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We will have a final intervention from Itamar. We are never out of time when it comes to discussing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Itamar RABINOVICH

Thank you. With your permission, as a professional Middle East historian, I would like to take a broader view and then come to the Israeli-Palestinian point. I think several of the points I would like to touch upon have been mentioned already by earlier speakers, but I would like to put a somewhat different angle on them.

The title of our session is 'Trends in the Middle East'. I would like to speak very briefly about these trends. First, I think Stuart mentioned the change in American and Russian policies in the Middle East. The Russian case is very clear. Russia is back successfully. It exploited American disengagement and the Syrian crisis and came in very effectively in Syria and proceeded to play games with Turkey and Saudi Arabia with successful diplomacy.

With regard to the US, in addition to what Stuart described about the trends in the US, there are bigger questions that I think preoccupy anyone who looks at American policy. How effective is this president? What does this president want? What kind of foreign policy does he have in mind? What does he want to accomplish in the Middle East? Does he have the foreign policy team to implement this policy? Does he have the temperament to make and implement this policy?

I am worried. For instance, he came to the Middle East for his first visit outside the United States and gave a big speech in Riyadh. The main point was how to stop Iran. I think he is trying to stop Iran in the wrong place. I mean just tinkering with the agreement on the nuclear issue, as I think has been pointed out, is very complicated. There is a better place to stop Iran. It is called Syria. The main effort of Iranian policy over the last decade has been Syria and Lebanon, the effort to build direct access from Iran through Iraq through Syria through Lebanon to the Mediterranean. If you are a superpower who looks at the global map and you want to stop Iran, the place would have been Syria, but Trump is only interested in defeating ISIS. He is less interested in what happens in Iraq when ISIS is defeated. It is the wrong policy.

With regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, he keeps saying that this is the ultimate conflict, the ultimate deal he would like to make, but we have not seen the seriousness that is required for making that deal and let me emphasise that without the active, effective participation of the United States, no Arab-Israeli agreement has been reached to date.

The second important trend is Iran and Turkey coming back to the Middle East. It seems surprising, but for much of the 20th century, they were not there. Turkey wanted to look at Europe. Iran was preoccupied with domestic issues and with the Soviet threat. Since 1979, Iran is back and since the first decade of this century, Turkey is back. Now, two large powerful countries - 80 million each, with sophisticated elites, military power and economic might - are in the game and therefore the whole arena of the Middle East has changed, not always for the better. Iran is an expansionist power. It wants hegemony, and Turkey's policy began ambitiously and spoke about neo-Ottomanism. Mr Davutoğlu, who will speak to us here tomorrow, coined the term 'zero conflict with our neighbours'. Turkey is now preoccupied with the Kurdish issue, both in Syria and Iraq. It has not been very effective in its Syria policy. It is very much preoccupied with this issue, and its impact as a regional power is still limited, but the potential is there.

The third is the future of the Arab states. We are now in what we call the post-Arab turmoil phase. We had an Arab Spring. We then had the Arab turmoil and the foundations of several Arab states have been shaken. Syria and the civil war, in Iraq, remember that ISIS almost captured Baghdad. In Libya, Yemen, Sudan, secession is a trend with Kurds. There was talk at some point about the Alawites seceding from Syria and creating their own statelet. This may have

been checked. We now have a fairly effective government in Baghdad. Assad, for better or worse, is going to remain in Syria. Libya of course, Sudan and Yemen are still a problem, but the future of the Arab state has been put in question. I think that issue may be checked.

On social economic issues, one major issue is the discrepancy between demography and resources. It is undermining the Arab world. Egypt is now a country of 100 million people and if you look 20 or 30 years down the road, 320 million Arabs are going to be half a billion Arabs. Who is going to feed them? Who is going to find employment without massive investment in industrialisation and development? That is a major trend.

Finally, regarding Israel, like you, Odeh, I see positive and negative trends. The negative is the fact that Iran has joined the fray. It is beginning to become not just an Arab-Israeli conflict, but almost a Muslim-Jewish conflict and that is very bad because in political and diplomatic conflicts, you can find compromise more easily than in religious conflicts where everybody sticks to an absolutist position and Iran is not a good influence. Stuart is right. We have had the most right-wing government that we have ever had, with people who are basically annexationist with regard to the West Bank, but here I would like to point out a positive development from my perspective.

This week is the first time that polls in Israel show that the centre left block is doing better than the right-wing block. This is fresh news from two days ago in Israel and that of course is good news for those who would like to see an Israeli-Palestinian agreement and of course the reconciliation between Hamas and the Palestinian authority is good news, but the question is: will the United States play the role it must play in order for us to take a step forward? I join Odeh in a rare display of Palestinian-Israeli unity in being slightly optimistic with regard to this situation. Thank you.

Miguel Ángel MORATINOS

Thank you. These will be my final words. I will try in less than a minute to conclude, to draw a few conclusions.

The Middle East is divided, first. Secondly, there is no crisis management system or security architecture. Thirdly, the economy is not faring so badly. Fourthly, we continue to prepare poorly for the post-oil economy. Fifthly, we are returning a world of Nation-States facing off with failed states. Sixthly, there are new players on the scene, as we just heard: Russia, Iran, Turkey. Seventhly, there is an absence or a question mark where the United States used to be. Eighth, we have not referred to this here, and it is unfortunate, but it must be said: we have not heard the word Europe, even from me. Where is Europe in this conflict? Ninthly, comes the question of hope. Why do we not make an agreement between Israel and Palestine? Everything else is more complicated. The easiest of our tasks is making peace between Palestine and Israel. I believe we can do that. Thank you.