

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

FALK AUDITORIUM

DISCUSSING THE “ONE STATE REALITY” IN ISRAEL-PALESTINE

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Tuesday, March 18, 2023

UNCORRECTED TRANSCRIPT – CHECK AGAINST RECORDING

PANEL DISCUSSION:

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**SUZANNE MALONEY:** Good morning. I'm Suzanne Maloney, vice president and director of Foreign Policy at the Brookings Institution, and I'm pleased to welcome you to our event today, entitled *Discussing the One State Reality in Israel Palestine*. Our discussion today marks the publication of a collection of essays published in an edited volume this month by Cornell University Press. In the book entitled *The One State Reality What Is Israel Palestine?* And in a new Foreign Affairs essay, the book editors Michael Barnett, Nathan Brown, Marc Lynch and Shibley Telhami argue that a single state already predominates in the territories controlled by Israel from the starting point. Rather than hope for a two- state reality, the book *One State Reality* offers a reconsideration of the history of and possible solutions to this conflict.

Let me take a moment to introduce our speakers who are here with us today, including two of the book's editors and one of the contributors and a very distinguished speaker who is joining us who did not contribute to the book. The first is Michael Barnett. He is university professor of international affairs and political science at George Washington University, where his research interests span the Middle East, humanitarianism, global governance, global ethics, and the United Nations. He has written and edited far too many books for me to mention here, the most recent of which is entitled *Humanitarianism and Human Rights Worlds of Differences*. A former editor of international organization. He previously taught at the University of Minnesota, the University of Wisconsin, Macalester College, Wellesley, Wellesley College, and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, among many others. We're also joined today by Marwan Muasher, who is vice president of studies at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, where he oversees research in Washington and Beirut on the Middle East. His very distinguished career has spanned diplomacy, development, civil society and communications. Marwan served as Jordan's foreign minister from 2000 to 2004 and as its deputy prime minister from 2004 to 2005. He also served in the Jordanian Senate and a senior vice president of external affairs at the World Bank as a diplomat. Marwan Muasher achieved a number of firsts. In 1995, he opened Jordan's first embassy in Israel while ambassador to the United States. From 1997 to 2002, he negotiated the first free trade agreement between the United States and an Arab nation. He then returned to Jordan to serve as foreign minister, where he played a central role in developing the Arab Peace initiative in the Middle East roadmap. He's the author of several books, including *The Arab Center The Promise of Moderation* in 2008 and *the Second Arab Awakening, the Battle for Pluralism*, which was published in 2014. Our third contributor to the conversation today and to the book itself is Dahlia Scheindlin who is a fellow at Century International based in Tel Aviv. She's a public opinion expert and an international political and strategic consultant, as well as a scholar and a writer. She has advised and conducted research on eight national campaigns in Israel for more than 20 years, and she provides research and advising for elections, referendums and civil society campaigns in 15 different countries and regions. Dahlia completed her Ph.D. in political science at Tel Aviv University and has previously taught and held positions at a number of universities and research organizations. And she's a very frequent commentator in the international media. Last but certainly not least, our colleague Shibley Telhami is a nonresident senior fellow with the Center for Middle East Policy in the Foreign Policy program here at Brookings. He's also the Anwar Sadat professor of peace and development at the University of Maryland. Shibley is an expert on U.S. policy in the Middle East, on Arab politics, on shifting political identities in the Arab world. He regularly conducts public opinion polls in the Arab world, Israel, and the United States. Among his many publications are *The World Through Arab Eyes*, *Arab Public Opinion* and *The Reshaping of the Middle East*. *The Peace Puzzle*, *America's Quest for Arab-Israeli Peace*, and the best selling *The Stakes America in the Middle East*. So we have an embarrassment of riches here in terms of deep expertise on Israel and the broader Middle East.

A quick reminder to say that we are alive and on the record. If you would like to submit questions, please do so by email to the email address [events@brookings.edu](mailto:events@brookings.edu) and we will be addressing questions toward the end of our program today. I'd like to start by welcoming all of my colleagues to turn on their videos and join us. Join me here on the virtual stage. And by inviting both Shibley and Michael to say a few words about how the book came to be. This was a project that emerged, I know, from several academic colloquium, but I think in in reading both of your reflections, both in the book and in the foreign affairs essay, I have the sense that it came from a strong feeling that

this was an issue that needed to be addressed by serious academics and by the wider policy community. I know from my own experience on this issue that more than 30 years ago, when I sought to get a new U.S. passport, I was told that we would no longer need to worry about stamps and passports from Israel when traveling to Arab countries. Because this was 1992, there was the expectation that we would have arrived at a full solution to the to the longstanding conflict within in just a year or two, obviously many decades and many passports since the solution to the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians has remained elusive. And the discussion has moved in recent decades into this conversation about the window for the two state solution. When is it closing? We've been hearing for years that that window may be closing. Shibley, if I can start with you. Tell us a bit about how it is that you came to produce this edited volume, the many contributors and their views and what you hope that will come of this conversation that we're having here today and through the book and the writings.

