

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

THE NEW ISRAELI SOCIETY: FROM MELTING POT TO PARTNERSHIP –
AN ADDRESS BY ISRAELI PRESIDENT REUVEN RIVLIN

AN ALAN AND JANE BATKIN INTERNATIONAL LEADERS FORUM

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PARTICIPANTS:

Opening Remarks:

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Introduction:

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Featured Speaker:

HIS EXCELLENCY REUVEN RIVLIN
President
The State of Israel

Moderator:

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. JONES: Good morning, everybody. My name is Bruce Jones. I'm the Vice President and the Director of the Foreign Policy Program here at Brookings. And on behalf of myself and Martin Indyk, the Executive Vice President of Brookings, it's my pleasure to welcome you here today to our Batkin International Leaders Forum with Reuven Rivlin, President of Israel. I'd like to extend a particular welcome to Ambassador Ron Dermer, Israel's Ambassador to the United States, as well as other members of the Diplomatic Corps and Brookings Trustees who have joined us here today.

The Batkin Forum is our platform for hearing from key leaders from around the globe. We've hosted leaders from a number of countries, recently including Joko Widodo of Indonesia, Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah of Afghanistan, Susana Malcorra of the United Nations. These opportunities matter and are critical components for our work for one simple reason: Leadership matters.

The foreign policy debate can sometimes become enmeshed in theories of international relations or big data or megatrends, but those of us who have toiled in the field of policy know one thing with certainty; that leaders make a huge difference to the lives of their nations. And when we study foreign policy, we should never forget the individual at the helm of the state, the men and the women who actively shape the world around them.

Today we're fortunate to be joined by such a leader in President Rivlin, a man who has spent his career in politics trying to shape Israel's future. And now as Israel's President is his country's leading voice for equality, coexistence, and engaged citizenship in troubled times.

I want to say a heartfelt thanks to Alan and Jane Batkin for their support to make this forum possible. In a moment we'll have a treat for you. President Rivlin has prepared a short video to introduce the subject of his remarks today, The New Israeli Society: From Melting Pot to Partnership.

Before I sit down, though, I want to say one final thing, which is an enormous thank you to Tamara Wittes who leads our Middle East and our Israel work here at Brookings with huge knowledge and an equally huge passion with a tremendous network that spans the Arab World and goes deep into Israeli politics and without whom today's event would not have been possible. So Tammy, thank you to you, and we look forward to your introduction after the video. And President Rivlin, thank you for joining

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us.

(Video played)

MS. WITTES: It is a special honor for us to host you here, President Rivlin, not simply because of your extraordinary leadership as Israel's Head of State, but because of the issues that you have brought to discuss with us today.

I was in the audience in Herzliya last June when President Rivlin spoke to Israelis about the four tribes that today comprise Israeli society and about the challenge of social cohesion. This emergence of a new Israeli society with no clear majority is a challenge with which America is also becoming familiar as within a few decades we, too, will be a society with no clear ethnic majority. This challenge is evident in the debates gripping Israel today, debates about economic inequality, about how to share the burden of military service, about the dominance of some religious movements over personal status, and about the struggle of Arab citizens of Israel for social, political, and economic equality. The changes in Israeli society have already produced changes in the party system in the Knesset and in a new political discourse, including sometimes about the United States that has surprised some observers.

At Brookings we saw that it was long past time for the Washington policy community to update its understandings of Israeli society and we can help. That's why earlier this year we launched a new initiative called "Imagining Israel's Future." Through research, events, other activities, we're bringing issues, debates, and voices from within the new Israeli society to a Washington audience. In the past year we've hosted events on topics like orthodoxy and feminism and civil rights for Israel's Arab minority. In the coming year we'll be hosting Israeli visitors at the Center and publishing Israeli scholars. I'm very grateful to the Morning Star Foundation and to the Israel Institute for their support that makes this work possible.

And there is no better way that I could imagine capping off our first year's effort than by hosting President Reuven Rivlin here at Brookings. In fact, when we first envisioned this project, hosting him was at the top of our wish list because of the clear inspiring voice he has provided on just these issues.

President Rivlin, of course, is the tenth president of the State of Israel, elected in June

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last year. His family has been in Jerusalem for eight generations and his father, I have to note, was a professor of Middle East Studies who translated the Koran into Hebrew. President Rivlin served as an intelligence officer in the IDF, including during the Six-Day War. He worked as a lawyer. His career in politics and public service began on the Jerusalem City Council where he served for ten years and moved on to the Knesset, Israel's parliament, as a member of the Likud party delegation. In addition to service on a number of committees, President Rivlin was twice elected Speaker of the Knesset and also served as Minister of Communications.

