cool. Marshall and Sagar here. Welcome back to the weekend. Ask me anything recap discussion episode. Kick this off two weeks ago. We're going to do these on a bi-weekly basis and folks appreciated getting the additional content in a slightly different form on Sunday. So we're going to just kick off by doing a bit of recap and discussion and then we'll get into the Q&A discussion questions submitted by Supercast subscribers, the way that I pay the bills when it comes to producing three to four podcasts a week on the realignment. If you'd like to subscribe to hear the full version of this episode and like to support the work we do, go to realignment.supercast.com or click the link at the top of the show notes in your podcast So I'd like to kick us off by discussing, you guessed it, Israel, Palestine, Gaza. I basically want to introduce a framework here because folks have been running out of questions and obviously this is a complicated situation so at our best I think the two of us could write people frameworks. I have two questions that both sides of this debate need to answer. Obviously I'm on the pro-Israel side, I think Gaza needs to be cleansed of Hamas, take that term however you mean it, but I broadly think Franklin Four in the Atlantic who was a guest on the show last month raised a really good question which is, look, Israelis, you need to tell us how this ends. The Tell Me How This Ends quote also was used a lot during the Iraq War. It was asked to David Petraeus when he took over US forces in order to leave the surge. Tell Me How This Ends really matters because, look, Israelis cannot simply just bomb Gaza forever without proving that the policies that they're taking are going to lead to a Hamas-less Gaza and a sustainable future for this conflict and for the Israelis and the Palestinians. So anyone on the Israel side, especially as the invasion is continually delayed, especially as you're just seeing really horrific images of collateral damage coming out of Gaza, you're going to have to answer Tell Me How This Ends. The question I'm going to have for those on the pro-Gaza, pro-Palestinian and oftentimes no offense, but true pro-Hamas side is, how would a ceasefire not just return us to October 6, 2023? October 6, 2023, there already was a ceasefire in effect and the next day, the most civilian Jews since the Holocaust were killed. And it is just not going to be justifiable at a Biden administration level or an Israeli level for us simply to return back to that status quo without the ability to remove Hamas from the equation. And if you're someone who favors a Palestinian state, if you want the alleviation of the suffering of Palestinians, that is just not going to happen if Hamas is in power the same way they were in October 6. So once again, before I throw it to you, soccer, my question for the pro-Israel side, tell me how this ends. Prove this isn't just a long-term collective punishment and acting out without an actual end game. And off beyond the Gaza side, explain why a ceasefire doesn't just lead us back where we are. Because if we just end up back here next year, the year after that, etc., the ceasefire is going to just increasingly be delegitimized as a means of assessing conflict. Unfortunately, Marshall, I actually do think we are going to end up back to October 6, because we're getting the worst of all worlds. We have mass bombing by Israeli airstrikes, which are not effective in terms of accomplishing their actual goal, which is destruction of, I mean, I'm not saying this. This is from Jaco and Martyr Maid, who by the way, I highly recommend their podcast, Marshall, you would enjoy too, because Jaco in particular was a battle commander, battle of Ramadi, which was similar, Stalin-Grad type urban warfare. And he's like, look, you got 300 miles of tunnels. Most of the stuff is in the tunnels. You're barely making a dent in terms of the actual killing the fighters. There's not a lot

