GOVERNANCE UNCOVERED EPISODE 55 TRANSCRIPT

Mayors in the Middle: Local Governance in Occupied Palestine

Hello and welcome to Governance Uncovered, a podcast brought to you by the Governance and Local Development Institute at the University of Gothenburg. This podcast is supported by the Swedish Research Council.

In this episode, we sit down with Diana Greenwald to talk about her book "Mayors in the Middle - Indirect Rule and Local Government in Occupied Palestine," which will be published by Columbia University Press in May 2024.

Host Ellen Lust and Diana start by talking about what initially made Diana interested in Palestine and local governance in the West Bank.

They then discuss the book itself, considering the dynamics of local self-government in the Palestinian West Bank. Diana argues that the system of Israeli indirect rule, particularly its emphasis on local policing, and the political affiliations of Palestinian mayors shape their governance strategies and outcomes.

The episode ends with a discussion about how Diana's book might help us better understand the current levels of conflict in Gaza and the West Bank.

We hope that you find this episode interesting. Let’s get into it!

So Diana, thank you for joining us today. It's a really exciting book, *Mayors in the Middle,* that's going to be coming out at Columbia University Press. And I was excited to read it. For those who will get a chance to, it's an incredibly rich and fascinating study about mayors in the West Bank and to how they, their incentives, how they sort of, end up seeing their situation, what kinds of services they do and don't provide as a result of that. So again, I just want to congratulate you on a really, really rich study, and an excellent and very well written book.

Thank you. Thank you so much, Ellen. It's great to be here.

It's great to have you and I want to start by just sort of stepping back a little bit and getting you to tell us about how you became interested in, obviously Palestine, but also in looking at local governance in the West Bank?

Sure, I took my first trip to Palestine as a graduate student, and it was actually the summer of 2011. When I had alternative plans when entering Graduate School, actually to do my research in Syria or Lebanon or somewhere else in the broader Levant, I had no intention of becoming absorbed into Israel and Palestine. But as most of your listeners will recall, 2011 was a pretty eventful summer in the region and a lot of those other countries were simply off limits. I couldn't use the existing fellowship I had to travel to Syria for example. So I ended up kind of with a Plan B that I crafted with my advisor, Mark Tessler, at the University of Michigan and went to the West Bank in part to study Arabic and in part to do some very early stage kind of faculty mentored research that I thought would maybe lead to a dissertation, but maybe not. Maybe it would just be a standalone project. But after, basically living in the West Bank for that summer, I was sort of fully absorbed and there was really no turning back just based on the everyday experiences that I witnessed of Palestinian life in this very sort of convoluted and institutionally complex structure of occupation under which they lived. That was sort of the beginning, and I didn't initially intend to to write the dissertation on local government. I had kind of come from a background before Graduate School where I had been working in Washington, DC, and I had been working on Middle East issues, and I was sort of exposed to some of the general discourse on Israel and Palestine and U.S. policy, and the quote on quote two state solution. And so I knew there was this thing called the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Gaza that had some governing authorities over Palestinians living there. And I initially thought of it as kind of a State Building project. And so I wanted to frame my dissertation and a lot of the scholarship that I was engaging in. I wanted to frame it around kind of State Building, but it really took a number of years in Graduate School and returned visits to Palestine and continued conversations with people there to sort of unlearn that framing and really to understand that the Palestinian Authority, something we can talk about, of course more extensively today, was put in place as sort of part and parcel of the structures of occupation. And it was not, you know, not only was it not developing into a state, but that was also quite likely never the intention behind these institutions. So I started looking beyond the central government level of what was going on in, say, Ramallah, which is kind of the de facto capital of the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, to see how Palestinians were living and sort of governing themselves at a local level under these institutions that had been pretty much static since the 1990s. By contrast, there was so much dynamism, and there was so much kind of local political variation that was interesting at the local level. And so that's what drew me to municipal politics.

That's fantastic. And it's again, I agree with you that we don't look very much at the municipal level, right. And I think a lot of people don't even think of it as being a thing and certainly not varying. And you make the case that you actually see quite a lot of variation in what you're thinking of in terms of the incentives of mayors and how they see themselves, vis a vis the people, their citizens, as well as vis a vis Israel. You present a theoretical framework that thinks about, on the one hand, the dominant state in this case is Israel, and then opposition and what you're thinking of as intermediators, right. Can you tell us a little bit more about the situation in Israel, but also how it helps us to understand the situation by taking these sets of actors into account?

Yeah, yeah, sure. I tried to do this in the book with a couple of historical chapters that establish basically what the set of institutions were, that Israel and the Palestinians, through the Palestinian Liberation Organization, the institutions that were established through the Oslo Accords in the 1990s, and that's kind of the macro setting within which all of my analysis of local government is situated. And the kind of historical argument that I make qualitatively in that in that part of the book is that, you know, these institutions, where by Palestinians were given kind of a partial and highly restricted form of self-rule in the form of the Palestinian Authority, in the 1990s, they were largely shaped and determined disproportionately by Israel's interests in the occupied West Bank and Gaza. And Israel's objectives for those territories, and in particular for the West Bank since 1967, were to control territory, to rule territory without politically absorbing the Palestinian population that lived there, right. And so there were constant kind of iterations, really from 1967, when Israel gained control of the West Bank and Gaza in the six-day war. From that point forward, there were constant iterations with how to ensure continued kind of Israeli control over that territory or at the very least, how to refrain from ceding any of that territory to a Palestinian sovereign? While, maintaining some kind of basic forms of governance for the Palestinians that lived there. But basically trying to outsource that as much as possible. Israel never, from governments on the left to governments on the right, never really had any intention or desire to be governing Palestinians itself right to be providing local services, to be taxing them, to be policing their cities and towns. This was not a role that Israel ever wanted to play. And so what we end up with, I argue in the 1990s with the Oslo Accords and the creation of this, really quite large, sprawling institutional structure known as the Palestinian Authority. What that came out of were kind of these earlier experiments, you know, outsourcing power to mayors or to municipalities and basically saying, you know, we're going to be the major Israel saying we're going to be the major, kind of wielders of force. We're going to continue to militarily control this territory and govern the lives of the residents within it, but you're responsible for kind of providing electricity and sweeping the streets and making sure that you know that there's basic services for the population. What we get in the 1990s looks really different, and it's basically the creation of this, as I said, really quite massive institutional structure known as the Palestinian Authority, which at its core from, you know, Israel's perspective and ultimately in terms, I argue, of how the Palestinians see these institutions and view these institutions at its core it's really about maintaining the security of Israel's Jewish residents and settlements, maintaining basic law and order within Palestinian towns and cities. And thus the emphasis is really on policing. And so the creation of a massive new central infrastructure with the aim of kind of policing in sort of an inward facing way, policing Palestinians within their isolated towns and cities throughout the West Bank. Some of this ties into as well the geographic delineations of authority, right, the Palestinian Authority is under the Oslo Accords, only allowed to really police and govern in kind of these small islands of Palestinian population centers throughout the West Bank, while the rest of the West Bank is under unmediated Israeli military.