And throughout his long career in the rough and tumble of Israeli politics, Reuven Rivlin has always upheld two key principles as sacrosanct, the unity of the country and the preservation of democracy and pluralism. This principled approach has won him admiration and respect from politicians across the Israeli spectrum left, right, and center.

Now this past year has seen some truly disturbing developments -- bitter fights between religious and secular Jews, the burning of a school dedicated to Arab-Jewish coexistence, the murder of a family of Jerusalem Palestinians apparently by terrorists inspired by an extreme religio-nationalist ideology who were arrested just last week, and the continued wave of stabbings and other terrorist attacks throughout the country.

Through all of this, President Rivlin has been a consistent voice against racism, for tolerance and coexistence. Everything about his work as President demonstrates his commitment to making Israel a secure home for all Israelis, a state that is both Jewish and democratic, a state where everyone lives in security and with mutual respect.

I look forward to hearing more about your vision for Israel's future. Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming the President of the State of Israel, His Excellency Reuven Rivlin.

PRESIDENT RIVLIN: Thank you so very much, thank you. I see that the English language is much more richer than the Hebrew because I read the translation when I was speaking about the new Israeli agenda and it was translated into English as the new Israeli order. It's not a new Israeli order. We have no orders in our democracy. At least we hope that we will never have orders in our

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democracy. So I really believe that the translation that they spoke about, the new agenda as a new order, maybe it is ambiguous once we are talking in Hebrew, but it should not be translated like that once you are watching what I've said in the convention.

Dear guests, dear members of the Brookings Institute, I must say that yesterday I was asked by the President of the United States, Barack Obama, what I'm going to do today. And I said to him well, I'll be first thing in the morning at the Brookings Institute. He said I see that you are going from strength to strength. So God Bless all of you.

Well, as you have said before, I am a Jerusalemite, son of a Jerusalemite, son of a son of a Jerusalemite, son of a son of a son of a Jerusalemite -- goes back to the year 1809 when my ancestors came from Vilna to Jerusalem. Vilna was defined at the time by the Jewish people as Jerusalem de Vilna or Jerusalem de Lita. And we came 100 years before Zionism as a political movement because we believed that Jews should not only pray three times a day to God to return us back to Jerusalem because our head of the family, the Vilna Gaon, the genius of Vilna said to us, why should we pray three times? If we would like to go to Jerusalem, let's go to Jerusalem. And we came to Jerusalem. And at the time Jerusalem was not part of a country because there were very few people inside the walls of Jerusalem.

And they welcomed us and we lived together -- Jews, Arabs, Armenians -- everyone who was situated in Jerusalem as Jerusalemites altogether. And we have prayed and we did everything in order to bring prosperity to Jerusalem and to try to bring Jerusalem to become the capital of the believers of all the world. Of course, we believe that Jerusalem is part of the idea that the Jewish people have to return to their homeland and even to build their own state at the time. And we were in very good friendship with all our neighbors, with all our cousins. We have never thought that we have war one with each other once we are talking about our beliefs and our religion. Of course, we had differences of opinion to whom the land of Israel belongs, and we believe that it belongs according to a promise and according to the beliefs of the Jews. But we have to return because we have no other place to go to.

When I was born, a seventh generation, and now the Rivlins are here for more than 12 generations because there are members of my family that are much more -- they have a third generation to come every 20 years while we are very lazy so it takes us from that time 30 years for each generation.

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But there are Rivlins of 12 generations in Jerusalem and we are the ancient families because the people who were in Jerusalem, they are already here for 17, 18, 19 generations. One of them is the late president of Israel. God Bless his soul.

So when I was born in 1939 and it was a long time ago, a century ago, we were in Jerusalem only -- in the land of Israel only 200,000 Jews and we lived together. Within four years, until 1944, there were an extra full 200,000 Jews I think from all over the disasters of World War II. And until '48 we were already 700,000 Jews. When David Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister of Israel, after getting the approval from the United Nations, he announced the State of Israel. And since then we are in a conflict, but we have started the real tragedy between the two people who are living in the land of Israel 150 years ago because unfortunately people in Israel, once we are talking about the conflict, believe that on both sides unfortunately that Jews and Arabs are doomed to live together. While it is our destiny to live together, there is no other way to live together because this is the reality.