**SHIBLEY TELHAMI:** Thank you, Suzanne. Thank you for hosting this and moderating this. And I should say, you know, I've just reminded that Michael Barnett is here as one of the coeditors of this volume. I recall that more than 20 years ago, he and I co-edited another book to which you, Suzanne, contributed an important chapter that is still read even today. So it's it's nice to to to be joining on the same platform on something related to policy in the Middle East. You know, the conversation started obviously among all of us. First, my colleagues at GW, Mark, Nathan and Michael are having a conversation about how the discourse around us was so detached from the reality as we understood it as scholars that it seemed completely detached from what we were observing on that on the ground. And then Michael came and we had lunch actually at my house to hash this out, to think about a project that would ultimately result in a, you know, US political scientist grappling with the question, what is Israel Palestine? We didn't have an answer. We did not conclude right away that it was a one state reality. Some of us had a hunch, but it was something like that. And then George Washington convened a lot of scholars to come and grapple with this issue, followed by a another workshop at the University of Maryland that I hosted. And we invited a lot of superb experts, including Dahlia, to participate and then to contribute chapters. Most of them were political scientists, not all, but most were political scientists and really grappling with this question of what is Israel Palestine? But pretty quickly, most of us converged on the idea that it's already one state and that the discourse around us, the two state solution discourse, has mostly served as a smokescreen to cover up the reality as it is and in some ways helped entrench that reality day in and day out, even as the two state solution, if it had any possibility at all, was diminishing by the day. And that was something that we grappled with very closely. And we have invited scholars to describe what the reality is. We have excellent chapters in the book beyond our own contributions and beyond the article that we publish in Foreign Affairs that deal with the nature of Israeli control of the West Bank and Gaza. Excellent articles by scholars like Alberto from the Hebrew University, Diane Greenwald from the City University of New York, who have articulated the nature of that control to lead us to the question that it really is already a one state reality, that two states, if it's possible at all, we don't dismiss it as a distant possibility because we don't have a solution. We don't think a one state solution is on the horizon. This is. Not a one state solution that we're recognizing. What we're recognizing is a one state reality, and it's an ugly reality. So once you start with this question about what is it and you say it's a one state reality, then you have to ask what kind of one state? Once you reach that conclusion, it's very hard not to reach out to the label apartheid in the relationship because you have once you put on a new glasses and you look at Israel Palestine, not strictly through the prism of pre 1967 Israel, which was a flawed democracy, and the Palestinians under temporary occupation. Once you look at it as one state, it is impossible to look at the relationship between Jews and non-Jews in that overall state and not reach out for the label apartheid. And that is hard to grapple with, grapple with that very, very closely in terms of the nature of that state. Once you reach that conclusion, then you have to ask a question about, particularly for us as Americans, about American foreign policy, are we basically enabling this ugly reality that is both unjust and strategically unstable? And an even if we don't offer a solution, we call on our government not to be part of the problem and not to be an enabler of this ugly reality. Now, I want to say one more thing, which I think, you know, there may be a misunderstanding, particularly with regard to our article in Foreign Affairs, because we don't choose titles. So people usually go by titles. We are not advocating a particular solution. What we're advocating is that we

can't accept the ugly reality and therefore we must start with the focus on equality, human rights, civil rights. That's what we need to start with. But we also differentiate and this is this should be clear between state. And sovereignty. We are not saying that Israel is sovereign over all that territory. We're saying there's a big difference. The state is about control. Sovereignty is about international recognition of that control. And international recognition of that control is not going to come even if there is an acceptance of the reality as a state reality in terms of structure, institution, entrenchment, the way it is being handled. And that is not going to absolve Israel or this one state from the international standards, such as, for example, that settlements are a violation of international law. That settlements in those territories are a control over which Israel is not sovereign, are still a violation of their national law. So we're not it's not an acceptance of the sovereignty of Israel, of those territories, acceptance of the reality to pass judgment on what kind of reality it is. And that's really important because a lot of people maybe missed that distinction that we need to think about moving forward.

**SUZANNE MALONEY:** Thank you, Shibley. I think that was a very important point that you made, because it was notable to me in reading the preface and understanding the the discussions that led to the writing of the book, that what you asked the participants in the workshop, many of whom later contributed chapters to the book, what you asked them to do was to describe the reality, not to offer policy prescriptions. But Michael, as I bring you into the conversation, I wonder if you can help us to understand, you know, if we are simply describing the reality as a one state solution that necessarily has implications for both current policy and future policy. And I guess, you know, what would you want readers to take away from this book in terms of what the United States and other governments around the world should be doing in terms of both acknowledging the reality, but also presumably helping to move this situation to a better reality? Apologies for your muted.

**MICHAEL N. BARNETT:** The we don't see this one state reality as a solution. It's you know, it could be a solution to the extent that it enshrines and institutionalizes Jewish supremacy over the land. But that's not a very stable solution or a very just solution. So it could be a temporary solution in the sense that this is where the parties are now. But we don't think it's very stable and we don't make predictions about where it goes from here. I think we're all to, you know, war weary veterans of the Israeli-Palestinian issue to think that our predictions would have any kind of bet against the future. But let me just comment a little bit and follow in, Shibley. Footsteps. I want to emphasize a few things. One, this has been an incredible journey, I think, for all of us, not only the editors, but all the contributors, because we were asked to do something or we asked ourselves to do something that we see all too rarely when it comes to questions of Israeli-Palestinian relations. And that is, let's not. Begin our analysis of what we hope will be, which in some ways is to invite the utopian, but rather let's begin with what is and then that shift from, if you will, what we wish to what is actually. Quite revolutionary in the sense that it makes you think about politics, land people, relations in a very different way. And that was part of our ambition, was, you know, Shibley, you know, use the metaphor to put on new glasses. And once we take off the old glasses of what we wish and put on the new glasses of the realism of what is, then it really does change the way we look at things. And that was part of our goal. And I would say I think all of us felt a degree of freedom to in many ways dispense with the the overhang of the dream of a two state solution and instead begin our analysis and our descriptions with what exists on the ground. So the other aspect that we hope we bring to the table is that as again, as we all know, discussions about Israeli-Palestinian politics are often seem to be driven by polemics. There is a lot of grandstanding and flag waving and people getting up on soapboxes. And what we wanted to do was actually, again, try to bring a I guess, a more powerful analytic lens to these issues. And to begin by saying, how do we describe it using the analytic tools that we have from political science, from comparative politics and international relations? And will that help us provide more crisp, detailed textures, understanding of what's happening? And so what would we begin with then is a shall we described is this a one state? And we know that there will be objections to that. But the foreign affairs piece and the longer commentary in the introduction, I think there's a pretty good job of defending why it is that we think of it as a state which is about control and let's not get hung up as much, as Shibley noted on the issue of sovereignty, because we think the state is actually the central creature here. And then also, as Shibley says, that once we say that it is a state, then the obvious follow up

question is what kind of state is it? And for us, one of the major consequences of that was that it was no longer tenable to argue that Israel is a liberal democratic state, that once you recognized that the state expense is from. The river to the sea. Then you begin to realize the extent to which it is a liberal democratic state for some, but not for others. And that leads you then to what amounts to be discrimination, institutionalized in terms of relations of superiority and inferiority between Jews and non-Jews. And then you can have a richer conversation about what kind of state is that? Apartheid is the one that has legal and political significance. And so we find it difficult, even if we wanted to, to in many ways hesitate from the apartheid. Brain. And as difficult as it was for some of us in the volume to accept that it was ultimately the one that was the most persuasive. And it seemed to us that actually trying to dodge that issue was disingenuous. What will this change? You know, I think all of us have been in the game for way too long to think that anything we have to say may change anything. All we can hope is that by adopting these new lenses, that we will actually find that people are now forced to actually dispense with their dreams and start from what exists on the ground. And I think doing so has very radical consequences. And so, for instance, I have a chapter there on the Jewish with Laura Freeman on the Jewish-American community. And one of the implications then is that for Jewish Americans, who largely see themselves as holding liberal values, Israel becomes a different kind of state, one that becomes more difficult to support. And therefore it demands new sets of conversations in the Jewish-American community. So and I think that those conversations are actually not trivial. I think they're important. So if the book and the essay have any consequences, I hope that it helps to actually. Trigger a new set of conversations that are less about the two state solution and more about what really exists.