So you talk about policing and one of the things that's really striking is when you also talk about the expansion of the police force, under the Palestinian Authority, right, that it gives to 10s of thousands of policemen. But you also talk a little bit about extraction. So you have sort of three components. We have a policing component which you make the cases extremely important in terms of securing Israeli citizens within the West Bank. You have an extraction

component which, if I understand you correctly, is less important, although it's still a component. And then you have the service delivery provision of water and other things which it almost seems like that's not a necessarily a goal of the dominant state of Israel, but it's more a function that's the municipalities are allowed to carry out that mayors can do. I just want to make sure that I understand that correctly and to get you to talk a little bit about how you see this balance of policing and extraction?

Yeah, yeah. And so, you're right, Ellen, that basically the argument about how Israel approaches governance in the West Bank, first of all, the framework I'm using is one of indirect rule. And the idea of indirect rule throughout, you know, other social science scholarship is basically when a dominant power, a state, perhaps a colonial power or an occupying authority, seeks to govern a territory, but basically either doesn't want to or cannot, except at great cost. You know, govern subset of the population within that territory, so it outsources or delegates some form of governance to an indigenous or a local kind of said intermediaries'. And so the argument I'm making is basically there are kind of three tiers of governance here. There's Israel as the dominant state or power, the occupying power in the West Bank. Then there's this kind of centralized Palestinian Authority intermediary, to which Israel has effectively delegated certain forms of governance. As you noted, you know I'm arguing that the primary form of governance that Israel has delegated to the PA, which is governed by Fatah, which is the kind of one party that has dominated the Palestinian Authority since its creation, the main form of governance that Israel has delegated to the PA, is policing. And essentially internal policing. So as I mentioned, you know, policing of Palestinians, right, this is not coercion in the form of external projection of military force or anything like that. It's internal policing. And they really emphasized that a lot more in this kind of indirect world relationship, than they have emphasized other forms of extraction. Like fiscal extraction like taxation. And this is something that has to do with Israel's goals and then territory, I argue, which ultimately are extractive, of course, and they're mainly extractive of land, right, and they're sort of main goal in the West Bank, Israel's main goal is to control and expand control over the territory itself and over land. But this is not something it outsources to its indigenous intermediary. Instead, it does that itself. Right, but what it needs the Palestinian Authority to do is to maintain, as I sense kind of quote on quote law and order or in less charitable terms, you know, to repress, politically repress in many cases Palestinian populations. And so this is one form of interact rule, you know, I talked about other examples and I sort of extend some of the insights at the very end of the book to the cases of India under the period of the British Empire and the case of South Africa under apartheid, there are cases where the dominant power or the colonial power, for example, let's say the British and India were much more interested in outsourcing or delegating taxation and extraction because that was kind of one of their main goals in controlling in South Asia, right? So of course, that comes with coercion as well, right? Like coercion and extraction are intimately related, but in the case of Israel's approach to delegation in West Bank, it's really policing, and coercion is emphasized, and the ultimate goal of fiscal extraction is really with the ultimate goal of allowing Israel to continue to assert its domination over the territory. So that's kind of the first level of the relationship between Israel and this central Palestinian Authority. Now the next level that I really empirically focus on in the book, is what that does to local government, right. And that's the level between the Central Palestinian Authority, its reputation, its identity among Palestinian constituents, and what that does to mayors and

local governments that are trying to function under this system. Right. And I make an argument that basically the way mayors and municipalities approach local governance, depends very much on whether they are seen as affiliated with Fatah, essentially with that Palestinian intermediary within Israel's regime, or on the other hand, whether they're seen as really challenging the intermediaries seen as opponents or challengers. And those opponents and challengers include groups like Hamas. They also include independents. They include smaller parties, in the Palestinian political spectrum, and I sort of, in some places, kind of group all of those opponents together, in some cases by analyze them separately. But really, whether you're seeing as kind of the local level affiliated with indirect rural regime through affiliation with Fatah, or whether you're seen as its opponents, is going to shake your government strategies.

I want you to say a little bit more about how it shapes governance strategies. I also want to highlight that you're basing the analysis on some really interesting budget information in terms of what municipalities do. A lot of interviews. I mean, it's a very, again, a very rich analysis that that underlies the kind of messages that you're giving us today. And so when we were looking at the Fatah or what we think of as the indigenous intermediary, you make the case what they really sort of lose is reputation, right? That there's a reputational cost to being close to or being seen as a handmaiden, and if you want to be uncharitable about it, of the Israelis. And that that then affects how they police, but also it affects how they grant services and do other things. Can you say a little bit more about that?

