Priorities of Israel's National Unity Government: A Discussion with Ambassador Danny Danon

TRANSCRIPT

Discussion

• Danny Danon, Israeli Ambassador to the United States
• Michael Doran, Senior Fellow, Hudson Institute

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Michael Doran:

Good afternoon everyone. My name is Mike Doran and I'm a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, broadcasting to you live from a secure undisclosed location in Washington DC and we are honored here today to be hosting a conversation with Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, Danny Danon. The ambassador is not a career diplomat. He has a history, his background is in Israeli politics. He was a member of the Knesset for six years from 2009 to '15. After that, he served as the Deputy Minister of Defense from 2013 to '14. And then after that he was the Minister of Science, Technology, and Space in the Israeli government. And then after he finished that, he was appointed to the United Nations, despite not having a background as a diplomat or perhaps because he doesn't have a background as a diplomat. He's had what I think everyone considers to be an enormously successful tenure at the United Nations.

He has brought a new spirit of positive interaction between Israel and the United Nations. We'll look forward to discussing that with him and how he managed that, where he sees Israel's relations with the United Nations going in the future. But before that, of course we want to discuss with him the Coronavirus and how that's affecting Israel and also many of the other major issues in Israeli foreign policy.

Before I get into the conversation with Ambassador Danon, let me please ask you to send questions to us. You can send them either to events@hudson.org or you can tweet Hudson Institute. Again, you can email them to events@hudson.org or you can tweet them to @HudsonInstitute. Well, Ambassador Danon. Hello. Thank you for coming.

Ambassador Danny Danon:

Hi. Good afternoon Mike. I wish I would be able to speak to you in person and the rest of the audience. Hopefully, in a few months, we'll be able to meet again in New York and have another conversation in person.

Michael Doran:

Yeah, I look forward to that. Why don't we start with this Coronavirus question. Perhaps you could just give us a bit of an overview of how you think Israel is doing. You know, Israel was, I think, certainly in comparison to other European countries and the United States, it was one of the first to see the severity of it and to begin to take actions of social distancing, closing down international travel, and so forth. Perhaps you could just give us an overview of how things are going and why it was that Israel was so quick to see this.

Ambassador Danny Danon:

Well, Mike, like everybody else, we are coping with the Coronavirus. We were one of the first one to realize the threat. We closed the borders. We stopped flights from China’s airports. When we look at the numbers today, we do have it under control, but we have a problem. We have more than 8,000 cases. We have more than 50 people dead, unfortunately. It's manageable and we make sure it will stay that way. That's why the prime minister decided tonight, in the next few days, there will be full closure on the cities. You will not be able to move from a city to a city. You know, in a few days we're going to celebrate Passover. We did a huge holiday in Israel. Everybody's traveling, meeting family and friends. So it will not be the case this year. This year, we will have to celebrate the holiday in our house without visiting our parents or grandparents.
So it will not be a recommendation anymore. It will be strict guidelines, strict regulation and the police will be out there to enforce it. So it's a new reality in Israel. I never remember such times. The last time I recall such measures that we're taking in Israel, it was in the nineties. I was back then in officers called in the IDF and the rockets flying from Iraq due to the Gulf War into Tel Aviv. And I remember that we had to run and put the gas masks, but this time it's not only Israel. It's all over the world and it's not a few weeks. I think it's longer. It will be longer. We are dealing with it.

The prime minister is leading the fight against the Coronavirus and we have some difficulties. And I will mention two issues. One, who's in charge? The Minister of Defense or the Minister of Health? That's a very important question because the professionals are in the Ministry of Health.

But when you speak about capabilities of mobilizing forces, sending food to people, restrictions enforced, we need the Minister of Defense. And today, you see a lot of arguments between the ministries. I'm not in the cabinet today. If I were the cabinet member, I would recommend to the prime minister to give all the authority to the Minister of Defense. They are the one who are capable of handling it the right way. Yes, we should listen to the professionals from the Minister of Health, but you need like one guy to be in charge and run the show. It's a complicated situation. The second issue that we saw in the last few days, that in some sectors in our society where people didn't follow the guidelines completely, we have problems. Mainly, the Orthodox Jews and the Arab Israelis. Those are the poorest sectors in our society.

