas on the outside. Is that possible going forward? Is that something that's desirable going forward? You know, Shlomo just said you're negotiating with a movement. When you're negotiating with a movement and leaving out another significant player, you know, where does that leave us if we aren't able,

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broadening, bringing Europeans and UN in, why don't we bring in Hamas and if we don't, what happens?

48:51

Daniel Kurtzer: Well first of all, I would offer one comment on what Shlomo said, which is if we all go home today remembering nothing else than the five-minute speech of Shlomo Ben-Ami, we will have spent our day wisely, because it really does encapsulate and quite succinct, but very serious terms two aspects of American policy, which need to be thought about by our decision makers: number one is what I have called informally backbone. He used the word leverage. But it's the idea that if you're going to have a policy and you're going to be involved, whether alone or with others, then you have to be willing to take and implement hard decisions, even if they are very challenging with respect to your politics as well as your, some of your other preferences. Secondly on the question of expansion of this process, at lunch Bob Pearson, our former Ambassador to Turkey, talked about the fact that when the United States speaks, even in a world where our credibility has been called into question, there's still a degree to which people listen to us. I call it convening power.

The United States still has, or still should have, convening power, but that doesn't necessarily mean monopoly power and some of the examples that Shlomo indicated whether it was keeping other parties away from Camp David in the year 2000, I was serving in Cairo at the time as Ambassador and I don't know if the Egyptians would have been helpful or not. But I do know how frustrated they were by being kept in the dark by what was happening at Camp David and how they might have been helpful had we brought them into our thinking and listened to some of their own ideas. What about the Arab peace initiatives since 2002? It's not necessarily a solution, but it represents a cosmic change in Arab State policy and both Israel and the United States have basically ignored it for 12 years. Paid a little bit of lip service to it at Annapolis. Why? When a large part of the Arab world is saying to you, "We are no longer fighting the battle of 1948. We are now ready to make peace on the basis of 1967." This should have been the booster stage for a movement towards peace. So I think, Shlomo, I can't agree with you more. On your question and I'm sorry to take so long.

Lara Friedman: That's okay.

Daniel Kurtzer: On your question, Lara, I also mentioned at lunch that I had written a dissent cable back when I was a junior officer in the Foreign Service and this was when it was unpopular to think about talking to the PLO and I argued that we ought to be talking to the PLO, not because I particularly liked them at the time. They were

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an organization that was involved in terror. They had not renounced terror. But if you're gonna try to make peace and reach accommodation, you've got to talk to a lot of people whose views and whose actions you don't necessarily agree with and I think we may be at that stage now with Hamas. Hamas has a lot of work to do internally. They are a terrorist organization and, you know, however we want to beautify what they say they do, the fact is that they support and are actively engaged in terrorism. Their charter is abhorrent. It's absolutely abhorrent and there's no way of beautifying that or prettifying it.

On the other hand, a large part of the Palestinian population, Khalil has suggested today that the majority of the Palestinian population would vote Hamas into office. So who are we going to make peace with? Who's going to be on the other side of the table if we want people to be able to represent and reflect the views of the "enemy," than both societies have to put forward negotiating teams or a negotiating team that represents the full spectrum of use. Now, I would go back to 2006. I think the United States made a strategic error in 2006 by equating Hamas' victory with Hamas', I think was felt to be Hamas' takeover of the PLO. It was no, no such thing. They won a majority of the legislative elections. If we didn't want to talk to Hamas, there was no reason to punish the Palestinian authority for our unwillingness to talk to Hamas and we may be at the same point now.

If there's a unity government at some point, as long as that government's policies and positions are still in line with those of the international community, let's continue to do work and maybe it would socialize and begin to bring some realism into Hamas' policies as they become responsible for what happens in the political diplomatic sphere. Is this hard to do politically? Yeah. It's real hard to do politically, especially in this town at this time. But if we're not ready to do hard things politically, then as Shlomo said, give way to somebody else. We are still the United States of America and we ought to be able to do these things and maintain our principles and advance the cause of peace.

