

Audio file

[2024.11.8_RabbaniEgian_Edited.mp3](#)

Transcript

00:00:02

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the Fourth Middle East Centre Friday seminar of Nicholas Kirk.

00:00:08

2024.

00:00:09

Great to see so many of you here. And given who we got on the program tonight, it doesn't come as a surprise. It is a pleasure to be well. Staying asmik. Jan, who was director of the UN.

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Security Council Affairs Division, which is the largest division in the Department of Political and Peace Building Affairs. She served there between March of 2016 and June.

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Over the past 30 years, doctor musician has held senior leadership and management positions in the United Nations system.

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In the areas of political and sympathizers, public information and program management, her UN assignments were wide-ranging from peacekeeping and Cambodia and Tajikistan to peace building in Somalia and Syria. Still, some work to be done in both.

00:00:57

Humanitarian and development work in Iraq, or UNICEF in Tanzania and.

00:01:03

The Middle East region.

00:01:04

She served both at the UN headquarters in New York as well as in the field of complex conflict and post conflict environment operational environments. Prior to her leadership of the Security Council Affairs Division, Miss Ijan served as the chief of staff in two UN special political missions to Somalia between 2012 and 2014.

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And the office of the UN Special Envoy for Syria in 24th.

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She retired from the UN in June 2022, since which time she's published several articles related to the UN, with a particular focus on the UN Security Council and Development in South Caucasus. Having also delivered lectures on the same in a number of universities in the US, in Armenia and tonight in Oxford.

00:01:52

I'd like to also welcome Mohan Rabbani, who is a researcher, analyst and commentator specializing in Palestinian affairs. The Arab Israeli conflict and the contemporary Middle East. He has, among other positions, served as principal political affairs officer with the Office of the UN Special Envoy for Syria.

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The head of Middle East with the Marty Advisory Peace Foundation, senior Middle East analyst and special adviser on Israel Palestine with the International Crisis Group and researcher with Allah, West Bank, affiliate of the International Commission of Jurists.

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The man is currently Co editor of Genelia, where he also hosts the Connections Podcast and at its its Quick Thoughts feature.

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Managing editor and associate editor of the Journal of Peace Building and Development and the contributing editor of.

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Middle East report.

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He is non resident fellow at the Center for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies, Democracy for the Arab world now and the Middle East Council on Global Affairs, and as you can tell from the stilted.

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And slightly artificial way.

00:03:00

Which I just read this statement. This wasn't entirely a my own drafting. If I were to go completely off piece and introduce Maureen as I would normally do, so I would welcome back as one of ours who came as a doctoral student in the 1990s and has yet to give me that dissertation.

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So.

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For all the things he has achieved since his time in this college, there is still some unfinished business that it would not be a correct Middle East centre introduction.

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But I didn't bring to the table.

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There's subject tonight is to examine the impact in the Arab world of the crisis in Gaza and the way it is played out in the Security Council.

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In particular, we could not have two people who, through their research, their careers, their experience.

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Would have more like to shed on these vexed and complex questions. Then Marilyn has made. Will you please join me in giving them a very warm?

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With Lisa welcome.

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Thank you.

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Kelly.

00:04:05

Cool.

00:04:07

Present.

00:04:08

No.

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Thank you very much. It's a real pleasure to be back here. I'll have the thesis for you.

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Tomorrow morning.

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So.

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I particularly like to thank Professor Eugene Rogan for the invitation to be with you this evening and also delighted to be sharing the podium with my wife, Hasmi.

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Reason.

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I forgot to mention that.

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I've I've been asked to speak about.

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Can you hear me in the back?

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I've been asked to speak about the regional dimensions of the Gaza crisis, and I'll look at 4 separate issues briefly, the influence of recent Arab Israeli normalization agreements on the decision by Hamas to launch.

00:04:56

The 7th of October attacks the role of Hamas and the self styled axis of resistance. The development of this axis during the Gaza crisis and finally the impact of the Gaza crisis on regional dynamics. To take the first issue.

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I think it's fair to say that a clear aim of Hamas on the 7th of October last year was to once again place the question of Palestine prominently on both the regional and international agenda.

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In this context, the Arab Israeli normalization agreements reached during the first Trump administration have been key to Palestine's marginalization and were seen as tantamount to a Haddad certificate for Greater Israel.