Now we are talking about the State of Israel and, of course, side by side we have to talk about the conflict with the Palestinians because Jerusalem, for example, is a microcosm of our ability to live together or to be in war forever. Jerusalem is a microcosm in the cities where we have about 800,000 inhabitants, Jerusalemites, all of them. We have 300,000 Israeli Palestinians or Jerusalemites, not even Israeli citizens. Altogether we are being in the same city living together in the same city and our ups and downs that cause a lot of difficulties.

I really believe that really the tragedy goes because of we have no confidence one in each other, no confidence whatsoever. And in order to be able to discuss the tragedy, in order to be able to try to find ways to bring to an end the tragedy, we have first of all to have confidence one in each other and we have no confidence. The Israelis don't believe the Palestinians. The Palestinians reject from time to time the very idea of the existence of Israel as a state at all, not only the Jewish state.

And that brings us all the time to ups and downs, to understanding from time to time, till a few years ago once we were talking about the Palestinian entity, about President Abbas that has changed his strategy. And I believe that he knows very well that the future of the Palestinian people and I never was one who learned how to patronize anyone. I'm not patronizing anyone whatsoever. Because of that

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maybe members of the Israeli parliament have decided that they prefer that I would be the President of Israel because we don't agree about the idea of the future of Zionism, but they agree that when I talk to them, never I patronize them.

So I really believe that without patronizing anyone, President Abbas knows very well just know that only a few years ago the Hamas was a sort of problem to the Palestinian community. And unfortunately now most of the Palestinian citizens or the Palestinian people believe that the Hamas is the solution and not the problem and that brings us to very, very delicate situation. And I would like immediately to go to the real idea of cooperation. And I believe that the bridge, the foundation of every bridge, to bridge the gap between the disagreement between us and the Palestinians and the lack of ability to trust one with each other, is to start and to begin with the Israeli citizens -- Arabs and Jews altogether -- because when they will understand that there are Israeli citizens serving in the Israeli Knesset. They are part of the Israeli environment. They are part of the Israeli hope. They should be part of the Israeli hope. They are part of the Israeli hope to be able to really succeed as a human being, as a citizen, not only as a member of one of the communities.

Well, when I was born, we had absorbed the Jewish people, so many people who came from all over, from 70 communities. Everyone had his own tradition. Everyone had his own way to pray and to worship God. Everyone had his own foods. Everyone had his own habits. And we have absorbed one with each other. The Polish have absorbed the Yemenites. The Yemenites have absorbed the people who came from North Africa. Those have absorbed those people who came from Russia. Everyone absorbed the people who came after them. And we all were in the feelings that we have to build the Jewish state, that we are one community in spite of differences of opinion between right and wrong, I mean left and wrong or whatever, between the people who believe the way of Zionism, where Zionism should lead us to. Everyone really understood very well that we have to be together because there is no other way to bring to the success of the idea of the Jewish to return back to their homeland.

So we were 80 percent of the population altogether. We knew that we have to serve in the Army because there is no other one to protect us but the IDF and it was our Army. It was -- everyone had his own children in the Army, and we had the same idea that we have to be together in spite of all

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differences of opinion, Jews cannot live without differences of opinion. Even the candles of Hanukkah, we don't know if we should light them from the first one to the eighth one, or from the eighth one to the first one.

So the idea of the call of our tradition is that we have all the time to debate, but we knew one thing that we are one community. Even people who believed in God they were brought up in a synagogue. They didn't know that there are other synagogues, although we always said that in every Jewish person you have three people who one goes to this synagogue and that one goes to the next synagogue and both of them will never enter the third synagogue.

But, of course, we had the idea together and there were minorities. And we have established the democracy of Israel in a parliamentary way of acting democracy. And we couldn't achieve the ability to fill up the roof, to ride down and to bring to approve a constitution and why it's so. Because we thought the majority, the majority from the left side to the wrong side or from the left side to the right side or whatever, we felt that without the understanding of the minorities we could not actually bring to the approval for any kind of constitution because the constitution first of all has a task and a role to keep the rights of the minorities.