**SUZANNE MALONEY:** Thanks so much, Michael. I'd like to now turn to Dahlia. Dahlia, you've coauthored a chapter with Omar Rahman on Israeli and Palestinian public opinion. And I wondered if you could speak to the extent to which your polling and other survey research has borne out these perceptions that we're hearing from individuals examining Israel from without that, the one state solution is the most applicable reality that we're facing today. Is that the way that Israelis and Palestinians see it? How have how has public opinion changed over time among both communities?

**DAHLIA SCHEINDLIN:** Thank you. And thank you to my coeditors who are with us for initiating this project. And to everybody for joining. I think that the. Certainly nobody sees this as nobody is choosing a one state solution. In fact, one of the biggest findings that we were able to conclude from our rather we tried to have a fairly exhaustive sweep of public opinion is that right now we have reached I'm just giving you the spoiler. Skipping to the end is that the public on both sides, frankly, is despairing of any form of political solution. The situation that we have termed in the chapter post solutionism. But let me go a little bit back. I think that if you look at the entire region through what we've all agreed is a reality of one state, whether we like it or not, and it is one state in the sense of there is only one recognized state, there is only one entity that has the capacities of statehood and sovereignty, even if it's not declared sovereignty. The other flipside is to realize that Palestinians do not have anything that resembles sovereignty as we know it. So I think that it shouldn't be controversial anymore to see that in this light. But when you put on that those glasses, as we've been talking about, and you realize that this is the reality, it actually put so much of history into place, including the history of public opinion, it makes much more sense when you look at the kinds of questions that have been asked over the years and the kinds of questions that haven't been asked. So one of the things I often love discovering about, you know, when you look at the history of public opinion research, not just the present, is that you learn as much from which questions are being asked as the answers to them. We don't actually have public opinion surveys testing a formal two state solution, frankly, until really the year 2000 and the early 2000s. Before that, let's say in the late 1980s, mid 1980s through the 1990s, I'm going to take a step backwards. You have each side asking itself what they think about a Palestinian state because Israel already had a state. Of course, that's indicative as well. Prior to that, neither side even remotely considered such a thing as a two state solution. In fact, if we're talking about Windows historically, we might really do well to recall that the idea of two states had its own historic window, and it was before the establishment of Israel. It was between 1937 and 1948. It vanished and it didn't resurface formally, certainly not for Israel until the year 2000. Remember, the Oslo Accords

never even named the solution. So that's the reason, of course, on the Palestinian side, up until, you know, I would say formally until the PLO declared that it was willing to that it was striving for a state within the 67 areas. The idea was a one Democratic state on all of Palestine, and that lasted through the 1980s. And that's why we don't see that as part of the public discourse. So the first finding is that it wasn't even present in the concept of looking at public opinion for much of the for much of the region's history. And then in the 1990s, when support on the Israeli side started at barely 20% and on the Palestinian side, it wasn't being asked. So systematically we see support rising, each side being asked about whether they support a Palestinian state and again, only in the 2000s looking at it as a two state solution. And at that point, we start to see the opening of a public opinion window during the 2000 lasting through basically the middle of the previous decade of the 20 tens, 2010 to 2020, and, well, only in the middle of that decade. So let's say through that, from the 2000 through about 2013, 14 and 15, we still see a majority or a regular majority, even if not a consistent majority on both sides, who support something that was named as the two state solution. Not exactly the same data on both sides, but what's been very clear is that from about 2010, the peak has been hit and has been on the decline and starting from about three years ago, the ARC has declined to the point where both sides show only a minority that is below 50%. Certainly among Jewish Israelis, it's even lower because Palestinian citizens of Israel support it at a higher rate. And right now we haven't seen anything even close to a majority on both sides that support of systematically tracked question about a two state solution since about 20 1819. And then the amazing thing is that the findings just keep getting worse. Each survey that we've done, including surveys that have been conducted since we published that chapter, Omar Rahman and myself. And I think that, you know, when you start to realize when you again, when you name the reality, this history of understanding the public opinion itself has only ever been an arc. It took a long time for it to even the idea of a two state solution to even be on the map and then reach a majority. But the majority on both sides was limited to roughly a decade between 2020 ten. Again after 2010, you could still find a consistent majority, but not always. And then from the middle of the last decade, that arc is already declining and right now it looks somewhat unsalvageable. I just want to say that I view our chapter in the context of several, you know, numerous very rich themes that are explored in the book. What you see in our chapter is the psychological dimension, the political, psychological dimension, how the two publics conceive of these ideas. I think that it's very helpful in the book that we see the same question approach from an ideological dimension. I'm thinking of Gershon Shaffer's chapter on the theology that supports total Jewish dominance. And on the bureaucratic level you mentioned as well, Dr. Albert, there does chapter on the bureaucratic nature of the one state. And then I think when we think about where this is going, again, from the public opinion perspective, there is no solution that people see. I think the most likely or the best way to characterize where people are now is the sense that there can be no political resolution to the conflict. And in this one way, I slightly disagree with my colleagues who have said that this is not a sustainable solution. I don't think American policy should support what's going on now because it's immoral and violates international law and violates the Palestinian right to self-determination. But stable. First of all, it has been sustainable, sustained since 1967. I think we can quite easily argue that most Israeli governments have. Every Israeli government since 1967 has given its support on some level a different in different ways to this to the ongoing occupation. So it is sustainable. We've all been proven wrong. Having said, it wasn't sustainable for a long time. However, even if it will lead to regular violence, which it will, 100% chance of violence, you know, in the near future, it's very hard to assert with any certainty that alternative political solutions or the processes to get there would not be unstable. Also, I think we have to take that reality into account anyway. I know that's not very uplifting. And to that end, I would say one of the very interesting articles I just have to namecheck some of my colleagues because the book is so rich and I wouldn't want this to be just about our chapter, but I'm the only contributor. Youssef on air has a very interesting chapter which is again, not prescriptive so much. It is descriptive of what it would mean to get around the question of what state frameworks we're looking at and decolonizing the actual pillars of the system in place right now. Something that's on my mind as an Israeli when I hear Palestinians say we want decolonization there, there's an actual substantive approach there broken down into the different social, economic, political, legal, moral fields. And I think that's worth thinking about, because right now we don't have any political framework that the public on either side believes in. And no particular political framework that the political that the leadership certainly