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Where Arab Israeli normalization had previously been perceived as a Palestinian trump card to be exchanged in return for an end to occupation and Palestinian statehood.

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These agreements transform normalization into an instrument Israel could use to isolate and marginalized the Palestinians and deal with them unilaterally it. If it these agreements effectively inverted the formula offered in the Arab peace initiative. So in that general sense.

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These agreements clearly play a supporting role in explaining the genesis of seven October 2020.

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But the more pertinent question, and the one that has been repeatedly, is whether Hamas acted specifically to prevent a Saudi Israeli normalization agreement, because such an agreement would make the significance of its predecessors pale by comparison.

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I don't think that that was at all the case, and here's why. If you look at the discussion that was being held in in 2020212223 about this agree.

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It's primarily a bilateral US, Saudi rather than Saudi, Israeli.

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Deal.

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And in which the primary deliverables, if you will, were American deliverables provided to Saudi Arabia in the form of a formal security guarantee.

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And the nuclear reactor and nuclear program, rather than anything that either the Saudis would be giving the Israelis or the.

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The Israelis would be giving the Saudis.

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And in this context, the two key issues, the security guarantee and the nuclear reactor are not within the gift of the White House. They would have required congressional approval, and it wasn't extremely unlikely that the Biden administration would have been able to generate.

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A majority in the Senate for this deal.

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It did include a.

00:08:00

Nobody Israeli uhm component, of course. Formal Saudi recognition of Israel and certain Israeli gestures towards the Palestinians. And well, I think a good case can be made that these Israeli gestures were primarily cosmetic in nature, as they were initially conceived. We were dealing with an Israeli Government.

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That was simply unwilling and incapable of making them without collapsing, and the Biden administration certain.

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We recognize this, and you may recall that it was, in fact, encouraging Netanyahu to ditch his far right coalition partners and replace them with a more centrist alternative. Primarily the party led by Iran that beat that creates a different problem well.

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That peace would have gone. It would have gone.

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Along with these Israeli gestures to.

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The Palestinians, he's also consistently on record.

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Speaking out against any normalization agreement that includes a US delivery of the nuclear reactor to Saudi Arabia. So that was a non starter as well.

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And then more recently, the Saudi Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman, proposed to the Americans. Well, if the Israelis are not yet ready to move forward, let's start with the bilateral US Saudi deal in terms of the issues that were being discussed and in terms of the Saudis making.

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Various commitments to the Americans about limiting or reducing their economic and security relationship with the Chinese.

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And the American response was unambiguous. Either the Israelis are involved or there is no deal. So even if I'm wrong about all of that, and there was an imminent Saudi normalization agreement, I still don't think it would have been.

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A factor for the?

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Very simple reason that Hamas.

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Would have looked at the record of.

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Previous Israeli normalization agreements and how wars including large numbers of Palestinian or Arab casualties, would have affected them. Look at the 1979 Egyptian Israeli peace people have remained entirely unaffected by the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

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Up to and including the solar city, the massive police in 1994 Jordan, Israeli peace treaty, it handily survived Israeli settlement expansion throughout the 1990's, the 2nd and the father, as well as.

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As well as the repeated Israeli assaults on the Gaza Strip during the 2000s and most recently, the so-called Abraham Accords have been unaffected by what we've been seeing during the past year. So therefore the only conclusion that could have been reached by Hamas.

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Was that at best it would have been able to postpone the consummation.

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Of any such.

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Agreement by a decent interval and in fact, if you look at the various statements Hamas has issued during the past year, ceasing to justify your decisions of one 7th of October.

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This is.

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They have mentioned normalization in a general sense, but I don't think I've come across a single specific reference to the Saudi Israeli normalization proposal. I'm going to turn next to the the role of Hamas within the axis of resistance.

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I think it's important to recognize from the outset that the Axis is a coalition and not an alliance. It consists of states, movements and militias with a collective agenda to confront US and Israeli influence in the middle.

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The east and at Times Western aligned regional governments as well, but it is not a formal alliance. It is often presented by Israel. Nevertheless, as an octopus in which Iran forms the head and the other members are the tentacles.

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Personally, I think it's more accurate to compare the role of Iran to that plague, for example by Germany within the European Union, rather than the former Soviet Union with respect to the Warsaw Pact. Relations between the acts of various members and between them and Iran.