of proof here in terms of like actual battle, in terms of like actually damaging the infrastructure for the enemy that you want. You're actually creating even more of a nightmare when you do go in, in terms of invasion. It's a lot easier to plant IEDs and fixed positions and all of that inside of rubble. And you're losing, as you said, the information operations warfare in terms of damage. The problem is, and I think this is the division where the Israelis are like, we have to do something, but they can't agree on what it is to actually cleanse Gaza of Hamas. There are 30 to 50,000 Hamas fighters inside of Gaza, 30 to 50,000. That is 10 times the number of ISIS fighters that were inside of Mosul. The Battle of Mosul is probably the most brutal urban combat that the world has seen since Stalingrad. In the Battle of Mosul, where you had combined operations of the Iraqi security forces who were SEAL Team 6 level combat veterans, we took one-to-one casualties in terms of civilian to fighter. I also forgot to mention Palestinian-Islamic Jihad. Here's the other problem. So if you put the total, you're around 60,000 fighters. So more than 10 times the number of ISIS fighters are inside of Mosul. At least in Mosul, the civilians hated ISIS. They were the ones who would be like, they're over there. They're in the house. Go get them. That's not the case. Civilian population, nobody knows how much they support Hamas. I'm just going to put out a guess. They support Hamas more than the people in Iraq. They support ISIS. So you've got a civilian populace, which is way more on the side of the terrorist group. You've got 60,000. And to be honest, given the IDF's military capabilities, everything gets erased. And this isn't the phrase of a martyr made who is on his podcast. A lot of good analysis is what all insurgent armies have learned in urban combat to neutralize air power is simply grab you by the belt and fight you so close that you cannot simply drop airstrikes. And the militant group will lose in the long run, but it becomes a battle of extraordinary attrition if you want to go and look at the number of Iraqi sphere. And to be honest, I just simply don't believe that Israel is prepared for the mass carnage of IDF soldiers of what it is going to take. It will take tens of thousands of military casualties just in the battle of Gaza in order to accomplish actual elimination of Hamas. In 2006 and in 2014, they proved that they did not want to suffer actual serious heavy casualties. They'd rather just bomb the shit out of the place and then pretend that everything was fine. I don't think that they're going to get to zero Hamas. I just don't think it's possible for two reasons. One is I don't actually think the Israelis themselves can suffer that amount of casualties. But two, by the time that we would even get to 25% of that, the conflict has expanded to include Hezbollah, Iran. I mean, the hospital was a great example for whatever bullshit is coming out of this war. The Arabs instantly just believe it was Israel. They're not waiting for the New York Times to protest and to try and burn the Israeli embassy down in Jordan. They're not. They're just going to believe it. And now multiply that by 10,000. I mean, like the amount of urban combat situations, we're going to see every firefight analyzed to death. We've never lived in an information environment like this. So yeah, anyway, I honestly think we're going to come right back to where we are. And we're probably going to have 15, 20,000 people dead in the meantime. I think the idea of is going to go in. They have no idea the amount that their shit is about to get rocked in terms of like actual combat. And if it does get anywhere close to, let's say they do have that commitment, which they're waffling right now, we're 21 days out from the actual attack. The cabinet itself can agree on what the invasion plan looks like. This is also where BB comes into play. I was just reading this morning about how the military leadership and this mutual suspicion

between the prime minister's office is so deep that BB's office is barring the military from bringing any type of recording equipments into the cabinet meetings. Apparently, BB Netanyahu's wife, Sarah Netanyahu, is like keeping lists. This is all well known in the Hebrew press, keeping like lists of enemies in the military bureaucracy. So, I mean, Israel's civilian government right now is a complete shit show, which is definitely, I mean, probably contributed to the failure of intelligence on the attack. Anyway, I'm just outlining how difficult this all is and why I do think we're just going to come right back to where we are, although each side has to play in the interim. There's no way the US government too would even allow what I'm talking about. It's not possible. The global environment already were at a place. 21 US troops attacked. There are 21 US troops who were injured, suffered TBIs. We're already apparently evacuating several positions in sort of forward operating bases in northern Iraq and in Syria. We've had missiles being shot from Houthi and all this, and they haven't even gone in yet. So, anyway, I'm outlining a scenario where I just honestly don't see either side reaching its maximum score, especially Israel reaching its goal. It's stated goal. It's up to them to see how long until they get there. I think what's useful about your articulation of the difficulties of a Gaza operation as it gets to a frustration I had interviewing my Hudson colleague, Michael Duran on the Arsenal Democracy podcast, because in the conversation, he basically articulated his critique of the Biden administration as the Biden administration is holding back Israel. They've got them in a bear hug. They say that this is friendly and in Israel's best interest in ultimates about de-escalating or preventing Israel from doing what they need to do. Once again, it's an interview show, so it's like not going to debate him, but how they were off of the podcast, what I'll just basically say is, well, I would take that idea a lot more seriously if an Israeli general had not said they have 24 hours to leave, which obviously was impossible. Yeah, was impossible, was reactionary, and was in the category of, okay, this is just punishment. Because I think this goes to your point. So you're raising very serious questions about the Israeli military capability when it comes to actually clearing Gaza. The issue that I have with the Israelis right now is I am deeply skeptical of the Israeli political establishment's ability to navigate a conflict during the modern era. You should be. I don't understand. In the United States, say what you want with the US. This is not a problem that we would have. I was thinking the same thing. Can you explain that? Because everyone was like, what's the difference between what Israel is saying and what America did in Irag? I'm like, America never went forward and said civility. I mean, the fucking press secretary of the United States is like, yeah, civilians die in war. Do you think we would ever say that when we're invading Irag? Never, never. There's no US military operation, even during Vietnam, where we said collateral damage is okay. It's nuts. That's what the Israelis, some of the shit they're saying in Hebrew, which I encourage everybody, you need to go and, yeah, BB, this is the people of the light or the people of dark. I'm like, dude, you're signing yourself. Yeah, it's like, by the way, man, there's 2 billion Muslims in this fucking world. How many Jews are in this world? Not that many. You're outnumbered. What, 10 to 1? It's like, you should just be, you should be way more cognizant of the way you're talking. You also fulfill the worst, and this is what Crystal's always talking about. She's like, they do have a plan. They want to ethnically cleanse Gaza and have genocide. I'm like, well, I mean, look, I mean, I can't say it's a 0%. I can't say zero.

