

Episode 5 – The Israel - Hamas war: architecture of diplomacy

Peter Loewen: Hello, I'm Peter Loewen, Director of the University of Toronto's Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy. Welcome to Scholars and Dialogue, Six conversations on the Modern Middle East.

These sessions were held in April and May, 2024, to provide in-depth insight on the political landscape in the Middle East, the war between Israel and Hamas, and the broader history of the region. This is a joint project between the University of Toronto's Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy, IE University's School of Politics, Economics and Global Affairs in Madrid, and Science Po's Paris School of International Affairs.

This is episode five, the Israel-Hamas War, Architecture of Diplomacy. This session delves into complex questions around using diplomatic initiatives to reduce the cost of the conflict and eventually de-escalate the war between Israel and Hamas. Moderator, Steve Paikin, is a Canadian journalist and host of TV Ontario's flagship current affairs show, The Agenda with Steve Paikin. Joining the conversation are panelists, Daniel Byman, Thomas Fletcher, and Julie Trottier. I hope you enjoy their conversation and that you learned as much from it as I did.

Steve Paikin: Thank you very much everybody, for joining us today, and let's introduce without further ado, our three esteemed guests.

Daniel Byman directs the security studies program at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service. He's a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and advises the State Department as part of the International Security Advisory board. He has authored nine books and is an expert on terrorism, insurgency, intelligence, and the Middle East, and he comes to us today from just outside Washington D.C.

Thomas Fletcher is Principal at Oxford University Hertford College. He served as Foreign Policy Advisor to three UK prime ministers, and was the UK's Ambassador to Lebanon from 2011 to 2015. He writes widely on diplomacy and democracy in the UK and the international system, and is an education quality advocate and a founder of a non-profit devoted to improving community and public life. He comes to us from Oxford, UK today.

Julie Trottier is Director of research at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique in France, and teaches at Sciences Po's Master's program on environmental policy. She is an expert on the politics of water and water technologies, including water in the Palestinian Territories. In addition to numerous scholarly publications, her work includes co-authorship of a proposal for an Israeli-Palestinian water plan for the Geneva Accords. And just to show you the miracle of technology knows no bounds, she comes to us today from the south of France in a tiny little place called Montegueux, [foreign language 00:03:00] France.

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Julie, bienvenue, Daniel, Thomas, welcome. It's great to be with everybody today. This feels like a really awful and pessimistic and hopeless time and I'm not necessarily asking any or all of you to dissuade us from that notion if that's appropriate right now, but we do want to consider off the top here what potential diplomatic initiatives, if any, could reduce the toll and tragedy of what's currently going on in the Middle East. Why don't we start, let's go in alphabetical order. Daniel Byman, do you want to start us off there? What hope is there at the moment?

Daniel Byman: So first of all, thank you very much for having me today, it's a real honor to be here with such an impressive group of colleagues.

The Middle East historically is a place where hope goes to die. This conflict has produced tremendous suffering and if I'm looking forward, there might be two areas to think about. One is the regional picture. The Hamas-Israel war has of course led to a regional conflict involving Yemen, involving Lebanon and other countries. There was concern that this war would be even more fierce, that we would see an all-out war between Israel and Hezbollah and Lebanon, for example. And that has been contained and while hardly optimistic, I would say some of the worst fears that many of us had in the first months after the war have not been fulfilled.

The second hope and hope is really a tough word here, is that there is more sentiment in Israel for a ceasefire than there has been in the past. And this is very much linked to hostage releases, not a sense that Israel should stop hitting Hamas' heart, but nevertheless, the public opinion dynamics in Israel have changed. Not necessarily the government dynamics as we can discuss, but the public opinion dynamics have changed. So those would be two areas I'd point to, even though in the end I'm fairly pessimistic on all this.

Steve Paikin: Tom Fletcher, what would you add?

Thomas Fletcher: I think that's spot on, Daniel. I very much agree. I mean, I suppose where I draw hope is that conflicts do end and this one is very, very tough, intractable. The human cost is heartbreaking and immense, but we know from history that conflicts do end and there's ultimately a space for diplomacy. There's not much space so far.

I draw hope from, as Daniel says, the fact that it hasn't escalated, that wider region, including probably Iran, don't want it to escalate at the moment. There isn't that wider interest in escalation. There is that hope of a broader, bigger package that leads to normalization between Israel and the wider region, that's clearly still on the table from the Saudis and from others. And I suppose I draw some hope from this sense that the international community can't leave this region alone. Now, that's a double-edged sword of course, but a year ago or less, a number of people in very prominent positions were saying, there's no such

thing as a two-state solution we have to disengage, there's nothing in this for us. I think everyone now realizes that the two-state solution is ultimately the only way that this can end without one side being pushed right out of the picture. And so there is that extra momentum behind that.

Now, where does that leave diplomacy? I think the real energy at the moment has to go into getting the hostages out, getting the aid in, of course, getting fresh leadership on both sides that can see a two-state solution as a way out of this corner, into which they've been painted at the moment. But the real energy will be in track two negotiations and I think there'll be a lot of really important dialogue going on behind the scenes, not always state led, and sometimes it's best that it isn't state-led, in order to try and create the conditions for state diplomats to then make more progress.

Steve Paikin: We will follow up on that second track in a bit. Julie Trottier, what would you add in terms of whether there are any diplomatic initiatives at the moment that could get us out of this?

Julie Trottier: Well, first before I answer, thank you very much for inviting me and allowing me the opportunity to discuss with such esteemed colleagues.

So we have no choice, so long as we have children and we're alive, we have to keep trying to find a solution. Even if we lack hope for an immediate solution, we have no other choice. The two-state solution is getting momentum. I agree with everything my predecessors have said, but I'm not so convinced it's still practically feasible. I have done a lot of field work over the last 30 years in both Israel and the Palestinian territories, and there's a lot of reality on the ground that would make this very difficult now, but we can have imagination and power.

And also we have practical issues with boomerang effects on both parties, such as water. I think we can try to develop a diplomatic path as Mr. Fletcher was saying, on the basis of a second track type of discussion and on practical issues such as water, because we have to be aware that the sea currents over there go north. So every pollution entering the sea on the beach in Gaza is immediately flowing to Ashkelon. And so destroying water facilities in the Gaza Strip is making it very difficult for Israelis. Everyone gains from solving the water issue if we look at water as a flow, and if we look at it as a stock, there's no hope. But if we look at it as a flow, there is a glimmer of hope.