And we had two minorities and at the time when we were 80 percent of the population of Israel in the idea of Zionism and the idea of bringing the State of Israel to prosper, we were talking to the minorities and there were two minorities, the Arabs and the Ultra-Orthodox. And they rejected the idea that the Israeli State would be defined as a Jewish democratic state. The Arabs said to us, well if we are all in Israel and we accept Israel because we are citizens of Israel in spite of the idea that our people are in war with our state, we are rejecting the very idea that Israel would be defined as a Jewish state because if it's democracy, let it be the state of all its citizens. You can decide from time to time what would be the nature, but don't put it into a sort of constitution. Once we will have majority if it is possible to change the definition and to change the character of the Jewish state not to be a Jewish state, but a state of all its citizens, then we would not agree to give our support to any kind of constitution that will say that Israel is a Jewish state. And we have said no.

We know the need for the next few hundred years to remain Israel as a Jewish state

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because the Jewish people have no other place. We have to keep in our hands the only prerogative to have the right of return to every Jew to his real fatherland, to his homeland. So they have rejected that. They have said we will not approve -- we will not give our hand, our support, to the idea that Israel will be a Jewish state, defined as a Jewish state, but Israel a state of all its citizens.

And then the other minority, the Ultra-Orthodox people in Israel and they are 20 percent. Once we were talking about the power of voting and power of decisions and much more because most of them are participating in the election. And if the whole population goes with 60 percent of the population going to the polls, they are going almost 80 or 85 percent once they have to decide upon the future of the democracy of Israel. So they said to us okay, we understand very well what is democracy because you explained it to us. It's not too important for us because we know that everyone is being keeping the rights of everyone, so we trust -- in God we trust, all others can be democrats. And they have said to us, we understand what is the meaning of democracy because you explained it to us and it is quite clear to us, but what is the meaning of a Jewish state? Is the Jewish state something that goes to other understanding of a Jewish state? So that was a rejection till now about defining Israel as a Jewish democratic state as long as we are not defining what is a Jewish state. And I appreciate, but I cannot give my hand to the idea that people cannot think of all the values that we are keeping and we are being appreciated by the entire world.

So at the time when we were 80 percent and there were no tribes, there were communities, communities that have held their need to identify themselves and to declare themselves as something which is different, but they were only 20 percent. They went to their own schools. They could influence the community, the atmosphere in Israel, but they could not be decisive. Once we had 80 percent of the center and some of them were even -- when they were the seculars, there were other seculars because when they were brought up, the first synagogue that they went to in Israel, in Jerusalem, was an Orthodox synagogue. So they understood and they believed that Judaism has no problem to do whatsoever. They were never brought up in New York or in Los Angeles or in Washington or all over. They did it according to their belief and to their way of living. But we are and we went to different schools and we learned different programs. And now I only showed the people of Israel the

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mirror of our community. I'm not so sure that they have the solutions. I'm not so sure that they have the idea how we can solve problems, how we can bring it to an end. But what I have put before the population in Israel is the idea that we are now not minorities because every one of the tribe is in the same -- they have the same sides -- thank you very much. Now I understand why I have a diplomatic --

Now we are almost 50 percent. There are four tribes and everyone thinks differently. Children are not beating one each other. At the time when 80 percent have served in the Army, the Army was the melting pot of the Israelis, all of them besides most of the Israeli Arab citizens, the Israeli Palestinians if they would like to call themselves Israeli Palestinians. There were citizens that didn't serve in a large way in the Army. The Army was really the melting pot of all other of the majority, the real majority that lived in Israel, and now we have less than 50 percent who are serving in the Army. This is a problem.

So the only place that the Israelis could meet within 5 or 6 years or 10 years or within one generation would be at work, which means that they will find themselves really strangers one to each other. They have to pay tax in order to make the country able to pass budget and to go on their preference of priorities once we are talking about the budget, the security and the building of security that we are facing and in those days much more. And because of that what I've done is to show the whole Israeli people and population that we have something to think about because it is not anymore minorities and majority. It is a real confederation of minorities and that is something that we have to take into consideration.

Well, I can talk to you about those problems for hours. I really believe that once we are talking about the Palestinians and the Israelis, the first way to build confidence is with Israeli citizens, with Israeli Arab citizens, and between the two communities to let them understand that they have the same hope of every Israeli. It's quite difficult to convince them, not because only it is very hard and difficult to convince them because they don't want to listen, it's sometimes because you have no really things to tell them and to say to them you see, let's go together.