in Israel wants because they don't want anything that they will name other than full sovereignty, which they have named between the river in the sea and on the Palestinian side. I think the leadership simply doesn't have the legitimacy to advance any of the kinds of political solutions that would be good for their people. So I'll stop there.

**SUZANNE MALONEY:** Oh, yeah. Thanks. You've put a lot on the table that I hope to come back to. And I know you have to leave us a few moments early, so we'll try to bring you back into the conversation too, as quickly as I can. But I do want to now turn to Marwan. Marwan, as someone who's been both a scholar and practitioner, I'm going to ask you to speak to the broader issue that we've been discussing here from the perspective of your diplomatic experience, setting up the first Jordanian embassy in Israel, having this kind of key role in the Arab Peace Initiative, does this acknowledgment and sort of barefaced statement that we are in a one state reality assist with thinking through solutions to what appears to be a very stymied diplomatic process between the Israelis and the Palestinians, even at a time where the regional diplomacy here to I hope to come back to that has become much more dynamic and to some extent unpredictable. Does this, you know, sort of acknowledgment here in this book, in this conversation in a way that happens less frequently in Washington than perhaps it should, that we are facing a one state reality at this time. Does that help or does that impede diplomatic solutions?

**MARWAN MUASHER:** Thank you, Suzanne. I want to first say that I'm talking as an ex to state that I spent all of my time in government trying to effect a two state solution. You know, with initiatives like that of this initiative and the roadmap, which were based on the separation of the two communities so that a two state solution can be affected. I have changed my views probably around ten years ago. And the facts are clear. And I think the book tells them in a very meticulous, scientific and sustained manner. I think this book is going to be a seminal work on what exists on the ground, even as people, including in data, will try to reject these findings. I totally agree with everything that has been said that this is not the solution, but it is a reality. And a reality that can no longer be ignored. Is it going to be helpful? I think so, because if you keep following Mirage that a two state solution is still possible. What that has done in four years is ignore the rights of Palestinians under occupation. The premise was that we need to worry about the shape of a solution first, and then the rights issue can come later. What I'm arguing now is that we actually should take the argument. We need to worry about rights, equal rights for both communities, and then we can worry about the state because the shape is obvious and the polls have shown this. But it is obvious that nobody knows what the shape of the solution is going to look like. But if we don't adopt a rights based approach as the basis for any stance, if we don't do that, then we will have to deal with. Whether sooner or later, apartheid, you know, the taboo, a taboo word that was taboo few years ago, but is no longer taboo today because the facts are clear. We do have a majority of Palestinians living in areas under Israel's control, whether as Israeli citizens or, as, you know, people under occupation. And you are not going to be able to ignore the rights issue for much longer. The book makes a very good argument saying that Washington must look at Israel as it is and not as it has been assumed to be. And that's a very I thought, you know, that perceptive remark, we need to look at the situation as it is once we do as simply and I think all of you have said it, once we look at the situation as it is, then the argument shifts from how does affect the two state solution, which I think is impossible today, to what kind of a state should we strive for? So that, you know, is it going to be an apartheid state? Is it going to be a democratic state? Is it going to be what kind of a solution should we strive for if we start focusing on the rights issue? I think this is where we should be heading. Are we heading this way? Not not yet. The Arab world is elsewhere. Arab governments have you know, several Arab governments have signed agreements with Israel, giving the false impression that it does not need to come to terms with the Palestinians if they can forge peace with several Arab governments. But it's an illusion that, you know, peace can flourish when the Palestinians fester under occupation. And for countries that do care, actually, including Jordan and Egypt, nobody wants to acknowledge. The fact that the two state solution is over. Why? One, because they don't want to deal with the alternative alternative. You know, it is very problematic for all of them talking about apartheid, talking about the one state that is not is not easy. A lot of Palestinians don't want to acknowledge it because they are worried about what happens to Palestinian national rights, what happens to

legalizing settlements, as Shibley said, because there are a lot of assumptions around this. And other Arab states just don't want to deal with this whole issue. So there is a reluctance today, both in the Arab world and among the international community to acknowledge what has been obvious to scholars for quite some time now, which is that the possibility of two states, the possibility of separating the two communities is no longer there. And I don't expect that that reality is going to be. A doctor at the office said. But it is certainly today being adopted at the academy and it will soon find its way to the political sphere, particularly if the Palestinians themselves start talking with a different discourse. A comment I hear often from European diplomats, from from other Arab diplomats is that they are not ready to acknowledge that the two state solution is over if the Palestinian Authority itself does not do that first. But at some point in time, I think people will come to realize the obvious. And that is why I think this book in particular has a very long shelf life. It might not be appreciated by some immediately, but as the situation becomes clear to all, as I believe it is clear to all the authors of the book and to myself as well, as the situation becomes clear, this book is going to be a reference very.

**SUZANNE MALONEY:** Thank you, Marwan. I think you've made a number of important points. And again, I want to bring in our other speakers here on on several of them. But just recognizing that Dahlia will have to leave us in a few moments. I want to perhaps ask you to speak to what has been an extraordinary period in within Israel itself. You know, the massive protests on the street, the concerns about the future of Israeli democracy. How does that internal politics, which is not directly motivated by the situation among the Palestinians, how does that intersect with the possibilities for the future of settling the conflict and devising a solution that does produce full and fair political and other rights for all peoples of both territories?

