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We will move along and get this very promising discussion about the Middle East underway. We have two distinguished diplomats and men of education, who will discuss the various problems with short opening statements. Then we will have some discussion between them and move to the audience for Q&A. It is my pleasure to introduce Manuel Hassassian, the Palestinian Ambassador to the United Kingdom, and Itamar Rabinovich, who was long-time Ambassador in Washington. They will address us today.

Ambassador Rabinovich is one of the most respected diplomats who has ever served in Washington in recent years. He is also a man who is associated quite actively with Tel Aviv University, New York University and other institutions of education. Ambassador Hassassian also came out of the field of higher education and was a Minister of Higher Education. For the last 10 years, he has been Palestinian Ambassador to the United Kingdom.

I wanted to ask both of you to address what I think is a central question. It is formed to some extent on an impression, but I would like you to take it into consideration as you make your opening statements. Perhaps you could either focus your remarks or add on to your remarks to deal with it.

A little over a year ago, I was at a conference somewhat like this in Abu Dhabi. It brought together leading officials and intellectuals from the Arab world, to discuss the most pressing problems of the day. For two and a half days, this conference did not devote a single word to the Israeli-Palestinian issue. I have had that same experience in subsequent discussions. It is almost as if the issue has disappeared.

Particularly in the Arab world, it is seen as more urgent today to talk about the Sunni Shiite problems, Yemen and certainly Syria. These have put the Israeli-Palestinian issue into eclipse. Whether you agree or disagree with that, I want to use it as the basis for a question that stands on its own. It is based on my feeling that neither the Israeli Government nor the Palestinian authorities today act in any meaningful way as if it is possible to have a two-state solutions. What are the consequences of such a situation, Ambassador Rabinovich?