

Transcript

00:00:00 Speaker 1

Phoenix. My name's Walter Arness. So if the Middle East Centre and it's my pleasure to chair this evening's seminar. Tonight's lecture focuses on Syria, which, as we all know, has ceased to be ruled by the Assad family.

00:00:17 Speaker 1

Since early December of last year.

00:00:20 Speaker 1

The fall of Bashar al-Assad was met with joy by millions of Syrians, but of course the future of Syria, if by no means completely clear.

00:00:29 Speaker 1

Whether or not.

00:00:32 Speaker 1

Have the support necessary to unite Syria.

00:00:35 Speaker 1

And begin reconstructing it.

00:00:38 Speaker 1

Is not assured, although there's reasons to be hopeful. The problems faced by Syria are formidable, ranging from reconciliation after a long civil war to dealing with the many outside powers that have been involved in Syria.

00:00:54 Speaker 1

For decades, to shed some light on how Syria got to this point and presumably how its recent past.

00:01:01 Speaker 1

Affect its future trajectory. We have Professor Johannes Wardenberg from the Free University of Languages and communication.

00:01:09 Speaker 1

Try to.

00:01:11 Speaker 1

Sort of thing Italian, but you can you can.

00:01:13 Speaker 1

It's like.

00:01:15 Speaker 2

Listen to Dolly on your styli, building me down.

00:01:20 Speaker 1

Professor Wardenberg has been teaching the general history of the Arab world at the university in Milan. As a historian, he specialises in the period of the Bath party in power in the 20th century, in 20th century Syria. He's presently lecturing in West European countries on historical roots of the outsider regime.

00:01:41 Speaker 1

It is widely claimed study that Syria contemporanea really seg Nando Bacard.

00:01:50 Speaker 1

In English, it's the the contemporary Syria of redrawing the map of the Near East, which came out in 2 volumes in 2021 in Rome with the Nalino Institute, and he describes in this in in this work, the transformations of the state economy in Syria.

00:02:08 Speaker 1

In the diverse international backing of the Assad.

00:02:12 Speaker 1

Over the over the years, he's now finishing publication on the implications of the Swiss government's involvement in the United Nations Commission for Human Rights violations in Syria.

00:02:24 Speaker 1

The title of his lecture is the chaos followed in Bashar al-Assad warned against Damascus University, 10th November 2005 and present day Syria. Please join me in welcoming Professor Johannes Wardenberg.

00:02:45 Speaker 2

Good evening. Well, thank you very much for all of you here tonight.

00:02:52 Speaker 2

And.

00:02:54 Speaker 2

Thank you Professor Ambus for your introduction. Thanks to Professor Eugen Rogan can't be here tonight. But who made this initiative possible? And of course, thanks so much to Jenny for all the work she does.

00:03:10 Speaker 2

That's it's essential to any scholar initiative. As for the initiative, so.

00:03:19 Speaker 2

Well, we'll talk about Syria tonight, which is obviously only the title we'll talk about. So chaos.

00:03:27 Speaker 2

And we'll try to bring in to the picture and our understanding some elements of history, which is not something normally happens.

00:03:39 Speaker 2

When one talks about the unfolding of events in one of these, one of the countries of the Middle East.

00:03:48 Speaker 2

Often it's more a question of recent events. Political analysis.

00:03:54 Speaker 2

Social transformation social actors. But historians are not so often called into.

00:04:00 Speaker 2

Umm. Into the discussion to try to bring elements of deeper understanding. Now I'll try to.

00:04:11 Speaker 2

Give 2 simple examples of obviously a lack of historical background to opinion makers or I mean to the pieces they write. This is an article which was.

00:04:27 Speaker 2

Published in Le Courier, which is a newspaper newspaper.

00:04:30 Speaker 2

Switzerland. So it's a it's a 10th of December 2024.

00:04:37 Speaker 2

Just after the full Bashar Assad, which happened on the 8th of December, you can see just in the final part of the article.

00:04:47 Speaker 2

The author.

00:04:50 Speaker 2

So it's Adele, Baka one who says that Hezbollah no repar.

00:05:00 Speaker 2

So I'm I'm reading this part obviously.