They're not connected to the media like the rest and it took them a while to understand the threat, the danger of the virus. And unfortunately today, we see more cases among those populations and today we put more effort and energy to make sure they will follow the guidelines. But I'm optimistic. I think that in the next few we will see the numbers continuing to improve. And hopefully, after the Passover we can start to think about how is the closure, maybe allow the younger population to start to go back to work. We are negotiating with the trade unions. We are talking about it. I hope we can come up with news in two or three weeks, but it is like it is in the US, it's a global threat. You know, we speak a lot about the Iran. We speak a lot about the North Korea, about terrorism. I don't think we were ready for such a pandemic, and then in the entire Western societies.

Michael Doran:

You know, it's interesting to hear your recommendation to put this in the hands of the military. I've been following the Israeli response pretty closely. I've also been following the British response very close. And asking myself is there anything that the United States can learn, but one of the things that you see quickly is that when you compare Israel to the United States, is that there are solutions or procedures that the Israelis can contemplate, almost naturally contemplate, which I think would be unacceptable in an American context. One is that the app that people have now, which will track them through their cell phone and tell them if they've come into contact with anyone who's had the virus. I think in an American context, this would be a political non-starter, but also the idea of just putting the military in charge.

What you say from a logical point of view, it makes sense that the military has the capabilities to manage a large campaign like this. But in America, that would never be possible. But also there's another question. Forget about the comparison to the United States and Israel. I
wondered if it's wise to put in charge of this people who are not also thinking about the economy. I mean, wouldn't you want over the military, at least a committee of the prime minister and a few other key ministries that can think about the larger ramifications, not just the operational concerns?

Ambassador Danny Danon:

But Mike, when I spoke about the military, I didn't mean that the military would make the decisions, the military should implement the decisions. Right now, we want to buy food for the population and not allow them to go to the supermarkets. The military could handle all of that. But the decisions should be taking in the government, in the cabinet. And over there, they have to think about our economy. When you look at the numbers, think unemployment for example. Initially. before the crisis, the unemployment was about 3% to 4%, which is a marginal. Today, we are talking about 25% and it's growing. So that would be the challenge and we have to take that into consideration. I think at the beginning, we were afraid about the outcomes. Today, we're in a better situation. And we spoke about the military, but we mobilize other agencies. Even the Mossad. We all hear about the Mossad activity in Iran, bringing the archives to Tel Aviv. We are very proud of the activities today. Actually, we mobilize the Mossad to purchase medical supplies for Israel. And by the way, they're doing an amazing job.

And we see that we are better prepared. So I think today we feel in a better situation than two weeks before, but we have to think about the economy. That would be the next challenge for all the democracies. And then we have to understand you have a difference between democracies, the way they handle the crisis, and the regimes like in China, in Iran. Although they don't share the information with everybody, they never invite experts to come in and to share the knowledge. And I think also with the day after, they do care about their economies. But they don't really care about the suffering of the people. We care about the GDP. We care about the wellbeing of our civilians. That's the difference between a democracy and the regimes that we discussed.

Michael Doran:

Do you have any thoughts as to why the Israelis were so quick to see this threat? I think that you were on top of it. You were talking about total, if I recall correctly, you were talking about lockdown and social distancing, stopping flights even before the Italian crisis that was ... I think when I was watching the British, it was the Italian crisis that really woke the British up. But I think you guys were already there. Is there a reason for that?