54:31

Lara Friedman: You really should applaud for everybody. It's only nice. All right, Khalil, that's actually a good segue into what I wanted to ask you about. You talked earlier about the diminishing legitimacy of Abbas. You know, we've tried peacemaking via Abbas. There's been sort of this mythology that he will become more legitimate when he can deliver a peace agreement and in the meantime, we don't have to worry about it. It fits in with the same mythology that says we can ignore Gaza and once we have a peace agreement, the enthusiasm for that agreement, we'll just roll Gaza into it. As we move forward with Abbas losing legitimacy really every day and I saw something interesting in your poll, as well. I

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haven't seen this contrasted before. The Reconciliation government basically is failing and your poll said that Palestinians don't want a Reconciliation government. They want a Unity government. So this sort of game that we played of well you can have a government that doesn't actually have Hamas in it and that way, you don't anger the international community, but it doesn't satisfy Palestinians. So, assuming that we do broaden this out, somebody takes the initiative, Europe, the US, whatever, what is the partner they should be engaging? Who is the partner on the Palestinian side? What is the, what is it compiled from?

55:45

Khalil Shikaki: In a context in which Abbas is able to talk to Hamas more effectively than he is currently doing. In a context in which there is indeed a Unity government. Hamas will have...and particularly if the US or the West, or some of the Western, West European countries are willing to engage Hamas in a discussion, I think in this environment, Hamas will have absolutely no objection to allow Abbas to negotiate with Israel. They will have conditions and so on, but I don't see them having...and Abbas' legitimacy would increase considerably if he is able to unify the West Bank and Gaza and to bring Hamas on board. This is something that for the Palestinians, the national unity is an extremely important value and the question then, to negotiate what? This Israeli government and the Palestinian authority just don't trust each other. The Israelis and the Palestinians believe there is absolutely no point in negotiating with each other and they're right. No Palestinian in his right mind would accept Netanyahu's conditions and Netanyahu will certainly not accept Palestinian conditions. So, which brings me back to what Shlomo said.

For the Palestinians right of conflict, the issue of using international organizations is not something that has been on the agenda of Israelis or Americans for a long time and with the US failure for over 20 years to bring about an end to this conflict, I think it would be very productive and in fact, I think it would also help the legitimacy of the process if the international community is involved in whatever way, including going to the UN Security Council with ideas on how to resolve it, based on what the previous negotiations have led us to. The problem with the US efforts so far have been that over the 20 years, these negotiations have been on and off and every time they're on, we start from scratch. But it is the US that has been mediating all these efforts. Why is it that every new US Administration wants to start from scratch and the idea that we would bring about all these ideas, which is what Dan talked about, the US should articulate this policy and these policies, I believe should be based on what Palestinians and Israelis have been doing so far, where the negotiating positions of the two sides have been, since Camp David. That could be certainly a Security Council resolution. Would the US allow this to happen? So even if the Palestinians are to do their job, which is what Khaled wants Palestinians to do. This

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is not necessarily going to end occupation. This is not necessarily going to make the lives of the Palestinians better.

For Palestinians, the most important thing is to end Israeli occupation and at the moment, there are no clear ways as to how this could happen and Palestinians are grabbing with this issue. At the moment, violence is very popular and this could be indeed what Palestinians might be doing in the next five to 10 years, but this will probably not solve the problem as well. And so we will have to come back to the question, will the US lead? Will the US allow others to lead and so far the answer is no. The US will not lead. The US will not allow others to lead. The US will not even allow the Security Council to vote on what Abbas wants. Admission of Palestinians into as a member state. How does that threaten peace and security in the world? Why would the US use its veto over this? Stating what the international community has said so many times that negotiations should start with the baseline of 1967. The occupation should end two years down the road. What's in that that the international community haven't said time and again? Why would the US still veto that? It's very clear that there is a problem with the US, that it will not act, will not allow others to act and I think the Palestinians certainly need to do their own job. Fattah and Hamas need to work together. The international communities need to revise its views about how to deal with Hamas and to engage Hamas. But ultimately for Palestinians and Israelis to end the occupation and establish peace between them, there has to be a viable process that is either led by the US or is led by international institutions.

