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Recommendations for US policy toward Gaza
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(MUSIC)

PITA: Welcome to Intersections, the podcast where two policy experts explore and explain the important issues facing the world today. We're part of the Brookings podcast network and I'm your host Adrianna Pita.

Earlier this year the Center for Middle East Policy at Brookings and the Center for New American Security assembled a task force to examine U.S. policy options for addressing the ongoing crisis in the Gaza Strip.

In a detailed report set to be released on December 3rd, the task force made up of a bipartisan set of foreign policy and security experts, including former ambassadors, negotiators, and other officials, lay out recommendations for meeting immediate humanitarian needs while finding solutions to the long-term political challenges, including the best role for the United States to play with Palestinians, Israelis, Egyptians, and other regional partners in ending the precarious situation in Gaza.

On today's show, the director of the Center for Middle East Policy, Natan Sachs, will lead a roundtable discussion with fellow task force directors Ilan Goldenberg from the Center for New American Security and Brookings Visiting Fellow Hady Amr previewing the task force findings.

Now, over to Natan.

SACHS: Hi, my name is Natan Sachs and I'm the director of the Center for Middle East Policy here at Brookings. Thank you very much for joining us for a conversation about the Gaza Strip and U.S. policy towards it. I'm joined by two friends and colleagues here, one is Hady Amr.

AMR: Thanks Natan, Hady Amr, Visiting Fellow here at Brookings and formerly Deputy Special Envoy for Israeli-Palestinian Negotiations focusing largely on Gaza.

SACHS: Thank you. And Ilan Goldenberg.

GOLDENBERG: Thanks, Natan, great to be here. Ilan Goldenberg, I run the Middle East Program at the Center for New American Security and also worked with Hady and others at the State Department on Israeli-Palestinian issue in previous negotiations.

SACHS: Great. Thanks for being with us. We're here to describe your report that

we wrote in close collaboration in a joint partnership with the Center for New American Security, a report on American policy toward the Gaza Strip and how we think it might change.

We formed a task force for that. We gathered some of the best and most experienced minds here in Washington, Americans who have had experience with American government and with analyzing the situation. We've spoken to numerous stakeholders in the region and elsewhere and tried to think about how American policy toward Gaza might change.

We will be launching that report on December 3rd at Brookings and please tune in for that. If you're in Washington, please join us. If not, you can join on the web at 10:00 a.m. on December 3rd.

So perhaps, Hady, you can start by telling us a little bit about the situation right now. I think we all know the situation in Gaza is bad, but if you could tell us a little more about what that actually means.

AMR: It's surprising how bad the situation in Gaza is. Gaza is essentially manmade humanitarian catastrophe that kind of unfolds day after day. We're sitting here in Washington, D.C., so I like to think about how big Gaza is.

Gaza is about just under 2 million people living in an area about twice the size of Washington, D.C., but the critical challenge there is this lack of freedom of movement, the inability of people of Gaza to move to adjacent areas, so imagine living in Washington, D.C.

Wherein Gaza only 300 people a day enter or exit the strip, whereas once upon a time it was 15 or 20,000 people per day. So that's a central challenge that the people in Gaza face.

But that bears itself out in unemployment, higher than just about anywhere on earth at 53 percent, 97 percent of the water is unfit for human consumption. When electricity until very recently had only been available for about four hours a day. It's this catch-22 situation.

Gaza needs water, electricity, and freedom of movement to have a functioning

economy. It needs to have that functioning economy to even pay for that water and electricity. So it's a -- just from a moral and ethical perspective and even a security perspective, it's a dangerous situation.

SACHS: Thanks, Hady.

Ilan, I should say this whole project is a joint project with the Center for New American Security. When we first spoke about doing this, we were thinking about how bad the situation was. It seems to be a cycle going on. Every time there's a flareup between Israel and Hamas, and we saw a mini flareup just recently, we see then the parties, especially with Egyptian mediation, trying to get back for quiet for quiet.

You saw this the time you were in the State Department, can you tell us a little bit more about how that cycle works and how U.S. policy is involved about it?

GOLDENBERG: Sure. I mean, cycle has basically been since 2007. Actually I should also say first, it's great to be working together, CNAS and Brookings, on this project.

But the cycle's been going since 2007 when Hamas took over Gaza and it goes something like this, and we've seen it now play out again and again and again, Hamas uses violence in order to try to both pressure Israel to achieve its political objectives and also to build support and demonstrate resistance at home.