Ambassador Danny Danon:

I think there are two main reasons. First of all, unfortunately we're used to it. Every few months we have rockets flying from Gaza into the cities in Israel. So we are used to state of emergency, to come together and to stop the economy for a short while and to move on. The second reason, we are a very small country, so we have one airport, international airport in Ben Gurion. So when you want to control the flights, it's very easily done. So it's not like the United States. How you operate is much more complicated. I think also the decision was the right decision of Prime Minister Netanyahu that despite the diplomatic issue ... I'm at the UN. It is not pleasant for me to explain to my colleagues why we are banning flights down to Israel. But we did it. We did it and I think today people recognize that it was the right decision.
Michael Doran:
Right. I know actually when ... people were mystified when you first banned the flights. They were asking how come they're going so crazy, but then just two weeks later we were in the same position. I wonder if we could move now to a discussion of Israeli politics. This has been an amazing year of three elections. It looks like now there's a unity government, but we're not quite there yet. I don't know. I didn't check the news just before we started to see if there's been a breakthrough, but could you just give us an update of about where this government, the negotiations over a unity government, stands?

Ambassador Danny Danon:
For us we can all agree it is about time that we will have a government. After with three cycles and now when we have the pandemic, we have to come together and I think the Israelis, they expect to still leadership nowadays. So I'm happy to hear that the Prime Minister Netanyahu and then Mr. Benny Gantz are very close to signing an agreement this morning. They were actually saying it's going to happen tonight. But unfortunately, there are some more issues to be discussed. I hope they will be able to be clear. I don't think they can vote on the new government before the holiday of Passover this coming Wednesday. But they can be clear that they agree on all the issues, that they will form the government right after the holiday. It will be a unity government.

Ambassador Danny Danon:
Some of us remember ... I do remember, even though I was very young, but I was involved in politics since I was five years old.

I remember the rotation between Prime Minister Shamir and Prime Minister Shimon Peres, and that you know what? It worked the people were skeptical about it but it worked. Shamir served for two years and Shimon Peres served for two years. Today people are more suspicious. So Benny Gantz agreed that Netanyahu would be the first one to serve for 18 months, from April of 2020 to September 2021. But he wants guarantees that actually the transition will take place.

So what will happen, we will have a special legislation that will say clearly that the day Prime Minister Netanyahu is sworn into office, Mr. Benny Gantz sworn into office as well to become the prime minister in September 2021. So we have to file new legislation to pass it in the Knesset. It also takes time to do all those things, and that will be the guarantee for Mr. Benny Gantz that he will actually take the position in 18 months.

I think mostly Israelis are happy about the idea of having a unity government, especially today. We don't have the time and the energy to continue with the fight, to go for another round elections. You know what? Maybe after we deal with the virus, everything will be okay. The economy will be great again. Then we can go back and argue about the regular issues we argue about.

Michael Doran:
Now, correct me if I'm wrong, but there doesn't seem to be a large disagreement between Prime Minister Netanyahu and Benny Gantz over how to fight the coronavirus. If I understand from the press that the differences between them, the major differences are about the justice ministry
and about the annexation of the Jordan Valley, and they're not really fighting about the coronavirus. Is that right? Or can we expect the unity government to take a different position on the coronavirus than what the current government is taking?

**Ambassador Danny Danon:**

I think once you will see the government in action, it will be more of a teamwork. Today the prime minister is leading the fight almost by himself. I think once that Mr. Gantz and his team will join, it would have to be more ... You have a special cabinet in the government that will deal with the coronavirus. So it will be more of a teamwork, which is good. You know, I was deputy minister of defense. In times of crisis, you want to hear a different opinions. I respect all the experts, but following what's happening here in the US and in Israel, you don't want to listen to one expert. You want to have a conversation. You want to listen to a variety of ideas, and at the end of the day, you want to get the right decision.

**Michael Doran:**

So will you expect that once we have the unity government and the main rationale for it is the coronavirus crisis, do you imagine it to have, to take any interesting initiatives outside of the fight for the coronavirus? For example, are you expecting that we will see annexation of the Jordan Valley or of other parts of the West Bank within the context of the deal of the century?