00:05:05 Speaker 2

He tries to make us think that it's al-Assad who created Hezbollah. That's obviously not the case for anyone knowing the history of Lebanon, the invasion of 82. I mean, it was not the al-Assad family which put up Hezbollah. Hezbollah is a completely different history.

00:05:22 Speaker 2

But this is an example of a specialist is a French specialist on the region on Iraq, brings into the picture historical elements or information which are just not.

00:05:33 Speaker 2

Correct. So that's that's the first example.

00:05:38 Speaker 2

Of the importance to have a check find fact checking of the historical information.

00:05:47

1.

00:05:49 Speaker 2

Introduces and the other example I wanted to to mention just in the introduction is that a lot has been said, of course, about the fall of Bashar Assad and his regime. But one element, which is.

00:06:05 Speaker 2

Is strangely not mentioned at all.

00:06:10 Speaker 2

Is the interview Ehud Barack which who who was then back then Minister of Defence of Israel, gave to CNN on the 16th of May 2012 in which he basically suggested that.

00:06:27 Speaker 2

One could get rid of the Assad regime and with the help of the Turks, and that this would weaken the Iranians. So basically what we've seen playing out in between November and December reflects.

00:06:40 Speaker 2

A strategy of one of.

00:06:43 Speaker 2

Well, an important Israeli political actor of that period.

00:06:50 Speaker 2

And that is absolutely not referred to in the present debates discussions. I mean, when 1 looks at the events in Syria, as if it's comes out of nowhere without having the, the, the background and the understanding of.

00:07:05 Speaker 2

How these how these changes might have been?

00:07:11 Speaker 2

Well planned to a certain extent.

00:07:14 Speaker 2

Talking about the Israelis on the subject of Syria, I just wanted to to point out that.

00:07:22 Speaker 2

There was.

00:07:24 Speaker 2

An acknowledgement by Biden on the 8th of December. So when just the same day, basically as the Moscow's was was liberated from Assad.

00:07:37 Speaker 2

That so Biden makes.

00:07:40 Speaker 2

A press or let's say, public public speech.

00:07:44 Speaker 2

Where he talks about the fact of managing the risk.

00:07:48 Speaker 2

Of the of the new of New Syria.

00:07:52 Speaker 2

So he takes.

00:07:54 Speaker 2

Responsibility for what has just occurred in in Syria and.

00:08:00 Speaker 2

One knows that a lot of the American apparatus that worked under Biden had connections, of course, with the Israeli establishment, and they were really most probably connections around these events.

00:08:17 Speaker 2

Between certain sectors of the Israel.

00:08:20 Speaker 2

Well, defence sector and the Americans now one other school of thoughts on the side of the Israelis.

00:08:28 Speaker 2

Is.

00:08:30 Speaker 2

What I mean, what can you?

00:08:34 Speaker 2

Refer to as maybe as a school of Iberman who makes a speech on the 3rd of October 2017 where he says.

00:08:43 Speaker 2

Assad is 1.

00:08:45 Speaker 2

And that's of all the Arab countries needs to reconnect with Assad. I mean to normalise relationships with Assad. And this strangely, I mean happens just less than a month after the speech by Hassan Nasrallah of Hezbollah.

00:09:05 Speaker 2

On the 12th of September 2017, where he says he has a same speech, he says we've won the war. This was just basically in the campaign for reconquering. The Dara Zoo governor raid.

00:09:19 Speaker 2

So Nasala makes a speech saying we've won a couple of weeks later, Lieberman says Assad has won. The Arab country should you know, normalise their relationships and.

00:09:30 Speaker 2

The reason why I'm mentioning this is because one has to think always when looking at the events in the region. What an actor like Israel does. I mean, it's not the only important actor, but it's a crucial actor and in the case of Syria.

00:09:46 Speaker 2

They are obviously different trends.

00:09:48 Speaker 2

And unfortunately this this kind of information is not widely circulated.

00:09:54 Speaker 2

When?

00:09:57 Speaker 2

Umm when?

00:09:59 Speaker 2

Especially so invited to talk about about the fall of the regime.

00:10:04 Speaker 2

Another interesting element of of the speech of La Salle of September 2017 is that he basically says, or announced that his troops would go, would retreat from Syria, so that happened well, seven years before the latest events in in Lebanon.