Israel at the same time uses economic pressure via blockade, to try and squeeze Hamas to get it to -- well, it used to be in the beginning it was about trying to get it to actually surrender. I think now they've moved on to surrender to just try to contain. Together with implicit support from Egypt and some other international actors to keep the blockade on, and then this creates pressure inside Gaza, makes everybody miserable. Over time that pressure builds and eventually it explodes as it did in 2008 and 2009 in the war, in 2012 in a war, and 2014 in a war, which I saw and Hady saw both when we were at the State Department and then also saw a lot of other near misses.

Whenever this situation explodes, the Egyptians and the U.N. they come in and they negotiate something between the parties, between Israel and Hamas that basically says, okay, let's go back to quiet for quiet, you guys stop fighting, everybody stops

fighting, Hamas commits to that, Israel commits to some small economic changes on the ground and some small benefits for Hamas, and then they all agree, well, let's talk about these other more complicated issues later and those complicated issues never get talked about.

SACHS: Like opening up the Gaza Strip or changing the fundamental relationship?

GOLDENBERG: Exactly. They never get to those discussions. Because once the fighting is over, there's no pressure on anybody anymore. So you sort of move beyond that point and everybody goes back to doing the same thing again until we get the next explosion.

The American approach in all this has basically been to stand on the sidelines. At the beginning we actually worked against trying to get to any kind of solution, because we thought we could really squeeze Hamas until it breaks.

Since then we've sort of moved on from that to more of hey, Egypt, U.N., if you guys want to try and do some stuff, knock yourselves out. We're going to focus here on making peace between Israel and the PLO and the West Bank. Once we get that great agreement, then this will sort of miraculously pin Hamas in and solve our Gaza problem and it hasn't worked. So this is where we've been stuck now for really almost 12 years at this point.

SACHS: It seems like when we were working on this, we identified at least two major problems. One was that we had a whole host of different actors working on this, the U.S. was only one of them. As I said, Ilan, the U.S. often wanted to stay out of mainframe and let Israel, Egypt, and others take the leap, but we have all these different actors with very different interests. Just between the Palestinians themselves, Hamas and the Palestinian Authority have different views on how the future should be.

Palestinian Authority demands that Hamas at least officially disarm completely and allow only one gun in the Palestinian Authority, which makes sense in theory but is very unrealistic at the present, and Hamas has absolutely no intent of doing that in the fold.

Many of the other actors, Israel, of course, has a very different opinion. In fact

many opinions inside Israel, the Egyptians have their own interest, the Gulf countries have varied interests, the Europeans, the Americans.

One question we confronted is how should the U.S. play in this. So I wonder -- tell us a little bit how you think about it. What is the U.S. role? Obviously in this report what we're trying to do is say that we think the U.S. should play a much bigger role, what kind of role would it be?

GOLDENBERG: Well, this is a great opportunity for me to use an analogy that has not made it into the report, but that I love to use, even though apparently Americans should not be talking to foreigners about soccer, because (inaudible).

Hady and Natan both view that is a bad way to go, so it did not make it in the third report but here in the podcast I'm going to use it.

So look as Americans usually we walk into a situation and we say, okay, now we're in charge of everything. This is how we generally view the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

So if we were to do this the way traditional American reports and recommendations, we would say, okay, the U.S. is coming in to take over this Gaza problem and we're just going to manage this and deal with it. This is I think the experience Hady and I both had in government also, which is everybody else was just sort of looking on or we treated everybody in some ways that way, but that's not going to work in Gaza.

It's not going to work, because the U.S. doesn't even talk to Hamas and we don't believe that the U.S. should be engaging diplomatically with Hamas. Also because there are so many different actors, as Natan started to point out with the Gulf, the EU, Hamas, the Palestinian Authority, Israel, Egypt that you can't have any one actor be the one in charge.

So the way we talk about it is think about it as a soccer team. We got to get everybody on the same page. You don't have one player on a soccer team that gets in charge of everything, you have a few players to sort of coordinate all the other ones.

In this case what you need is the United States together with Egypt and the U.N. to coordinate this effort. Together they need to come to a joint plan, then they need to

get all the other actors on board, then they need to take that approach to the parties themselves.

So we can be the ones who play the most significant role in terms of our relationship with the Israelis and we can be the ones who also play the most significant role in terms of coordinating all the other actors, because we have the most leverage. People tend to listen to the U.S. more than all the others.

But Egypt and the U.N. have very critical roles to play in that as well, engaging with Hamas, understanding the situation on the ground in Gaza, and also putting a lot of the pressure on the Palestinians.