Steve Paikin: We will come back to that issue as well. Tom, I just wanted to pick up on something that you mentioned that yes, conflicts end, but why would anybody watching this have any optimism that this thing will end in a month or two as opposed to in a year or two or more?

Thomas Fletcher: I think that's a fair point. I look at the way in which the conflict did end though, with between Israel and Egypt or between Israel and Jordan, and do have that

hope that common sense can prevail in the end. But I think that such damage has been done in the last seven, eight months to the underlying trust between these two peoples, that it will be really, really hard. And I fear that the situation does get worse before it gets better, before everyone comes to see that there isn't a solution apart from that two state solution. I agree with Julie that it is immensely hard to see how we get there. I think someone, I think one of the Israeli leaders once said, there is light at the end of the tunnel, but there just is no tunnel, and I think it feels like that at the moment.

Steve Paikin: Daniel, the immediate crisis presumably needs to be dealt with before you can get to any of these larger issues. And there are so many different actors at play here, one wonders, obviously the Americans take the lead, but who's a player in all of this right now in hopes of bringing the immediate crisis to an end?

Daniel Byman: So, we have people trying to bring it to an end and we have the spoilers trying to keep it going. So obviously, we need to think about the parties immediately involved in the conflict first, so that would be Israel and that would be Hamas, and right now they're still fairly far apart in terms of some of their basic demands for what a ceasefire would entail.

Then you can expand the circle slightly and talk about other actors that have an interest in some sort of ceasefire and peaceful resolution. And this would be Arab states, it would be the Palestinian authority which governs the West Bank. It would be of course the United States, Canada, many European powers, all of which have an interest in stability. But it's also worth pointing out some of the spoilers. Iran has benefited from the regional instability. And I don't want to say Iran is behind all this, I think that's a gross overstatement, but nevertheless, Iran is stirring the pot successfully on this.

So I think we need to recognize that there are malevolent actors as well as positive ones, but in the end, Israel and Hamas are 95% of this, and that's where we should begin our focus.

Steve Paikin: And Julie, how do we get to a point where those who are aiming to be spoilers and troublemakers are not in ascension and the countries or non-state actors that have a constructive role to play, actually can be the leaders here? How do we do that?

Julie Trotter: That's a huge question because I agree with what everyone has said. To go further actually, Netanyahu and the present leadership of Hamas have been helping each other over the past few years because if you look at the political clout of Netanyahu, he needed to have a threat coming from the Gaza Strip actually, and now he needs to have the war for the war to keep going in order to stay in power. So a lot of Israelis right now are asking for him to resign so they can have elections and actually, elections would be a good idea because most people actually want to live peacefully.

And a problem we have on both sides, on the Gaza side, there hasn't been any elections since 2006. On the Israeli side, there has been, have been a lot of elections in the past few years, but Netanyahu has been in power for 16 years, even longer than David Ben-Gurion. And with the present leaderships, it doesn't look good, but we can hope that the Israelis who want to have elections, will get them. It's not so easy on the Palestinian side. So that would be, elections would be a first step forward.

Now, when you talked about the deadline, will we have in two months time or months time, two months time? There's one point we really have to take into consideration, is that humanitarian aid has not been keeping the Palestinian people alive in Gaza as much as khobeza. Khobeza is Malva in English, it's weed, and it's edible and it's extremely nutritious. Nutritionists tell us it's better than steak, actually, in the way of nutrition. And the reason actually Jewish people survived during the 1948 siege on Jerusalem was because they were picking khobeza. And the reason the Gaza-ese survived so far is because they were picking khobeza. Now, it only grows in Gaza during the rainy season. Now, we're going to have six months without rain, so the famine will be become much, much worse now. And I think the crisis situation will be so unbearable that something will have to be done, sadly.

Steve Paikin: I want to circle back with Tom to something you just said on the issue of Prime Minister Netanyahu's time in office, and that is, he seems to have, Tom, a built-in incentive to stay as long as possible because if he's no longer prime minister, he has to face presumably charges that deal with his other partisan political life. So again, we get back to another reason why there seems to be very little reason for optimism here. If the players are going to remain the players, where's the opening?

Thomas Fletcher: Absolutely right, and I just say, that's absolutely fascinating from Julie on the khobeza. I'm really interested in that.

So yeah, there isn't an incentive at the moment for either side to change things. Both are in many ways benefiting from the continuation of this conflict. Bibi Netanyahu, because he knows that the second the conflict ends, assuming that he hasn't managed somehow to eradicate Hamas forever, assuming that sadly he hasn't managed to get the hostages back, that he will face a very angry electorate and actually also a very angry international community, and we're hearing that more and more clearly in these recognition statements of Palestinian statehood in recent days, but also of course in the language coming out of the White House. So, Netanyahu has no incentive to end this conflict there. Hamas presumably have no incentive either because they know that the pressure would be on for some sort of more moderate Palestinian leadership to emerge in the West Bank and Gaza, and that certainly would be what the Europeans, the Americans and the region would be working very hard on.

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So, the actors who most want to stop a two-state solution are the actors who are currently holding the power. But I think where we can draw some encouragement is that they are becoming increasingly marginalized in international opinion and in domestic opinion, and I think that trend continues.

The extra dynamic I'd throw in, of course, it's a dynamic that is there in the background, a specter in the background in all conversations about global affairs at the moment and about international relations, is the American election. I think as we speak, the Prime Minister of the UK is announcing a UK election on the 4th of July. That one probably won't make a big difference to the Middle East, but most people would expect the American election to make a difference and that run up to November to be a time when it is very, very hard for the White House or anyone else to make significant progress with the parties on the ground.

Steve Paikin: Well, I was going to get to this later, but as long as we're here now, why don't we go there? And Daniel, you're right there in the American capitol. Does it matter to the outcome of this war who the next President of the United States, is after November?

Daniel Byman: It matters tremendously, and it's always difficult to know what's in the mind of any political leader, but one of the arguments is that Prime Minister Netanyahu is really just trying to wait out the United States, believing that should President Trump again take office in January, that he would have a much more supportive American Administration. During the earlier Trump administration, it was very much a blank check. In fact, the US Ambassador to Israel at the time was in some ways pushing things on the United States that the Israelis themselves really didn't care too much about. But we're seeing this very strong demonstrations of support for Israel that includes very strong support for the settler movement on the West Bank. And I understand that world opinion is very frustrated with the United States for not putting sufficient pressure on Israel in a variety of ways, but from the Biden Administration's point of view, by delaying arm sales, by sanctioning groups, settler groups on the West Bank, it's done a lot of things that haven't been done, at least by recent US administrations, as well as the fairly constant pressure for ceasefire. So I think it would be night and day is perhaps a bit too strong, but maybe evening and morning in terms of a comparison between the two administrations.

