

The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: No End in Sight?

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Claire Spencer

Good evening and welcome, everybody, to our discussion this evening on ‘The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: No End in Sight?’ I was reflecting to our speakers this evening, just now, that we used to have discussions on the peace process, and what next for the peace process, and now the question seems to have moved on to the inevitability of conflict. I’ve tried urging them to think of some positives but we may find ourselves actually contemplating where we are – that’s the aim of this conversation, to contemplate where we are now and what happens next in the larger scale of things. About three weeks ago we had a meeting here on Gaza and the immediate aftermath of Gaza. I think this discussion really is focusing on what does this all add up to in the overall scheme of things, in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the prospects for peace, and the reinstalling (if at all possible) of a peace process. Can we still talk about a peace process in this part of the world?

I should say, before we begin, that this event is on the record. You can comment via Twitter using #CHEvents.

I will introduce our speakers briefly. What I’m going to do is ask, more as a conversational style, each of them a question and then a joint question. Hopefully we can then kick off and there will be plenty of time, I estimate from about half past six, for you also to pose some views and ask some questions.

So first of all we have Gideon Levy, who is a *Haaretz* columnist and a member of the newspaper’s editorial board, where he has been since 1982. He spent four years as the newspaper’s deputy editor. He’s the author of the weekly ‘Twilight Zone’ feature, which covers the Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza over the last – it says here 25, but I believe it’s more like 30 years that you’ve been covering this. He’s also the writer of political editorials for the newspaper. I’ve looked up your latest one, of the 5th, on Israel as a binational state, which you say is not a new idea: all that’s left is to decide whether it is binational with a democracy or an apartheid regime. I believe sentences like that have caused you something approaching trouble in Israel.

Yezid Sayigh is well known to audiences here as a senior associate at the Carnegie Middle East Center in Beirut, where his work currently focuses on the Syrian crisis, the political role of Arab armies, security sector transformation and Arab transitions, the reinvention of authoritarianism – I think it didn’t really go away in some places, but the reinvention – and, of course, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and peace process. Before setting up shop, as it were, in Beirut with the Carnegie Middle East Center, he served as assistant director of studies at the Centre of International Studies in Cambridge. He also headed the Middle East Programme of the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London, and immediately prior to going to Beirut he was professor of Middle East studies at King’s College London. But perhaps more pertinently for this discussion, since 1999 he has provided policy and technical consultancy on the permanent status peace talks and on Palestinian reform. He was also an advisor and negotiator in the Palestinian delegation to the peace talks with Israel from 1991 to 1994.

I should stress that our invitation of our guests tonight is not that they represent a Palestinian view or an Israeli view, but as analysts of a situation with a particularly interesting point of view, whether one agrees with it or not. That is part of the dynamic of the discussion here this evening.

So where are we now? I’m not going to do a résumé of the failed peace talks, failed as of May of this year, and indeed I would invite everyone not to go over detailed ground of the Gaza conflict. But I notice in passing that the Swedish government of Stefan Löfven has just announced the intention of his

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government to recognize Palestine. Interestingly, the Swedish foreign minister, Margot Wallström, wrote on Twitter yesterday that two less-unequal partners would facilitate negotiations.

So turning first to Gideon, one article that caught my attention (not one of yours) was David Grossman writing in the *New York Times* at the end of July this year, where he said – I thought it was interesting, when he was talking about the grindstone of Israeli-Palestinian violence, he said: Israelis and Palestinians are imprisoned in what seems increasingly like a hermetically sealed bubble. By that he means a bubble on each side. He elaborates on that, but further on in the article he said: ‘I believe that Israel still contains a critical mass of people, both left-wing and right-wing, religious and secular, Jews and Arabs, who are capable of uniting, with sobriety and no illusions, around a few points of agreement to resolve the conflict with our neighbours’. This, of course, draws attention to the paradox of Israel, of there still being in the polls a majority of Israelis who are in favour of a two-state solution, and yet it seems we’re never far away from this.

So do you agree with David Grossman that there is at least a possibility of there being enough Israelis to actually, with sobriety and no illusions, move on this? I’ll ask you to sit on that while I turn to Yezid, because I’ve got questions for both. You can think about it and then I can sit back and listen to the answers, like you.