SACHS: So the U.S. obviously has very close relations with Israelis and a lot of sway with the Israelis, Egyptians today have very close relations with the Israelis, and we mentioned the U.N. -- we're talking specifically about the U.N. special coordinator who has actually good relations with everyone, including the Israelis, which is rather rare for a U.N. body.

But how do you -- what about the Palestinians, especially the Palestinian Authority, one of the most dramatic things that happened as we were working on this, as the task force was meeting, was that U.S. policy, especially towards the Palestinians themselves, was very dramatic and very new. It changed a lot.

So could you tell us a little bit about that, but especially what needs to happen for the U.S. to engage productively with the Palestinian Authority?

AMR: So that's right. So right now U.S. government relations with the Palestinian Authority are at a quarter century low in a sense, or almost a quarter century low, whereby there's effectively little to no contact at senior levels between the Palestinian Authority run by Mahmoud Abbas and the United States. So there's been a series of steps the Trump administration has taken that has really upset the Palestinians. So the U.S. has moved the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem, the U.S. has consolidated -- the U.S. consulate in Jerusalem opened in the mid-1800s into the embassy. It's cutoff assistance to the Palestinians, it's cutoff assistance to UNRWA.

And so across a range of issues like that, the Palestinian Authority is really

frustrated with the U.S., so it's going to be difficult. If the Trump administration were to release a mega peace plan, do they even have somebody on the Palestinian Authority side to talk to, and right now they don't, so the relationship needs to be repaired and restored in order for progress to be made.

SACHS: Thanks, Hady. One of the issues we confronted as well is that there's sort of two objectives, and we deal with this directly in the report, but there's two objectives that many of the different players have been dealing with for a long time.

Ilan, you mentioned this. On the one hand, the U.S. has been involved in trying to negotiate peace with the Palestinian Authority, in fact with the PLO, and with Israel and has said Gaza is a secondary issue. It's been a West Bank first approach.

On the other hand, many of the parties, including recently the Israelis and Hamas, with Egyptian mediation, have been looking for some kind of accommodation between Hamas and Israel, trying to reach some kind of ceasefire, a small ceasefire in this case, some people dream of a bigger ceasefire.

But the interesting thing is, the tragic thing in fact, is that these two objectives to a large degree are in contradiction, or might be contradiction. For example, the last attempt between the Israelis and Hamas to reach some kind of accommodation was opposed vociferously by Mahmoud Abbas and the Palestinian Authority.

They view this as an attempt to create a three-state solution circle, in other words to break Gaza from the West Bank permanently and to let Israel live with Hamas sort of peacefully, or less violently we should say, and deal with the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank separately from that.

Why don't we turn to the recommendations to where we came out after these long deliberations and a lot of these meetings and talk about really these two objectives.

The first thing I would say is we think in fact the U.S. should pursue both of these objectives simultaneously. On the one hand stabilizing the situation in the Gaza Strip, that would involve probably some kind of dealings between Israel and Hamas as they have recently but in turbo, and secondly trying to bring in the West Bank into the story, some kind of reintegration between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip that is coupled

together with a ceasefire. All this would allow first for stabilization of the Gaza Strip.

So, Hady, I wonder if you could tell us a bit more about what that would look like, how could we actually change this reality in what you called the D.C., the District of Columbia, maybe twice its size, the one that has no contact with Maryland or Virginia.

AMR: That's right. I think about that, because Ilan and I both drove in from Virginia today to come into our jobs and we'll go home to our families tonight and that's something that is just impossible for the people of Gaza to do right now.

Look I put the fixes that Gaza needs into a handful of buckets. The first one is that freedom of movement bucket. So once a upon a time, there were 20,000 Gazans that worked every day in Israel, brought money home to their families, each one of those supporting about six or seven other folks. And today we're in a situation where only a few hundred Gazans go into Israel every day or beyond -- and those are not even workers. Those are humanitarian cases, people transiting internationally and so we need to just get back to that.

If you think that's impossible, again let's not only think back to the 15, 20,000 that were doing it a dozen years ago, there are 75,000 Palestinians that travel from the West Bank to Israel to work every day. So it is entirely possible and normal for that to happen in that economy.

Also in terms of the freedom of movement, we need more freedom of movement for goods and services. It used to be that a thousand truckloads of Gaza exports transited to Israel every month, now it's down to a few hundred. We need to get the Gaza economy moving again, so we need to open it up for people, for goods, we need to expand the fishing limits. Gaza's on the coast. Under the Oslo Accords, it's accorded 20 miles of fishing zone. It's really only practiced to six to nine miles. If that fishing zone could be expanded, that's more that could be done and Gaza could also use a few industrial zones.

