

ITAMAR RABINOVICH

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Thank you, Jim, for this kind introduction and to our Qatari and French hosts and, thank you to my colleagues on the panel for having made such a variety of interesting comments and insights. The only advantage of being the last speaker of a last panel is that you may get some perspective on everything that has been said. I would like to say that looking, let us say, at the next 10 years or so, and trying to integrate what we have heard, we are talking about four levels of analysis. A point was made about the infrastructure by my Saudi colleague and in a very powerful way by Saeb Erekat. This is a region that now has almost half a billion inhabitants. Egypt is now a country of 91 million and soon enough will be a country with 100 million that it cannot feed. Nothing is going to be stable if the issues of production, the relationship between population, demography, and resources, the need to develop industry and sources of occupation for this very large population are not resolved in the next few years. Nothing is going to be stable and very political structure will then be standing on a house of cards, and one major effort needs to be made in that regard. There is no objective reason that the Middle East should not undergo changes similar to those in South East Asia in previous decades. There is nothing that should hinder that.

The second level is the state. What we are witnessing now is the collapse of a large number of states, at least six or seven states in the region meet the classic definition of failed state. Unfortunately, Syria is the worst case, but Iraq, Yemen, Malia, Sudan, Lebanon, etc. meet that definition. Therefore, a second challenge is to build durable states, durable frameworks for people to live in and conduct their productive lives in the coming years.

The third is the issue of regional order. The Middle East's origin is not just a piece of geography on the globe; it is a region. There are patterns for conducting relationships between the members of that region. Part of the current problem and crisis in the Middle East is that right now there is no pattern. The Arab League is not functional. There was a Saudi-Iranian rift this year; the continuing Arab Israeli conflict; the Syrian crisis, which is a conflict of regional rivalries, etc. It is a very important fact that the Middle East has been joined by two very large and powerful actors in recent decades: Turkey and Iran. Iran and Turkey during much of the 20th century were not part of the Middle East system but now they are in a full way and they have not integrated themselves or been integrated by the others.

There has to be a quest. Miguel Moratinos spoke about how Europe tried to do that quite successfully. The Middle East needs to go through such a process, both in a broad sense and for specific issues. Of course, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been mentioned here by several speakers, including the Prime Ministers. Saab and I share the ultimate line, that is to say a two-state solution, and we are both working for it. This is not a great time for the two-state solution but developments have happened in both our parties and also internationally. Obviously, this needs to happen. It is the only way to resolve that issue.

The Middle East was governed for many years by the Cold War and after the collapse of the Soviet Union came a period of American ascendancy. There is now renewed competition and, with Trump's election, there is a rapprochement between Putin's administration and Trump's administration. Maybe yes, maybe not. What we heard from candidate Trump and what we see for candidates in foreign and national security policy does not send a single and clear message, and there are inbuilt contradictions. If candidate Trump is very anti-Iranian but is friendlier with Mr Putin, how do you reconcile those two issues? It is very difficult to reconcile and we will have to see how that works out and of course all these four levels need to be integrated in a comprehensive way; otherwise, there is no clear path for us to follow.



Finally, a word about the very term Middle East, which I think will give us an interesting insight. The Middle East is the only part of the world that is defined geographically from the outside. We speak about Latin America; we speak about Africa; we speak about South East Asia; they are all absolute terms. The Middle East is a relative term; it is the Middle East because, seen from Europe, there is the Far East and there is the Middle East. The Middle East refers to itself in a term that expresses an external view not an internal view. It is time for people in the Middle East to change that and start looking at themselves and the region and acting for themselves because salvation will not come from the outside. The outside can be helpful and can be used but it is up to the people of the region to take their faith in their hands and make the next decade better than this decade.

Thank you.

Jim HOAGLAND, Contributing Editor, *The Washington Post*

Itamar, thank you. That was reassuring to hear you reinforce the idea of the two-state solution is still possible and achievable. What needs to be done now to make it plausible as a solution?

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I think the single most important action needs to come from President-elect Trump. We have seen contradictory signals; names have been mentioned for key positions that are actually hostile to this idea. He himself spoke twice, early on his campaign and then in *The Wall Street Journal*, about his willingness to resolve this issue. He said that this was the ultimate deal he can make. If he throws his weight behind that, it could be the shot in the arm for a process that seems to have been moribund for too many years. If you ask me for the one important message, it needs to come from Donald Trump.

Jim HOAGLAND, Contributing Editor, *The Washington Post*

Thank you.