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Have fluctuated over the years. Look for example at the Syrian Iranian relationship during the past quarter century, you go back to 2000 and Syria was still the dominant force in Lebanon and in fact, to a large extent was able to regulate Iranian access.

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Syria held a much bigger level of influence over Palestinian organizations and so on compared to now, where Syria is indisputably the junior partner.

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In this relationship and a similar industry exists with regards to Hamas, it's a member of this coalition. But then, as you may recall, in 2011, 2012 it broke with Damascus and in fact moved its headquarters from.

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Damascus not to either Beirut or Tehran, but rather to Doha, the Qatari capital, which of course has no relationship with.

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And this in turn resulted in a rupture in Hamas's relationship with Iran as well, and and these relations were not actually repaired until almost half a decade later, primarily under the influence of none other than Yahya Sinwar.

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Who took the position that Hamas's relations with foreign parties needed to reflect Hamas's needs and interests?

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Yes.

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Rather than its ideological.

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Differences and on that basis there was a reconciliation not only with Iran but also with Egypt and more recently with Syria as well. So on the 7th of October, as both US and Israeli military intelligence have concluded, Hamas acted alone rather than.

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Either at the direction of Iran or in coordination with other Members of this axis, why did it do so operation?

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Social Security may have formed part of the reason, but I think the more likely explanation is that Hamas understood that if it had proposed this, this offensive to its fellow coalition members, it would have been resisted and warned not to proceed.

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In other words, why ask for something you know you're not going to get better not to ask for it at all, and just go your own way.

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It has also been suggested that Hamas acted on the assumption that despite acting alone.

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It is believed.

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That other access members would be compelled to follow its lead and launch wars of their own against them against Israel. Yet Hamas must have understood that, just as Hamas itself prioritized.

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Its own agenda and interests, its coalition partners would also act according to their own priorities and interests.

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And this is in fact exactly what they've done since October 7th.

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Turning now to developments within the access, during the past year, as as you're probably aware, on October 8th Hezbollah launched the first of multiple so-called support fronts. Had this net, as the name implies, these are efforts launched in support of.

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The mass of the Palestinians, rather than independently, and were not intended as.

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Additional full scale armed conflicts. Rather, they collectively consisted of a multi front attritional war designed to divert Israeli resources from the Gaza strip and raise the costs to Israel of continuing its campaign against the Gaza Strip.

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Hezbollah initiated its own support front on the 8th of October and I think it's it's been characterized by what's been properly described as controlled escalation. An additional reason that Hezbollah.

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Opened its support fund in this manner is that after 2006, its leadership determined that Hezbollah could not afford to once again be seen as the party which initiated a war against Israel. Ultimately, this proved to be a near fatal miscalculation. During the past summer we then.

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And the various militias in Iraq and Syria.

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Launching attacks not only against Israel but also against.

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U.S. forces in.

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Iraq and Syria and in in Jordan, I would argue that the most significant of these was, in fact the campaign initiated by Ansarullah.

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Known as the Houthis in Yemen because that transformed to what had been in Israeli Palestinian.

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And then a regional crisis.

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Into a crisis with global implications because sitting astride balanda and controlling access to the Suez Canal through which 10 to 15% of of of daily trade flows, millions of barrels of oil inputs from Asia for just in time.

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Supply chains in Europe and so on had a real effect and that also Expo.

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Things why the US together with the UK, which did not respond militarily to either Hamas or Hezbollah, did launch Operation prosperity guardian in the Red Sea once the Houthis opened up their own support support front. As for Iran, Iran perceives.

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Itself, I think as a strategic reserve.

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Of of the act.

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And it only became directly involved when it was itself directly targeted by Israel first in the attack on its embassy complex.

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In Damascus in April, and then most recently when Israel assassinated the Hamas leader, the small in in Tehran.

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I'd just like to briefly before turning to the final section, talk about Israel's response.

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Israel's on 7th of October, the Israeli leadership was thrown completely into disarray and I think it's fair to say that its initial response to October 7th basically was motivated by bloodlust and revenge and did not contain a clear strategy.

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That began to change over the summer, in which what appears to be an increasingly confident Israel went on the offensive against the elements of the Axis to try to separate the support fronts from Gaza and then to dismantle the individual elements.