Steve Paikin: Julie, if you want to see an end to this conflict sooner, who should you be cheering for in the November American Presidential race?

Julie Trottier: I'll take the fifth amendment on that one. It seems to me the most important thing is when we talk about elections is for better information of the public everywhere of what's happening. Something that really strikes me because I've kept, I'm still discussing every day with both Israelis and Palestinians, is the Israeli public is in such a trauma because of the 7th of October. It triggered a

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collective trauma there that a lot of people have lost completely any empathy for the Palestinians and they're not being informed. There, if you watch the national channels in Israel, you don't know what's happening in Gaza and there's very little information shared among the public. And I think the same thing happens in the United States, people don't seem to be correctly informed in order to vote in an informed manner. So I'm quite worried about that.

Daniel Byman: Can I chime in a little bit here, Steve?

Steve Paikin: Please.

Daniel Byman: So one thing that I really want to highlight is something Julie said about the news environments. If you watch the news in Israel, if you watch Arabic language news, you're watching two different wars and it's really quite striking. In Israel it is about the progress of the Israeli military, it's about the families of the hostages, it's about the atrocities of October 7th. If you're watching some of the Arabic language satellite televisions, it's about a deliberate Israeli slaughter of Palestinian civilians. And both sides are reacting to the other's position, I don't know if Julie would agree, but I would say with almost disbelief. Where there's a real sense, and opinion polls show this among Palestinians, that Hamas committed zero atrocities on October 7th, that that's all made up. And Israelis are incredibly skeptical of reports of widespread civilian suffering or as Julie said, really don't care because they see it as justified. And that problem is going to be an exceptionally difficult one to bridge as people choose their own news sources these days.

Julie Trottier: I'll second that. Sorry, I'll just give you an illustration supporting what Daniel just said, is that I still work with faculty members that were Israeli and Palestinians in Gaza. They used to work together in the same projects for 30 years now, because water flows and we were all working on solving water issues. And the description I get from the conflict coming from one party and from the other, as Daniel said, is unbelievably different. The Israeli profs I speak with describe soldiers finding military weapons in every single house they searched when they were in Gaza, they believe this. When I listened to the professors on the Gaza side, then they tell me that it's a devastation of civilian homes who had never anything to do with any military activity. So we have completely... And this comes from people were until very recently working together.

Steve Paikin: Tom, apparently we have learned that a Canadian working in France is allowed to invoke a clause of the American constitution before answering a question, and I don't know if that provision works in the United Kingdom as well, but let's find out. Do you want to weigh in on whom we should be cheering for in November, in terms of the influence the next president can have on this conflict?

Thomas Fletcher: So I think much of the world, much of the international community, much of Europe has, as Daniel said, been critical of elements of the current White House's approach to the Middle East. They would've wanted... People recognize that there's no progress really, without American pressure on Israel and the parties towards a two-state solution, and they would always want more of that. But I think there is also awareness that the Biden Administration and Anthony Blinken have gone further. I mean, they've certainly been engaged, they've been active, they've been energetic, and they have surprised people at various times, outspoken criticism on these restrictions, on arm sales and so on. And on the space that they've allowed others to be more critical as well, which is a crucial part of the collective pressure. So I think no one's giving them tool marks, but I think there is recognition of that effort.

Now, we lay that against what we know of a Trump presidency, having seen it once already. Most of the interactions we all tried to have with the Middle East, tried to put out fires. I think a lot of observers would say that in the first Trump Presidency where he saw the embers of a fire, he would tend to pour some oil on it. And so some of those fires were ignited. Yet, you think about moving the US embassy to Jerusalem for example, which was seen as a very provocative act across much of the region, but also you have this sort of pinball diplomacy where no one quite knows what's coming next. Now that can be quite exciting, it can keep people off balance. Maybe the Iranians and others fear it, but ultimately, it makes for a less coherent approach and a less collective approach.

The worry is that under Trump 2.0, the international institutions that we've built with such patience and through bitter experience of what happens when they fail, that those continue to fail, that the UN is further undermined. The UN Security Council fails to achieve consensus and that the UN agencies on the ground that we rely on so much to deliver aid and keep people alive, will find things harder and harder. So, I think we've all learned not to tell people in other countries who to vote for, but I think if you're interested in peace in the Middle East, then I'd be recommending a vote for President Biden.

Steve Paikin: No pleading the fifth there. Okay, Julie, you want to come back?

Julie Trottier: Can I summarize this in Canadian words? When you have to choose between plague and cholera, you choose a disease you think you'll survive from.

Steve Paikin: Okay, understood. Let's move our discussion now into what some of the other players, be they countries or non-state actors, can or will do in this situation. And I know questions are coming in already related to what's transpired in the last 48 hours, namely a handful of European countries deciding that they are prepared to recognize a Palestinian state immediately. Daniel, why don't you start us off on that? What impact do you think that would have on all of this?

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Daniel Byman: So, the decisions by these governments is right now not going to dramatically change things. As everyone knows, there's a huge amount going on, in terms of the conflict itself, pressure from the United States, the international courts, possible warrants against Israeli leaders. So there are a host of things that are probably more important, day-to-day basis, but it is signaling what has been a very steady shift over recent decades, which is that Israel's position on the Palestinians is increasingly seen as not acceptable. And we're seeing not only countries that historically didn't care much about Israel and might just be doing it for random political reasons, not only those countries doing so, but countries in Europe and Israel very much sees itself or parts of Israel see themselves as akin to a European country rejecting the Israeli stance and embracing the Palestinians.

And I don't think that this decision is going to be the one that tips it, but I do believe that the steady change in the world climate on this does have an impact on Israel and how it sees itself. So, I do think it's important, even though again, I wouldn't look for a change in the next week or months.

Steve Paikin: Julie, your view on that?

Julie Trottier: The occupation has gone on for so long that a lot of important Palestinian economic actors have adjusted and they will tell you as a researcher, they'll tell you in private interviews, of course, that they're working for one-state solution. So, the foreign states actually supporting a two-state solution, recognizing the state of Palestine is a good idea that might be coming a bit late in the game. That's the problem that we're facing.

Steve Paikin: Tom, is there an interpretation of the events of the last 48 hours in Europe, which concludes like this? You may think you are constructively contributing to what's going on there, but in fact, by offering this recognition at this stage of things, it's actually not helpful at all. Is that a defensible argument?