1:00:52

Lara Friedman: Thank you. I have a follow up for Khaled, but first I want to say we're going to up this up to questions imminently. So, I believe there's a mike there and maybe over there. Yes. So if you want to start getting up, I will prepare to call on you in a moment. Khaled, I want to follow up on this. You know, we're all talking very much in the old paradigm of peace, two states, based on '67, which I think most of us still believe is the only possibility for a solution. But there is a growing zeitgeist on both sides that says no, on the Israeli side says, "We're gonna keep it all. We'll deal with it. Maybe there's no solution. On the Palestinian side, which says, even from people who would say, "I used to support two states," but now find '67 is off the table. It's '48. One state. I was looking at Khalil's most recent pole again and you know, you can say optimistically, only 29% of Palestinians say they're ready to get rid of the two state option, go one state. But that's almost a third. Where do you think that...how serious a trend do you think that is and how much does that trend potentially get in the way of progress or will it disappear if there is real progress?

Khaled Elgindy: That's the million dollar question. You know, the question I often ask to Israelis, Palestinians or Americans is, you know, we always talk about the window

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closing on a Two State Solution. When exactly does the clock strike midnight and you know, poof, it's over? And I've never gotten a straight answer from anyone. No one can point to any specific tangible indicators or metrics that would say, "Aha! Now it's too late for a Two State Solution." It may actually...it's a... basically, I think a Two State Solution ceases to be a possibility when one or when a consensus of one side or both decide that it's no longer desirable or feasible and we're moving in that direction. I think both sides are moving in that direction. The consensus or the extent to which there was at least a political consensus among Israelis and Palestinians, I think was always very precarious to begin with. It was never seen as the best option. It was always seen by Israelis and Palestinians as the least worst option and I think it still is the least worst option. It's not ideal, I think. But, there is an alternative to a Two State Solution, which is a One State reality, the reality that we now live in.

Part of the problem I think with the One State advocates is that it, there, you know, the One State, it sounds great but it's not yet feasible, certainly in political terms and it's not clear to me how we would get from where we are today to that sort of idealic moment in the future when a majority of Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs say, "We want to live together in a single state." So, it's entirely possible that we could have seen the end of a two state, the possibility of two states, even before alternatives sort of come on line. Alternatives being like a One State Solution. So, we're, we may very well be in that sort of no-man's land, if you will, of options. But, you know, at the end of the day, as long as people believe that a Two State Solution is still possible, then it will remain the go to sort of default, um, at least politically, solution. No one has put forward that I know any plan or political program much less a movement around a One State Solution. So that may happen at some point in a few generations, but I don't see it happening now. But if I could just make one point on the Palestinian leadership question, because there's a bit of a paradox and, you know, in my last response to the previous question, I sort of put the onus back on the Palestinians. I want to kind of now do the reverse and put the onus back on the United States, because there is a fundamental paradox that is at play. I was asked a couple weeks ago by some folks in the administration how, you know, how can we strengthen this Palestinian leadership? What can we do for Abbas? And it occurred to me that there's actually nothing that the United States can do. There's no way to strengthen Abbas and the PA without also triggering a crisis within American policy and politics, without challenging some fundamental policy problems like the kind that Dan and others referred to and so we need to update those policies. For example, we, if we're going to normalize Hamas; if we're going to strengthen one way paradoxically to strengthen the PA and Mahmoud Abbas is by normalizing Hamas. I think that would truly make him a president of all Palestinians and not simply the mayor of Area A, which is very often he's seen. So he would be presidential in a very real sense. But, you can't do that. You can't bring Hamas into the PLO or the PA

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without also triggering political and/or economic sanctions and so those policy contradictions have to be addressed, even before we can talk about strengthening the PA.

1:06:46

Lara Friedman: Thank you. All right. We have about 20 minutes for Q&A. I'm gonna take two from here and then here and back. I'm going to ask that you genuinely ask a question and I'm known as a tough moderator, so if you don't, I will interrupt you rudely. If you want to introduce yourself and I ask that you actually direct your question to specific panelists, otherwise, we'll do long rounds and we'll have time for one question. So you both go ahead.