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Of the supply.

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Front leading. Ultimately, I think Israel hoped to a major confrontation with Iran, if not by itself, then preferably by the United States. And we saw, of course.

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An extraordinarily successful series of Israeli attacks amounting to an organizational decapitation of Hezbollah during July.

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By August, September of August and September of of this year, and I think it was in that context that Israel finally acquired the belief that it had within its power to transform the strategic equation of the Middle East, much like it had managed to do in 1967.

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On this rapidly accumulating series of successes, I believe also persuaded the Biden administration that Israel would be able to succeed and bought it on board with this strategy, and that is, of course changed given.

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As brandon's.

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Remarkable ability to not only survive but recover from these massive blows to the organization.

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I'd like to end by looking at both the short and long term impact of the Gaza crisis on regional on the regional dynamics in the short term, as we've seen, normalization has been entirely unaffected by Israel's genocidal campaign in.

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The Gaza Strip.

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You could contrast this with with 1967, when several Arab states severed diplomatic relations with Washington, and with 1973, when one, when a number of Washington's closest regional allies, including Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, initiated an oil boycott against the United States.

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This time there have been practically no consequences, and I think one reason that the US has not changed.

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These policies is because they've seen that their unconditional support for Israel has had zero consequences on their discussions with their other allies and partners in the Middle East.

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This requires an explanation and I think there are several. The Arab state system is, of course much weaker today than it was last. There is no rival superpower comparable to the Soviet Union during these previous eras.

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I mentioned. Additionally, the PLO is a member.

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Know.

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Of the steering state.

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System Hamas is not. And not only is Hamas not a member, but in a polarized region. Many of the Arab governments were initially happy to see it weakened because they believed we awakened.

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Would weaken their regional rivals particularly.

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Iran and its axis.

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They're also, of course, closed security relations with them.

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One need only think of is Israel's role in assisting the Egyptian government in putting down the insurgency in the Sinai Peninsula. And finally in this is speculative. I don't think that many of these Arab governments want to be seen as accommodating.

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Popular sentiments about Gaza in the wake of the Arab people of of the past decade. In other words, they feel that if you give.

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In to popular sense.

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On this, you're kind of opening the floodgates for more demands than you might then need to accommodate. And yet, and perhaps ironically, we have also seen elements of reconciliation or rapprochement, at least between Iran and members of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

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Israel's conduct over the past year has has transformed GCC perceptions of Israel.

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From that of a security partner to a threat determined to set the region of flame. In this context, the memories of the US under Trump's watchlist, standing by as Unsaddling Law, launched direct attacks on Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, while Iran launched attacks on Aramco.

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Facilities and Saudi Arabia were not forgotten.

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Therefore, this time every GCC member, including even the UAE.

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Condemned Israel's attacks on Iran and there is also been substantial GCC Iran dialogue. The GCC states know that it would be them rather than Israel or the United States, that would be the main victim of any all out regional confrontation and are therefore seeking to integrate themselves from this.

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Finally, over the long term, as I've mentioned, Israel does see an opportunity to redraw the strategic map of the Middle East, as it did in 1967.

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Because, but this is unlikely because if the road to Tehran indeed goes through southern Lebanon and the southern suburbs of Beirut, Hezbollah's recovery from these devastating blows, I think.

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Has made short.

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Shrift of that ambition.

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Looking forward, Trump, for all his bellicose rhetoric, is unlikely to want to involve the US in the Middle East War. That would make Iraq look like child's play.

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But and then.

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Let's also briefly consider the long term impact and here I would compare 2023-2024 to 1948. Of course, in the decade after 1940 or after 1948, we had a decade of upheaval and instability in the region, culminating in 1958.

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The overthrow of the Iraqi Hashemite monarchy. There were Needless to say, and, as you well know, many reasons for these developments. But Palestine did play a significant role.

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Both because of what actually happened in Palestine and because the Arab governments that are under discussion played a direct role in the 1948 Palestine War and lost and were being held accountable by their own citizens and by their own opposition. The difference today is that these governments.

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Oh.

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Or not directly involved.

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But they're not even indirectly involved, and they have reduced themselves to powerless spectators who issue appeals to Washington or Brussels or London to please do something, thereby tell advertising and publicizing their own impotence and unwillingness to do anything which is worse.