**DAHLIA SCHEINDLIN:** Thank you. And also thank you for being conscious of my time. I apologize to everybody in the audience that I will have to leave a ton of. It's a very complicated situation, and I think that there's no illusions, like from the very beginning of the protests, when Israeli society at large or let's say Israeli Jewish society was having its first shocking level of disillusionment about the fragility or the, I should say, disillusionment with the stability of what it considered to be a liberal democracy and began flooding the streets within the first two weeks. It was clear to the protest leaders and organizers, which are very organic, very informal. People came together from many different communities, realized right away, and advocated for there to be no real conversation about the occupation because they prioritized the great urgency of making the protests as accessible as possible, particularly to those people who had voted for the coalition parties, people who consider themselves to be right wing supporters of Likud, to be able to join and express themselves and feel comfortable. And the obvious conclusion to for all of the protesters, again, the leadership, to the extent that there is kind of some level of organization, is that bringing the occupation in would destroy that would would ruin it would be too alienating. And on an anecdotal level, on a personal level, I've naturally been going to all of the protests for 15 weeks now. And whenever you ask people at the protests or even if you don't ask, they sometimes say, oh, look at those Palestinian flags from those radical activists. I wish they weren't there. What does that have to do with our struggle to preserve the independent judiciary and which people see as the core of liberal democracy? Now we're talking about parallel realities, because even among Israeli citizens, we've all noticed, of course, that the Palestinian citizens of Israel have a completely different experience. They never had this image that Israeli democracy was working so robustly over the years for its citizens because they have been living under uncertainty for the first 20 years, under a parallel system that was essentially a form of martial law and a military regime. And since then, under discriminatory practices, which many countries have, but also legislation and a national identity which is very much structured to alienate them and keep them out of the mainstream. So they have not been as present. But I think that the one. Counter narrative I can give to that is that many people, everybody who is opposed to occupation among Israeli citizens, Jewish and Arab Palestinian citizens alike are also part of the protests. They may not be the leadership. They sometimes speak at the protests. Again, I think that Dr. ElBaradei spoke at one of the protests and tried to bring in these connections that seem very intuitive to us, that there cannot be any real struggle to strengthen democracy or build real democracy, such as it is without addressing policies that are complete violations of democracy. And the occupation is the biggest example of that. And



of course, there are protesters who have certainly been making the case through each week of the protest with signs and banners and trying to get the word out. And many of them, I am among them. I will be very open disclosure here. Some of us feel that there has been more and more interest and less hostility. If you can imagine, at the beginning of the protest, there was an actual sense of hostility about what are these people doing here and why are they making the statement that the occupation should be part of this and discussing the issue of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? There seems to be less of that. There is lots of interest. We often notice how many signs and posters we give away, but I think that as a pollster, I have to be very cautious about assuming that represents anything like a widespread trend. I think the best we can say is there is an opportunity, an extraordinary moment in Israeli society in which people are simply asking themselves, what does democracy actually mean? Have we actually had democracy in the full sense of the word in Israel? And for many, including among mainstream Jewish society, they are realizing just how much was missing from the very concept of constitution of a constitutional liberal order. And I think that is a moment when there's an opportunity in the long term for people to internalize that democracy means not undermining the self-determination of another people and holding them under separate and unequal forms of rule, one of which is not even civil rule. And also, you know, thinking about what that will mean in the future for shifting these policies. But I do think it's not a conversation that is openly happening now. This is the opening of an opportunity to be able to have those conversations. And it will take, at least in the medium term, I think, that we're looking at the medium term. We're not looking at some overnight shift. I can tell you that data I've seen recently shows that there has been zero change in the number of people who self-identify as right center and left in Israel, even as the electoral map has been shifting dramatically. So there is an opportunity in some, but it will take a long time to realize that. And that means that anybody committed to changing attitudes on this issue within Israel and Palestine need to be very vigilant to continue working on that, even after I assume eventually, you know, there will be some sort of political resolution over the issue of the judiciary and the current government in Israel.

**SUZANNE MALONEY:** Thanks to you, I'd like to return to Shibley and put to you a statement that Marwan said, which was essentially, We should flip the argument, flip the script of what the prescriptions have been for many years and worry about equal rights first and about the pathway to two separate states. Secondly, does that flipping the script essentially predestine a one state solution, not just a one state reality, but a one state outcome? By this further disempowering a Palestinian Authority and other Palestinian institutions which have been so embattled over many years. How is it that that one can think about making a better reality for today, especially for Palestinians, even as one does not predetermine outcomes that would essentially disempower those Palestinian institutions? Sorry, Shibley, you're muted.

**SHIBLEY TELHAMI:** Sorry. So I we take a position in the book and much more in the article in Foreign Affairs that we should base our policy on a rights based approach. And the reason for it is very simple that we now do not have a possibility of a solution imminent that the US could advocate. And secondarily, the existing reality is so unjust that it just cannot be tolerated. And we cannot be not only ignore it, but even enabling it through our silence of pretension so that in actions, in fact, that do kind of reinforce it. So therefore, we do agree that it should be the right to be approached. However, I do not think that a pre-judge is what the outcome will be. I think if we deal with it in a serious way, it might lead Israelis and Palestinians to contemplate different alternative futures. We don't even rule out a distant future. Two state solution. That's not something that looks right possible now to us. But in theory, we don't know what will happen in 23 years, particularly if there's a lot of focus on the equality business. And I think if you look at it, there really aren't many possibilities of equality in Israel-Palestine. There are there are two states that obviously can be equal and both hopefully democratic or you can have one state. And and that's going to be up to the Israelis and Palestinians to determine the outcome. But it should be clear to the parties, no matter what the outcome is going to be, we're going not going to tolerate structural discrimination and certainly we're not going to tolerate apartheid. And then it's going to be up to them. I want to say something about that, because I think in our political discourse, part of the problem and by the way, on on the American part of this picture, we have good chapters in the book. We asked people to say, how would you consider, you know, what the consequences would