And what you're, what you're getting at, and this is just, once again, why Durran is, I think, deep, and this is, and this is where the Biden administration, they're just sort of cop between everything, but I'm like, the Biden administration understands every single thing you just said, because once again, it's like, look, Mike Durran, if the Israelis were not saying people of darkness and people of light, you have 24 hours, they're animals. Like the other difficulty here is that obviously Israel is a very fractious and opinionated democracy. So like the claim here is not that like BB needs to be jailing members of the Knesset when they say things that are like out of control, but just at a baseline level, this would just not be tolerated in civil military political relations in the United States. So that's just been my biggest issue is like, you just cannot say this. You cannot, you, what you base, what you basically have to say. And if I were, if I were an Israeli, I would effectively say the following. I would say, listen, this isn't about politics. This isn't about statements. This is a military operation to prevent this attack from ever happening again. Everything that is not included in that is now over. The military will not be commenting to the press on anything beyond specific military operations. BB is not giving speeches about people versus the darkness. Like, you know, it's kind of funny, but there are very few chances we get to praise George W. Bush. Here's a chance we get to praise George W. Bush. I'm talking about the George W. Bush of September 12th, 2001, basically until December 31st. George

W. Bush, he goes to the mosque, he goes to the national like Islam, like the National Islamic Center and like gives a speech. He meets with imams and with the community. He like bemoans any violence against Muslims. He makes clear that this isn't a war against Islam. This is a war against like evil doers. Let's watch this again. That's some cringe, bushy 2000 language. But once again, that is not what BB and the Israelis are doing here. And at a baseline level, it's just like genuine independence. And that's why you just have this. You have this situation. What I suspect has happened on the Israeli political system, other than just the coup and the right wingness of his coalition. The Israelis have basically said to themselves, look, the New York Times, the Washington Post, the BBC, all these big media institutions, they are always just going to be against us. So we basically need to just act for ourselves. We need to just move forward and ignore whatever the Western center of life says about us. I genuinely do not think they understand the impact of the social media side of this war, right? You and I, you and I were in, you know, we met at GW in 2010. That was when you'd had one of the first one of like the first of our like adulthood, Israel Gaza conflicts, the difference and how generations have responded to these conflicts based on Tik Tok versus a Facebook dominant social media is just entirely different. Yeah, I think they don't get that either is and I actually really understand this because most if you haven't been to the developing world in the last five years, you I don't think you can understand the exponential level of change that has happened. You've got fucking farmers in India with full 5G data that are on WhatsApp who also can't read. And I know that's very difficult to understand, but these guys literally can't read, but they know how to forward videos to each other. That's what it's like on the entire Arab world. Everybody's got 5G. Everybody's got smartphones, videos and claims and all this stuff, Arabic Twitter. That's the other thing. If you think America is a Twitter obsessed society, you know, in Saudi Arabia, something like 70% of the population