Yeah, that's right. So basically the analysis is based on the local level quantitative data on local governments budgeting. You know, how much revenue they're raising, what forms of revenue they're collecting, and how much they're spending, what sorts of goods and services they're spending on. Also, local level data on variation in that second level or second tier of the framework, which is the police and control of the Palestinian Authority. How that variation shapes these local governments as well. And then finally, as you mentioned, a number of interviews that I did over several field visits to the West Bank. With mayors, municipal council members, municipal staff, some constituents, and other kind of political analysts and such. So essentially the argument that you've hinted at is exactly right Ellen, so the approach towards local government, if you're a mayor, or municipal council affiliated with Fatah, affiliated with this kind of central ruling party in the PA, you have certain advantages and certain disadvantages. And the advantage is primarily resource based, so I find for example that Fatah affiliated governments are more likely to spend on popular public goods such as electricity and water provision, when compared to their opposition counterparts. And they're also more able to do so from deficit based spending, so they actually exploit or seem more able to take advantage of this kind of soft budget constraint, to not balance their budgets and I attribute that in some ways to their resource advantages, probably perhaps to some form of political favor to some that they're benefiting from, and they're able to do that to kind of shore up their popularity and their role at the local level. But Despite that, resource kind of advantage that they have over the opposition parties, they do have this reputational deficit. I argue that is essentially my explanation or my theory for why they, to borrow a term from the scholar Alicia Holland's work, why they forebear from, or why they refrain from doing certain other unpopular tasks like collecting revenue and collecting local taxes. And I argue that

that's mainly because of this kind of legitimacy problem or reputation problem that they have with the Palestinian public. Namely because Fatah is so implicated as a political party in the Israeli occupation regime, because they are so centrally a part of this indirect rule regime over Palestinians. And not emphasize is really policing and coercion. Well, then at the local level, these kind of thoughtful affiliated mayors and local governments are going to do what they can to balance that, right. They're going to try to extract less from their constituents. They're going to try to forebear from or refrain from carrying out these other kind of politically sensitive tasks of local government. So as a result, they kind of tax less, they spend more. And they sort of used those, those endowments, in terms of their, their resource endowments, to balance against those reputational deficits that they have. The opposition parties, on the other hand, and again, these are sometimes formal, you know, political parties. I, I can say a little bit more about the complications of trying to label mayors and local governments, as either intermediaries affiliated with Fatah or quote on quote opposition. There's a lot of nuance there, and there's a lot of complexity. But if we're to take the larger group of non-mayors which include. As I said, those affiliate with parties such as Hamas or the PFLP or independents, we're going to take them all together, these opponents tend to have kind of the opposite problem. Where they have not sort of an advantage in terms of access to resources. They don't appear as likely to be able to exploit soft budget constraints to deficit spend on goods, for example, they seem to have more challenges in, as I said, generating enough revenue for their spending. So they have this kind of resource deficit. But on the other hand that they have this reputational advantage in the sense that they are not affiliated with, they're not tied to this indirect control regime. They're not tied to Fatah, and so that in turn shapes what they do. They really emphasize revenue mobilization much more at the local level. They emphasize trying to achieve cost savings where possible because of the resource deficits. So, this might be, you know, I interviewed Hamas mayors, for example, or opposition mayors who spoke about leveraging, you know, voluntary contributions from members of the town, whether that be voluntary labor, or whether that be constituents connecting them to donors in the diaspora who can help support and fund local projects. They use kind of refurbished equipment and try to be creative about cutting costs. And they try to, you know, it appears from the data that I had, they really force revenue collection a bit more stringently than Fatah does. And this sort of shapes their approach to governance and I argue that basically it's sort of the mirror image of what Fatah is doing.

So I think your point about, you know, not seeing this as a State Building project, especially not intentionally as a State Building project from Israel's side, is well taken. But one of the things that strikes me when I listen to the differentiation between the opposition mayors and the Fatah mayors, is the extent to which it feels like the opposition ones are actually engaged a bit more in what we would think of as State Building. Would you see that as accurate or do you think that that even there we don't really see kind of the rudimentary elements of State Building taking place?

I think that's a really interesting question. I think a lot of my movement on understanding these issues over the years has also been influenced by the research on things like rebel governance. Other forms of governance that we don't, as political scientists, probably shouldn't assume are going to progress or to theologically lead into like a state, and I

certainly think if we're talking about the occupied West Bank when we're talking about some of these opposition groups, they have essentially zero formal political power. So in some cases, I mean, what I'm looking at, and I should specify the period of time that I'm looking at in kind of the quantitative analysis of the budgets and everything, that part of the book is kind of a unique period of time where these opposition candidates were able to compete for and win office at the local level. That characterized a window of time from roughly 2005 when these local elections concluded up until 2012 or 2013. Then Fatah reasserted authority over many of these local councils, and we sort of returned to a much more autocratic one-party dominant system within the localities. It's a little bit more complicated these many of these opposition politicians still do have presence and institutional inroads within within Palestinian government. But to call it state, building is tough just because they are so, you know, pretty thoroughly repressed at this point. And furthermore, have basically no ability to develop one of those key capacities to our definition of the state, which is coercive capacity, right. So this is very centrally a part of the story, which is that, both Israel and its so-called intermediary the Fatah controlled PA, and in particular the Fatah controlled security services in the West Bank, are united in their desire to repress the political rivals to Fatah, who happen to also be the most strident opponents of the Israeli occupation. So these groups are, they're doing something at the local level, they're certainly developing as I argue in the book, you know, developing reputations for local governance. Developing connections with their constituencies, distinguishing themselves from Fatah in important ways. And as I said, even though many of them are no longer in office today, they're still taking on active roles in their communities some of them, you know, they became mayors, but then they went back to their work and they might be teachers or they might be preachers in the local mosques, or they might be local business figures. I would argue that none of those, even if we were to call them State Building, you know, State Building efforts, they didn't just kind of disappear, completely fizzle out, they're still embodied in a lot of the reputations and relationships that were built during these mayors times in office, but I guess this question about State Building also really taps into kind of the question about the future of the West Bank, right, and what the institutional configuration of authorities is going to look like and that's, you know, very much an open, and in some sense, very troubling question.