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Getting directly involved in losing or not getting directly involved at all. I think in the months and years ahead we will find out and that there will be challenges both to.

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Individual governments and to the regional order as a whole with clear connections to what we've to the Gaza crisis of the past year. Thank.

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You very much.

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Hmm.

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And thank you so much for laying out this tour of the horizon about the Arab world. If we could now invite Mika Jan to take us through the way this is played out in the international arena of the Security Council, please.

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Thank you, Pastor Eugene Rogan.

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I'd like to thank the Middle East center of Saint Anthony's College for the invitation. It's a pleasure to be with you and to share the podium with my husband, Wayne Rabbani. My presentation today will explore the role played by Arab states in the UN.

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City Council, during their terms as non Permanent Council members.

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And the impact they may have had.

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On issues related to the Middle East bit of few introductory words about the UN.

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The United Nations was created on the colossal debris of World War 2 in 1945. Its charter or Constitution drew on the lessons of the UN's failed predecessor, the League of Arab Nations. That itself was burned from another World War. This was also 2 decades.

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Before the decolonize.

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Creation of most of African continent and Asia, the UN was shaped by the victors of World War 2, and it shows. Even now, nearly 80 years on.

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However, the world today is very different than when the UN was created in the mid 20th century.

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There is universal acknowledgement, but while the UN membership has nearly quadrupled from 51 in 1945 to 193 states today, its power structures first and foremost the Security Council, has remained nearly unchanged.

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There is strong merit to the argument that the Council derives its legitimacy and credibility from its membership representation and how it exercises its powers on behalf of the wider UN membership in fulfilling its mandate.

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80 years on Africa, Asia, with the exception of China and Latin America, are not represented among the Council's permanent members.

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The representation and power this disequilibrium are within the Council, with only five veto wielding permanent members out of the 15, in addition to the lack of permanent representation from those 3 continents.

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The UN Charter has vested the Security Council with the weighty responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

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As such, its record to fulfill this mandate has been an abysmal failure, not only in the last, but especially in the first quarter of this century, as deadly wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, Syria, the Sudan, Ukraine.

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To name a few, and now Gaza and the wider Middle East have borne witness in each of those conflicts. A veto wielding permanent member with either a proxy client.

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As a direct participant has stamped efforts by the Security Council to prevent or to resolve a wider conflagration. Russia and the US have cast the most vetoes. If the war on Ukraine was driving up Russia's veto numbers in 2022 and 2023.

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Israel's war on Gaza has seen a similar jump in US vetoes since October 2023.

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You might be interested to learn that neither France nor the UK have cast any vetoes since 1991 in the Security Council. This is probably in acknowledgement, even if not explicitly stating so of their vulnerability. When while you have.

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Countries with larger economies water political influence on the international arena who are not yet permanent members. While they still continue to hold the the veto but have not exercised since 1991.

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Few words about UN regional groupings and how they're represented in the Security Council.

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The 10 non permanent members of the Security Council are elected by the UN General Assembly for two year 2 year terms. Five members leave the Council upon completion of their terms and five another five come on board in January.

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Each year, elections of the non permanent members are based on.

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A set formula.

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From 5 regional groups in the UN in any given year, there are three members. Member States from Africa, 2 from Asia, the Pacific, two from the Western European and others group. You might be interested to learn that Israel belongs to the group of.

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European and Western European and others are not the Middle Eastern group, with the public place 2 from Latin America, the and the Caribbean, and one from Eastern Europe.

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Yeah.

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However, the numbers did not tell the whole story. Some have argued that this formula that have just outlined has allowed the tipping of the political dynamics in the Council in favor of the West, with European over representation when taking into account not only the three permanent members.

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Namely for.

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UK, US but also the two seats from Western European and others group, and often the one seat from Eastern European Group, which in recent memory has seen Albania, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine, the Security Council, by way of examples.

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The Arab states do not enjoy the status of a geopolitical regional configuration in the UN, similar to that of the five mentioned above.

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Instead, and since 1968, a country from the Middle East and North Africa region is alternately represented in the Council from either the African or Asia Pacific Group quota. For example, in 2022-2023 United Arab Emirates.

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Where in the Council as part of the Asia quarter, while this year and next Algeria is part of the Africa quota.

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Mm-hmm.