Male: Okay. Thanks. My question is to Mr. Kurtzer. You mentioned that a One State Solution is not doable. The Palestinians really live on one state, on one land and if we could get the respect that Shlomo was talking about, well then they have to establish that one state and if still doable, do you would recommend that the Palestinians to declare on one side a state and get the world recognition for that?

Molly Holloman: Hi. My name's Molly Holloman and my question is either for Ambassador Kurtzer or Ambassador Ben-Ami. My question is regarding the timing of Protective Edge and what that reveals or reaffirms about Israeli strategy. On the eve of Protective Edge, it seemed pretty clear and we've discussed here that Hamas was very desperate and my understanding is that it actually reconciled with Fatah out of that desperation and basically gave every concession that Abbas demanded and when Operation Protective Edge began, it was obvious that that would lead to a resurgence in Hamas' popularity. So my question is, what does that reveal or reaffirm about Israeli strategy and how that strategy is or is not connected to a grand strategy or policy? Thank you.

Lara Friedman: Thank you. Shlomo, do you want to go first?

Shlomo Ben-Ami: Of the Israeli strategy?

Lara Friedman: Yeah.

Shlomo Ben-Ami: I'm not sure the strategy in the sense that people normally understand what the strategy is. I don't think that there is a master plan with regard to the territories. There is; however, a psyche that addresses issues normally on the basis of worst case scenario. If this is a strategy, so this is a strategy. If the Iranians are going to have the bomb, so they are going to launch it against us. So that's that and therefore, you need to deploy your strategies it were or your response with

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regard to the Iranian bomb based on the worst case scenario. If you are to create the Palestinian state, so the worst case scenario would be that, yes, what you are seeing now in Gaza, you will see in Palestine. Therefore, the security requirements are going to be such that would clash frontally with what the Palestinian understands as a sovereign state. I mean you will go to the outer limits of the Palestinians' capacity to give you the kind of security that you want. How do I know that there is not such a thing as a national strategy? Because I remember of such a commission now that was put together and it is not the only one, by the way. There are a number of commissions that we tried to impress upon the government to assume some sort of national strategy. The one I participated in was one that I co-chaired with Efraim Halevi and we are working for a whole year and I heard now that there are another two or three that are trying to have some kind of influence on the government with different political shapes and colors. So if I would reduce the concept of national strategy to its minimum, I would say, and this is something that can be said about all governments, not only the current one and that is, a Jewish state or a state with Jewish majority. That is true about the left and the right as well. The wall, the so-called wall was not invented by Ariel Sharon. It was invented by Yitzhak Rabin, the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate that wanted to preserve the Jewish majority and if the Israeli right is reconciling itself to the idea of a Peace Process, it is because of the specter of a demographic doomsday. I am one who believes that Zionism was always more about the demography than about land and when there is a clash between these two concepts, traditionally the Zionist movement opted for the safety of demography instead of diluting its majority in a larger territory. And I still believe that this is possible, although now Netanyahu, who is just putting forward the bill in the Knesset that would put the emphasis on the Jewishness of the state, less so on its demographic nature and this is the kind of electoral mode I was trying to, I was referring to earlier.

1:12:20

Lara Friedman: Dan, do you want to add anything to that?

Dan Kurtzer: Look on the first question, I think Shlomo has articulated why a One State Solution simply won't be acceptable to the State of Israel. On the question of the timing of Protective Edge, we could have a whole panel on what went into the Gaza War and what came out of it and it's complicated. You obviously had the immediate precipitant of the kidnapping of three teens, which prompted a crackdown by Israel in the West Bank against Hamas. Reaching a point at which Hamas and Gaza felt it couldn't allow the situation to continue and launched rockets, which reached a point in which Israel felt it couldn't allow that to...so you had a kind of action/reaction spiral. This did occur, as you suggested, and the question against the backdrop of a beginning of a reconciliation process, which the Israeli government