Thomas Fletcher: I'm not sure about that. I think one of the great irony in all of this is that the thing that Netanyahu least wants, most hates, is the idea of a Palestinian state. It's why he's systematically undermined the more moderate Palestinian leadership over his career, but actually, by the action he's taking in Gaza, he's almost bombing a Palestinian state into existence.

I think for those Europeans, I think we're looking at the Norwegians, the Spanish, the Irish and others are either doing this or considering, in the front line of considering it, I think they would say that they recognize it is a purely symbolic move. No one's going to wake up tomorrow and say, fantastic, Oslo has said there's a Palestinian state so now there is a Palestinian state. So it is symbolic, but the symbolism in the Middle East always matters, and they are sending this message that, we are absolutely fully behind Israel's right to exist. That is a complete, not up for negotiation, but that we are also right behind

Palestine's right to exist and that's not up for negotiation either. That both of those things have to happen and both of those things are complimentary. If we're able to deliver this Palestinian state, that it makes it easier and safer to protect the Israeli state as well, and vice versa. It's a very difficult argument to win, but I think ultimately they will feel that this creates additional pressure in that direction and gives some hope to the people on the ground at a time when things must feel pretty hopeless.

Steve Paikin: Daniel, we know Israel has a demonstrated history of launching rescue missions when their people are held hostage, going back almost half a century to Entebbe and times after that as well. Do you imagine there is a potential hostage rescue operation being planned by Israel at the moment, despite the fact that conventional wisdom says these hostages are underground in 300 miles of tunnels and who knows where?

Daniel Byman: So my short answer is no, at least in terms of a viable rescue plan. Of course for Israeli society, Israeli leaders, the rescue of hostages is important, but a few things. First of all, people learned from Entebbe and one thing they learned is you don't put all the hostages and one big area where they can be easily rescued. The other is that you want to disperse them as much as possible and what we seem to have seen in Gaza for the remains of hostages that have been recovered or the very, very small number that have been rescued, is they're dispersed. So you'll see some in one area, some in another. As we all know, there is a vast tunnel infrastructure underneath Gaza and many seem to be held there. That's an exceptionally difficult place for a rescue operation, and there is in fact a very high likelihood that the majority, not just many, but the majority of the remaining hostages are actually dead already. And so all these are issues, and from Hamas's point of view, the hostages in some ways are their best bargaining chip. Israel in the past has released really huge numbers, 1,001, and one very famous case of prisoners, to rescue an Israeli and Hamas leaves that I think correctly, that it can extract fairly serious concessions.

Having said all that though, let me add one very different point, which is the Netanyahu government has prioritized military operations against Hamas over hostage rescue, and especially over hostage negotiation. And so there is a real possibility of significant hostage release as part of a ceasefire. Israel would have to make what for it are very painful concessions, it's not an easy decision. They'd have to release a lot of people, including many that Israel, their phrase would be, have blood on their hands, but nevertheless, Israel could do this tomorrow. In fact, if it wanted at least some of the hostages released, but it has chosen to keep military pressure on Hamas. And from the Israeli military's point of view, that's a very painful choice, that you want to have both, but nevertheless, I think we need to recognize that there has been a government decision in terms of what their prioritizing.

Steve Paikin: Julie, any point in launching a rescue mission at this juncture?

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- Julie Trottier: Clearly, I totally agree with both Thomas and Daniel. Clearly, the solution will be political. A political solution will be much more efficient and successful than the military solution to recover the hostages. And that takes us back to what we're discussing about the two-state solution. What matters is for people to have political rights. Peace will prevail once people can use political mechanisms to face the conflicts they're facing. So, whatever shape the political rights take, whether it's two-state or one-state, what's important is for everyone in that region to have political rights.
- Steve Paikin: I'm going to pick up on that again in a second, but Thomas, should let you weigh in on whether a rescue mission makes any sense.
- Thomas Fletcher: I think if you've got fantastic intelligence about where specific people are and you've got the means to go in, I think most governments would try that. I don't think that intelligence necessarily exists, for the reasons that Daniel points out. And I'm very struck that... I remember on October the 8th, sitting with hostage release experts, special forces experts and so on, and on all of them telling me that if you want to get as many hostages out as possible, don't go in heavy. Don't go in with a big military attack, don't go in with a ground invasion. Work on the negotiations with very targeted special forces operations ready to go alongside those. And then over time, hunt down every single one of those responsible for the atrocities on October the 7th. That was the very clear advice they were giving to their counterparts in Tel Aviv, but of course, the leadership of this cabinet chose a different course and I think it was the wrong choice.
- Steve Paikin: Let's follow up now on Julie's point about whether we're talking one-state, two-state solutions, what the future political possibilities are from that standpoint. Julie, based on what you see in here, do you suspect that there is a workable majority among the Israeli population that would acknowledge the rights of the Palestinian people to their own state? Do you see that right now?
- Julie Trottier: That's a good question. I would've been much more optimistic about that 20 years ago. The public opinion has been moving in a direction of intolerance, of considering any political rights for Palestinians as being illegitimate. I'm not talking about everyone, of course, but a big bulk of the public opinion. And so right now, I don't think the two-state option is very popular among the Israeli population, but there is a growing concern. And there is a core, a minority right now, but a core of Israelis that are pushing for a two-state solution, indeed, but they are a minority, definitely.
- Steve Paikin: Daniel, what do you see?
- Daniel Byman: Unfortunately, I have to agree with Julie. There was an Israeli narrative that emerged after the second Intifadah, which was that Israel offered a peace deal and the Palestinians responded with suicide bombers. Now, someone like me

will argue with aspects of that, but nevertheless, that narrative is very firmly entrenched.

And if you look 20 years later at October 7th, you're seeing a new narrative, which is from Israel's point of view is it was trying to allow things in Gaza to get a little better, and instead there was this massive brutal attack. And again, Palestinians would strongly dispute that interpretation, but that narrative is I think, incredibly strong. So you're going to see a new generation that is more conservative on this issue, and the politics are grim. It's not, if you look at the people who are critical of Netanyahu might take his place, they're not calling for a two-state solution at present, right? I mean, that's not the dispute right now. The dispute in Israel is whether there should be a ceasefire primarily to do a hostage release. And so the kind of voices calling for a two-state solution were, I think, fairly weak before October 7th, and politically, I think they're close to non-existent at present.

But I want to emphasize the point that Thomas raised. In the end, I don't think there's a choice. Right? I mean, I think this is the reality of where this needs to go and people might not want it, they'll drag their feet, but in the end, I think it's necessary.