Actually, I wanted to go there next, actually, when you were talking about the difference between 2005 and 2012, of course we can think about that as the period of time when there were more opportunities. 2012 and post where the Fatah has reasserted authority. And of course now where, if ever there was a time that the kind of legitimacy and the and the reputational costs of being in alignment with Israel is high, this is a time where we're seeing that. And while attention is largely being placed on Gaza for obvious reasons, there's also a lot that's going on within the West Bank at the moment, so I'd like to hear your thoughts about not only what the future might look like, but what the present looks like and how does your work help inform our understanding of the current levels of conflict and the current issues with the West Bank?

Yeah, yeah, sure. I think you're right that obviously, for very good reason, much of the public focus right now on international attention is on what's going on in Gaza and what's been happening since October 7th. But the West Bank, really over the past, I would say, two to

three years, has been experiencing a pretty slow-moving collapse, for lack of a better word, political crisis. I mean, obviously it goes back much, much, much further than two to three years. But there have been kind of a series of developments that I think anyone who's been watching Palestinian politics and watching politics in the West Bank has been expressing, like increasing using alarm. And part of that has been the, you know, inauguration of this very, very far right, very annexationist government in Israel, which includes members within the government who, of course outwardly seek to fully annex the territory of the West Bank and are unabashed supporters of ethnic cleansing, or of essentially giving Palestinians three options. Either you submit to Israeli rule and to second class status not being full citizens under this the Israeli sovereignty, or you leave the territory. Or if you fight or resist, we will, we'll fight back, right? And so this is kind of the program that's some of the most radical right wing religious Zionists that are part of the Israeli government, have been very open about pursuing. What that means is there's different versions of right-wing ideology within this government represented. And there's some disagreement within the Israeli Government about things like, well, what is the role of the Palestinian Authority in this picture? Should Israel continue to collaborate with the Palestinian Authority under Fatah rule? Should the Palestinian Authority continue to exist at all? And you know, there are vocal and powerful elements within the Israeli Government that don't think it should exist, like the religious Zionist Party that I just mentioned. And its leader, Betzalel Smotrich, is an adamant opponent of the Palestinian Authority and thinks that essentially Israel should reassert direct, unmediated military rule over the some 3,000,000 Palestinians living in the West Bank. So as part of that, really kind of, almost apocalyptic vision, there's this assumption that, once again, in some ways Israel can return to the strategy that it used from 1967 up until the 1990s, before the PA was created, of disenfranchising Palestinians, continuing to withhold political rights, and citizenship, and representation from them. But, nonetheless, allowing them to form their own like local governments, right, and to continue to provide those services sweep the streets and provide some modicum of law and order, etcetera at the local level. And that that's just the largest form of Palestinian self-determination that can be permitted under Israeli rule. Is the local, right. And so there's this return to this idea that, well, we can kind of Co-opt or control or, in some sense, supervise these Palestinian municipalities or village councils under unmediated occupation. Now as you mentioned, I mean this is a vision that's, it was already articulated by Modrich by others before October 7th. But now we're in this world where the onslaught in Gaza, the, the, the continual atrocities that are being carried out there in response to the horrific attacks on October 7th, are totally undermining any sort of role for Palestinian political actors who would collaborate with or Co-govern in some sense with the Israeli occupation at this point. So, there's more kind of public opinion polling being done now. This is not really my area of expertise at this point, but you know, been sort of loosely following like in the West Bank, there's still pretty high levels of support for Hamas, even you know at this point very low levels of support for Fatah that have been a consistent trend over the past, many years. And so it's hard to imagine what is going to come next in the West and or never mind in Gaza. But the idea that the occupation can essentially continue. You know, in an updated form and there can be some form of Palestinian governance underneath that subservient to that, that is in kind of a collaborationist role with Israel seems extremely unlikely to be any kind of like stable arrangement that would work.

No, I agree, and it's interesting because you start the book when you're talking about the pre-Oslo period, when you talk about mayors and their roles. It's hard to even imagine that it would be possible to return to that type of an arrangement given the recent experience and also given the kind of the longer-term experience with Fatah and the frustrations with the PA, right. So it's not just a return to the 60s, it's actually, I think what you're alluding to, it's a whole new world, right, so.

Yeah. And that period, really, it was kind of the 80s, I started talking provide some of the opening anecdotes for the book, I think it really demonstrated that even then, Israel felt compelled to allow some form of elections at the local level. And you ended up in 1976, and then into the early 80s you had this window of time where you had these unabashed Palestinian national elected as mayors who were outspoken about their unwillingness to collaborate and to work in cooperation with Israeli authorities. And they really became a thorn in the side of the Israeli military because of that and because of their ability to mobilize constituents and their popularity. And ultimately, three of them were targeted with car bomb attacks by the Jewish Underground and including Hello and welcome to Governance Uncovered, a podcast brought to you by the Governance and Local Development Institute at the University of Gothenburg. This podcast is supported by the Swedish Research Council.

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Thank you. Thank you so much, Ellen. It's great to be here.

It's great to have you and I want to start by just sort of stepping back a little bit and getting you to tell us about how you became interested in, obviously Palestine, but also in looking at local governance in the West Bank?