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had come out strongly opposed and that has given rise to the idea that it was somehow in the back of Israel's minds to use an occasion to undermine that. I don't think you go to war for that reason. My problem with the war is that neither side entered it with any idea of what was going to emerge by way of political success. So you end up with tremendous amount of human suffering, infrastructure destroyed, economic damage done to both societies. You end up with both sides claiming victory, because Israel says they restored deterrents and the Palestinians, the Hamas says they stood up as resistance. But in practical terms, neither side either articulated nor achieved any discernible political goal and we are essentially not just back where we started, but we're in worse conditions than where we started, which leads to the only conclusion which is that we're fated to have a fifth round of Israel/Hamas warfare, 2006, 2008, '12, '14 and at some point in the future until one side or the other or both decides what it is they want politically, try to achieve it short of war in a classic Clausewitzian way and then if you don't, you try to achieve it through war and at the end, you can then see whether or not you have been able to secure your political objectives through war. But neither side is even close to that and, therefore, in a sense all that's left here is the tragedy of human suffering.

1:16:17

Lara Friedman: Thanks. Let me take two questions from this side.

Peter Humphrey: Peter Humphrey for my former boss and Ambassador Kurtzer. It seems to me that Israel has maybe 15% Arab population?

Lara Friedman: It's 20.

Peter Humphrey: Twenty. And that's growing over time, because of differential birth rates. We're living with this fantasy that we're going to have some sort of land swaps? I mean, can you see the Shah's Party accepting even the gift of the Negev Desert for land swaps? It seems to me that's zero. There's no chance of that happening. There's also no chance of a...

Lara Friedman: I'm going to ask that you get to your question.

Peter Humphrey: ...of a cyanide type pull out. So that leaves us with only one solution and that's a Jewish minority within the new Palestinian state. Is there any chance that the PLO would make the grand gesture and say to the Jewish settlers, "Welcome to your new country. If you don't like it, go back home to Israel."

Lara Friedman: I think that one's for Khalil or Khaled, or both.

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Khalil Shikaki: I don't know what the Palestinian authority would say to that. I would say to that, yes, of course. If Israel wants to return to the laws of 1967 and if the settlers want to live in the Palestinian state, then great. I don't think there will be a lot of Palestinian resistance to the idea. However, I doubt very much that settlers will be happy with that and I doubt very much that the Israeli government would be happy with that. We did actually a few surveys amongst settlers, in which we asked that question. Would you be willing to live in a Palestinian state? Only 15% of the settlers said they would be willing to live in a Palestinian state and I don't think any Israeli government would want Israeli settlers, Jews, to live on a Palestinian state in given the history of the conflict. It's understandable. There would be a great deal of security concerns, particularly early on, after resolving the issues. I think that the land swap is probably an easier solution than this one.

Lara Friedman: Anybody wants to add to that? You don't have to.

Khaled Elgindy: Well, I'll just jump in and say that it's actually not a hypothetical. I mean, in the negotiations that I participated in and I think even at Annapolis, but even at Camp David and Taba, the idea was proposed by the...

Khalil Shikaki: Even before.

Khaled Elgindy: Even before.

Khalil Shikaki: I discussed it with (inaudible) in 1999.

1:17:57

Khaled Elgindy: Right. So, I mean and I, (inaudible) himself proposed that in the negotiations in 2008 with Tzipi Livni and the idea on its face was categorically rejected by the Israeli side. I think the problem is less on the Palestinian side, although there are, would be real obviously security and logistical issues.

Khalil Shikaki: And the bone of contention was not whether or not you would allow Israelis to stay in Palestine, but whether that these settlements would have a legal personality. Yes? The Israelis would insist that the Palestinian would treat them as any other village that can...that's the...

Lara Friedman: Right. I owe you a question over here. My apologies.

Dewey Warner: Hi. Dewey Warner. I'm a student at the University of Wisconsin. I guess my question is geared toward Mr. Kurtzer and Mr. Ben-Ami and this is in regards to changing the negotiator of any Peace Process from the United States, the

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United Nations. First, how do you get Israel to submit to that sort of process when it seems that it would serve Israel's interests a lot better maintaining the US as lead moderator? And then furthermore, how do you ensure that, whatever results come out of that process are maintained when it seems pretty clear that one of the bigger weaknesses of the UN is actually enforcing its results?