Thomas Fletcher: Yeah, just to jump in, I think in that great Tom Friedman book, from Beirut to Jerusalem, he talks about hammer rules. And one of them, which I think is applicable to this crisis, is you don't hit your opponent because it necessarily makes rational sense to do it because it's the most sensible course of action, but you do it because you think your opponent is weak, and both sides are falling into that mode of thinking.

I suppose the only thing I'd say, because I agree completely, it's a really hard sell at the moment, as I think Julie said earlier on, the Israelis are not feeling any empathy for the Palestinians under the bombs, and the Palestinians under the bombs at the moment don't seem to be feeling any great empathy for the Israelis on the other side. I would think though, when the polls shift within Israel, when you talk about that broader normalization, so when you're not talking about just a two-state solution, but a 22-state solution, an agreement with the entire region on normalization, so that effectively you're doing that peace deal with Saudi, with Abu Dhabi, with Qatar, with Bahrain and a major component of that deal, they're insisting on the recognition of Palestine. Then I think it shifts it because there's that bigger prize of normalization on the table.

Steve Paikin: In which case, Julie, let me ask about the other side of the coin, which is a possible one-state solution, which has gained some currency more recently. Can you imagine the other side going for that given a post-October 7th world?

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Julie Trottier: Right now, no, of course. But the thing is, we face as much difficulty building a one-state with equal rights for everyone, as we would be facing difficulties for two-state solution at this point.

I'd like to add one point, which is really important, and I think everyone will agree on this, is on 7th of October, the Kibbutzim team that were attacked, the ones who became victims, they were the opponents to Netanyahu. They were the population working, wanting Palestinians to have political rights. One of the lady was taking hostage and was one of the earliest was freed, she had been actively working, going to the Gaza Strip, taking children to hospitals in Israel. So the left wing, the people wanted Palestinian states, the people wanted the two-state solution, in Israel have felt very much betrayed because there's an idea that's very entrenched right now.

I don't know, historians will have to tell us whether this is true or not, but right now the conviction is very entrenched among Israelis that the Palestinian workers from Gaza who were coming to work in those Kibbutzim actually provided intelligence to Hamas, which allowed them to plan this attack because apparently the attack was very carefully planned. They knew a lot about the way those Kibbutzim were protecting themselves. And so this feeling that this group of Israelis, this population of Israelis who won't actively promoted a second, a two-state solution, really feels betrayed, which means we've lost a lot of support on the Israeli side for a two-state solution and that's part of why I said this is, I mean, I would love to see a two-state solution. It's not for me to decide whether it'll be one-state or two-state, but I'm just saying we are at a very, very dark point in time concerning any support for that on both sides.

Steve Paikin: Tom, do you think there are any diplomats anywhere in this region who are thinking about the viability of a one-state solution at this point?

Thomas Fletcher: Well, actually, I think before October the 7th, it was much more part of the discourse, and that was partly because people had given up on the two-state solution, they just didn't see any way through to it. As I say, the light may have been there, but the tunnel was very dark or nonexistent to get there. I'm not hearing it as much anymore and I think that's partly because the public discourse around the situation has shifted. So I think now, people would feel that calling for a one-state solution means the destruction or displacement of the other side. It's hard to imagine a one-state solution with these two peoples coexisting at the moment. Just the practicality of governing that in a fair, just way, I think it's beyond us all.

And so therefore, to call for a one-state solution now, it really does mean someone's got to go, they've got to be displaced or destroyed. Now, if anyone is calling for a one-state Palestinian solution, then I think they would rightly be called out for being antisemitic, effectively calling for the destruction of Israel, and I think the same applies if you're calling for a one-state solution for Israel,

that's effectively Islamophobic because you're calling for the displacement or destruction of the Palestinians.

Steve Paikin: Daniel, your take?

Daniel Byman: Yeah, let me add briefly. You began our conversation asking for a bit of hope, and I'm trying to cling to that. And so one to me, one of the hardest questions right now, and in my view probably the most important, is what comes next in the Gaza Strip. What is the government going to be? And a frustration I have with Israel is I think they should have been thinking about this since October 8th, and they've been instead doing the opposite, deliberately putting off this very important question.

But one of the arguments Israel made against the two-state solution for many years was, there's no Palestinian side, the Palestinians are divided. And look, there's different governments on the West Bank and Gaza, so how can we possibly negotiate because there's no negotiating partner? Now, we now know that Netanyahu deliberately supported Hamas at different times in part to keep the Palestinians divided, but even putting that aside, there is a real division in Palestinian society, and there was a real question even in the West Bank, where you have leadership that is largely discredited, very old... Mahmoud Abbas is an 88-year-old chain smoker. So there's a real question of what's going to come next. But if you can actually have real leadership in Gaza and that can be acceptable to the international community, then almost by definition you're having real leadership that can be acceptable as a negotiating partner. And that hasn't happened yet and there are problems on the Palestinian side, there are problems on the Israeli side, but that at least is something that I'm hoping will go from problem to opportunity, if it's managed right.

Steve Paikin: Tom, I've seen op-eds written on the notion that, had the Palestinian leadership and people in Gaza made different decisions along the way over the last many decades, they could have been more like the United Arab Emirates right now, as opposed to the disaster that they are. You think that's a reasonable argument to make?

Thomas Fletcher: I think it's quite a big jump. Now I think, I regret the fact that the Palestinians in Gaza elected Hamas, but I can also... They weren't given much of a choice, given that the Fatah leadership was old, real governance problems, was hardly willing to face democratic scrutiny. So, it was, I would argue a big mistake, a huge mistake to have elected Hamas, but they were clearly feeling there wasn't much of an option.

I don't think, given the realities of life in Gaza that after 2008 they could have suddenly turned themselves into UAE. I mean, they don't have enormous, they don't have immense amounts of oil wealth just sat underneath them there that

could suddenly have been turned them into a massive economic superpower like the UAE. So, I think it would be a big jump for them to do that.

Steve Paikin: Julie, let me circle back to the first answer you gave at the beginning of our conversation, where you focused on water resources and the potential for coming up with something that would see these two different peoples share the same water in a way that would somehow fit into the Geneva Conventions. What do you see happening there?

Julie Trottier: They already share the water even if they don't want to, because they're sitting on a shared aquifer. But just to compliment on the Hamas, I think if you had free elections right now in Gaza, they wouldn't get elected. Even before October 7th, Gaza-ese were very disenchanting with Hamas, but I don't think you'll find a lot of people with enough courage to run against Hamas candidates, because they would feel too endangered.