Sure, I took my first trip to Palestine as a graduate student, and it was actually the summer of 2011. When I had alternative plans when entering Graduate School, actually to do my research in Syria or Lebanon or somewhere else in the broader Levant, I had no intention of becoming absorbed into Israel and Palestine. But as most of your listeners will recall, 2011 was a pretty eventful summer in the region and a lot of those other countries were simply off limits. I couldn't use the existing fellowship I had to travel to Syria for example. So I ended up kind of with a Plan B that I crafted with my advisor, Mark Tessler, at the University of Michigan and went to the West Bank in part to study Arabic and in part to do some very early stage kind of faculty mentored research that I thought would maybe lead to a dissertation, but maybe not. Maybe it would just be a standalone project. But after, basically living in the West Bank for that summer, I was sort of fully absorbed and there was really no turning back just based on the everyday experiences that I witnessed of Palestinian life in this very sort of convoluted and institutionally complex structure of occupation under which they lived. That was sort of the beginning, and I didn't initially intend to to write the dissertation on local government. I had kind of come from a background before Graduate School where I had been working in Washington, DC, and I had been working on Middle East issues, and I was sort of exposed to some of the general discourse on Israel and Palestine and U.S. policy, and the quote on quote two state solution. And so I knew there was this thing called the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Gaza that had some governing authorities over Palestinians living there. And I initially thought of it as kind of a State Building project. And so I wanted to frame my dissertation and a lot of the scholarship that I was engaging in. I wanted to frame it around kind of State Building, but it really took a number of years in Graduate School and returned visits to Palestine and continued conversations with people there to sort of unlearn that framing and really to understand that the Palestinian Authority, something we can talk about, of course more extensively today, was put in place as sort of part and parcel of the structures of occupation. And it was not, you know, not only was it not developing into a state, but that was also quite likely never the intention behind these institutions. So I started looking beyond the central government level of what was going on in, say, Ramallah, which is kind of the de facto capital of the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, to see how Palestinians were living and sort of governing themselves at a local level under these institutions that had been pretty much static since the 1990s. By contrast, there was so much dynamism, and there was so much kind of local political variation that was interesting at the local level. And so that's what drew me to municipal politics.

That's fantastic. And it's again, I agree with you that we don't look very much at the municipal level, right. And I think a lot of people don't even think of it as being a thing and certainly not varying. And you make the case that you actually see quite a lot of variation in what you're thinking of in terms of the incentives of mayors and how they see themselves, vis a vis the

people, their citizens, as well as vis a vis Israel. You present a theoretical framework that thinks about, on the one hand, the dominant state in this case is Israel, and then opposition and what you're thinking of as intermediators, right. Can you tell us a little bit more about the situation in Israel, but also how it helps us to understand the situation by taking these sets of actors into account?

Yeah, yeah, sure. I tried to do this in the book with a couple of historical chapters that establish basically what the set of institutions were, that Israel and the Palestinians, through the Palestinian Liberation Organization, the institutions that were established through the Oslo Accords in the 1990s, and that's kind of the macro setting within which all of my analysis of local government is situated. And the kind of historical argument that I make qualitatively in that in that part of the book is that, you know, these institutions, where by Palestinians were given kind of a partial and highly restricted form of self-rule in the form of the Palestinian Authority, in the 1990s, they were largely shaped and determined disproportionately by Israel's interests in the occupied West Bank and Gaza. And Israel's objectives for those territories, and in particular for the West Bank since 1967, were to control territory, to rule territory without politically absorbing the Palestinian population that lived there, right. And so there were constant kind of iterations, really from 1967, when Israel gained control of the West Bank and Gaza in the six-day war. From that point forward, there were constant iterations with how to ensure continued kind of Israeli control over that territory or at the very least, how to refrain from ceding any of that territory to a Palestinian sovereign? While, maintaining some kind of basic forms of governance for the Palestinians that lived there. But basically trying to outsource that as much as possible. Israel never, from governments on the left to governments on the right, never really had any intention or desire to be governing Palestinians itself right to be providing local services, to be taxing them, to be policing their cities and towns. This was not a role that Israel ever wanted to play. And so what we end up with, I argue in the 1990s with the Oslo Accords and the creation of this, really quite large, sprawling institutional structure known as the Palestinian Authority. What that came out of were kind of these earlier experiments, you know, outsourcing power to mayors or to municipalities and basically saying, you know, we're going to be the major Israel saying we're going to be the major, kind of wielders of force. We're going to continue to militarily control this territory and govern the lives of the residents within it, but you're responsible for kind of providing electricity and sweeping the streets and making sure that you know that there's basic services for the population. What we get in the 1990s looks really different, and it's basically the creation of this, as I said, really quite massive institutional structure known as the Palestinian Authority, which at its core from, you know, Israel's perspective and ultimately in terms, I argue, of how the Palestinians see these institutions and view these institutions at its core it's really about maintaining the security of Israel's Jewish residents and settlements, maintaining basic law and order within Palestinian towns and cities. And thus the emphasis is really on policing. And so the creation of a massive new central infrastructure with the aim of kind of policing in sort of an inward facing way, policing Palestinians within their isolated towns and cities throughout the West Bank. Some of this ties into as well the geographic delineations of authority, right, the Palestinian Authority is under the Oslo Accords, only allowed to really police and govern in kind of these small islands of Palestinian population centers throughout the West Bank, while the rest of the West Bank is under unmediated Israeli military.

So you talk about policing and one of the things that's really striking is when you also talk about the expansion of the police force, under the Palestinian Authority, right, that it gives to 10s of thousands of policemen. But you also talk a little bit about extraction. So you have sort of three components. We have a policing component which you make the cases extremely important in terms of securing Israeli citizens within the West Bank. You have an extraction component which, if I understand you correctly, is less important, although it's still a component. And then you have the service delivery provision of water and other things which it almost seems like that's not a necessarily a goal of the dominant state of Israel, but it's more a function that's the municipalities are allowed to carry out that mayors can do. I just want to make sure that I understand that correctly and to get you to talk a little bit about how you see this balance of policing and extraction?