Lara Friedman: You start.

Dan Kurtzer: You know, Resolution 242, which has been the basis of this Peace Process since 1967, was not accepted by everyone for quite a few years and so it is possible that if the UN is given a larger role to play, e.g., if some resolution is put forward, I would hope that with the support of the United States, I would even hope that we co-draft it, which has a more ample definition of terms of reference for a potential outcome, that becomes a new basis for negotiations, comes the new 242. It may not secure the agreement or approval of Israel or perhaps the Palestinians and others right away, because we're in a period of tense, political ferment in the region and it may be too difficult to expect that. That's why is said earlier that my preference for the United States to articulate its views now has nothing to do with an expectation that articulating those views is designed to get us to negotiations. I don't think negotiations are wise at the current moment and on the other hand, I think a UN resolution could be a very wise decision at this time and then it becomes a question for the political systems in Israel and Palestine to think about and debate and to fight over and ultimately to make a decision. So I don't know if it works immediately, but it can work over time.

1:20:59

Lara Friedman: All right. So we're gonna take the last three questions here very quickly all together. I ask you to make them quick questions and then I'm going to hand them off to the entire panel, starting with Khaled down the line here, because Khaled's gone last in every round. He can go first. And it's an opportunity to answer what you want to answer and make any last points you want to make.

Stephen Buck: Stephen Buck, retired Foreign Service Officer. The panel's been quite eloquent about the conditions in East Jerusalem and horrors in Israeli newspapers written about basically activities by the Israeli government to get people, get Arabs to leave East Jerusalem or B, you know, get settlers in there and so forth. That's the context. But if you look at the papers this week, you see everything about the violence, but almost nothing about the context. Why do you think that is and is there any likelihood for change?

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Moderator: Lara Friedman

Lara Friedman: Thank you. Context for the violence and the background. We're going to take all three of you at once.

Male: My name is Said Arikat. I'm a Palestinian journalist and my question is simple. Why, in your opinion, after 47 years of occupation, since 1967, there's been no movement within Israeli society that lives, and pre-'67 borders, against the occupation. There's such complacency. Almost outright support to the occupation while in fact a majority of those under 60 years of age have served in the occupied territory. I've known it. So my question to you is when are we likely to see a genuine homegrown movement among Israeli Jews that says, "Enough is enough."

Jake Aram: Thank you. My name is Jake Aram. My question is for Dr. Shikaki. You mentioned increase radicalism within Fatah. Who do you see as the next generation of political leaders within Fatah or in the West Bank in general? Thank you.

Lara Friedman: All right. So you guys can take any of those, all of them. We have four minutes to wind up. But, of course, we're gonna go...we can go over that a little, but I think people will stay. So, Khaled, why don't you go first?

Khaled: On the East Jerusalem context question, I think it's true. I mean, it's part of the tradition of the American political and media discourse on this issue to sort of see past the occupation. And many in Washington have even convinced themselves that there is no occupation in Jerusalem. Jerusalem after all is the annexed and eternal undivided capital of Israel. That is even though not officially recognized by US policy, that is more or less the default of most in the media and even in the punditry and even to some extent in the policy establishment where it's taken for granted that certain things in Jerusalem don't, or certain things that we don't like about the occupation don't apply in Jerusalem and you see that in the Peace Process where we've exempted Jerusalem from the Peace Process, from the Oslo process. I think there is some attempt now to compensate for that deficiency, but it's not going terribly well. So, you know, that invisibility I think is part and parcel of the US discourse in policy. And just quickly on the question of why there isn't an anti-occupation movement in Israel, my question would be why would there be? I mean, there hasn't been an enormous cost for maintaining the occupation economically, even security wise. I mean, there are occasional flare-ups, but there are things that I think by and large Israel can handle and is prepared to deal with in order to maintain the occupation in its various forms, whether in Gaza, through the blockade or in Jerusalem or in the rest of the West Bank.