**Ambassador Danny Danon:**

So in the first few months of the government, they will have to. That's what they are being expected to do is to deal with the coronavirus and the implementation and communication of our economy. So that what they will do first. But after that, I do think they will go to deal with other issues. One of the problems in the negotiations was the issue of annexation, whether Prime Minister Netanyahu will be able to move forward or not. From what I heard, they came up to an agreement, but you will be able to continue with that after consultation with the US and with Mr. Benny Gantz.

So it's only a consultation. He doesn't need the approval of a blue or white Benny Gantz party, but they will need to consult with them. But I think more importantly, Prime Minister Netanyahu said that he will work with the US administration and he will do it with administration. So I think also today in the US, people are dealing with the peace plan. People are dealing with the virus. It will take some time, and hopefully in the summer, we can go back and deal with other issues.

**Michael Doran:**

What about the struggle with Iran? I mean, everyone in the region is having to struggle with coronavirus. It seems to have calmed down or at least frozen some of the conflict for the moment. But I don't expect that to last. Do you expect that Gantz and Netanyahu will have a common picture, with regard to Iran and be able to take initiatives on that front?

**Ambassador Danny Danon:**

Well, we have to remember that Mr. Gantz was the chief of staff of the military when I was the minister of defense. He's aware. He saw the materials. He's aware of the intention of the Iranians, and I think they will be able to work together on this issue. It's interesting you
mentioned Iran because as we speak, I'm dealing with Iran at the UN. The UN is still in session, right? We do not meet, but we have the security council debates. We have actually voted in the general assembly.

We do everything remotely and usually Iran is a major issue because first of all, I think that they are lying about the numbers in Iran. You know, we know it's not true. We know the situation there is not great to say the least, and they are trying to lift the sanction. We have heard they're speaking about it and Israel's position that we support humanitarian aid to the Iranian people. We do not support lifting the sanctions.

Now only two days ago in Russia, they tried to pass a resolution under a silent procedure in the general assembly, which called to lift sanctions on the Iranian regime. The US opposed to it, and other countries opposed to it and it didn't pass. I think it's important because we have to make that distinction between the humanitarian support, sending medical supply, making sure it will get to the people. But if we lift the sanctions they will continue with enriching uranium, with ballistic missile tests, and with sponsoring terrorism.

By the way, they're doing it as we speak. Despite the corona crisis, they are sending funds to Hezbollah, and that will continue with the supporting their proxies in the region. So that will be our position. You know from the US, we have different positions about the issue of the sanctions. We have to remember that also in the fall. In the security council, you have an issue of the sanctions on arms, on the weapons, that's different, and our position that we will have to renew those sanctions also.

Michael Doran:

Right. What about the effect of the coronavirus on the United Nations? You mentioned that the work is still going on there. Have the measures in New York and globally to fight the coronavirus had a big impact on the way the UN is functioning?

Ambassador Danny Danon:

I think we all come together. It's natural. Today we put our disagreements aside, and we come together. Even when I look at Israel with the Palestinians, they will provide humanitarian aid to the Palestinians. We trained them how to deal with the coronavirus. It is our interest they will be able to overcome the crisis in the Palestinian authority. But unfortunately, the Palestinians, they choose to continue with the fights. So last week, when we had a debate in the security council, the council put out a press statement, praising Israel and the PA for collaborating on this issue. And a day later, the PA representative sent a letter and he blamed Israel. And Mike, it's a ridiculous letter. He blamed us for spreading the virus. It's pure anti-Semitism. And the thing is why they cannot wait for a week, for a month? Let's work together, let's find the virus, and then they can continue with allegations. But today in the UN, people do not listen to those allegations. People care more about what we can do to help others. And we have to pay attention to developing countries, Michael. We speak about Spain, Italy, the U.S., the UK. Why we don't speak about Africa, about developing countries in Asia? And by the way, they don't have the technology, they don't have the medical services to deal with the virus, and we have to make sure that the strong countries, after we've dealt with our problems, we have to reach out to support them and to make sure we don't have to deal with the virus in Africa in the next five or 10 years.
Michael Doran:

It's a fascinating aspect of this virus that, on one level, it makes you more aware of the things that you share with people beyond your borders and even within your own society. I mean, I find myself, when I see people just collecting my trash, making deliveries, and so on, I find myself thankful that these people are out there doing these jobs in a way that I wouldn't be thankful in other circumstances. But at the same time, it also encourages you to look just after your family, just after your country, to close borders, it's working on us in opposite directions at the same time. Do you think that there'll be, at the UN level and in an international diplomacy more broadly, do you think that there are going to be lasting implications from this crisis? Do you have any thoughts about what they might be? Or do you think that once its passed, we'll just return to work as normal?