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Bahrain from Asia Asian grouping is expected to replace Algeria in 2026.

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This fragmentation of the Arab space representation in the Security Council dilutes their cohesiveness and at times presents challenges.

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In the last decade, the three Council members from the African group, known as the 83, have.

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Pleasingly, take a unified block position on most issues on the Council's agenda related to the continent, to the African continent and some somatic ones. It is now common practice for one of the 83 member to deliver statement the Council, on behalf of the region representing the position of the.

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Thank you.

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African Union.

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This includes the Arab state alternating in the Council from the African seat quarter. The same cannot be said.

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Said about the Council's deliberations on the Middle East, where depending on the A3 configuration, the positions of the individual Member States have parted ways.

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One needs to only recall the solid pro Palestinian position taken by South Africa during its most recent 10 year in the Council in 2019-2020. Even in comparison with another A3 member, Tunisia in 20/20/2020, I will come back to Tunisia.

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Further further down.

00:35:03

In 2017, Egypt and Ethiopia found themselves feeling 2 of the 8 three seats in the Security Council. Relations between the two countries have been fraught with tension since 2011, when Ethiopia began the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance dam, known as third.

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On the Blue Nile River that spans 11 African countries tributary from where 85?

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Sand of the Niles waters flow, Egypt and the Sudan in particular, viewed this development as a threat to their own access to a key water resource, economic development and security, sparking a major hydro geopolitical dispute that continues to date.

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Egypt sees this as an existential issue.

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With Egypt and Ethiopia and the council concerns.

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Were palpable of a spill over of their.

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Overtly hostile relationship into the.

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Work of the.

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Council, however, the conflict with the conflict in Syria dominating the Council's agenda at the time the two countries navigated their terms without memorable incident, it was only in 2020 when both countries were no longer in the Council, that a first meeting was held at the requested to meet on behalf.

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Of the Arab group regarding the issue.

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The First Security Council outcome on guard in the form of a presidential statement, was adopted in September 2021 on the basis.

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To the Tunisian text, which some viewed as complicating as complicating an African Union LED negotiating process, this was a prime example of the complexities encountered by by Arab states in the Council straddling two different regional representations with divergent interests and positions.

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A question to be asked then what has been the role of Arab states in shaping the agenda and the outcomes of US City Council on the Middle East in the first quarter of the 21st century? One would be hard pressed to find a consistent answer and any analysis would paint multifaceted.

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Picture for the following reasons.

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It is paramount to to bear in mind that two incongruent principles that hold true at the same time. First, is that non permanent Council members represent their regions or constituencies and positions taken, lead, lend legitimacy Council decisions on issues related to their.

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Respective regions. So this is one of the principles they represent the regions interests and their constituencies. Secondly and all.

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Secondly, it is their individual national interests that take priority consideration over any other as well as possible impact on their bilateral relations in their regions and beyond when deciding on a position in the Council.

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This holds true not only of Arab Member States in the Council few illustrations.

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In 2011, US City Council Resolution 1973 on Libya imposed an no fly zone over the country and ushered in NATO bombings of Libya.

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Who supported the League of Arab States for the No Fly Zone was a critical factor in landing in leading the Council's adoption of the resolution.

00:38:27

This was manifested by Lebanon's affirmative vote in the Council, which represented the Arab seat back here as an elected member, while five other council members, Brazil, China, Germany, India and Russia abstained.

00:38:45

One of the starkest examples of national interest trumping regional representation was Egypt's actions around the Council's adoption of Resolution 2334 on 23rd December 2016 regarding Israel's settlements in occupied Palestinian territories.

00:39:05

The resolution reaffirmed the status occupied Palestinian territory since 1967, including E Jerusalem, as well as the illegality of Israeli settlements in those territories.

00:39:16

And called on.

00:39:17

All countries to distinguish in their dealings between the territory, the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967.

00:39:27

The resolution was adopted with 14 votes in favor. the US abstained. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, who was in office at the time as well, was live.

00:39:41

Egypt was a non permanent council member in 2016, seventeen holding the Arab seat from the African group quota.

00:39:49

There was high and intense drama leading up to the vote. Around 2354 Israeli settlements. The draft resolution was initially presented by Egypt on behalf of the.

00:40:00

Arab.

00:40:01

Group, including the Palestinian delegation.

