



It's often said that the resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict is a key to Middle East peace. Do you think that's an accurate portrayal of the situation, and if so, what does that mean for

summer. You have an international force with all its problems. And for the first time in thirty years, the Lebanese army is reasserting Lebanese sovereignty all the way to the border. So, that's a major situation that has changed compared to what it was before.

The second strategic consequence is that with all the limits—the difficulties and setbacks—the Israeli defense forces did succeed in one very important realm. It succeeded in destroying a very, very large chunk of the long-range Iranian-deployed missiles to Hezbollah. And by the way, originally, these missiles were not only Iranian supplied. They were actually originally in the hands of revolutionary guards, a few hundred revolutionary guards who were stationed in Iran and in the Sudan. And gradually the control over these missiles and rockets was transferred to Hezbollah. But this force was a major component of the strategic deterrents against Israel. Partly for the Hezbollah strategic deterrents, and partly for the Iranian strategic deterrents, against what was the possibility that Israel or the combination of Israel and the US, would do something against Iran's nuclear installations.

Well, this is a very important arm which has been largely damaged. So when

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than ever. We got Hamas in government in Palestine. We got Hezbollah in government in Lebanon and so on. There is a saying in Hebrew, the translation of which is something like, "it's not for this baby that we yearn."

Q : One last question and I'll let you go. Brandeis, where you teach, has found itself at the center of this discussion recently about whether and how Americans can criticize Israel, Israel's policies, without also somehow criticizing the existing or Israel itself. There have been charges of anti-Semitism. Do you think that that discussion about this is a productive one? Is it a discussion that can lead to positive ends, or is it something that is best left off the table? Is there any way, do you think, to diffuse some of the heated tensions that have arisen amidst this conversation?

A : If we thought that it was best left off the table we wouldn't be doing what we're doing. We are the Crown Center for Middle East Studies, and we are studying the Middle East. We are undeterred in studying the Middle East. We're also undeterred in our very particular commitment and very particular approach. And the particular commitment and the particular approach is the commitment to what I call balanced and dispassionate study of the region. That means that we have involved with us senior Palestinians. This year we have a senior Palestinian economist, Dr. Mohammed Samhoury. We have probably the number one Egyptian strategic thinker, and we have a person like myself, an Israeli.

We are exposing competing theories, competing explanations, what can be referred to as competing narratives about the region, and about the region's development. That's our approach.

Now, of course, this is challenged not from one direction, it's challenged from both directions. It's challenged from the right, and it's challenged from the left. It's challenged by people who are

driven by passions rather than by the commitment to a dispassionate approach to the region. And it's clearly driven by people who don't believe in Hezbollah's approach.

By the way, I specifically use the term balanced, rather than objective. I don't know what objective means. But I think you can be balanced in the sense that you can provide a stage and attribute equal significance to alternative explanations and alternative approaches and theories. But of course for people who are imbalanced and driven by passions, the balanced and dispassionate approach is a threat to them. Whether they're from the right or from the left, it really doesn't matter. And indeed we have been challenged, and the challenge is to the ability to conduct a balanced and dispassionate discourse at Brandeis.

The fact has been challenged by both the right and the left. The right has attacked us for our association with a controversial academic, who I think is one of the most

enlightened scholars in the region. In a direct way we're also attacked by the left by constantly charging us by essentially provoking a different kind of debate by people who are by definition controversial. When the attempt is to create a controversy, it's a different commitment. Our commitment is to conduct an exploration, is to try to understand what's going on. Their commitment is trying to provoke a discussion. So, it's very different approach, and as I stressed, this approach of ours is challenged by both the right