Ambassador Danny Danon:

Well, I think we will have to learn the lesson. So I think our instinct is to close the borders, to take care of our families, of our nation, and not to collaborate, but then after a while that doesn't work. If you don't deal with the virus with your neighbors, you will have the problem in a few weeks coming back to your cities.

The next day assumption that we have to understand is we have to fight those epidemics globally. And I spoke a little bit about it before ... I sat in the security council, and we had hundreds of discussions about Iran and North Korea. I don't really remember a discussion about pandemic. I think we have to put more time, more energy ... Take for example, the WHO, nobody paid attention to what actually happens there in terms of corruption, in terms of the organizational behavior. And I think today people will pay attention. Who is running the organization? Who is being elected? Where the fund is being used or not? So I think we will see some change in the UN, and people will understand that we have to deal with those issues globally. You cannot protect your borders completely. People will continue to fly. You're going to have to build our economies, so import and export will be part of that. So I think very fast people will go back to fly, go back to import and export, but at the same time I expect some of the world leaders to build the better mechanism to deal with the future crisis.

Michael Doran:

What about China and the crisis? See I have a question already coming in from the audience. I still have a couple more questions I want to ask you, but we have an audience question here about whether this is going to harm the reputation of the Chinese or is it going to present opportunities for them to exploit?

Ambassador Danny Danon:

So I think people today criticize China for not sharing the information on time and not allowing the experts to come in. And that's what we should expect from anyone you work with, that if you had a problem, if you had a red flag, you will say, "Listen, I invite your experts to come and help me with that." They didn't do it. I don't know if they will do it in the future. It's a different mentality. You will think that it's very hard to change the way they run businesses. But that's a thing we can demand. I think we can demand, not only from China, from other countries. But they are not democracies, they don't have accountability to the people, they don't have proper
elections, but we can demand from them to have specific guidelines or procedures to handle future epidemics, because otherwise it's only a matter of time until we will sit down and discuss ... I don't know what would be the name of the virus, but something else will be there.

Michael Doran:

I'll move in one second to some more audience questions, but let me ask you about this issue that I flagged at the beginning, when I was introducing you. You were, I think, universally recognized for having brought a new spirit in relations between Israel and the UN, how do you account for that? Is that just because of your own attitudes or has the world changed? And maybe you could give us a sense of how things have changed between Israel and the UN since you've been there?

Ambassador Danny Danon:

So I'm very optimistic about our standing at the UN. I think it's a combination. First, my approach was a different approach. As you mentioned, I'm not a career diplomat. I was in government for many years. And the approach was we can do a lot. We can build relationships, and that's what we did at the UN. I brought, to Israel, more than 100 UN ambassadors who came, visit Israel, and for the first time they actually-

Michael Doran:

100?

Ambassador Danny Danon:

More than 100.

Michael Doran:

More than 100? Wow.

Ambassador Danny Danon:

Sometimes they took a few dozens on a special delegation, and I traveled with them and we showed them everything. The facts, Hezbollah, Hamas, but also the opportunities, the high-tech innovation. And I think it changed their mindset.

The second aspect is the innovation and technology. Today we can do a lot, we can share the knowhow with other countries, and that's what we are doing. Take Africa for example, in the past, Israel was very involved in Africa until 1973, until the Yom Kippur war. After that war, they decided to join the Arab League and to boycott Israel. And in the last five to 10 years, Africa is coming back to Israel and Israel is coming back to Africa. And I think we can do more in terms of innovation and technology. So if in the past Israel was considered to be a problem at the UN, today people look at Israel as a solution. And I get phone calls about when Israel would come up with a solution to the coronavirus.