is on Twitter, 70% of the adult population is on Twitter. It's outrageous. And also, they don't have community notes on Saudi Twitter, just so people know. It's like Arabic Twitter. Arabic Twitter is out of control, insane conspiratorial. People have no clue. Every word, every action that happens in Gaza is instantaneously forwarded all across the world. This is why I was really annoyed when everyone was bashing the New York Times because we go to the New York Times responsible for protests in Jordan. I'm like, that was a bad headline. I'm not defending it. I'm not defending it. I'm saying the people in Jordan do not give a shit about what New York Times says. They're like, it's the Western media's fault. I'm like, guys, they think we're fucking Jewish pigs. You think they care what America says about whether they hit the hospital or not. They think about what their buddy or their cousin who lives in Gaza is telling them, no shit. It's one of those where people just don't understand the train of info. Anyway, the Israelis in particular, I've never seen them worse than where they are right now. They've always been especially arrogant. They've always believed correctly that the US political system and all of that will protect them. But as you said, they don't get TikTok, Twitter, even Instagram. I mean, the level of change even that I've seen is just exponential. And I honestly think it's just because of near total and open information environment where you can just see it with your own eyes of exactly what's going on. And also every day that we move from October 7th, the memory of what happened in Israel goes down in the public consciousness and the death toll in Gaza goes up. I mean, I don't know what the death toll is. I can't believe the quote unquote health ministry, but it's definitely a lot more than Israel. Yeah, it's not nothing. It's maybe they say 7,000. So let's plus or minus 2,000 and still a lot of people. My point is, and look, yeah, this is what I would tell Mike. I like Mike. He's a nice guy. I just be like, look, man, I'd be like, really, what you're saying is that then you are for not only Israel being allowed to do whatever it's want, you're also for the US being caught in the collateral. Because I think what the Biden admin hopefully understands, I think they do at least understand

be like, look, man, I'd be like, really, what you're saying is that then you are for not only Israel being allowed to do whatever it's want, you're also for the US being caught in the collateral. Because I think what the Biden admin hopefully understands, I think they do at least understand this to a certain degree is no matter what, and especially with some of the statements made by Anthony Blinken and Biden, we're paying the price for whatever happens here. And that means that there

will be some sort of broader regional conflict if you allow the Israelis to quote unquote do whatever they want. And if that's the case, then obviously you should exercise your ability to protect yourself. So this is my this is usually a frustration that I have spending time in conservative spaces. Conservative spaces do not understand the difficulty of the coalitional problems the Biden administration is going on right now. Because by the way, it's like, Mike, talk to the talk to certain parts of the Democratic Party's base and definitely talk to the Democratic Party's staffer, NGO, nonprofit foundation class, they will be shocked at the idea that Biden is holding Israel back just at a conventional wisdom level. And then you look and this is happening like Anthony Blinken, you know, Secretary of State is having to have meetings with State Department staffers proving what the Biden administration is not declaring open season on Palestinians and Muslim Americans. And he's having to do all this while Israel is doing what it's doing, saying what it's saying. And I also think the Israelis also also do understand this too.

I genuinely do not think the Israelis understand the incredibly difficult position they are putting the Democratic Party center left in. And this doesn't factor it. But I do I do not think you're having a level of state, I think I think the Israelis are seeing that they're doing a good

meeting of Joe Biden. And they're not understanding the background that's actually happening. So yeah,