00:10:21 Speaker 2

So the.

00:10:24 Speaker 2

Understanding that.

00:10:28 Speaker 2

Because of the difficulties of Hezbollah in Lebanon, Syria was an easy target. It's obviously also questionable. I mean, if Hezbollah with Jewish forces in 2017, then probably and that's basically what we saw on the ground.

00:10:43 Speaker 2

The the the the regime was not.

00:10:47 Speaker 2

You know, supported anymore militarily by Hezbollah has been in the previous years. I mean, there is a lot of discussion about.

00:10:57 Speaker 2

Why Assad fell after the war in Hezbollah?

00:11:02 Speaker 2

Well, perhaps getting to that later on with the with the, with the questions or with.

00:11:06 Speaker 2

Further discussion.

00:11:07 Speaker 2

The main understanding is that it was some kind of checklist on the part of the Israelis or the Americans to say, well, listen, you've got there is this axis of resistance we want to defeat Iran. Let's pick the one after the other.

00:11:23 Speaker 2

My understanding is somehow different. I was on the ground in Lebanon in well from September to December, so I just I witnessed the events there and obviously what I what I saw is that it's a difficulty on the part of the part of the Israelis. I mean, I wasn't in the South myself.

00:11:39 Speaker 2

But I really saw the difference with Israelis to get.

00:11:42

Now.

00:11:44 Speaker 2

A handful of the country. So I mean I I my my understanding is it's because of the difficulties of the Israelis in the South of Lebanon that the option of removing al-Assad

came into the picture. I mean, we'll, we'll we'll perhaps discuss more about how that really happened.

00:12:03 Speaker 2

But I think that.

00:12:06 Speaker 2

It wasn't originally planned that some kind of international alliance or or or or or.

00:12:16 Speaker 2

Well, group of actors would would would, would go this far. Now why am I saying going this far? I mean, removing Bashar al-Assad or Assad family from the, from the from the region and from Syria?

00:12:31 Speaker 2

Is gigantic transformation, I mean it's nothing. It's nothing less than that. I mean, they go back to the 70s, nineteen, 70. They came to power.

00:12:40 Speaker 2

In in November 1970, in fact, there was an internal strife inside the BAF party and the Alawite faction of the Balfour Baf party. In February 69. So the real.

00:12:56 Speaker 2

Moment in which Hafiz al-Assad signals his power in the country is February 69, so you you've got the dynasty, which starts in 69 and comes, I mean, until 2024.

00:13:11 Speaker 2

Which is an incredible.

00:13:14 Speaker 2

Well, arc of time and with huge events happening in the region, I won't go through all of that of course now, but it's just to to exemplify or to illustrate how much this transformation means for the region.

00:13:31 Speaker 2

And.

00:13:34 Speaker 2

The asset family is already known as having its.

00:13:37 Speaker 2

You know, I mean.

00:13:38 Speaker 2

We all have some understanding of of.

00:13:40 Speaker 2

Syria, and of its past.

00:13:44 Speaker 2

They didn't have a good reputation. You know the other side, and I mean we think of of Stela Zaltag in in Lebanon, we can think of.

00:13:54 Speaker 2

Well, Yarmouk, more recently the Palestinian camp in Damascus, but also the massacre of Hava in 82.

00:14:00 Speaker 2

I mean, this family have blood in his hands, there's no doubt about that. So. Umm.

00:14:06 Speaker 2

How did it?

00:14:08 Speaker 2

How did they manage, you know, to give you?

00:14:10 Speaker 2

For so long.

00:14:13 Speaker 2

Other dictators or other families of of, well, I don't know if there are any other fires in Iran, but.

00:14:21 Speaker 2

Had left the the the power quite quite.

00:14:27 Speaker 2

Well, soon as I thought the best word, but I mean rapidly, whereas seat Assad remained in power for, for, for five decades.

00:14:33 Speaker 2

It.

00:14:36 Speaker 2

And.

00:14:37 Speaker 2

Why? I thought that it might be interesting for all of us to have a look at this famous speech of the genre dimasc of 2005 in the Damascus University speech.