Michael Doran:
Well, that's the next question that's on my computer screen right here from one of viewers right now. The question is, is Israel working with the United States on technological answers to this problem or with other countries? Anything you can say about Israel science and industry and the coronavirus, I think would be of interest.

Ambassador Danny Danon:

So, absolutely, we are working on it. And I served, before coming to the UN, at the Ministry of Science and Technology, and one of the centers they visited is all the way up north, next to the border with Lebanon. We have a small lab and actually we're investigating the coronavirus on animals. And today they're converting the research and doing it very fast, and they're trying, Michael, to come up with vaccination that we can use. I hope they will do it fast enough. We have another lab that is also dealing with biological experiments and they're now focusing on this issue. So I'm optimistic.

I even heard today, one of the leaders of the BDS movement, it's a movement that's called to boycott, divest and sanction on Israel. His name is Omar Barghouti, and he said that if Israel will come out with a solution, we should use it, we should not boycott Israel. So I hope we'll get a vaccination fast. I don't care if it's coming from Israel, the U.S., Europe, we need it fast. We together with the U.S., with other colleagues around the world, I believe that we will hear about it in the near future.

Michael Doran:

I saw, also, a senior cleric in Iran, also came out with a fatwa, saying that if the Israelis come up with a vaccine to the coronavirus, it's permissible for Muslims to use it. So you've got all the support you need from all the right places.

Ambassador Danny Danon:

Exactly. And I think ... I've been working a lot with many Muslim countries who don't have diplomatic relations with them, and we share technology with them. And we sold them some of our defense capabilities, because they have issues with Iran also. And in the last few days, we actually purchased medical supplies from them. So we do a lot of things quietly with many of the Muslim countries, and I think it's very important. And I hope that in the future we will be able to do it publicly and not only behind closed doors.

Michael Doran:

Well that's another question that we have here from the audience. Is the coronavirus crisis going to bring Israel and the Gulf States closer together or is it going to have a no effect?

Ambassador Danny Danon:

So I think what brought us closer was not the virus, it was the Iran deal. The Iran deal, it posed a threat on Israel and the Gulf countries, and that was actually the trigger that ignited the process and brought us together. I visited some countries in the Gulf. We were actually planning to open our exhibit in Dubai for the Expo 2020. We have a beautiful pavilion. I hope that in October we'll be able to actually go there and open the Expo 2020 with other countries in the
Gulf area. So I'm sure it helped, but the trigger was the Iran deal, the threat for the Gulf country, the threat for Israel, that's what brought us together.

**Michael Doran:**

You don't see any specific areas for cooperation, specific to the coronavirus question.

**Ambassador Danny Danon:**

So we are cooperating already, and it's both ways. It's not only us supporting them, it's us buying supplies. And I want to say without naming names, we appreciate it. We used our agencies, and we got some very fast responses, and we got a lot of supply coming from the Gulf countries to Israel. We always like to speak about what we are doing for others. We call it “tikkun olam” and we're very proud of it, but I have to give credit to those countries that actually helped us when we asked for help.

**Michael Doran:**

What's the most surprising development that you encountered while you were at the UN?

**Ambassador Danny Danon:**

I think the gap, Michael, between the public UN and the private UN, it was an amazing experience for me, because publicly people still voted against Israel, but privately they appreciated Israel, they admired Israel. And I put it to a test when I ran for a position to become the chairman of the legal committee. We have six committees that the UN. I went to become the chairman for the legal committee.

For the first time, Israel ran for such high position at the UN, and I got the support. It was secret ballots. And I got the support of 109 member states that voted for me and only 44 voted against me. So it actually proved that when it's behind closed doors, people support Israel, and our challenge is to change that and to make it public support, because publicly they will acknowledge what we are doing and they will stop with the ridiculous votes against Israel that we deal with them every year.