once again, it's unclear what's going to happen next. But this is like I said, we're starting this conversation, there are some difficult questions here. Okay, so next topic that I want to hit as we near the Q&A section. Don't I know you're going to poo poo this but don't don't poo poo this because this was a fun intellectual exercise. So I was I was in Austin and I met up with a founder who I really like and respect. He's in a space that people will be interested in. But I won't name him obviously because of the context of this conversation. And he sat me down, he said like, okay, real talk. You focus on foreign policy, national security. Why should I not be deadly afraid of World War three breaking out? Given what I'm seeing, Twitter, Facebook, all these different things, you've got a really good articulation in the past of why for a variety of reasons, some design decisions Elon has made has made it so every other random blue check account is tweeting out like misinformation about World War three breaking out. She's like so convinced me and I was sort of my initial reaction is like, okay, dude, like, first, like, don't follow those accounts, probably switch from the for you tab to the counts you actually follow. But that's like the first situation. I was like, actually, let's take this intellectual seriously. Here is the reason why I do not fear World War three breaking out. So when I say World War three breaking out, people should understand that when they're talking about World War three, we don't just mean a regional conflict. We don't just mean a war between great powers. We actually mean a situation that starts small, gets big, and then tens of millions, if not hundreds of millions of people die over the course of the next decades. So here's what I interpret World War three and World War one to mean. World War one, you've got a complicated powder keg in Europe especially concentrated in the Balkans. You have the assassination of, you know, the Archduke friends, you know, Franz Ferdinand by Serbians, the the Austrians then go into Serbia, the French and the Russians back Serbia that brings in the British escalation, escalation, escalation. The same thing is effectively true in World War two. Hitler is Hitler's early career is made by the fact that he just consistently gambles. He gambles, but he could break the Treaty of Versailles and no one will punish him. He gambles that he can intervene in the Spanish Civil War and will punish him. He takes the Sudetenland, etc. etc. etc. He then gambles that the West isn't serious and he invades Poland. Famously, Hitler did not think that England and France would start a broader

war in response to him invading Poland. He thought the invasion of Poland was the equivalent of him seizing the rest of Czechoslovakia, despite all the promises he made at Munich. Key point about World War One and World War Two, everyone is taking all these individual small steps, and they have no conception that that small step will lead to something broader. If you asked the Austrians who invaded Serbia, in no way would they say, Oh, yeah, like, obviously, if we take this step, we're going to see a global conflict that's going to involve the United States, if it's going to involve the Ottoman Turks, that's going to involve the end of our empire, they would just think of it in such a small level. So the reason, given those stories, World War One and World War Two, but I do not fear World War Three is because we're having this conversation. Because we are aware of the fact that a drone strike in Syria or a attack on an American base in Iraq could lead escalatorily to a broader regional and then global conflict.

I do not fear someone at the Pentagon just thinking, Oh, yeah, we're just going to launch a strike on Iran. That's going to be super simple. The same thing happened with Ukraine, for good or for our Ukraine policy, every single person in Russia, in the United States, in Great Britain and NATO has said to themselves, how does an action that I'm taking not lead to World War Three? There's a good Financial Times article, super paywall, and the subscription is way too expensive, so I don't expect people to actually get it. But Jake Sullivan basically wakes up every single day thinking, Okay, like, how do these actions we take not lead to World War Three? I have an FD subscription, by the way. Yeah, I have it too. It's worth it, you know, and it's a great publication. But my point is, World War Three should be defined as small thing happens, the leaders in question have no conception, it could get bigger. This is also I think the Cold War never went hot, because everyone was always aware that, Hey, we Soviets, yeah, we could invade the rest of Berlin, but America could escalate that. What I actually think, the point of my statement is not that we shouldn't fear escalation and shouldn't fear war. I am just saying when people say World War Three, they are basically taking the template of World War Two and World War One, and applying it to the Middle East. I think we should fear some second, third unnamed thing that we don't have an intellectual framework for the same way that in World War One, the Austrians were probably thinking worst case scenario. This is the Franco-Prussian War at last for a few months. And that's that. Oh, have an easy one, Iraq is bad enough. Iraq is not World War Three. This is why I get annoyed too, also. And also, if anyone wants to go check my tweets, I don't ever say America is afraid, is on the verge of world war. I say a broader regional war. It's enough. We went bankrupt on one broader regional war. It doesn't always, I would define World War Three as great power conflict. I'm far more afraid of World War Three with respect to Ukraine and with China. Those are the only two countries that even qualify for World War Three that would get into any conceptual possibility of a nuclear exchange, of which hundreds of thousands of Americans would die. That's not on the table. But it's also enough for how many people will be losing the GWAT? Maybe six, seven thousand? I'm not downplaying their debts. I'm just like, that was one bad day, in some cases, in some of the biggest wars that we've ever fought. But it was still enough to become a strategic disaster. So yeah, I'm very afraid of a broader regional war. I'm not sure I'm resigned to it 100%. I think it's a coin flip right now. I don't exactly know what it looks like. I don't know if it goes existential for Iran. I hope not. But you know, it's bad enough. You know, they're big, that's big country. They got a lot of proxies. They got a lot of missiles. There's a lot of people that could die. You could lose a thousand, two thousand easy American soldiers who are service members who are all stationed throughout the region in a blink of an eye. Something we haven't really seen in a long time. And that's not World War Three, though. And I think that's, yeah, I agree. I don't fear World War Three over this at all, actually. I do fear a broader regional war. I don't think it would ever get existential. But that's another good conception. People need to understand World Wars as existential. As in, if you don't win, you literally collapse as a regime. That's basically what happened to all of the powers. That's Nazi Germany. That's Imperial Japan. That's Austria Hungary. That is Ottoman Empire. Germany. Right. So if you're on the losing side of a World War, you should conceive of it as your regime will literally collapse. That's not going to happen. But that doesn't mean it's not bad. You lost seven trillion dollars in Iraq and Afghanistan over 20 years. That's bad enough. You know, a couple thousand people, two million people deployed,