be for American policy? We have a chapter by our colleague Carmen Haggard and our former colleague Tamara Wittes, one by our former colleague Lee Elgindy. Very strong chapter that articulate, you know, consequences for American foreign policy. But particularly in our thinking about this issue, we as coeditors and coauthors of the foreign affairs piece, you know, we have seen American foreign policy focused principally on this two state solution because in a way, it solved the problem. The problem was not just sort of something to hold onto for the future, but it also solved a kind of a theoretical problem at home, sort of for Israel to be both a Jewish state and a democratic state. Now, of course, there was always tension between Jewishness and democracy anyway, in the context, even a pre 1967 Israel. But if you go to one state, it becomes impossible to reconcile and you're going to have to deal with that. Are you embracing a democratic Israel? Are you embracing a Jewish Israel at a time when our public opinion in America is strongly in favor of democracy over Jewishness? In the public opinion polls that have been going out for years, where even a majority of Republicans say if it push came to shove, I would choose a democratic Israel over Jewish Israel. Certainly the overwhelming majority of Democrats say that. So politicians would be forced to deal with that. They don't want to deal with that. It's a tough one for them to deal with. And in fact, when we look at the transformation that's taken place in public opinion, as you know, Suzanne, you know, all of public opinion polling I've been doing on this for years have indicated a shift, especially among Democrats, that once overwhelmingly to have a balanced policy on Israel-Palestine. But increasingly more Democrats want to lean toward the Palestinians than toward Israel. And the most recent Gallup poll, and after years of polling by Gallup, found that more Democrats want to sympathize with the Palestinians than with Israel, especially the young Democrats. What is the reason for that? The reason for that is that they don't really see it through the strategic prism anymore. And even young evangelicals in my polling show that they don't even see it through the biblical prophecy prism. Increasingly, they're seeing it through social justice prism, one of equality, human rights, citizenship. So that is the prism that it's actually animating the nine. Governmental conversation. And honestly, you know, when we were thinking about this book, is this going to distance us from policy? Many of us, as you know, have been engaged in policy on the policy world. But but this was an intellectual exercise. We need to shift the conversation. We need to change the conversation. We need to work with the paradigm. We need to start a broader conversation outside of government. Government officials are not going to be the ones who are going to change their posture for a lot of reasons. This is not a priority issue for them. They have other issues to grapple with. There is a comfort zone that they want to lean on. They're not in a position individually to create a shift in in public opinion around them. So it's, as Marwan said, particularly about the Arab world, how this is shifting at the public level, at the intellectual level. And it'll hopefully catch up, at least at the conversation into official level. But our aim was really to do two, to do it, certainly among academic scholars and analysts, not so much to address the policy world directly, but indirectly by framing a paradigm that might that that needs to be addressed.

**SUZANNE MALONEY:** Thanks so much, Shibley. And let me just say a very special thanks to Dahlia Sangalang from the Century International. Really appreciate your taking the time to be here with us today. And I was grateful to you for staying even though you've got another commitment. So thank you and look forward to many others reading your chapter in this book.

**DAHLIA SCHEINDLIN:** Yes. And thank you all. Certainly to the hosts and to Brookings users and to my colleagues. And apologies for having to leave early.

**SUZANNE MALONEY:** The beauty of Zoom that we can be many places at one time. So with that transition, let me bring Michael back into the conversation. I want I know that in the beginning of the discussion today, there was a distinction made between the one state reality is recognizing a reality over state control versus state sovereignty. But I think it's important to think about both. You know, as we flip flipped the conversation from what would it mean for Palestinian institutions. Can you tell me what it would mean for for issues like Israeli settlements if we were to, you know, sort of shift U.S. policy to dealing with the current reality, would that normalize or even legalize Israeli settlements? Would they simply be, you know, sort of normal towns and cities in a in a one state reality? Or do they would they still be problematic under international law?

**MICHAEL N. BARNETT:** Well, if it's a one state reality in which Israeli sovereignty and sovereignty must be conferred, it's not something that a state can claim. It is rather a social recognition. So, for instance, Jordan had control of what became the West Bank, but its sovereignty over those that territory was denied by most of the international community, including very vehemently Arab states. So Israel can actually exert control, which has been doing and will continue to do. But whether that control is recognized and therefore made legitimate is something that can only be done by other states. And I doubt that will happen. So. And it's not enough for if there's another Trump or Trump himself becomes, you know, gets reelected, it's not enough for the United States to recognize that sovereignty. It must be done by the international community. So as Shibley said, this is not, you know, we should no longer think about the settlements as an obstacle to peace. We should think of it as a violation of international law. And I think that can only be said emphatically. If I could just take the opportunity, though, to follow up on on Marwan and Shibley previous comments. I think there's another reason why people continue to echo that, that two state solution. And that is if you actually abandon it and then you're left adrift. What what comes next? And I think the bandwidth of the U.S. government, of European governments and others is actually quite limited, especially at this moment. And so if you were to say it's an apartheid or it's a one state reality, then the premise is that something must be done. And if you don't know what to do or you worry, it's going to be a distraction from other issues like China and Ukraine, then you stick with with the current vernacular. And on the rights issue, you know, several years ago, I sort of came to my own internal conclusion that there were Palestinian rights of self-determination. But those aren't the only rights Palestinians have, that the rights exceed just simply the right of, let's say, creating their own state, but also can include the panoply of political, civil, economic and social rights which have been denied. The implication, though, is that if in fact the move is to embrace. And a set of equal rights for those who occupy with those who are citizens. The implication is that it will end the Jewish state. And I think that's part of the reason why you see such a hesitation, not only among protesters to embrace the Palestinian situation, but also to go down that road of Palestinian rights because of the fear that it will erode the fabric of the idea of a Jewish state. So it will have an impact then on what that state currently is. But I think, as Shibley says, it opens up the possibility of lots of different conversations that have been put away in a lockbox for several decades. The last point is that there is I think once we adopt the language of apartheid, that that is quite inflammatory language. And I think once Israel becomes understood as an apartheid state, this is no longer simply a situation that must concern the Israelis and Palestinians or key stakeholders. But it's a matter of the international community, and not just simply the community of states, but of human rights organizations, transnational activists, people who are concerned about social justice. Now, I think that will bring a sort of a heavy burden on Israeli politics. But I think the consequence then is about the international climate. And one last point is that, you know, today is very different than three decades ago when attempting to dismantle apartheid. That was the beginning of a new democratic wave. We're in a illiberal age at this point. And so I myself am, you know, not bullish on the idea that somehow once you call it apartheid, you'll find the same kind of international mobilization to dismantle it as you did in South Africa 30 years ago.