1:24:56

Panel 4: After Gaza: Getting Back to the Peace Process

Shlomo Ben-Ami, Amb. Daniel Kurtzer, Khalil Shikaki, Khaled Elgindy

Moderator: Lara Friedman

Lara Friedman: I do want to interject here. There is an anti-occupation campaign in Israel. It's led by peace now.

Shlomo Ben-Ami: A word about Jerusalem. Well I think that when it comes to Jerusalem, there are a number of issues that play into the current situation. First, in spite of long years of the city being united as it were, as Israel's capital, it remained a divided city in many ways. It remained a city where the division might not be a through a frontier, a border, but yes, the levels of social and economic government and infrastructure and etc., etc. So that is a reality. That's been a reality that could not be overcome, even by the fact that the East Jerusalemite population forms part of Israel's Social Security system. There was always this discourse in Israel that because they get Social Security allowances, they will sort of behave themselves. Only I think not more than 40,000 out of 300,000 Palestinians in Jerusalem that have what is called Blue Identity Cards. That is Israeli identity cards, because they are all entitled to it, but only about 40,000 opted for that. So, both politically and as far as infrastructures, the city is divided and this goes against the political rhetoric and political discourse and you will hear much more on that in the coming elections, because you can see how Netanyahu is going back to the slogans of 1996, the perils that will divide Jerusalem and he would keep it united. This is one of the biggest lies in Israeli political discourse, I am afraid. The second question about an Israeli movement, well I think it would be unfair to say that there is not such a thing. There has always been such a thing and from Peace Now to all kind of NGOs, they are very, very active. Admittedly, it has been fading away since 2000. Since 2000, you have seen the decimation of the peace camp not only politically, but also socially and culturally and this is one of the effects of the crisis as it developed after in the year 2000. Bear in mind that when it comes to the territories, there is also, you know, I don't know what year was it that President Eisenhower warned the Americans of what he called then an industrial military complex.

Male: During his administration.

Shlomo Ben-Ami: When?

Male: Fifty-nine, 60.

Shlomo Ben-Ami: Sixty or sixty-one. And I think that do not focus merrily or exclusively on the settlements as the expression of Israel's occupation. It is a much wider, much more profound penetration and ownership of the territories through the mentality and the fact that many of the people that are in key positions come from the military establishment and when they go into politics, if they go to politics, many of them remain with the same kind of mindset. And there is also the economic control. I think that after Europe, Palestine is the second recipient of Israeli exports

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and much of our trade balance depends on the Paris Agreements that are, you know, you have the Palestinian side we spoke about and it changed them, etc. In fact, they are still there. The Paris Agreements whereby the economic, the Palestinian economy is dependent on the Israeli economy. But none of any of you is familiar with the economic history of South America, what they call it in South America, The Pandismo. The fact that the entire economic development of South America dependent on the priorities of United States and Britain and independence came about when economic self-rule was restored. So these are the conditions right now in the territories as well. So it's not only settlement or roads or this stuff.

Lara Friedman: Thank you. Khalil?