There's a lot of political violence, so organizing free and fair elections would be quite difficult right now in Gaza Strip. And that's why I believe in water, because this doesn't require candidates running for elections, but everyone needs to have access to clean water. It's a necessity for survival. And what's happening right now is that groundwater flows. We never stuck water under the ground, right? Water is always a flow. And right now the natural flow of water goes from this agricultural area in the south of Israel that is just east of Gaza. Groundwater flows into the Gaza Strip, laden with a lot of chemical products used in agriculture. 122 chemical products are used every day in Israeli agriculture that are totally forbidden in the EU, so the effluents are quite polluted.

Now, this polluted water comes into the Gaza Strip from the east, and as the main source of water in Gaza has always been wells, groundwater wells, and there's been over-pumping for quite a few decades, we have seawater infiltration coming from the west end. So you have seawater coming in from one side, polluted water coming from the other side, so there is no such thing as potable water in the groundwater under the Gaza Strip. So what people have been doing for a long time is they desalinate, they do reverse osmosis on water that has been pumped from the ground, and this requires a lot of electricity and most of the electricity in the Gaza Strip was coming from Israel. So, the decision to cut off electricity has been harming Palestinian access to drinking water.

What have people done? Well, there is a huge wastewater treatment plant called NGEST that was built in the complete northeast of Gaza Strip, as far from the sea as you can be inside the Gaza Strip. Upon the request of Israel, Israel wanted that wastewater treatment plant to be located there because it didn't function for many years because there wasn't enough electricity. So it was just infiltrating untreated wastewater into the ground and this untreated wastewater would just flow towards the sea. Once it reaches the sea, the currents go north, they run to Ashkelon. So whatever pollution is in Gaza water ends up on the

Israeli coast. It's a loop, I call it the boomerang effect. Everyone will win if we work on restoring a healthy aquifer and healthy water treatment.

Now, what's happening in NGEST, this wastewater treatment plant, it had been functioning for a few years now, because a huge, huge amount of solar panels had been set up next to it. It was producing 53 megawatts a year, this was humongous. It was providing half of the electricity this wastewater plant needed and this wastewater treatment plant needed. What happened when people suddenly became short of drinking water? Well, people went and picked up the solar panels and fitted them to the pumps that were pumping water from the ground so their kids could survive and drink water fit to drink. So there's those solar panels, if you take a satellite image of Gaza now, you won't see a single solar panel there. They haven't been bombed, they've been picked up and set up to provide drinking water, which means the lack of drinking water that was provoked by cutting off the electricity has now caused a lack of treatment of wastewater, which will finally pollute seawater and pollute Israeli coasts.

So here we have a common interest that's quite clear. It's beyond any kind of election or party candidates. And if you speak with water engineers, I've always seen Israeli water engineers collaborate really well with Palestinian water engineers, because they have the same social technical imaginary to them. Wastewater is meant to be treated and drinking water has to be fit for drinking. And here you can really have progress because either we all win in this, I mean parties there, or nobody wins. So, I see a glimmer of hope here. I'm not saying it's going to be easy, but I see an opportunity for progress.

Steve Paikin: Tom, can I get you to weigh in on whether you see other potential areas of shared resources or shared interests leading to the potential of something?

Thomas Fletcher: Water is a great example because it's such an opportunity, but also such a threat to both sides if they get it wrong. So you can imagine that focusing, you hope that that would focus people's minds. I think there's a lot of interest in the offshore gas, and when I was back in Lebanon from 2011, 2015, we put a lot of work into trying to find agreements between Lebanon and north of Israel, Israel and the Palestinians to the south, to see if there was any common framework that could allow those countries actually to make more of the resource that was just off the coast there. And Amos Hochstein of the State Department and others made real progress in doing that through actually in the end, because Lebanon and Israel couldn't, for obvious reasons couldn't reach an agreement with each other, the agreements were basically done with Cyprus in order to demarcate those territories. So, offshore gas could be one of those, but I wouldn't want to put too much hope on that. It's a big incentive for people to fight, as well as for people to make peace.

Steve Paikin: I'm just mindful of what the clock is saying right now, and I note that we are at the time in our discussion when the organizers would like us to start taking

questions from the audience, which have been coming in on a steady stream throughout our conversation.

So Daniel, the first one here is for you and the questioner would like you to speak to Hamas's military strength at this point in time, and how to what degree Israel might succeed in its stated aims of deconstructing Hamas's military and government infrastructure. How do you see it now?

Daniel Byman:

So Hamas's military probably has been hit very hard. I want to stress that I think the numbers, at least from where I sit, are uncertain. The Israeli military claims that of the pre-war total between 25,000 and 30,000 Hamas fighters, that it's killed about 12,000. Hamas puts the figure at seven or 8,000, but either way, that's actually a very significant percentage of the overall fighting force. Hamas has lost a number of mid-level leaders, it's also lost a lot of its military infrastructure. So many tunnels have been destroyed, ammunition caches have been destroyed, the rocket systems and so on. So, there have been very significant losses.

But the thing I have to stress is that military power is a relative concept. And so if the question is, could Hamas successfully attack Israel? The answer is no, but it never really could, as long as Israel was prepared and willing to fight back. So October 7th happened, not because Hamas was super strong, but because Israel allowed itself to be surprised. And so that's, I think we can safely say, Israel's not going to let that happen again. And therefore, that concern to me is diminished almost from day one.

The bigger question though is, does Hamas have the power to sustain itself in Gaza itself? The answer is yes, because there's no replacement. And this gets back to what we discussed earlier, where there needs to be some new government in Gaza itself, and that government to be effective has to have either outside support or its own ability to maintain security. And right now, whether Hamas has 15,000 fighters or 1,500 fighters, that's enough if there's no opposition. And because of that, we've seen in my view, a tremendous Israeli failure. What it states as its most important goal, which is destroying Hamas, is not as simply removing Hamas, it's a replacing Hamas question, and there's nothing queued up to replace it.

And the last thing I would say is, understandably world attention is focused on the potential Israeli military operation in Rafah, which may be massive. We've already seen beginnings of it, but we've also seen very limited Hamas guerrilla operations in parts of Gaza that Israel claimed it had cleared of Hamas. And this is no surprise to certainly, anyone who watched wars in Afghanistan or Iraq, which is that clearing the fighters is step one. The next steps are holding the territory to make sure they don't come back and after that, building things in their place to present a coherent government that can act on its own. And those

two stages, Israel has not done. So we're simply seeing Hamas resort to guerrilla warfare, which to me is very predictable, and Israel was not prepared for that.