Yeah, yeah. And so, you're right, Ellen, that basically the argument about how Israel approaches governance in the West Bank, first of all, the framework I'm using is one of indirect rule. And the idea of indirect rule throughout, you know, other social science scholarship is basically when a dominant power, a state, perhaps a colonial power or an occupying authority, seeks to govern a territory, but basically either doesn't want to or cannot, except at great cost. You know, govern subset of the population within that territory, so it outsources or delegates some form of governance to an indigenous or a local kind of said intermediaries'. And so the argument I'm making is basically there are kind of three tiers of governance here. There's Israel as the dominant state or power, the occupying power in the West Bank. Then there's this kind of centralized Palestinian Authority intermediary, to which Israel has effectively delegated certain forms of governance. As you noted, you know I'm arguing that the primary form of governance that Israel has delegated to the PA, which is governed by Fatah, which is the kind of one party that has dominated the Palestinian Authority since its creation, the main form of governance that Israel has delegated to the PA, is policing. And essentially internal policing. So as I mentioned, you know, policing of Palestinians, right, this is not coercion in the form of external projection of military force or anything like that. It's internal policing. And they really emphasized that a lot more in this kind of indirect world relationship, than they have emphasized other forms of extraction. Like fiscal extraction like taxation. And this is something that has to do with Israel's goals and then territory, I argue, which ultimately are extractive, of course, and they're mainly extractive of land, right, and they're sort of main goal in the West Bank, Israel's main goal is to control and expand control over the territory itself and over land. But this is not something it outsources to its indigenous intermediary. Instead, it does that itself. Right, but what it needs the Palestinian Authority to do is to maintain, as I sense kind of quote on quote law and order or in less charitable terms, you know, to repress, politically repress in many cases Palestinian populations. And so this is one form of interact rule, you know, I talked about other examples and I sort of extend some of the insights at the very end of the book to the cases of India under the period of the British Empire and the case of South Africa under apartheid, there are cases where the dominant power or the colonial power, for example, let's say the British and India were much more interested in outsourcing or delegating taxation and extraction because that was kind of one of their main goals in controlling in South Asia, right? So of course, that comes with coercion as well, right? Like coercion and extraction are intimately related, but in the case of Israel's approach to delegation in West Bank, it's really policing,

and coercion is emphasized, and the ultimate goal of fiscal extraction is really with the ultimate goal of allowing Israel to continue to assert its domination over the territory. So that's kind of the first level of the relationship between Israel and this central Palestinian Authority. Now the next level that I really empirically focus on in the book, is what that does to local government, right. And that's the level between the Central Palestinian Authority, its reputation, its identity among Palestinian constituents, and what that does to mayors and local governments that are trying to function under this system. Right. And I make an argument that basically the way mayors and municipalities approach local governance, depends very much on whether they are seen as affiliated with Fatah, essentially with that Palestinian intermediary within Israel's regime, or on the other hand, whether they're seen as really challenging the intermediaries seen as opponents or challengers. And those opponents and challengers include groups like Hamas. They also include independents. They include smaller parties, in the Palestinian political spectrum, and I sort of, in some places, kind of group all of those opponents together, in some cases by analyze them separately. But really, whether you're seeing as kind of the local level affiliated with indirect rural regime through affiliation with Fatah, or whether you're seen as its opponents, is going to shake your government strategies.

I want you to say a little bit more about how it shapes governance strategies. I also want to highlight that you're basing the analysis on some really interesting budget information in terms of what municipalities do. A lot of interviews. I mean, it's a very, again, a very rich analysis that that underlies the kind of messages that you're giving us today. And so when we were looking at the Fatah or what we think of as the indigenous intermediary, you make the case what they really sort of lose is reputation, right? That there's a reputational cost to being close to or being seen as a handmaiden, and if you want to be uncharitable about it, of the Israelis. And that that then affects how they police, but also it affects how they grant services and do other things. Can you say a little bit more about that?

Yeah, that's right. So basically the analysis is based on the local level quantitative data on local governments budgeting. You know, how much revenue they're raising, what forms of revenue they're collecting, and how much they're spending, what sorts of goods and services they're spending on. Also, local level data on variation in that second level or second tier of the framework, which is the police and control of the Palestinian Authority. How that variation shapes these local governments as well. And then finally, as you mentioned, a number of interviews that I did over several field visits to the West Bank. With mayors, municipal council members, municipal staff, some constituents, and other kind of political analysts and such. So essentially the argument that you've hinted at is exactly right Ellen, so the approach towards local government, if you're a mayor, or municipal council affiliated with Fatah, affiliated with this kind of central ruling party in the PA, you have certain advantages and certain disadvantages. And the advantage is primarily resource based, so I find for example that Fatah affiliated governments are more likely to spend on popular public goods such as electricity and water provision, when compared to their opposition counterparts. And they're also more able to do so from deficit based spending, so they actually exploit or seem more able to take advantage of this kind of soft budget constraint, to not balance their budgets and I attribute that in some ways to their resource advantages, probably perhaps to some form of

political favor to some that they're benefiting from, and they're able to do that to kind of shore up their popularity and their role at the local level. But Despite that, resource kind of advantage that they have over the opposition parties, they do have this reputational deficit. I argue that is essentially my explanation or my theory for why they, to borrow a term from the scholar Alicia Holland's work, why they forebear from, or why they refrain from doing certain other unpopular tasks like collecting revenue and collecting local taxes. And I argue that that's mainly because of this kind of legitimacy problem or reputation problem that they have with the Palestinian public. Namely because Fatah is so implicated as a political party in the Israeli occupation regime, because they are so centrally a part of this indirect rule regime over Palestinians. And not emphasize is really policing and coercion. Well, then at the local level, these kind of thoughtful affiliated mayors and local governments are going to do what they can to balance that, right. They're going to try to extract less from their constituents. They're going to try to forebear from or refrain from carrying out these other kind of politically sensitive tasks of local government. So as a result, they kind of tax less, they spend more. And they sort of used those, those endowments, in terms of their, their resource endowments, to balance against those reputational deficits that they have. The opposition parties, on the other hand, and again, these are sometimes formal, you know, political parties. I, I can say a little bit more about the complications of trying to label mayors and local governments, as either intermediaries affiliated with Fatah or quote on quote opposition. There's a lot of nuance there, and there's a lot of complexity. But if we're to take the larger group of non-mayors which include. As I said, those affiliate with parties such as Hamas or the PFLP or independents, we're going to take them all together, these opponents tend to have kind of the opposite problem. Where they have not sort of an advantage in terms of access to resources. They don't appear as likely to be able to exploit soft budget constraints to deficit spend on goods, for example, they seem to have more challenges in, as I said, generating enough revenue for their spending. So they have this kind of resource deficit. But on the other hand that they have this reputational advantage in the sense that they are not affiliated with, they're not tied to this indirect control regime. They're not tied to Fatah, and so that in turn shapes what they do. They really emphasize revenue mobilization much more at the local level. They emphasize trying to achieve cost savings where possible because of the resource deficits. So, this might be, you know, I interviewed Hamas mayors, for example, or opposition mayors who spoke about leveraging, you know, voluntary contributions from members of the town, whether that be voluntary labor, or whether that be constituents connecting them to donors in the diaspora who can help support and fund local projects. They use kind of refurbished equipment and try to be creative about cutting costs. And they try to, you know, it appears from the data that I had, they really force revenue collection a bit more stringently than Fatah does. And this sort of shapes their approach to governance and I argue that basically it's sort of the mirror image of what Fatah is doing.