We have the Fatah-Hamas reconciliation agreement of April, which of course was stillborn given what happened subsequently and the conflict in Gaza in particular. Then a new comprehensive agreement of the 25th of September, which they signed in Cairo, where they’ve agreed that the civil administration of Gaza – over the last seven years in the hands of Hamas – will now be turned over to officials of a Palestinian unity government led by Mahmoud Abbas, and that the Palestinian Authority is going to control border crossings. Do you think now the Palestinian unity government, even though it’s yet to form, is enough of a basis to convince Israel that we can now move forward to a new set of talks? Particularly, I believe, there’s a new, at least dialogue in Cairo aimed for October this year.

Then my question to both of you, if you can remember the first question still: are there any prospects of new ways of doing peace? Is the old formula – you know, the definition of madness is to keep applying the same remedies, expecting different results. Can you both think of new ways of doing a peace process that would actually, if you like, address some of the weaknesses of previous attempts? Gideon first.

Gideon Levy

Thank you. Thank you for coming. It always amazes me how much interest there still is in Europe, and especially in the UK, in this ongoing conflict which doesn’t go anywhere, repeats itself, and is boring to death in many ways. So I’m really happy to see all of you here. I doubt if even in Tel Aviv we could have had such a crowd – I especially know that if I would have been there, but even if it would be someone.

Thank you for your understatement claiming that I’m not very popular or that I don’t represent Israel. I hardly represent myself. I for sure stand for a tiny minority today in Israel, and this goes directly to your question. I’m reading now David Grossman’s recent book, a wonderful book. It is not yet translated into English. I think he is really a gifted writer, but unfortunately I don’t share his optimism.

I don't share the whole attitude of believing that something might come out from within Israel, that change might come from within the Israeli society. I think this has very little chance, if at all, because Israeli society is going in a very clear direction in recent years. We saw it in the recent war in Gaza, when things really went as bad as never before domestically, when people were even afraid to go to demonstrate – they were afraid physically to go to demonstrate. When a prominent leader of the Likud Party called to bring me to justice for treason in the middle of the war, when professors were almost fired because of remarks they have done – the most minimal remarks, like this professor of law in a very well-known Israeli university who dared to write to his pupils, to his students, that he hoped that they are well and likely thousands of people are not well now. By this he meant that Palestinians and Israelis are the same, are equal, and this was enough for the rector of the university to call him to apologize, and he had to apologize (God knows for what) in front of his students for hurting their delicate emotions.

So in any case, my view is much more pessimistic than Grossman's and than many other Israelis. Look, an average Israeli today has no reason – but no reason – to care about the occupation, to care about all kinds of moral or legal questions, to care about the Palestinian people, to care about anything which happens half an hour away from his home (namely, the Occupied Territories). Life in Israel, as most of you might know, is far too good to be bothered by those questions. The media and many other agencies are doing anything possible to hide, to deny, not to bother the readers, not to tell them anything about the occupation (or as little as possible), to dehumanize and demonize the Palestinians on a systematic basis again and again. When all this is happening – when peace, occupation, international law are all concepts which are totally unknown for an average Israeli, totally boring, totally something from a different world – what does he have to do with occupation, with international law, with the Palestinian people? All those questions are not on the table in Israel at all.

So how can you expect that something will change when all those things are not on the table? When there is already a meaningful social protest in Israel three years ago, and you really see finally the masses coming out to the streets, and nobody – but nobody – dares to make any kind of connection between the occupation and the economy, between social justice and the crimes of the occupation, between the settlements and their budgets and the welfare budgets of Israel. So even when something like the social movement or the social protest movement, even they didn't dare to touch those questions, anyone who thinks that one day the Israelis will wake up and say, wow, yeah, there is an occupation, we have to do something about it, it's bothering us – no, this will not happen. It will not happen by itself.

As I say, there are enough agencies which help it not to happen, because the Israeli society today, if I may generalize, is a society in denial – in such a denial that really anyone who comes from the outside many times can hardly believe it, in what kind of denial, ignorance and lack of interest the society is now. When everything is really only about the individual questions, when Palestinians almost don't exist – don't forget that we deal with a society who don't meet the Palestinians anymore. In the recent 10 years, any young Israeli who is younger than 30 or 35 has never met a Palestinian in his life. If he did so, it was in his army service. You can imagine yourself what kind of meeting it is. But except for those, and not many of them are serving in the army, in units which serve in the Occupied Territories – except for these meetings, there is no other meeting point. So the only information about the Palestinians is what the media is telling him, and the media remembers the Palestinians only when Gaza is shooting Qassams, when there is terror – and there is no terror in recent years, or almost no terror – that's the only image of the Palestinian: the terrorist. There is no other image of terrorists in Israeli society.