Steve Paikin: Tom, you're on a university campus, so this question feels like a good one for you. In recent weeks, we have witnessed significant student-led efforts worldwide demanding an end to the conflict. Importantly, students argue that disclosing, divesting and cutting ties with Israeli academic institutions may be practical steps that we may take right now. Are these initiatives, the questioner asks, at all effective?

Thomas Fletcher: So this, people clearly are really troubled about what's happening in the region, and people feel great concern from both sides. Many students have families on the Palestinian side and on the Israeli side, and they're deeply worried for them. Also, there were lots of students who are just carrying on life, carrying on learning and researching and so on. So campuses aren't as swept up here as sometimes seems to be the case on the other side of the Atlantic. But we do have, there's an encampment 30 seconds from me just outside the window here, outside the Bodleian Library.

So the demands do include, and the demands that I've seen in the statements from the encampments do include divestment from companies that are complicit in genocide and institutions that are complicit in genocide. My argument would be that we're not investing in companies that are complicit in genocide and we're not cooperating in institutions that are complicit in genocide and I don't think a wider boycott of Israeli universities, for example, is part of the solution here. I think academic cooperation is very, very important and is part of what makes us research institutions that we are. So I think that, I suppose that's one of these elements that will generate more heat than light, perhaps.

I think my message to many of the students I've been talking to who do feel really troubled by what's going on is, let's look at how we can support some of those Palestinian academics who've been displaced or whose universities have been destroyed. How can we find cooperation with them as well? Let's not punish Israeli academics, let's just find ways to try and support those Palestinian academics who have suffered.

Steve Paikin: Julie, how about your view on whether any of this has been effective?

Julie Trotter: Well first, if you allow me, I'd like to congratulate our students at Sciences Po, because when they occupied the building, they were completely peaceful. We didn't have a single window smashed, we didn't have a single stone thrown, they were extremely peaceful, and I really appreciated that.

Now, when they say divest, I think it's a serious concern for a student. Am I paying fees to an institution that might be acting towards a genocide? So what I don't understand is why our institutions, I'm speaking about all universities, why

don't we invite those students on board a commission that would examine every single investment so that everyone can be reassured, and set a list of criteria for acceptable investments, so that everyone is reassured that no, there are no investments in any activity that collaborates with a genocide. I think every single university could do that. Now, it's easier to say in France because universities are public institutions, so they don't have any investments in principle, most universities. It'll be more complicated for American universities, of course.

But one thing that divesting from a company that makes weapons to me sounds like divesting from a company that sells cigarettes. We know that smoking cigarettes is like committing suicide. So of course, universities are not supposed to invest in that. In the same way, universities, I don't think, should be investing in building bombs to kill people. Now, this being said, stopping any collaboration with Israeli university is another matter because universities are where you will find the biggest concentration in Israel of people who believe in a two-state solution, of people who believe in political rights for everyone. So, if we stop collaborating with Israeli institutions, we are actually harming the very people we want to support. So, I see this as a completely different issue.

Steve Paikin: Daniel, what's the view from Georgetown?

Daniel Byman: Yeah, so I think from Georgetown, I would say I'm going to speak for every single American university now, which is, everyone should be skeptical of what I'm going to say. I do think it's actually mattered in the United States considerably, and not in the sense of, will a particular institution divest or not? I mean, that may happen in a few cases, but I'm skeptical, especially the actual way. This isn't 1970, where people owned 5% of stock in a particular company, right? It's a very different financial picture that I frankly think the students aren't even trying to understand. But more broadly, this has been on the front pages of major newspapers, it's been the subject of considerable, really massive network coverage, and in some ways in the United States has probably gotten more coverage in the last three months than the war itself. So there is truly a lot of coverage on this.

And going back to the American election question, the American election, whoever is going to win this year, it's going to be very close. And having people who are stirred up on this issue, often in the American context on the political left, is a concern of the people that support President Biden. And so he I think, is being pushed to act not only because of his genuine views, not only because of American strategic interests, but also because of his own political concerns about critiques on the left, and whether that will mean people vote for another candidate, they simply don't vote at all for him. I think that has really shaped the administration's response.

Steve Paikin: Julie, we have a question here on Hamas and Fatah. The questioner says, we have seen several negotiations between Hamas and Fatah in recent months, in

places such as Moscow and Beijing. Do you think a real reconciliation between the two organizations is possible?

Julie Trottier: I wouldn't bet on it, because the way the Palestinian authority has been evolving over the past few years has been with a close interaction with Israel, which Hamas, of course will not accept. Now, this is not for me to decide of course, but maybe a third political movement could start. Maybe it would be the right time for Palestinians to build political alternatives. During the first Intifada, we saw the rise of many different political movements. We could use this tragic time now as a time of opportunity to build new movements that could bridge the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. This being said, I think Pakistan and Bangladesh are showing us that one state that is disjointed geographically has little chance of survival as a single state.

Steve Paikin: Daniel, maybe I could get you to follow up on that. In as much as I hear Americans complaining all the time, boy, we wish we had something other than Republicans and Democrats all the time. And yet at the end of the day, those seem to our only two choices. Now, I'm not making comparisons between those two political parties and Hamas and Fatah, but essentially, people are looking for alternatives, and yet it always comes down to them. Are there any alternatives?

Daniel Byman: So, yes and no. Of course, the United States has had a very stable two-party system for many decades now, and that's largely simply because of the mechanics of the American political system, where third parties really are not viable except in very unusual circumstances. And in contrast to parliamentary systems where you can have coalitions, after the fact, in the American case, you basically do your coalition before the election.

And so even though we have a party called the Democratic Party and we have a party called the Republican Party, what they stand for has changed tremendously in American history. And just to pick an obvious example, the Party of Civil Rights for a long time was the Republican Party, and now the Democratic Party will claim that label. And I could point to 100 other examples, and I think people need look no further than President Trump. So much of what he embodies, in my view for worse, but for better or worse, is quite different than the Republican orthodoxy of Ronald Reagan. Very important issues like standing up to Russia, free trade, small government, this was the core of Reagan-ism and Trump rejects all of it. So, I think there actually is tremendous choice, but it actually happens within parties rather than between parties. So, when we think about what a Democrat is or what a Republican is, you'll get very, very different answers over the years.

Steve Paikin: Tom, your name comes up in this question here, so this one's going to you. Why is the one-state solution always framed as displacing or destroying one of the two peoples, as Tom Fletcher puts it, or at least as this questioner thinks you put

it? Why isn't it presented by the international community as a Dayton-like accord, focusing on peace-building a secular state that is safe for all?