So I really believe that building the bridge with the Israeli Arabs is something which is necessary to show the Palestinians that peace will come when we will be able to understand that we are

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living actually in the same space of earth with two states -- one state, three states, a confederation, whatever first of all while although people think on both sides that it is not the hope of their life to live together. Nevertheless, it's not too difficult to live together because it brings you some advantages and the hope that maybe it is in our both interests and mutual interests to get to the understanding that in order to bring to an end the tragedy that we are living is to cooperate and to start to understand that we are not doomed to live together. It is really our destiny to do so, and it starts in Israel and it starts with this problem, to bring all these tribes to become communities who have different ways of living. Nevertheless they know that we are one entity, that we are one people. And the hope of the people, the agenda, the new agenda of Israel, is the hope of every citizen of Israel to succeed and to get to really ability to find the Israeli dream part of his life. Thank you very much. Now I will answer questions.

MR. SACHS: Mr. President, it's really a special honor for me in particular and, of course, for Brookings. I'm also a Jerusalemite, of course, as you know, and so it's really particularly special for me.

You may not know, but President Rivlin is one of the biggest fans of Beitar Jerusalem, a famed soccer club in Jerusalem.

PRESIDENT RIVLIN: Best time in my life when I was president, I was the president of Beitar.

MR. SACHS: Absolutely. I will confess straight away and I hope in the spirit of unity you will forgive this. I grew up right by the soccer field of a different team. That's the last I'll mention that other team.

PRESIDENT RIVLIN: Now we all have Teddy.

MR. SACHS: Your Excellency, you spoke about Jerusalem and you spoke about your family being there from the early 19th century, long before the modern Zionist movement. And Jerusalem, of course, has troubles. It's on many people's minds here in D.C. as well. And when you look at the city, you look at the violence that we see in the streets, but you also look at the microcosm you mentioned, just these tribes even more so in Jerusalem with about a third Ultra-Orthodox, a third Arab, a third secular national religious and other. What gives you the most hope about the city? What gives you

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the most concern? Where do you look forward for the city in 20 and 30 years?

PRESIDENT RIVLIN: For years, since '67, all the population in Jerusalem on the Arab side and on the Israeli side really believe that we can live together. They had their hope. They knew that the Israeli government is very precise about holding Jerusalem united. We started to cooperate. That was one of the ups and downs because we had ups and downs during the years for centuries before these times.

So unfortunately we as people who believe that we have united Jerusalem, we kept three refugee camps in Jerusalem. We after being intimidated by the need of security have built walls. We have made it quite difficult for Jerusalemites to really fulfill their rights as citizens of Jerusalem. You know that the Mayor, Teddy Kollek, succeeded at the time in the year 1984 to achieve a mass majority in the Jerusalem municipality because more than 20,000 Jerusalemites from the Arab neighborhoods have voted for him because they said we have to decide about our future as citizens, and we would like to influence.

Even at the time there was a gentleman by the name of Senor. I was a member of the Jerusalem municipality and they had warned us, the Israelis, listen to us. If you are not going to return back from the idea of uniting Jerusalem or implementing Israeli law all over Jerusalem, I'm going to run to become the mayor of Jerusalem. I, a member of the Likud, said to him, welcome. I would like to be your deputy. In the Likud, of course, they were very much annoyed about my announcement. And I said if you are really supporting the idea of the Jerusalem act of the Knesset of Israel, then I'm ready to really contribute everything that you will become part of the Israeli experience, part of the Israeli way of running Jerusalem. I welcome you. Of course, they voted once again to the problem that we failed to find understanding and belief that we can live together.

I believed that there were a lot of projects. At the time, for example, there was the electricity company of Jerusalem, of East Jerusalem, and we thought that maybe we could combine them with the Israeli electricity company. And I said to Teddy Kollek at the time, no, we have to keep the electricity company of Jerusalem to be operated by them because we need people from the Palestinian side in Jerusalem to have the ability to run, to manage, and to be part of the people who are running