00:14:52 Speaker 2

Because I think in his in the words of the of the dictator and the words of of this, I mean his own words, one can understand a lot of what is really happening.

00:15:05 Speaker 2

Behind the scenes, so many of the different.

00:15:10 Speaker 2

State actors in the region have a presentation of what they what they're up to, to their people, to international audience. But the whole region being split up the way it is has to coordinate. I mean, the different actors have to coordinate.

00:15:28 Speaker 2

And.

00:15:29 Speaker 2

I think this speech is unique illustration of how this how this works basically.

00:15:40 Speaker 2

I'll just give an elements of understanding also of this coordination between different actors.

00:15:47 Speaker 2

By.

00:15:48 Speaker 2

Mentioning the extent to which after 2000 and.

00:15:54 Speaker 2

I would.

00:15:54 Speaker 2

2015 so from 2015 onwards.

00:16:00 Speaker 2

Different international actors, Russians, Americans, the Turkish state, the Israelis, the well, Hezbollah, of course, I mean different actors organised their their territory, territorial influence or or occupation occupation of Syria.

00:16:19 Speaker 2

So I mean, looking at that period of time from 2015 onwards, when sees how on the ground.

00:16:26 Speaker 2

All these different, you know, international actors, regional actors.

00:16:31 Speaker 2

Well.

00:16:33 Speaker 2

Arrange. Make an arrangement. OK. And this speech, we're going to look at releasing at at least, I mean, a short passage.

00:16:43 Speaker 2

Gives us the keys to understanding how an actor like Assad refers to those to those agreements. We'll move to the video first again so originally.

00:16:57 Speaker 2

The text used to be.

00:16:59 Speaker 2

Umm, retrans rewritten. I mean it was available on the Internet, there was an official page, President Bashar al-Assad. So you could, you know, check on all his speeches and stuff. That page doesn't exist anymore for obvious reasons, but.

00:17:15 Speaker 2

We still can't find the the the the tape of the speech and.

00:17:20 Speaker 2

Uh, well, so I'll just show it starts in moments of the beginning, just to give the, you know, the atmosphere of of what it was like back then, I've.

00:17:29 Speaker 2

Seen such.

00:17:32 Speaker 2

A.

00:17:32 Speaker 2

A context in a in a speech in any university. I mean, I've, I've, I've I've been to Guatemala universities. It's quite unique and then we'll focus on a real passage of the of the text.

00:17:48

I.

00:18:02

The traffic is about to that and then it couldn't have.

00:18:09

Another one of all the CRC apps.

00:18:15 Speaker 2

OK, so he's reassuring everyone he's not sick. He's all right. He will deliver his speech.

00:18:24

Yeah.

00:18:43

In the passage.

00:18:44 Speaker 2

We will analyse it just after this.

00:19:07

You have.

00:19:35 Speaker 2

No.

00:19:45

Anything else?

00:19:57

And I've got a the.

00:20:30 Speaker 2

OK, we'll get into the translation. So I'll just read it out because I realised we can't. I mean, it's what.

00:20:36

Isn't easy to see.

00:20:37 Speaker 2

It over there. So we've supported international legitimacy and have not supported international disorder. International legitimacy is the United Nations Charter or international disorder, is basing resolutions on the interests and moods of certain decision makers. I don't know if you can hear me.

00:20:54 Speaker 2

Umm, so decision makers in this world, those countries, those forces and everybody in this region and in the world should know that the era of *toute* launch which existed at the beginning of the last century is over. And now the region is faced with two choices.

00:21:11 Speaker 2

Either resistance and set fastness or chaos.

00:21:15 Speaker 2

There is no fair choice. Resistance prevents chaos. Resistance has a price, and chaos is a process. But the price of resistance is much less than the.

00:21:23 Speaker 2

Of chaos.

00:21:24 Speaker 2

We need to know these things about blackmail. If they believe that in this way they can try to blackmail Syria, we tell them that they are at the wrong address. But if the matter is one of bargaining with them, raising a problem here to bargain with us about different things concerning other matters.

00:21:43 Speaker 2

For instance, for instance, Iraq. Then they're welcome to come and negotiate with us round the table in front of the people. So.