not to mention just strategic, you know, the strategic blunder, reputational damage. I could go on forever, but it was never existential. So, yeah, there's gradations to this that people need to understand in their rhetoric. That's why I don't use the phrase. I don't ever say the phrase. I just say a broader regional war. That's what I said. And the key thing, and this goes to some incentive problems within the, within the Twitter system, everything you just said does not travel. If you're a 300,000 follower random blue check account, World War Three is coming, is going to travel a lot further. Yeah. Could you actually, I had, I just want to do a quick shout out. I had a Michael, if you're listening, an LSU junior reached out to me for a media project he's doing for class. And basically, he asked me a bunch of really great questions about the, it wasn't the usual like, tell me about how the real line was going to change everything, because I'm, please guys, no more of those. But this was generally like, where does a podcast fit within the news ecosystem? How does the design of like the media structure affect things? A question I want to ask you before we get to Q and A is real guick. What has this conflict and your coverage of this conflict taught you about the design changes within Twitter? Because Elon's claim was he wanted Twitter to become just the place for news. And just for me, frankly, it's just been a disaster.

Well, first of all, the removal of headlines was a nightmare. That's absolutely made news gathering so much more difficult, just because you can't look and people are like, oh, do you only read the headline? I'm like, no. But in some cases, it's about the AP being like XYZ happened. So instead, you have to be able to click out to link. That's terrible. The second problem is you have all of these accounts, which are engagement farming, which have blue checks, as you said, which paid to do this, which is a new thing, right? Yeah, they're literally paid to engagement and they aggregate news and clips with no verification, which is so difficult because you're like, though, and they'll use declarative statements like Israel just bombed Egypt and you're like, what? And I'm sure you saw the like US Marines are giving nerve gas. Yeah. They're like, what's going on? So I'm like, OK, like I go to research this, whereas previously in the past, A, that wouldn't have spread like wildfire and B, it wouldn't have the like, it wouldn't be imbued with the authority of the blue check. But I actually put the blue check and all of that aside. The biggest problem is that people are getting paid for engagement. And so by doing that, you actually increased quote unquote clickbait, but within the Twitter platform. And so how do you know what's real? How do you know what's not? And there's so much fake shit out there. It's faker and it's worse than it's ever been, having covered multiple of these types of conflicts. This is worse than Ukraine ever was, which is kind of shocking because I always thought that was bad. But this one is just one of those where you truly just have no idea what is going on. And it's very, very difficult. And ironically, and this is the thing, ironically, it means that Americans and most others should rely on official sources that are inside of Israel and of Gaza, rather than random Twitter accounts where previously I would never have said that. But we're actually at a point now where, you know, vetting the amount of information and all that stuff coming out is just so hard. Yeah, I don't know. It's honestly sad. There are a lot of good accounts and all those. My biggest, my metric for this is how much work is it going to take on my end in order to filter good information? And it takes so much and do this for a living. If you're some random person out there living your life, why should you be required to? You shouldn't be have to do that. You're

supposed to be able to just log on effortlessly. That's the unfortunate part, I think. Now, we are going to transition to our last section, which is the paid AMA Q&A section. These comments are submitted by our Supercast page, realignment.supercast.com. To listen to the full version of this episode and submit your own Q&A, go to realignment.supercast.com.