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Jerusalem. And they were hesitating. I really believe that the way and the belief of all the Jerusalemites, and I know that most of Jerusalemites are quite satisfied beside the understanding that the Palestinian people who would like to define themselves as a nation. They would like to have their own self-determination about their nationality. But when we are talking about day-by-day life and the cooperation and the ability of everyone to cooperate, to be with the hope that he can achieve his needs as a person, as a human being, and when he goes to school and when he goes to the university, he can afterwards find his way inside the Israeli environment, then, of course, we can come to the idea that we are one community. Unfortunately for the time being and as it is developing just now and the hatred and the really not only intimidation because only today one more heat we are in a position that in time we have the mechanism to find a way and order to bring to an end occasion that we need, understanding from both sides. When we had wars with the states and with Egypt, we afterwards went to negotiate and not immediately peace, but a cease fire and afterwards we managed to bring to peace and to sign a peace treaty and even to live in peace for the last 40 years. A cold peace, but nevertheless peace that both of us even today through the understanding that once we are talking about fighting extremism and fighting fundamentalism, we have to cooperate because it is in the best interests of both people. It is a mutual interest of us. We can find a way in order to live together. But now once we are talking about incitement and once we are talking about incitement in the Facebook or the Internet, Facebook that comes into every house of every one of us all around the world, and we find that we have no mechanism in order to bring to an end the riots and the violence that we are facing in Jerusalem. Only today and I'm sending and my heart is with them if something happened in the vicinity of Jerusalem.

Those matters are bringing more disagreement. It brings people and their children to believe if you are a Jew that Arab is a murderer and that the Jew is evil. Once we are talking about bringing up and really educating our children, that is something that goes for generations to come. The hope is that everyone will believe that we can live together because if a Jerusalemite being situated say to us okay, you have closed because it was your need to protect the burden of security, bring you to the idea that you have to build walls between the two sides of Jerusalem, I'm close on the side of the Israelis. I'm part of Israel.

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Let's assume that I would like to be part of Israel. What possibilities do I have? Do I have a chance? Do I have a future? Do I have hope? Can I go from my school directly to the Hebrew University, to find work, to find job? That is something that goes to the burden of the majority. We have to find by all means the possibility to cooperate. When they say we don't like to cooperate with you because you are patronizing us or you would like to impose on us the idea of Israel, we have problem because we are not going to give up the idea that Israel exists as a Jewish state. So really the dialogue, it's not only a dialogue, the very effect that everyone can use the Israeli hope, that everyone can achieve the Israeli hope, is the real task and the real goal that we have to operate in order to find a way of cooperation between all people all around. And it will be very tough. It is still very, very complicated to do so, but we have to start with a first step.

MR. SACHS: I want to, with your permission, operationalize a bit what you presented to us. You mentioned a scene of Israel now that has tribes, and in particular tribes that study in separate educational systems. These four systems don't meet. They teach, as you said, different values and in one case even in a different language. The Arab Israeli educational system teaches mostly in Arabic. This in a sense represents change from a melting pot idea from the early state to a multicultural approach, at best a multicultural approach. How can this be done? How can this be? The challenge that you presented to Israelis, how can that be met? Should languages be different? I know you're a proponent of teaching Arabic, for example. But should these different educational systems perhaps even be merged?

PRESIDENT RIVLIN: When you live in tribe you always live in a real threat that somebody wants to impose on you, something that you would not be ready to be imposed by. We are living according to our traditions, they would say, according to our principles, according to our values. We can cooperate, but you cannot impose on us. And we find day after day that it is almost impossible to impose because if you impose something on someone, whenever it would be possible for him he would rebel once again. So we have to find the understanding, the understanding that we are living in communities. But the communities need to cooperate because we are living also as one country, as one people, as one people that have different approaches to life, with different approaches to beliefs, different

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approaches of the ways and even of values. But we have to have common values and the understanding that every one of us can live together with the other side. And the melting pot has to be something which is just now can be found by every one of us because you are saying the right thing.

Most of the Arab Israelis know Hebrew, not fluently, but they know how to talk Hebrew. There are very few of the Jewish people in the State of Israel who know Arabic at all. Their parents, some of their parents, who came from Arab country they knew, but once we are talking about the people of Israel. We have tribes from all over that have come to Israel.

I, for example, am a grandpa. I'm a grandpa to nine grandchildren -- five boys, four girls. Two of them are Yemenites. You can have no mistake when you see my grownup grandchildren that are serving in the Army just now. You know that they are Rivlins, but you are very sure that they are Yemenites. You cannot be mistaken. Their mother is so dominant that there are two Yemenite Rivlins. I don't believe that in the way of thinking and belief and he was really one who thought like a prophet about the people of Israel. He was not sure that he will have two grandchildren, Yemenite grandchildren. I have three Iraqis, wonderful, two of them are girls, one is a boy. Wonderful children. They are from Iraq. Nothing to be mistaken about. Don't tell anyone, but they have another three, but not everyone can be perfect, so we manage to be the grandchildren.