So you live in denial. The world becomes more and more critical about Israel and even this is perceived in Israel as yesterday's news. The world is anti-Semitic. The world is always against Israel, so why would we care about the world? Besides, who is the world when the United States is in our pocket? Who cares about

the world when Israel dictates to the United States like never before? I don't remember a period of time in which Israel was so free and many times fresh to do things against the American position without nothing. I still remember times when any new terrace in the West Bank would create some kind of tension in Israel: what will the State Department say? Now when you look at the relations between Israel and the United States, many times you really can't tell who is really the superpower between the two, and who dictates to whom what to do and what to say.

So in this atmosphere, why would an average young Israeli care about the occupation? Why would he? Life is good. The world is anti-Semitic. The Palestinians, there is no partner, as we all know. They were born to kill. You can't do peace with them. There is ISIL around the border so for sure you don't expect us to do with them some kind of peace. Hamas, we know. Abbas is too weak so how can we do with him peace. We had Arafat before – we always said that the only obstacle for peace is Arafat, once Arafat will be gone there will be peace. Yeah. So then came Abbas, and Abbas is too weak to make peace. So what is it all about?

Those tendencies are becoming stronger and stronger: the denial, the lie, the life in a lie. Israel is living in a big lie, that this can last forever. We know from history that it cannot last forever because it never lasted forever. No state could live on its sword all its life, or forever: it's always until a certain stage. So in this atmosphere, when the occupation is totally not on the Israeli agenda and life is good, I don't see any way out of it.

Therefore – and this refers to your second question, which I guess I'll answer later or whatever – in this frame of reference, I think the only way to make it change will be through an international intervention. There is no other way. Or, to phrase it in less diplomatic words, as long as Israelis will not pay or be punished for the occupation, for the crimes of the occupation, for all those atrocities – as long as this will not happen, there will be no change.

And even this is not enough because Israelis were already punished once for the occupation and nothing changed – on the contrary. Namely, the second intifada, in which Israelis paid a hell of a price – the Palestinians did as well, obviously – but life in Israel in those years, 2002-2003, was really tough. Those of you who have been there know that life was very tough. The only problem, and that's what made the intifada such a failure in terms of Palestinian achievements, is that nobody in Israel dared to make the linkage between the occupation and the terror, between the intifada and the occupation. When you don't make this linkage, then you can't achieve anything. So Israelis were punished, did pay a price, but didn't draw any conclusions because for them terror comes out of the blue sky, without any kind of reasons – for sure, not with justifications. For most of the Israelis, the price that they paid was just another price of Jewish destiny which has nothing to do with what Israel is doing or not doing. Therefore, nothing was achieved.

So the only idea that might make a change is the day that Israelis will get this wakeup call. This wakeup call can be either by bloodshed – and I hope this will never happen – or by any kind of other steps which will shake the Israeli society out of its pathological indifference, apathy and blindness. I don't know how many of you travel to Israel or meet Israelis, but try to talk with average Israelis, try to see what bothers them. You'd be amazed, first of all, by the level of ignorance. They know nothing about nothing, about what's happening half an hour – I emphasize again, we are dealing with things which are taking place half an hour's drive from their homes, forty-five minutes from their homes. They've never been there, they have no idea what's going on there, only through all kinds of mediators like the media, which is playing a destructive role (but that's another topic).

So all together, I am not here to bring a kind of hope. But people are always mad at me that I keep the audience with such pessimism and despair. People dressed up, came here, and you send them home without any hope. So I will say what I always say – and it's not very convincing, I must say – three things.

First of all, all my forecasts are always wrong. Until now, all my forecasts are always wrong. So for example, I was sure that after Operation Cast Lead, after the Goldstone report, after the whole turmoil in the world, Israel will never dare to go for another brutal attack on Gaza – for sure not in this kind of brutality. Sure enough, Israel went to another operation, ten times more brutal. The world reacted this time even in a less critical way and less involved way than last time. I was wrong. So my forecasts are not very valid, don't have much value. So first of all, that's the first source of hope.