There's two other key areas where Gaza needs help, one is electricity. As I said until recently, Gaza's only had four or five hours of electricity per day. Imagine living in D.C. on four or five hours of electricity. It would simply griped to a halt, so there are

many things that can be done.

In fact, I think some folks maybe got early copies of our report and started implementing them. So with international funding from the Gulf, electricity for Gaza is temporarily up to 14, 15 hours a day now through April and we'll see if that can be sustained. But Egypt could supply more electricity, Israel could supply more electricity, there could be solar fields that are developed, but the long-term solution for Gaza is bringing in a gas pipeline so we can have free flowing electricity.

Let me just conclude by talking about the water situation. Again it's a tragic situation, 97 percent of the water in Gaza is unfit for human consumption. They're already consuming less water than the U.N. says is necessary for a healthy life. So there are a handful of things that need to be done in this base of water.

There are leaky pipes in Gaza that need to be fixed. Pipes leak around the world, but in Gaza one-third of the water is lost to leaky pipes. Then again, more water can be supplied from Israel. There's a long-term solution as well, which would be building a large scale desalination plant in Gaza.

I could go on and on and on, but I know we're trying to keep this podcast short, so I'll wrap it up there.

SACHS: Hady, I'll just add, though, you're describing a lot of different things. In a sense, they're all a puzzle of how do you try to jump start an economy that in the long term, of course, will have to sustain itself, like any economy. It's not going to be able to live on aid forever.

So Israel supplying electricity, what we're talking about is creating a situation where over time Gaza can simply buy its electricity from Israel. That's already to a certain degree the case, except it's done through Ramallah through the Palestinian Authority.

But in order to have an economy, you have to have electricity. In order to have electricity, you have to have cash, means you have to have an economy. So of course you have a vicious cycle here and part of the challenge I think that you're describing is how do you change that vicious cycle into a virtuous one where the economy can start to sustain itself and eventually the Gaza Strip can be invigorated economically, but where you

started I think is key.

If you think of something twice the size as the District of Columbia, it has to have relations with Maryland and Virginia if it's going to have a serious economy.

Singapore if it were completely cutoff from the rest of the world could not thrive. If it is related to the world, Singapore can truly thrive. And the Gaza Strip doesn't have to become Singapore, it just has to become a more livable place for us to -- certainly be worth our time for investing on this.

We think about how Singapore or other places can work, you've had some experience trying to build projects in the Gaza Strip as a U.S. governmental official. Tell us a little bit about that.

AMR: Right. Thank you for talking about flipping the vicious circle to the virtuous circle. It's this giant catch-22 situation. Look, if you want to build a school in Singapore or Senegal or South Africa -- and I used to be an economist at the World Bank, so I've done this. I've worked on projects like that.

You come up with the international funding, you negotiate with the government, you build the school. Maybe some of the money gets syphoned off to corruption, but basically in a year or two the school gets built and most of the money went to that purpose.

If you want to build a school in Gaza, it's like bureaucracy cubed, so what you've got to do is you've got to not only deal with international funding, you've got to deal with Israel allowing -- or Egypt allowing those goods to flow in. You've got to deal with the Palestinian Authority, which has an adverse relationship with the people of Gaza, and that 12 to 24 months can literally turn into 12 or even more years.

There was a project that began when George Bush was president to try to open a desalination plant in Gaza and we worked on it diligently throughout the Obama administration and it only just got opened up a few months ago.

So it could take a dozen years in Gaza what it takes to do elsewhere, and we need to tackle that problem if Gaza is able to flourish. I think that's a little bit about what we're talking about here is trying to build that soccer team so it works together.

So Israel, the Palestinian Authority, the people of Gaza, and the international community can work together to effectively and rapidly implement projects and move Gaza from a place where it needs aid to a place where it's thriving on its own, and I think that is possible.

SACHS: This is one leg of the two objectives that we're talking about, stabilization, both in the short term and, of course, in the longer term also economically.

But there's a second leg, which is without the politics, without thinking about the power structure between Hamas, the Palestinian Authority, Israel, Egypt, and others, you can't really sustain this over time. It's been tried to before and it's not likely to succeed.

Ilan, could you tell us a little bit about recommendations that we're writing on how the politics should be thought out in a new arrangement?