**SUZANNE MALONEY:** Thanks, Michael. I do want to come back to some of the points that you just raised, including the language itself and the description. But I do want to bring Marwan back into our conversation and return to the kind of regional dimension which I think everyone has been highlighting. And there has been, as as you noted, Marwan, you know, just sort of a new opening among Israel and a number of its Arab neighbors, the Abraham Accords and the negative dialog there. There seems to be a lot of momentum around this, including most recently, the possibility that somehow Saudi Arabia might, in fact, recognize Israel and join in this wider, more explicit alliance among some of Israel and some of its Arab neighbors. What how would moving to explicit recognition of this one state reality impact that and or any of the Arab states in a position today to apply sufficient pressure to the Israeli government that would produce either a more fulsome recognition of Palestinian rights under the current scenario or and or momentum toward a true two state solution.

**MARWAN MUASHER:** Suzanne, the Abraham Accords, as they are called. Put forward a number of myths that were proved to be false. The first one was the agreement with Arab states is going to

help moderate the Israeli position regarding occupation. That has not happened. So that economic cooperation is going to be new. Then you lay of the land that this is going to help Palestinians. Well, the Abraham Accords participants cannot even meet. You know, they had to postpone their meeting in Morocco because it is becoming clear that it is a myth to claim that the Abraham Accords can flourish. As the book, I think, says, while the Palestinian issue best, is that that's not happening abroad. We of course, we of course know that. But I don't make accords are not about peace. Even the word peace does not does not does not appear in many of these agreements. They are bilateral agreements among the Arab states. But to expand. That you can forge agreements with out of work. Why not? Coming to terms with the people that you occupy is actually a far stretch, in my view. Not not going to have. Now. Arab states are not going to accept that the two state solution is dead. We already talked about that. But there comes a point when the reality on the ground will prove it, in my view. And as my friend said, you know, there comes a point when when the international community is going to understand that Israel is applying two separate legal systems, one for its Jewish citizens and one for its citizens, and then another separate legal systems, one for the settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem and one for the Palestinians under occupation. This is the legal definition of apartheid. It's not an emotional or political definition. This is how apartheid is. Is is, is, is. I recognize the game. And I do want to make one point, Suzanne, but that's my convention. Yes. Most different designers, if not all Israelis, are afraid that concentrating on riots means the end of the Jewish state. Not necessarily because there are many scenarios under which a solution can arise that preserves the national identity of Palestinians and is very of Jewish Israelis. For example, in a federal arrangement. I don't want to count the number of scenarios that have been put forward in federal arrangement abandoned as the Confederal Arrangement. Several alternatives have been suggested in which both communities can exercise their national rights. Within two entities that are then somehow connected in one way or the other. That is left to the negotiators themselves. But to deny Palestinian rights and use, you know, the end of the Jewish state as a reason for indefinitely denying Palestinian rights is not going to fly in this world that age. Michael Vincent said that the young generation, even the young American generation and the young American Jewish generation is increasingly seeing this problem through social justice prisms, not through their parents prism of blindly supporting Israel, right or wrong. This is changing and it is. It will change. I'm afraid that all this is or might not result in any instant change of policy regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict by the United States, by the international community, or by Arab states as well. But change is coming. I am convinced of this. Change is coming. It might take five, ten, 15 years. I don't know. I think the interim we're going to go through a lot of violence, but the status quo is not sustainable.

**SUZANNE MALONEY:** We have a number of questions from the audience, and I'm going to start to weave those into our conversations in just a moment. But I want to put a very brief question to Shibley before I take those audience questions. And that is just an acknowledgment that all of our speakers today have used the word apartheid. And of course, the book and the Foreign Affairs article both used the word apartheid to describe the legal system that exists today within Israel for treatment of its different populations. We all recognize that apartheid was in fact a specific system of racial segregation. Specific to one particular case in South Africa. It may have become something like a more generic description of systematic inequality, much as the, you know, sort of generic terms have been adopted. But there are also considerable concerns that the use of this term tends to gloss over significant distinctions between what existed in South Africa and what exists today in Israel. And also that the term itself may be used to demonize and delegitimize the Israeli state. And so, Shibley, if you could just briefly respond to that. Do you think that the use of this term is helpful to policy discourse into solutions? Sorry. Shibley you're muted.

**SHIBLEY TELHAMI:** See. Okay. We obviously we thought about this long and hard, the four of us and also other other people who participated in the project. You know, the big shift is not really whether it's apartheid or not. The big shift is what it whether it's a one state reality or not. Pretty 1967 Israel, even with structural discrimination against Arab citizens, was not an apartheid state. It was a flawed democracy, but not hugely different from other flawed democracy or liberal states around the world. But if you look at the situation of the Palestinians relationship with Israel in the context of one state, and you think of it as semi-permanent, it's impossible to avoid the labor

apartheid. And the labor apartheid and apartheid, by the way, is not South Africa. We actually say it's not. We avoid the comparison to South Africa. Apartheid is actually an international law now. It is basically a term that is encoded and enshrined in international law as a crime against humanity. And and while it is based on race, whether it's in South Africa and in international law, international law actually talks about racial discrimination as including people based on religion and national origin and goes beyond race, as we understand it, in the common language. And so our our own conclusion was basically put aside, whether it is we actually said it is akin to apartheid. But the the reality of is we don't compare it to South Africa. We just talk about it in terms of, you know, imposing a supremacy state over a portion of the population. And and analytically, I think there's no avoiding that. We can't dodge it. But but the switch is not as I said, it's about apartheid, because that's actually in some ways the easier part the switch is whether it's a one state reality or not. It, Michael, may have some more to say on that because we have we have grappled with this issue long and hard.

**MICHAEL N. BARNETT:** Yeah, I agree with everything Shibley said, and I think for all four of us, and I think for many of the people in the project, this was a difficult conversation. There are lots of different opinions on this. I think part of it has to do with what? I'm not an international legal scholar, but, you know, some of the debates and ambiguities of the legal definition of apartheid. But I want to say something, actually. What I think is incredibly important here, which is like what would not want the debate over apartheid. To distract us from what's really going on, that you can call it apartheid, You can call it Jim Crow. You can call it a caste system. There are any number of terms that exist that from history that provide not you know, that provide in some ways not exact parallels, but analogies. Maybe the Israelis will come up with their own organic term for thinking about the systematic discrimination of Jews against non-Jews. But I worry, much like we've seen with debates that go on in other countries about genocide. I would hate for the debate on apartheid to derail what needs to be a more sustained, critical conversation, as Shibley suggested, about what those realities are. And I think the reality is, even if you don't if they don't add up to you for apartheid, they add up to something quite ugly and certainly discriminatory. And I think that's, for me, the important conclusion.