The second source of hope is that if we would all meet in the late 1980s and I would have said here in Chatham House that within months the apartheid regime in South Africa is going to fall, Soviet Russia is going to fall, the Berlin Wall is going to fall, I guess you would have never invited me again. Lunatics are not really welcome in Chatham House. I don't think I would have been invited here again. And all this happened, without almost anyone foreseeing it. Same might happen here. We see that the occupation is as established as never before, we see the United States as passive as never before and weak as never before, we see Israel doing almost whatever it wants – I don't know one country in the world which really just ignores the world in many ways. I once wrote that most Israelis think that 5 million Jews in Israel are right and 7 billion people in the world are wrong. That's the way of thinking.

So those things might change when nobody expects them to change. Many times you walk in the street, you see a strong tree – looks healthy and very strong – all of a sudden, falls down, collapses by itself. Then you check the tree and you realize it was all rotten from inside. God knows how rotten is the occupation. Maybe it will fall by itself, I don't know. Not that I see a scenario for this.

And if this didn't convince you, the last source of hope that I have is that in the Middle East – and I'm sure Yezid will agree with me, even from his place in Lebanon – in this part of the world, one should be realistic enough to believe in miracles. So let's be realistic enough and believe in miracles. Thank you.

Claire Spencer

Thank you very much for that. I can see gloom also takes a certain amount of time, so Yezid, don't feel constrained by my 6:30 deadline, although there will be time for discussion. I just wanted to observe, Gideon, your second point reminded me of one of my thoughts when it comes to international affairs, and mostly history: the stronger the architecture, the weaker the empire. I use this to make observations about the British empire and also the French empire in North Africa. There was suddenly a building boom. In the case of the British, the whole of New Delhi, Lodhi Gardens, etc., were completed in 1935. I think most of us here know how long the British empire in India lasted after that: a mere 12 years. So there you are, some hope, perhaps. Yezid, how do things look from the Palestinian side?

Yezid Sayigh

I guess I'm like Gideon in being in a tiny minority, but not the one he expected: the one that doesn't believe in miracles. I don't see any coming and I don't believe in them. I guess it should worry you that I

actually tend to forecast things rather well. I think Rosemary Hollis had organized a panel in Oxfordshire in February 2001, when I expressed the opinion that the window of opportunity for a two-state solution had closed, that the violence that was then sort of at its peak was going to continue for the next three to five years at that pace – which was borne out, roughly until 2005 and the Gaza disengagement – and that the Palestinians would enter a period of drift, such as the one they followed after 1948 as many different political and ideological views competed over what the new national agenda should be (from an Islamist perspective, a Nasserist or Ba'athist, socialist, Arab nationalist and Palestinian First perspective). It took about a decade and a half for that finally to turn into something like the PLO and then to be revolutionized in the late 1960s.

It was my opinion that in effect what was happening with the second intifada was the dissolution of a political system, comparable in a way to what had happened in 1948 in Palestinian society: that in 2000, those who were supposed to lead had abdicated leadership and had allowed men with guns to take over, without any clarity on the connection between the form they were using of resistance and the political goal. Arafat tried to use it in an opportunistic fashion but of course by then the Palestinian political arena had so deinstitutionalized that he wasn't in fact in control. Of course, he didn't grasp the dynamics of conflict that had been unleashed in terms of the relationship between Israelis and Palestinians at many levels, and the fact that what was important and, I guess, good about the Oslo Accord was that it occurred at the last moment of Cold War politics – a moment when the end of the Cold War, the Gulf War, the rise of Hamas, and internal Palestinian politics allowed a deal to be struck just before it was too late for the Palestinians to get a foot in the door of nation-state building. By 2000, that moment in world history had passed. The Cold War was well past. The alignments that had allowed the Palestinians to acquire recognition from the Soviet bloc, the Non-Aligned Movement – none of these structures were around anymore or had that kind of impact. Therefore the PLO was entirely dependent from there on, on the US and the EU primarily.

Let me remind you that in March 1998, in their Berlin statement, the European Council took a position of basically anticipating that the peace talks should result (that were scheduled for the following year, the final status talks) should result in a Palestinian state, and if that did not happen the Europeans would then potentially go for that on their own, unilaterally. Now think of where we are today.