GOLDENBERG: Sure. So basically to try to solve the political problem, we've had two separate approaches taken over the last ten years. One has been trying to negotiate a reconciliation deal between Fatah and Hamas -- Fatah being the political party that controls the Palestinian Authority and is really Hamas' big rival -- in order to try to get the Palestinians back together again.

Now, the second track has been an effort to get a long-term ceasefire between Israel and Hamas. Both of those have failed. What we conclude is both of those have failed is because you can't have one-off deals. All three parties need to be part of both agreements. You really need one deal amongst the three parties.

So here's the challenge of trying to do these as one-offs. You want to do a deal between Fatah and Hamas about a reconciliation. Well, Hamas needs to get economic incentives to do that. They need to know the blockade is being lifted, or at least parts of it are. But Israel controls the blockade, so it has to be part of that deal.

You want to do a deal between Israel and Hamas to create a long-term ceasefire. Well, that's not going to work, because Israel does not want to legitimize Hamas with a long-term ceasefire deal, but Israel would be okay, for example, with a deal that was negotiated with a number of Palestinian factions which included Hamas.

So again there you need to bring in the Palestinian Authority, or Fatah, so you

start quickly coming to the conclusion that this is a triangle.

So what we recommend then is a three-way deal, what happens, what does Hamas get. Hamas gets an end to the blockade, so Israel has to agree to basically remove a lot of the restrictions to the blockade, whether it's an end or a significantly loosening of what goes (inaudible) Gaza, that's a big economic benefit for Hamas, in exchange for Israel receiving a long-term stable ceasefire.

Now, as part of this deal then, the Palestinian Authority slowly starts to resume control and take over parts of Gaza, that's not something the Palestinian Authority necessarily is very enthusiastic about doing.

So in exchange for that, Hamas is going to have to take significant steps to demilitarize. What the Palestinian Authority is worried about is we're responsible for all the unpopular governance things in Gaza, but Hamas continues to hold all the guns and really control everything. So we get blamed for all the bad things, Hamas controls the situation on the ground.

So part of this deal needs to be that you start to have some levels of demilitarization. You're not going to be able to get rid of all of Hamas' weaponry initially, but you can maybe have them destroy all the tunnels that go into Israel, you can have them agree to some steps.

Hamas also in that deal politically agrees to recognize that the PLO -- which, you know, the PA, the PLO, it's a long story on how they're different, but Palestine Liberation Organization and Palestinian Authority are two entities that really represents the Palestinians.

But basically Hamas agrees that the PLO is going to be the representative of the Palestinian people and in exchange for that, Hamas gets at least some kind of inclusion or seat at the table in terms of Palestinian decision making, so that's a big give to them, but that's the exchange there.

Then finally -- this is a pretty good deal for Israel and for Hamas. How you make it better for the Palestinian Authority is by having Israel also take a significant step inside the West Bank, something meaningful that Israel gives the Palestinian Authority inside

the West Bank to signal that it's serious about a two-state solution and to empower the Palestinian Authority politically so as to not be in a position where they're seen as the biggest loser in this deal.

So that's a very complicated web, but everybody is getting something in that scenario that they want. It's going to be very hard to put together. In fact, I would go so far as to say it might not even be possible to do today. You might need a shift in dynamics, maybe in the politics of all sides or in the leadership of all sides, maybe even in the U.S., inside the Palestinian Authority, in Israel, you might need -- you might need there to be some kind of near conflict to really pressure the parties to move this.

I think this is a framework. Now, whether this problem is solved in two years, four years, six years, hopefully sooner, this is the kind of framework that could actually work.

SACHS: Thanks, Ilan.

I think one way to think about it is that we've obviously not discovered the wheel, or something that no one has ever thought of, but a lot of the parties know what their interests are, of course, but also what the interests are of the other parties.

The problem is that everyone is stuck in this equilibrium where if they're going to be the first mover on trying to go in one of these directions, they will immediately lose in the short term.

So we've been stuck in this miserable situation for over a decade now. What we're trying to do here is to take a step back and say if the U.S. were to play a leadership role, again not a sole leadership role but a leadership role, this is the direction it should go for.

As Ilan said, it might not be possible today. It might only be possible in a couple years or maybe longer than that. But unfortunately, and it really is very tragic, it's quite possible that this crisis will still be around in similar form more or less in the future.

What we hope to do with this is to chart the path for U.S. policy when there's a moment of opportunity. We hope very much there's not another major conflict between Israel and Hamas, but like everyone there we recognize that it certainly is possible, we almost had it recently. If that is the case, that might be a moment of opportunity to push.