00:40:05

This was in late December 2016, and the US Obama administration on its way out was keen to see the draft tax could to vote, as were most council members.

00:40:18

In what was believed to be unprecedented, the US president-elect Donald Trump, who had won the elections a month earlier but not yet in office, directly interfered in a policy decision of a sitting administration.

00:40:34

On December 22nd, he called Egypt's president and CC to withdraw the proposal, which Egypt promptly did under what its UN ambassador described as intense pressure.

00:40:47

The ambassador was visibly distressed and dispirited by the development. It was reported that president-elect Trump similarly had called Russian President Putin the Russian

ambassador's request to postpone the vote until after Christmas did not find support among council members.

00:41:05

On December 23, 2016, four non permanent Council members, namely Malaysia, New Zealand, Senegal and Venezuela, took up the same draft that Egypt had withdrawn.

00:41:20

And tabled it for a vote. New Zealand stood his ground, despite Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's threat that Israel would consider such a step a declaration of war four years later, in 2020, another Arab member in the Security Council found itself in a similar.

00:41:41

Conundrum related to the question of Palestine with a frontal attack from the US Trump administration, Tunisia was into the second month of its two year term when in early February 2020 together with Indonesia.

00:41:56

Circulated a draft resolution rejecting President Trump's Middle East peace plan, known as from peace to prosperity, but better known as the deal of the century as a breach of international law. Tunisia, as the Arab regional groups represented in the Council, led the negotiations on the draft.

00:42:16

Solution.

00:42:17

Though expecting the US veto, the intention was to bring the draft to a vote at a high Level Council meeting on the question of Palestine on February 11th, in which Palestinian Authority president would Abbas was to participate. The draft resolution never made it to the Council for a vote. The newly elected Tunisian.

00:42:37

President, I say it was since locked himself.

00:42:41

In full authoritarian.

00:42:44

And who had only a week earlier described the deal of the century as the injustice of the century.

00:42:50

Caved into pressure from the White House and fired his ambassador to the UN, thus distancing himself from the initiative. Monsef party, highly respected by his peers at the UN and considered among the most experienced Tunisian diplomats, had been brought out of retirement by his own government only five months.

00:43:10

Earlier, to lead Tunisia's Security Council term.

00:43:14

For by saying pleasing the US administration early on his new presidency in Tunisia seemed worth paying the price of the utter humiliation of his country and his ambassador in the US Security Council.

00:43:28

The United Arab Emirates secured a significant national interest ring during its tenure in the Security Council in February 2022, when the Council agreed to add hotties as an entity, characterizing it as a terrorist group to the existing Yemen sanctions List subject to targeted.

00:43:49

From Zimbardo measures.

00:43:51

Since 2015, six city officials and Guti leader Abdul Malik Al Ghouti had been listed in the Council Yemen sanctions.

00:44:00

This, but this was the first time that the Houthis were listed as an entity. Resolution 2624 was adopted on February 28 with 11 votes in favor and four abstentions. Brazil, Ireland, Mexico and Norway in explaining their abstentions.

00:44:21

Expressed concern with identifying cooties as a terrorist group in the absence of an internationally agreed definition of terrorism and the potential for.

00:44:30

Unintended adverse human humanitarian consequences for Yemeni civilians living in hooded, controlled areas.

00:44:38

Until February 22, 2022, Russia had been the main stumbling block in the Council in designating the Houthis as a terrorist group.

00:44:48

But on February 28, Russia voted in favor of Resolution 2624.

00:44:54

This long sought breakthrough for the UAE was a reciprocal return of failure favor two days after Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 23rd 2022, the UAE, to the surprise of many, had abstained in the Security Council were condemning invasion.

00:45:15

Invasion Russia vetoed the draft resolution on.

00:45:20

February 27. The UAE also abstained in a Council vote on a resolution referring to the Russian invasion of Ukraine to the UN General Assembly under uniting for peace.

00:45:31

On February 25th, ahead of the vote, Russia had announced that the Emirati Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation would be visiting Moscow on 28 February, the day of.

00:45:42

The vote on the booties.

00:45:44

For talks with the Russian Foreign Minister.

00:45:48

Still on the UAE?

00:45:50

Interestingly, the first UN Security Council resolution adopted on Gaza since the outbreak of the war in October 2023 was not authored or introduced in the Council.