I'm going to come back to the broad strategic-type prospects when we come to Claire's joint question. I think Gideon has already very eloquently described the realities affecting the relationship between Israelis and Palestinians on the Israeli side and in terms of the US position, and overall the international overload, fatigue, whatever it is, that has resulted in less and less of a response to something like the Gaza war this last summer. There's nothing I disagree with in that. The picture he painted shows why we shouldn't expect anything. I expect no solution. But we can come back to any other ideas, which is what Claire invited us to do earlier.

Going back to Claire's actual question, I'll start from a current affairs type of analysis on the Palestinian national reconciliation agreement, or two agreements so far since spring, the latest one supposedly 'comprehensive'. I think all that's comprehensive about it is that they agreed that it's comprehensive. What that actually means in practical detail is still unclear and it appears that there is no more practical substance to the agreement than there was to the one before.

But does it make a difference? Let's consider two scenarios. Supposing Fatah and Hamas and other smaller partners work out all the practical details of transfer or transition of authority in Gaza, reintegration of the civil service and the police – which is not an easy thing to do, of course, working out the issue of salaries – let's say they deal with all of that successfully. One possible outcome of that is

simply to reinstate what already existed, which is a comfortable coexistence (comfortable for Israel, in any case) in which the donor community provides salaries, channelled to Palestinians through the Palestinian Authority. The Europeans have already said they can deal with the Palestinian national unity government (i.e., Hamas' presence or blessing for the government is not an obstacle). The Americans were willing to sort of not oppose the European position. So we could just end up basically that Fatah and Hamas make it possible once more to restore 'business as usual' to Gaza as well, within that envelope of Israeli control and unchallenged or uncontested political laissez-faire – laissez-faire for Israel in continuing its policies.

We already see, of course, if you look at the West Bank, how on the one hand the Palestinian Authority basically acts as an ATM machine for 170,000 to 180,000 Palestinians who draw their salaries from the Palestinian Authority (thanks to donors) and on the other hand the private sector has been pulled back in by Israel into a whole network of relationships, permits and permissions and so on, to help the private sector do its business. We have in effect seen a reinstatement, more or less, of the old system of Israeli civil control and administration of the Occupied Territories – not that that was ever dismantled in many respects, but I'm also talking here about significant parts of local Palestinian society becoming in a way mediators and brokers once again for the occupation as a de facto reality, because they need to get business going and they need to get their livelihood and employ people. And of course, it's a consensus among donors (Western donors and certainly the World Bank and others) that the private sector is the engine of growth and creating jobs and increasing income, and therefore this is a privileged sector in a way.

What I'm describing is a situation in which nothing we've heard so far vis-à-vis maybe improving conditions for Gaza, allowing building materials in, maybe a significant improvement or facilitation of the movement of goods in and out, of money, of materials – along with, let's say, sort of rehabilitation of the government structure in Gaza, under the joint umbrella of Hamas and Fatah behind the technocratic government – let's say we've got all this operating. It just seems to perpetuate and renew what's been there all along and was working just slightly better until 2000.

None of this addresses the question of what the two principal Palestinian parties do about the big political issue of, and then what? Do we then somehow get independence? What do we do to get it? How do we wake up Israel, as Gideon put it? Bloodshed – or something else? Something else being the US changing its approach – I think we have seen the US, again as Gideon said, reach an unprecedented level of complacency, complicity and compliance (whichever C you prefer, or all three together) regarding Israeli policy – any Israeli policy whatsoever, and certainly when it comes to the Occupied Territories. I see no basis to expect that to change. There is absolutely nothing. Look at what's going on in Iraq. I don't even think the US is dealing with Iraq seriously, despite the jihadist terrorist threat. The US is just not invested in this region, for all sorts of very long-term reasons I won't go into.

So what can the Palestinians do to break this impasse? Maybe what President Abbas tried to do very recently at the General Assembly of the UN – again, we can maybe come back to that a little bit later; we're going to run out of time, I suspect – which is to say: for negotiations to be credible, we need to place them under a different umbrella, a different framework. An international one, a UN one, with a definitive deadline, to sort of make people wake up a little bit. That's one proposal.

I won't get into the detail there but I also reflect on another option that Palestinians have, which just happened – the timing of this has been very fortuitous, both because of Abbas' speech but also because today Ali Jarbawi (a friend, a colleague from Birzeit University and the next minister of the Palestinian Authority) had an op-ed in the *New York Times* (the international version of it, anyway) tackling both this UN strategy and making the point that Abbas needs to back this up with something credible, a threat: the

'so what' question. If we don't do it, so what? Well, dissolve the Palestinian Authority. You've probably heard this before, every now and then someone comes along and suggests this.