**SUZANNE MALONEY:** Thanks, Michael, and thanks. Thanks to you, Shibley, both for taking my question seriously. I'm going to put a question from the audience to each of you and turn different questions, and then we will wrap up because we're nearing the end of our time. I'll start with you, Michael. This is a question that came in asking when did the one state reality come into existence? The questioner notes that they have heard West Bank Palestinians say they've been living in it since 1967. At what point do the authors of this book see the genesis of the ontological shift that they describe and analyze?

**MICHAEL N. BARNETT:** I can only speak for myself. For me, that notion of a one state reality began to creep into my own vision. Once I became convinced that there was no two state solution. And, you know, and so once there were no serious negotiations, once there was no appetite for even thinking about a two state solution, certainly by by Israeli Jews, then it became difficult to avoid that language of a one state reality. And so I think all of us would have different ways of marking the birth date. I don't imagine that. Well, there'll be a consensus. But again, for me, it really was. There is no two state solution. So now what do we have? And that's when. There was no way of avoiding the fact that it was a one state reality.

**SUZANNE MALONEY:** Thanks, Michael. Let me put a question.

**SHIBLEY TELHAMI:** Let me just let me just add one thing I want to say. You know, the interesting thing is the reason why both Michael and I are saying it's really about the one state reality is because actually Israeli officials and American officials, including John Kerry and previously former President Jimmy Carter, had warned that if you don't have two states and you have this semi-permanent reality, at some point it's going to be an apartheid state. So the leap about apartheid was warned against seeing, because once you create the current reality as semi-permanent, that's

what you end up with Now, again. You know, language is important. Obviously, one can debate how you describe it, but it's certainly as bad.

**SUZANNE MALONEY:** Shibli while you have the mic, let me put another question to you and then I'll put the final question to Marwan Shibley. For you, Shibley, there's a question that came in from the audience asking on the Palestinian side, Even if Fatah could be considered a reliable partner in the process, how would one manage Hamas in a one state reality?

**SHIBLEY TELHAMI:** Yeah. I mean, the reality, you know, it's not about management. That's obviously up to the Israeli state to do so. We have in the book itself, in the article, we don't really address that. But in the book itself, we have a couple of chapters, strong chapters on Palestinian politics. So there are people who have written about it. One of our core editors also has a contribution on this issue. So it's not really a question about, you know, how you manage it. That's up to the Israelis in many ways. In the context of one state. We are the international community, though, has it still has an address, which is the PLO as they're representing the Palestinian people. And people think that it's the Palestinian Authority. Of course it is, because Mahmoud Abbas is the head of both. But in general, I don't think that's going to change in the sense that when you have an address that the international community has to go to to deal with to hear a Palestinian voice. Officially, I'm not talking about the the discourse publicly. Officially, they're still going to talk to the recognize represent of the Palestinian people with all its flaws. And the Palestinians are going to have to clean house. So we're not saying the Palestinians have not manage their own affairs badly, whether the Palestinian leaders have managed their affairs badly or the in fact, we say the Palestinian divisions have made it increasingly hard. That's one reason why there is no solution on the horizon. Same thing with Israeli politics. So we avoid really tackling that in terms of our prescriptions, but we build it into our description.

**SUZANNE MALONEY:** Thanks so much, Shibley. And this is a finale question to Marwan Muasher from someone in the audience who notes that if you and I think they were speaking to essentially all the panelists here today in the generic, you recognize that there is a one state reality and this reality is ugly and strategically unstable. Should we not be urging the United States to put its policy where its mouth is, double down on a policy that opens a pathway toward a two state solution by actively opposing settlements, supporting Palestinian statehood? Fundamentally, if a one state realities is so objectionable, as I think we have all concluded through this conversation, why not double down on the one path that offers a better solution, a two state solution?

**MARWAN MUASHER:** Suzanne, the the answer I have is that the time for a two state solution demographically and politically has passed by. It's not whether we want the two state solution. It's not what we what we hope. It's, as the author said, recognizing the situation as is. Today, there are 750,000 settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, including 250,000 in East Jerusalem alone. The ability to separate these two communities, which is the basis for a two state solution, has gone. That is not to say anything about the political will of the Israeli government, which has repeatedly declared its intention not to withdraw from occupied territory and not to establish a Palestinian state. So so that's you know, that's one part of my answer. The other part is we certainly should urge the United States to do a lot of things differently, which have been stated before, declare that settlements are a violation of international law and not accept any products that come from these settlements, insist on a rights based approach that preserves equal rights for everyone. I mean, after all, this is what President Biden said in his address at the beginning of his administration, that he wants a United States that reconciles its values with its interests. And he explicitly talked about democracy and freedom of speech and all that. So certainly the United States has to do things differently. The problem is that the United States is elsewhere. The United States is not convinced that the region is of any strategic importance, as it used to be, and it has already receded from the region. And I'm afraid something really major security wise has to happen in the region before the United States might might come back. Having said that, Suzanne, I don't want to underestimate the agency that the new generation of Palestinians, in particular in the West Bank and Gaza are having. They have lost all trust in their own leadership. And then the international community's ability. To change things on the ground. What we are seeing today, in

my view, is a third intifada. But unlike the first two intifada, this one is needless. This one, you know, is a bunch of young kids who have no hope and who are taking things by their own hands. And that's that's worrisome because it is very difficult to to control it. There is an argument for the United States to reengage in the region, but to reengage differently, not along the old rules. Is it going to do so? I mean, it does not seem to be likely at this stage.

**SUZANNE MALONEY:** Marwan, thank you for concluding our conversation today on such a thoughtful and profoundly important note. You've given us much food for thought, and I would imagine we could bring this group back together for another conversation. I want to thank Michael Barnett and Dahlia Scheindlin, who had to leave a little bit early and also, of course, Shibley Telhami, our colleague Shibley, along with Michael, Marc Lynch and Nathan Brown, are the coeditors of this very important volume. Thank you all for this tremendous conversation and look forward to many more. Thank you.

**MARWAN MUASHER:** Thank you.