00:46:02

By the Arab seat holder, the UAE, but by Malta.

00:46:07

Resolution 2712, which was adopted on November 15, 2023, by a vote of 12 in favor with Russia, UK, US abstaining. It called for urgent and extended humanitarian pauses and corridors throughout Gaza to facilitate the provision of essential goods and services, as well as.

00:46:27

For the unconditional release of all hostages out in.

00:46:30

Salsa.

00:46:31

The resolution did not call for a ceasefire or cessation of hostilities, the Russian ambassador, in explaining his country's abstention vote, decried the omission of such a call in the resolution.

00:46:44

While the US ambassador attributed her country's abstention vote to the absence of a condemnation of Hamas, the so-called humanitarian pauses collapsed 2 weeks later on November 30th with the resumption of fighting in Gaza and for.

00:47:00

In the release.

00:47:00

Of about 100 Israeli hostages by Hamas.

00:47:04

Four months into the Gaza war, the US repeated vetoes in the Security Council had prevented the adoption of resolutions calling for a ceasefire or cessation of hostilities, including on

February 20th this year when Algeria, having replaced the UAE as the Arab League member.

00:47:24

In the Council introduced a draft resolution on behalf of the Arab Group calling for an immediate ceasefire.

00:47:32

13 Council members voted in favor with the UK abstention and US veto.

00:47:39

It was only 5 months after the.

00:47:42

Started the Gaza war on March 25th at the First Council resolution calling for temporary ceasefire, maybe through vote. Tabled by the 10 non permanent Members Resolution 2728 demanded an immediate ceasefire during the month of Ramadan, leading to a lasting sustainable ceasefire.

00:48:03

There were only two weeks left to the.

00:48:05

End of Ramadan.

00:48:07

The US abstained.

00:48:10

While fourteen other council members voted in favor, with Israel continuing its relentless assault on Gaza, there was no ceasefire even during this period.

00:48:20

If I were to think of one state in the Security Council during the six years when I was in the Chambers, director of the Security Council Secretary between 2016 and 2022, that reflected a healthy balance between its regional representation, its national interest during its tenure.

00:48:39

You would have to be Kuwait.

00:48:42

To date, where it has been elected to council only twice in 197879 and 40 years later.

00:48:50

In 2018-2019.

00:48:53

In June 2019, during its monthly presidency, the Council quite introduced and led to the Council's adoption of a groundbreaking presidential statement to promote closer cooperation between the UN and the League of Arab States. Since then, there have been annual briefings of the Council by the Secretary General of the League of Arab States.

00:49:14

An annual informal meetings between the Council and the.

00:49:17

League of Arab States.

00:49:20

Few days earlier, the Council had unanimously adopted a first ever Council resolution on persons missing in armed conflict drafting by drafted and tabled by Kuwait.

00:49:31

The resolution called on parties to armed conflict to take all appropriate measures to actively search for persons reported missing to enable the return of their remains and to account for persons reported missing.

00:49:44

The issue of missing persons in conflict is a particularly important one with also global.

00:49:52

Reach impact given the long standing cases of missing Kuwaitis from Iraq's invasion, occupation of the country in 19901991.

00:50:03

One of the most memorable achievements of Kuwait was the unanimous adoption of Resolution 2401 on February 24, 2018, during its monthly presidency of the Council and at the height of the Syrian war.

00:50:18

The resolution called for a 30 day ceasefire throughout Syria and was drafted by code drafted by Kuwait and another elected member, Sweden.

00:50:28

Throughout 15 day.

00:50:30

Negotiations on the draft text among council members Kuwait came under intense pressure from the US and UK to table the resolution prematurely for a vote effectively to force another, yet another Russian veto.

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Despite these pressures, Kuwait and Sweden continued negotiations until such time that they they had a draft that ultimately ensured 15 affirmative votes, and the passage of the resolution.

00:51:00

In conclusion, it would be presumptuous to say that an exclusively dedicated Arab regional seat in the UN Security Council would guarantee greater political, regional cohesion and consistently 1 needs to look no further than another multilateral body, the League of Arab States, to be disabused of such notion.

00:51:21

However, this does not negate the argument that splitting the Middle East, North Africa regional representation between the African and Asian seat quotas does weaken their position as elected council members when it comes to the Council's work on the Middle East. Thank you.