Here I want to come back to the Fatah-Hamas unity agreement. Bluntly, I don't think the threat of dissolving the Palestinian Authority is going to be particularly credible, for a range of reasons. It's not easy dissolving something like that, which has a whole range of commitments and obligations legally entered into, with a host of different actors (including domestic ones). Debt and so on would need to be worked out, and salaries of 180,000 families or so.

But more importantly, I think Hamas and Fatah have huge vested interests in the status quo too. They'd like to achieve independence and statehood and all the rest, but it's no easier for them to think about dissolving the structure – the financial structure, the income structure – than it is for Mahmoud Abbas. Bluntly, I'd say that if he were to actually try and go for it, you can bet that suddenly we will see contenders appearing from within his own movement and around. Mohammed Dahlan is already presenting himself as a rival, backed by people like the Emirates or the Egyptians (until recently, anyway). I'm sure the Americans and the Europeans and others would suddenly find it necessary to think of replacing Mahmoud Abbas. I'm not saying these things are just done like that, by the CIA or someone – it's not a sort of conspiratorial theory. I'm just saying that there are genuine interests at stake here. There will be an earthquake in Palestinian society, I think, by a whole lot of people who think: well, yes, we hate the situation but can we do this? And there will be those who will say: no, that's not how to do it – and will present themselves. I'm just trying to say it's really not so easy.

One thought I'll add there, and I'd like to stop and allow either some more thinking about what others could do, the UN idea, the recognition issue of the Swedes that they've reopened once again – I'd like to be able to come back to that. But for now I'll just stop by saying that I think both Fatah and Hamas have an obligation to do certain things as well, to help make it possible to change the politics. Not that I'm going to suggest anything that I think will make all the difference, but they do have a certain responsibility.

Hamas continues to hide behind the game of saying: we'll let Abbas or Fatah or others negotiate with Israel – no problem, go ahead, we're not going to call you traitors or shoot at you. But we'll keep our fingers out of this. We're going to stay pure and clean. That's a game they can't go on playing. The idea that we'll deal with the two-state solution and we'll tell everyone who comes to talk to us that we're okay with two states on 1967 lines, with a just solution for the refugees and Jerusalem in a Palestinian state – which is what the PLO has been saying all along – but we just won't recognize Israel. However they work it out, this is a game that Hamas is winning nothing by, the Palestinians are gaining nothing by. They think it's a card – Arafat played that game for 20 years and it really brought nothing. The idea that somehow Hamas is holding back some asset that it can trade in for a much higher value from Israel, I think is nonsense. They have to bite this bullet and deal with it, in whatever way, but stop trying to play it both ways.

Fatah, on the other side, has to be as committed to Palestinian national unity, to making it possible for all Palestinians to engage in politics – at least, not shooting in the West Bank – and to be willing to fight for that. Frankly, I don't think Fatah has that courage. I don't even think it exists as a living organism that can sort of think about these things, have an internal debate, arrive at policy recommendations that are then translated into policy at any level. As a political organization, it's dead. The only active organization on that scale is Hamas, and it's got its own problems.

I'm just trying to add that bit there to say that there needs to be an internal debate, or many internal debates, among Palestinians. In this case, I've touched on the two principal players, but I'll go back at the end of this set of remarks to say that – I'll go back to where I started, which is that I think the Palestinians today are still at a very early stage of re-engaging among each other about what the national agenda should be. They're therefore still very far from reaching a minimum level of real agreement. At one level you could say most Palestinians actually are agreed on a two-state solution, including Fatah and Hamas – yes, but not in a way that they know how to translate into any practical reality. In the meantime, things keep going on inexorably – the Israeli colonization of the West Bank and Jerusalem, and what happens in Gaza.

So I think realistically – my realistic perspective anyway is that the Palestinians, who I expected in 2001 faced 10-15 years of drift until a new consensus (or a basic core of a consensus) emerged on what the national agenda is – one person, one vote; anti-apartheid; one state; one Islamic state; two states; two and a half states – I think we're actually at the beginning, sadly, of 10-15 years still of that debate. That's one forecast I'll admit to being wrong on. I'll stop there for now.

Claire Spencer

Thank you, Yezid. I'm going to propose, since we started slightly late, that we carry on until five past, if that's agreeable with everybody, including my colleagues.