Khalil: I'll try to answer the question about Fatah. Fatah faces three major difficulties. One is the question of leadership crisis. The issue of succession. What happens if Abbas is no longer there? He's close to 80 now and it is not clear that there is a natural successor to him and there really isn't a great deal of debate in, among Fatah really as to how they should go about selecting a successor to him. And he, although he says he's not going to participate in the next elections and doesn't want to continue to lead the Palestinian Authority, Fatah has shied away from entering this discussion and the only person who can lead Fatah, effectively lead Fatah, is someone like Marwan Barghouti. He is very popular. Very popular within Fatah when he is serving several life sentences in an Israeli jail and it's not likely that he will be Fatah's salvation when it comes to the issue of leadership. The second major problem Fatah faces is the gulf that is mounting right now between the grass root, which is becoming more and more radicalized and Fatah Stop Elite. Fatah Stop Elite is in the Security Services and it's the Top Elite in the bureaucracy and they are the ones who benefit from the continuation of the Palestinian Authority. They serve in their authority. It gives them a position of power, while most Palestinians are becoming more concerned about. The reason why there is a Palestinian Authority, if this Authority is not going to become a state, this elite becomes the target and although Abbas himself is trying to create a legacy for himself and in going to the UN and taking the risk of a PA collapse. This Elite itself is probably not very enthusiastic about that. And the third problem that faces Fatah has the question of if diplomacy is not the answer to end occupation, which is something that Fatah has opted since 1988 at least and Fatah does not have an answer to that. In its competition with Hamas, Fatah therefore fails to present a, or articulate for the Palestinians the way forward. So, for all these reasons, Fatah faces a very difficult challenge ahead and a revival of the Peace Process would certainly help successful bid by Abbas international legitimacy and support and bring in the international community to find a solution would also be a way to move forward. But without this, we will have the mainstream nationalist movement, the secularist movement will certainly be weakened with time.

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Lara Friedman: And final word from Ambassador Kurtzer?

1:32:54

Dan Kurtzer: Well with the final word, let me be either provocative or thought provoking. First of all, we have I think most of us, all of us on this panel, have been perhaps speaking some truth to power with respect to Israel. I think we need to do the same thing with respect to the Palestinians and in that respect, the question that was asked about an Israeli Peace Camp is misplaced, in my view. There's not only peace now. There has been a peace movement in Israel for a long time and there has never, ever been anything like it on the Palestinian side. Now, the argument that is made is, well people under occupation can't be expected to do that and I don't agree with that. People under occupation can and should mobilize thousands of people in the town square of Ramallah and Jenin and Bethlehem and Hebron and you name it, to demand that the Palestinian Authority try to make peace. So excuses aside, both peoples, we've been talking about governments, both peoples have a responsibility to demand peace from their government and unfortunately, Palestinians haven't stepped up to the plate. Fasten your seatbelt on this one. On Jerusalem, if we talk about Jerusalem as a place that is critically important to both sides and involves Holy Places for both sides, then both sides ought to have access to Holy Places. It doesn't mean that one side can unilaterally barge onto the Haram al-Sharif, the Temple Mount, and unilaterally express its view to pray, but it means that they should be allowed to pray. Because if the place is indeed holy and for those who believe that it's holy, and who are praying to a God that wants peace, it should not be a place that's exclusive to one side or the other. So the whole discussion over the prayer rights on the Temple Mount Haram al-Sharif, which in some ways may be at the epicenter of what we're facing now in Jerusalem, has been dominated by the radicals on both sides and it's time that normal, reasonable people take back this issue. People should be allowed to pray respectfully. Maybe adjusting time so that they don't bump it each other, but it is really a time to push back against the radicals who have claimed dominion over an issue related to God and religious rights and let everybody pray to his and her God. Thanks.

1:35:35

Shlomo Ben-Ami: May I add just a footnote to what Dan just said about Temple Mount? I guess you are aware that Jews are not allowed to go to the Mount for praying.

Lara Friedman: By Israeli law.

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Moderator: Lara Friedman

Shlomo Ben-Ami: To the orthodoxy. But if we speak about strategy, I can assure you that I am not aware of any strategy to desecrate or violate the status of the Palestinians and the Muslims on Temple Mount. I think there has never been such a policy. There are, there have been Knesset members recently that I would blame them for this recent radicalization of the discourse that have been causing provocations, because of electoral reasons and because of the political problems that they have. But, as a state, Israel from 1967 has always respected the full control, administrative control of the Palestinians on (1:36:53) of Temple Mount and this policy hasn't changed to my knowledge.

Kate Seelye: Well we haven't come up with any perfect solutions to the region's many challenges, but we have heard from a broad range of voices today who presented some very fresh perspectives and I hope we come away from this conference a little more enlightened than when we arrived. So I want to thank this incredibly rich panel of experts and moderators for their insights and to all the panelists who joined us today and to our very committed audience, we will see you next year. Thank you all.

1:37:30 discussion ends