So I think your point about, you know, not seeing this as a State Building project, especially not intentionally as a State Building project from Israel's side, is well taken. But one of the things that strikes me when I listen to the differentiation between the opposition mayors and the Fatah mayors, is the extent to which it feels like the opposition ones are actually engaged a bit more in what we would think of as State Building. Would you see that as accurate or do you think that that even there we don't really see kind of the rudimentary elements of State Building taking place?

I think that's a really interesting question. I think a lot of my movement on understanding these issues over the years has also been influenced by the research on things like rebel governance. Other forms of governance that we don't, as political scientists, probably shouldn't assume are going to progress or to theologically lead into like a state, and I certainly think if we're talking about the occupied West Bank when we're talking about some of these opposition groups, they have essentially zero formal political power. So in some cases, I mean, what I'm looking at, and I should specify the period of time that I'm looking at in kind of the quantitative analysis of the budgets and everything, that part of the book is kind of a unique period of time where these opposition candidates were able to compete for and win office at the local level. That characterized a window of time from roughly 2005 when these local elections concluded up until 2012 or 2013. Then Fatah reasserted authority over many of these local councils, and we sort of returned to a much more autocratic one-party dominant system within the localities. It's a little bit more complicated these many of these opposition politicians still do have presence and institutional inroads within within Palestinian government. But to call it state, building is tough just because they are so, you know, pretty thoroughly repressed at this point. And furthermore, have basically no ability to develop one of those key capacities to our definition of the state, which is coercive capacity, right. So this is very centrally a part of the story, which is that, both Israel and its so-called intermediary the Fatah controlled PA, and in particular the Fatah controlled security services in the West Bank, are united in their desire to repress the political rivals to Fatah, who happen to also be the most strident opponents of the Israeli occupation. So these groups are, they're doing something at the local level, they're certainly developing as I argue in the book, you know, developing reputations for local governance. Developing connections with their constituencies, distinguishing themselves from Fatah in important ways. And as I said, even though many of them are no longer in office today, they're still taking on active roles in their communities some of them, you know, they became mayors, but then they went back to their work and they might be teachers or they might be preachers in the local mosques, or they might be local business figures. I would argue that none of those, even if we were to call them State Building, you know, State Building efforts, they didn't just kind of disappear, completely fizzle out, they're still embodied in a lot of the reputations and relationships that were built during these mayors times in office, but I guess this question about State Building also really taps into kind of the question about the future of the West Bank, right, and what the institutional configuration of authorities is going to look like and that's, you know, very much an open, and in some sense, very troubling question.

Actually, I wanted to go there next, actually, when you were talking about the difference between 2005 and 2012, of course we can think about that as the period of time when there were more opportunities. 2012 and post where the Fatah has reasserted authority. And of course now where, if ever there was a time that the kind of legitimacy and the and the reputational costs of being in alignment with Israel is high, this is a time where we're seeing that. And while attention is largely being placed on Gaza for obvious reasons, there's also a lot that's going on within the West Bank at the moment, so I'd like to hear your thoughts about not only what the future might look like, but what the present looks like and how does your work help inform our understanding of the current levels of conflict and the current issues with the West Bank?

Yeah, yeah, sure. I think you're right that obviously, for very good reason, much of the public focus right now on international attention is on what's going on in Gaza and what's been happening since October 7th. But the West Bank, really over the past, I would say, two to three years, has been experiencing a pretty slow-moving collapse, for lack of a better word, political crisis. I mean, obviously it goes back much, much, much further than two to three years. But there have been kind of a series of developments that I think anyone who's been watching Palestinian politics and watching politics in the West Bank has been expressing, like increasing using alarm. And part of that has been the, you know, inauguration of this very, very far right, very annexationist government in Israel, which includes members within the government who, of course outwardly seek to fully annex the territory of the West Bank and are unabashed supporters of ethnic cleansing, or of essentially giving Palestinians three options. Either you submit to Israeli rule and to second class status not being full citizens under this the Israeli sovereignty, or you leave the territory. Or if you fight or resist, we will, we'll fight back, right? And so this is kind of the program that's some of the most radical right wing religious Zionists that are part of the Israeli government, have been very open about pursuing. What that means is there's different versions of right-wing ideology within this government represented. And there's some disagreement within the Israeli Government about things like, well, what is the role of the Palestinian Authority in this picture? Should Israel continue to collaborate with the Palestinian Authority under Fatah rule? Should the Palestinian Authority continue to exist at all? And you know, there are vocal and powerful elements within the Israeli Government that don't think it should exist, like the religious Zionist Party that I just mentioned. And its leader, Betzalel Smotrich, is an adamant opponent of the Palestinian Authority and thinks that essentially Israel should reassert direct, unmediated military rule over the some 3,000,000 Palestinians living in the West Bank. So as part of that, really kind of, almost apocalyptic vision, there's this assumption that, once again, in some ways Israel can return to the strategy that it used from 1967 up until the 1990s, before the PA was created, of disenfranchising Palestinians, continuing to withhold political rights, and citizenship, and representation from them. But, nonetheless, allowing them to form their own like local governments, right, and to continue to provide those services sweep the streets and provide some modicum of law and order, etcetera at the local level. And that that's just the largest form of Palestinian self-determination that can be permitted under Israeli rule. Is the local, right. And so there's this return to this idea that, well, we can kind of Co-opt or control or, in some sense, supervise these Palestinian municipalities or village councils under unmediated occupation. Now as you mentioned, I mean this is a vision that's, it was already articulated by Modrich by others before October 7th. But now we're in this world where the onslaught in Gaza, the, the, the continual atrocities that are being carried out there in response to the horrific attacks on October 7th, are totally undermining any sort of role for Palestinian political actors who would collaborate with or Co-govern in some sense with the Israeli occupation at this point. So, there's more kind of public opinion polling being done now. This is not really my area of expertise at this point, but you know, been sort of loosely following like in the West Bank, there's still pretty high levels of support for Hamas, even you know at this point very low levels of support for Fatah that have been a consistent trend over the past, many years. And so it's hard to imagine what is going to come next in the West and or never mind in Gaza. But the idea that the occupation can essentially continue. You know, in an updated form and there can be some form of Palestinian governance