So the whole community needs a change, but we cannot bring together those communities who are -- they are not forced to live alone. Their tradition because one was Ultra-Orthodox believe that giving the ability to one of his grandchildren to go to serve in the Army, for example, it will bring him to the possible hesitation about what he believes in and about what he was brought up. But in the meantime, the separation between the communities brings us to lack of ability to run the economy of Israel, to run the security of Israel, and they understand it very well. And now we see more and more Ultra-Orthodox Jews joining the Israeli Army because after that they can, of course, go to work and after that they are part of the community. They can keep their tradition. They can keep their beliefs. If you impose on them, they will say no, no way, no way, no way. If you will say to them okay, we are living in different communities, we are living in sort of different tribes, but the need of the unification of all of us for our mutual purpose, for our mutual hope, to become really something that could be defined as an Israeli

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hope for all us, that is the way in order to bring to understanding between all of the communities.

I'm saying so. I'm not so sure that it is possible immediately. I'm very, very -- I'm not too optimistic to be correctly -- to be -- it's not to say the least to be correctly, politically correct. It's not politically correct, but nevertheless I really believe that without imposing they will understand the Arab communities had at the time 10 children, 13 children. Now the Jews have 12 children, 13 children, and they are also living in a way that they would like to give all the abilities, and I'm not patronizing them. They understand that they would like to live according to the way that they can support and they can bring their children to the best chance that everyone has in order to progress in his life as a personality, as one of the community.

So not imposing, but coming to understanding that the responsibility is on all of us. It's not something that you say you have to do. I'm a minority. You have to take care of me. Because minorities are saying we have to be protected by the majority. Now there are no more majority. Every majority can become a minority in no time. We are four communities that create the Israeli experience, and the Israeli experience being led only by 38 percent of the population is something that cannot be done once we are talking about 30 years to come.

So I really believe convincing one each other, showing one each other that we can live together, to live together and separate, separate and together in the same nation, in the same population. I really believe that that will have -- it is something that will come to the minds of everyone because this is a necessity. It is something that we cannot live without it.

MR. SACHS: Thank you, sir. You outlined in your talk four challenges, four tasks for the Israelis. And among them was creating a sense of security for all citizens and also creating a new sense of Israeliness, what Israeliness would be in this new agenda.

PRESIDENT RIVLIN: Israeliness would be the hope of every Israeli from all tribes and from all communities that you have a change to progress in Israel although he belongs to one of the communities that are living altogether in Israel. Once you will understand that. You don't have to meet. For example, we have some programs being led by the Presidential House to bring together children from Ultra-Orthodox schools, from Israeli Arab schools, from general schools, and from national Orthodox

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schools, altogether they are meeting every month. There are 100 such meetings between all those schools from all over Israel, and we are doing a lot in order to let them operate through the Internet Festival. And then they meet one each other and they see we are all the same.

Actually we are dealing with environment problems, not something that goes into the myriad of the differences between the communities, about general ideas. And they find themselves sitting altogether and they come home. I must say that some of the parents are refusing to let the children go into such meetings between all the groups, especially when we are talking about a Jewish school and an Arabic school in the State of Israel. They are both schools in Israel, nevertheless when we are meeting they see actually that they are the same. They have the same ability to analyze different issues that they are dealing with once they are in connection through the Internet. And after that they meet and after that they become friends and after that they are going to summer camps together. And that could bring us to the understanding of every community from all over that it is possible that okay we are different, okay we have conflict between nations, okay we have a real culture war, we have really differences of opinion about how to worship God or how to behave. Nevertheless we are one unit. One without the other is impossible and that has to start from the beginning, from the high schools, and even from the elementary schools.

MR. SACHS: Mr. President, you have to make it to Capitol Hill, and so although we could continue for hours with this, it was fascinating --

PRESIDENT RIVLIN: Wait here, I'll return back.

MR. SACHS: You will? Thank you very much.

PRESIDENT RIVLIN: It is a real pleasure to meet you. I've heard about the Institute many times. I appreciate and read the reports from your sessions here, and I was very proud and I'm very honored to be here and I'm very happy. God Bless all of you. Thank you.

MR. SACHS: Thank you so very much, sir, thank you. And please remain seated while the President leaves.

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