Thomas Fletcher: I mean, I love that vision and I'm with the questioner. Wouldn't it be great if we could get to that point? And as I said in the run-up to that period, and as we came closer to October the 7th, a lot of people were talking about a one-state solution and imagining, hoping for something like that. But I think the last seven or eight months, that period, October the 7th itself and then the retribution that has followed, have really set back that idea that you could have those two peoples coexisting in one secular state like that. I can't imagine the governance structure that would work and that would deliver security, justice, opportunity for the Palestinians and Israelis within a state. I would love to be wrong and I will be celebrating if somehow that emerges in a fair way, but I just can't see how it can emerge with the lack of trust on both sides at the moment that we've been discussing.

Steve Paikin: Just for the record, I should ask, have you ever been wrong about these things before?

Thomas Fletcher: All the time, absolutely. I took a bet out once that we'd have a female President of America and UN Secretary General at the same time. I think this was back in, well 2012, maybe. And I've been proved wrong on both of those so far.

Steve Paikin: Well, we can't feel cocky in Canada because I think we've had 23 prime ministers, only one female, and only for about, what was it, six months or something like that. So anyway, back to the questioning here. Julie, this one's for you. Benjamin Netanyahu was aggressively anti-Oslo during Yitzhak Rabin's final few months and the situation has evolved significantly since then. Is any hint of sustainable solution even remotely considerable, given Netanyahu's past and present, while he and or his coalition remain in power?

Julie Trottier: His coalition definitely is pretty extremist and refuses a two-state solution and has been refusing it at least 10 years. But Netanyahu cannot stay in power forever, because if there are elections given his unpopularity right now, I doubt he would win them. There's been so many elections in the past few years in Israel because no party managed to get a real majority, so they were always fragile coalitions. And I doubt that in the next elections he will be able to build a coalition that will be able to lead him back to government. And now this being said, I'm a bit like Thomas, I often lose my bets, but so long as he's in power, I'm not very optimistic. My optimism comes from the fact that there will be an election and probably he will not be able to form another coalition again.

Steve Paikin: Well, Daniel, having said that, I talked to plenty of people after October 7th who said Netanyahu is done, he's finished. His one calling card was security and he's blown that, and yet here we are all this time later and he's still in power and an obvious alternative isn't there. So, what do you think?

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Daniel Byman: So, because of Israel's political system, there didn't have to be an election. So he was deeply unpopular, yet on the day-to-day basis, as long as he kept his coalition intact, that was all that mattered. And he is as I think everyone knows, a truly remarkable politician. I disagree with many of his policies, but I have to admire his ability to reinvent himself again and again and be able to go from coalition to coalition and successfully stay in power. As Julie said at the beginning, he's the longest-serving Israeli Prime Minister in Israel's history, which is rather stunning.

I want to temper expectations for a coming election, however. Let us say Netanyahu loses, which I would agree, actually I think is probable, although far from certain. However, I also think the extreme right is likely to do well, and these are the people, the Ben-Gvir, the Smotrichs, that really regard the Arabs as either subhuman or not deserving rights, and want them pushed out or severely restricted. And that view, which truly used to be a minority within a minority in Israel, has obviously gained significant support in recent years based on the presence of these two people in government. But I think it's going to grow stronger. I think October 7th makes the extreme right view that there's no possible dealing with the Palestinians. I think it makes that argument stronger. So I could imagine Netanyahu losing perhaps to someone more moderate like Benny Gantz, but at the same time, a more extreme opposition coming into play that favors, in my view, very nasty policies.

Steve Paikin: We've got just a couple of minutes left here, so let's do one more question and we'll get nice brief answers from the three of you on this one, and it's right in your wheelhouses. What role, if any, should the scholarly community play in diplomatic efforts to facilitate a sustained solution to the conflict? Okay, looking at all of you, Thomas, you're nodding first, go ahead.

Thomas Fletcher: As I was nodding, I was thinking, this is a mistake. So I think academics can play an amazing part in coming up with the research and information that can underpin peace agreements. I think Julie's work on water is just such a brilliant example of that, because they've got the time and energy to think about things that policymakers are often too distracted and too tactical to think about. So that's a massive one.

I think that retaining, and I think Julie and Daniel mentioned it, retaining these academic links between institutions, between individual academics, is absolutely key to part of this. We can't close ourselves off to other people, we've got to have those human connections. So that should be at the heart of the discussion.

And I think I worked in government, part of government, and we found that we were often very reactive. We wanted ideas, we wanted policy, we wanted creativity, but we found that we were just too exhausted and rushed to come up with it. And now that I'm working in academia, I'm working with people who've got ideas and creativity and content, but just are desperate for policymakers to

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hear it. So, I think there is a space here and it's one of the things we're trying to do here at this university, at this college, almost translating between these two constituencies, the policymakers and the academics to get better policy out of it. So yeah, academics, higher education institutions, I would say, wouldn't I? But very much part of the solution.

Steve Paikin: Julie, s'il vous plaît.

Julie Trottier: I totally agree with Thomas, and one concern I have is right now, every single university in Gaza is being destroyed. If we want a new political movement that can build a democracy with political rights for everyone that will ensure lasting peace, well, we need educated people. And I think working with faculty members on both sides can facilitate this. We can meet because we don't represent our governments, we can meet abroad. I mean, Israeli faculty members, Palestinian faculty members, have been meeting abroad even before Israel recognized the PLO as a legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. So, I think we have to cultivate those links because I hope the next political elite leading both Israel and Palestine or Gaza, whatever they will choose to build, I hope that they will be part of the intellectual elite. So, there we can be enmeshed in this. And destroying all universities the way we've seen in Gaza, is not helping.

Steve Paikin: Daniel, you're batting clean-up here.

Daniel Byman: Lather and repeat, my colleagues, that's excellent points. I'll simply give a shout-out really, to our host today. I think an important role of universities is broader education, and sometimes that's the students in the classroom, but it's also the broader communities of which we're all a part. And that hardly means that academics have all the answers, but we at least have the freedom to raise a wide range of questions, to have free discussion, and hopefully we all come away a little smarter, and that makes us better citizens. So, I think that's a huge role that universities can play.

Steve Paikin: I want to personally thank the three of you for just an excellent discussion, that was first-rate.

Peter Loewen: Thank you for listening to Six Conversations on the Modern Middle East. You could find all episodes on our website Munkschool.utoronto.ca, or wherever you get your podcasts. I'm Peter Loewen, Director of the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy. Thank you to our partner schools and especially to Arancha Gonzalez, Dean of the Paris School of International Affairs at Sciences Po Paris, and Manuel Muñiz, Dean and Provost of the IE University in Madrid.