underneath that subservient to that, that is in kind of a collaborationist role with Israel seems extremely unlikely to be any kind of like stable arrangement that would work.

No, I agree, and it's interesting because you start the book when you're talking about the pre-Oslo period, when you talk about mayors and their roles. It's hard to even imagine that it would be possible to return to that type of an arrangement given the recent experience and also given the kind of the longer-term experience with Fatah and the frustrations with the PA, right. So it's not just a return to the 60s, it's actually, I think what you're alluding to, it's a whole new world, right, so.

Yeah. And that period, really, it was kind of the 80s, I started talking provide some of the opening anecdotes for the book, I think it really demonstrated that even then, Israel felt compelled to allow some form of elections at the local level. And you ended up in 1976, and then into the early 80s you had this window of time where you had these unabashed Palestinian national elected as mayors who were outspoken about their unwillingness to collaborate and to work in cooperation with Israeli authorities. And they really became a thorn in the side of the Israeli military because of that and because of their ability to mobilize constituents and their popularity. And ultimately, three of them were targeted with car bomb attacks by the Jewish Underground and including Missamma Shaka, who's the one I opened the book talking about. And then ultimately, there are these mayors are deposed by Israel and they're replaced with appointed leaders by the military. And so I think the lessons though of that time are that basically, the local for Palestinians is the national and it always will be, right. And I sort of titled the piece that recently, but it cannot be divorced from the kind of ongoing struggle for national sovereignty, for self-determination, for liberation. And so, any kind of reconfiguration of Israeli occupation without a process, without a set of institutions through which Palestinians can achieve sovereignty or self-determination or liberation, it's just going to allow those kind of political currents to percolate. And so we see that happening in different forms over different periods of time for the past at least 56 plus years since 1967, and arguably, further back than that. We see that, you know, local government is going to be a set of institutions to contain or restrain Palestinian national aspirations.

So I want to end by just thinking a little bit about what you would recommend, or what types of the policy implications that come out of your work, or ways in which, if you want to shore up the rights of individuals, whether we're talking about Palestinians or Israelis, what are the implications of your work for thinking about policy?

I guess that depends who we're directing the recommendations towards. I mean, there's Israel, there's the Palestinian leadership, there's the US, etc. I try to refrain from making kind of really specific policy recommendations with this work, but I think one of the main implications of my research is that regimes of domination, as I described in the book, so regimes that are that are based on some form of ethnic or ethno-religious or racial domination, such as, I would argue, the occupation of West Bank has been since 67, I think

that they are, I do think there's an inherent instability to them. And I think, unfortunately, some of the scariest and most troublesome ultimate trajectories for these regimes include things like ethnic cleansing, include things like genocide, terms that I think many people are using right now as they're watching events unfold in Gaza. And I won't dive in personally into which of those terms are appropriate or not. But I think that, these are outcomes we should all seek to avoid, right? And I think we're all on the same page that we don't want to see ethnic cleansing at a mass scale. We don't want to see genocide. We don't want to see that be the ultimate outcome of this, this kind of 56 year-long experiment in occupation. Right. So there has to be a really fundamental trasformation in political rights and empowerment and franchisement of the 5 million plus Palestinians that have been living under this regime since 1967 in the West Bank and Gaza. And indirect rule ultimately is still part and parcel of a strategy of nomination because it is outsourcing authority, delegating authority to indigenous actors with the goal of sustaining or buttressing the existing regime or state. And so I elsewhere have written that basically what needs to change in in Israel and Palestine, there's a lot of attention on the one state solution versus the two-state solution, or the one state reality versus the two-state solution. And I think personally and have agnostic about how many states there are, it's more about the regime, right. It's about the rules of the game. It's about the institutions that determine who has access to political power rights, who has access to water, who has access to housing, who has access to agricultural fram land, who has access to courts of justice, right? All of those are the rules, the institutions that shape life for Palestinians. And so I think my approach would be to start to change those first and see how many states you get at the end of that, right. Not to be caught up in this talk of where the borders are going to be and how you're gonna evacuate settlements and all of these questions, but undo the regime of domination first.

Yeah, basically start with the fundamental rights. Thank you. This has been both a fascinating discussion and as I said, it's a wonderful book. So congratulations and thanks for joining us.

Thank you so much. It's my pleasure.

Thank you for listening to Governance Uncovered! You can find more information about Diana and her work in the description below. If you liked this episode, then please give it a thumbs up and share it with your networks. Bassam Shaka'a, who's the one I opened the book talking about. And then ultimately, there are these mayors are deposed by Israel and they're replaced with appointed leaders by the military. And so I think the lessons though of that time are that basically, the local for Palestinians is the national and it always will be, right. And I sort of titled the piece that recently, but it cannot be divorced from the kind of ongoing struggle for national sovereignty, for self-determination, for liberation. And so, any kind of reconfiguration of Israeli occupation without a process, without a set of institutions through which Palestinians can achieve sovereignty or self-determination or liberation, it's just going to allow those kind of political currents to percolate. And so we see that happening in different forms over different periods of time for the past at least 56 plus years since 1967,

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