If there's a change in leadership, again it might be a moment of opportunity to push.

So we hope that this at least will allow each of the different parties to take care of their vital interest, the way they see the main key interest of theirs in this situation, including the Egyptians, including others, and to promote something slightly better than the situation today.

I wonder as we went through this whole process, we started out with our preconceived ideas. I came in -- I follow Israel closely, and I came in with the Israeli interest in mind of course. Israel has very different interests than the Palestinian Authority or Hamas, but it is fundamentally interested in a different situation with the Gaza Strip. Of course you mentioned water in Gaza, Hady, and that water flows to Israel very closely. The sea is just on the verge of Israeli waters as well.

But as we went, in I wonder if you guys have any thoughts about what surprised you when we talked to Israelis, to Palestinians, to Americans. I know my opinions -- my view changed from the start of the process. Do you have any examples of what surprised you in this whole task force process that we went through?

AMR: Zzz the one thing that surprised me, and again a lot of -- the data didn't surprise me, because this was my job dealing with this during the Obama administration. But the one thing that surprised me was the depth of the collective action problem.

We were so frustrated how difficult it was to solve things, because we were trying to do it ourselves, bring others in. What I came to realize is that USA is just in a very weak position in this regard, we've written ourselves out of the game by not being present on the ground in Gaza, by not having robust engagement there, and we've now further written ourselves out of the game by essentially alienating the Palestinian Authority leadership in (inaudible). So it's the depth of that collective action challenge is really what sunk in the most for me.

GOLDENBERG: Zzz I would say for my end I definitely rolled in thinking, look, we got this humanitarian issue, we just got to solve this first and then we can deal with the politics.

It's crazy what's happening in Gaza right now, exactly what Hady described it. I

still believe there's things that need to be done and a lot of what Hady talked about, his recommendations, are things we need to just be executing on day one no matter what.

But what surprised me is the more I dove deeper, the more I realized you really can't approach the problem that way. The politics are just so intertwined in this, that there is no solution without a political solution, and you're only going to make marginal progress I think unless you get the big political deal.

So I came in thinking let's just try to do small stuff to make everything better, and I came out thinking there's really no way to do that unless you go for something bigger.

SACHS: From my perspective I ended up, I should say, with two contradictory things. On the one hand, I'd like you to describe, Hady, the depth of cynicism and almost despair I would say on the part of many of the different parties, everyone thinking there's really nothing to be done, period, and we're just going to live with this forever.

On the other hand I was also surprised by how if you listen to the different parties -- in fact, they all do prefer different reality or most of them would prefer a fundamentally different reality. So we have this exact problem of jumping from one equilibrium to the other, how do we move all the different parties simultaneously.

Ilan, as you described earlier in the past, the '90s or 2000s, we would talk about the United States being the quarterback from another football and just forcing the issue, just pushing everyone.

We're in a different state today. We can't really play that role, but I do think the U.S. has a major role to play together with its partners, with Israelis, with Egyptians, with the Palestinians I hope in moving things in the direction that would be far better for everyone, certainly the Israelis and the Palestinians of the West Bank, but perhaps more than anyone, the Gazans, the people in the Gaza Strip who are caught in this situation right now under Hamas rule.

I grew up in Israel. A long time ago I remember you would meet Gazans all the time working in Israel, as you described, Hady, and it's very convenient I think with all the violence going on to equate Gazans with Hamas.

It's important to remember that's simply not the case. Hamas rules Gaza and one

can have no love for Hamas, I admit I have none, and still think that 2 million people in the Gaza Strip should have a different reality.

With that in mind, we look forward very much to launching this report on December 3rd. It's a lengthy report. You'll see there are a lot of data, a lot of recommendations. I should say we hope to keep it realistic. We hope that we're setting out a plan that can be used, at least in part, by future administrations. We have very few illusions as to what that would be, but we also think disillusionment about the possibility of changing things is the wrong approach. A lot can be done and the U.S. can play an extremely important role in that.

So I want to thank again the Center for New American Security and, Ilan, on behalf of CNAS on this wonderful partnership, it was just a pleasure for us and thank you for joining us on this podcast.

Hady, my friend, at the Center for Middle East Policy here at Brookings, thank you as well. We hope to tune in again on December 3rd.

PITA: Thanks for listening. You can find more episodes of Intersections and the rest of the Brookings podcast network on Apple or Google podcast, on Spotify, CasBox, Stitcher, or your other favor podcast app. Don't forget to follow us on Twitter at policy podcast for news and updates.