**Michael Doran:**

It's fascinating actually that as the United States pulls back somewhat from the Middle East, Israel becomes more popular rather than less popular. I think a lot of people for years thought that the dynamic was the opposite, that countries were engaging with Israel because the United States wanted it, rather than because they saw it as in their own interest.

**Ambassador Danny Danon:**

And I would add to that, that if we talk about the Muslim count within the region, in the past they said, first you finish your problem with the Palestinians, then we will join you. And today we are changing the equation and we are saying, let's work together and maybe you will be able to help us to win the Palestinians on votes and to help them to reach the right decisions.

**Michael Doran:**
We’ve got one more audience question here and then I have one more question and then I think we can wrap it up. And the audience question is, have you seen China attempt to influence you in resolutions or processes in favor of Chinese economic development models against the US and against the EU during this coronavirus crisis?

**Ambassador Danny Danon:**

So, not in particular about the crisis, but I can say both China and Russia, when they vote, they look only at the interest of China and Russia, not like the US or European country that they have a dialogue, they ask for some recommendations, they engage in the process. They don't care about that. So I cannot say about the coronavirus, because we haven't dealt at the UN Security Council about it specifically, but for sure in the past they saw that both China and Russia, they don't care about the PR. They will veto resolution that they don't like without giving any explanations.

**Michael Doran:**

What is the thing that is of most concern to you? When you hand over your position to your successor and you brief him or her, what are you going to say is the most worrying thing that they'll have to deal with?

**Ambassador Danny Danon:**

So short term, we are dealing with Hezbollah in the northern border. It's a real threat for us. You know, we speak a lot about Hamas, but Hezbollah have more than 100,000 rockets and missiles. And today what they are trying to do is to abrogate the missiles and rockets to install a GPS guided mechanism and if they will be able to do it, it will change the game in the region. So we are fighting it on the ground and we are fighting it at the UN. That's the short term.

Long term, it's the Iran deal. You have to understand that it is a bad deal. You have the sunset clause. We have to keep pushing around this issue and not to let it go.

So that would be my two recommendations for anyone who wants to support US and Israel policy at the UN.

**Michael Doran:**

Well that is music to my ears. I totally agree with that 100%. Let me just ask you about yourself, personally. I think you're actually in overtime now at the UN, are you not? Your three years, you were appointed for three years. Am I right? And you finished them and so what's going to happen with you?

**Ambassador Danny Danon:**

Well, I'm here five years, Michael. I joke with my dear friend, the Ambassador Nikki Haley, that she got sentenced for a two-year term and I'm stuck here in this building for five years. So it is a long time and I'm ready to move on. I'm ready to go back to Israel to use the connections, the knowledge I acquired here and for the benefit of the country for Israel. And I think that I learned a lot. I learned a lot. I met a lot of interesting people. I was very active, but now we have to wait
first for the government to be formed and secondly we have to win the fight against the coronavirus and then I will be ready to move on to the next stage.

**Michael Doran:**

So in other words, you’re going to be here for at least another year or two. Is this what I conclude from what you just said?

**Ambassador Danny Danon:**

I'm turning to my wife. I'm optimistic. I told you. I hope that the UN will be able to move on with the virus and the governments will be able to choose somebody else to replace me. I believe in intelligence. I think five years in an intense place at the UN is more than enough.

**Michael Doran:**

Well listen, you can tell your wife there are worse places in the world to be stuck than New York City. But anyway, I don't want to get in between you and your wife. Don't tell her I said that. Listen, thank you very much. It was a great pleasure and an honor to have you, and I wish you enormous amount of luck both in fighting the coronavirus and in keeping your family safe in New York City.

**Ambassador Danny Danon:**

Thank you. It was a pleasure. Like always either too to speak with you. I want to thank the Hudson Institute for that initiative and I want to wish you happy Easter, happy Passover for everybody, and then we have to be strong. We will prevail.

**Michael Doran:**

Thank you. And let me just say thank you to all of the viewers who watch this over the internet. We really appreciate you tuning in.