00:21:50 Speaker 2

What we have here is basically the choice given to the international community.

00:21:57 Speaker 2

Or you keep us and the resistance that is also, I mean Hezbollah.

00:22:04 Speaker 2

Or you face something terrible. You know, it scales and.

00:22:12 Speaker 2

It's basically, I mean, he's talking to the university audience. I mean, I didn't really see a lot of students up there, but anyway, it was a university. I mean, people inside the university.

00:22:23 Speaker 2

And.

00:22:25 Speaker 2

They so they were not, you know, the public he was talking to the public. He was talking to was international community. They were he mentioned the region. He talks about the events in Iraq. I mean 2005 is just.

00:22:40 Speaker 2

Before the unlash of.

00:22:43 Speaker 2

Really sectarian violence in Iraq that started in 2006? Maybe. Maybe, maybe, maybe.

00:22:48 Speaker 2

So it's it's a moment of of truth, right?

00:22:55 Speaker 2

Just to to put the context of the speech so.

00:23:00 Speaker 2

As we'll all remember, the assassination of Rafik Hariri, so the Prime Minister of Lebanon happened on the 14th of February 2005. So the same year, but at the start of the.

00:23:09 Speaker 2

Here and up until March, April 2005, the Syrians were present in Lebanon. You know, they were the occupying force in Lebanon. They were looking after Lebanon. And as they would say it themselves, and this was under the umbrella of an international agreement.

00:23:28 Speaker 2

It wasn't written that way in the dais agreements, but the dafa agreements were used by Syria to legitimise their their their them staying in country in the country.

00:23:41 Speaker 2

They had invaded Lebanon in 76.

00:23:45 Speaker 2

And repressed the Palestinian movements. I mean, they were called in.

00:23:48 Speaker 2

By the Maronites.

00:23:52 Speaker 2

The Maronites conservative factions to help and save the Lebanese state in 76, and that's what they did.

00:24:00 Speaker 2

Basically.

00:24:02 Speaker 2

So they've been there a long.

00:24:06 Speaker 2

In February, Prime Minister Halep he gets killed. Everyone well, thinks believes it's the serious. Did that and you have mass protests in in Beirut the population is is is really fed up with this with this occupation of of the by the Syrians and they withdraw they withdraw extremely quickly.

00:24:28 Speaker 2

I mean, knowing the Syrian regime, I mean the fact that they withdrew in less than two months is quite is quite unbelievable. So one of one of the chapters of my book is.

00:24:41 Speaker 2

Is is, you know, trying to think about these events of of Lebanon at the beginning of 2005 with different with different elements and not only the official that.

00:24:53 Speaker 2

Syria or Hezbollah are the only ones who who who create havoc in Lebanon.

00:24:59 Speaker 2

Now.

00:25:00 Speaker 2

The other elements which is important is that an international Commission.

00:25:07 Speaker 2

International Investigation Independent Commission was put up by the United Nations to investigate on the killing of Haiti and they had come out with.

00:25:18 Speaker 2

First reports on the 20th of October, so that's 20 days before this speech, and on the 20th of October 2005. This report says, well, probably, you know.

00:25:31 Speaker 2

Syrians did did killed Ahi. So this speech is also.

00:25:37 Speaker 2

A rebuke against an international accusation that you know they were Syria is responsible for the murder of Haiti.

00:25:50 Speaker 2

I said this under pressure when he makes his speech, there is a new spring which which I mean politically.

00:25:59 Speaker 2

Movements which which which came up in in Damascus, the spring of 2000 and five 2006. So he really needs to.

00:26:07 Speaker 2

States his position to make clear to the people, or I mean to the international actors we've got to deal.

00:26:15 Speaker 2

There is a deal between the NSA's family and the international community.

00:26:20 Speaker 2

Don't forget that if you get rid of us, you've got chaos.

00:26:24 Speaker 2

If we stay.

00:26:25 Speaker 2

Power. It has a cost. We know that. I mean, we're not. We're not there for free. You know, there is a cost to us staying in power. But don't forget there's a deal between us and this deal goes back.

00:26:36 Speaker 2

The 60s.

00:26:38 Speaker 2

To the end of the 60s beginning of.

00:26:39 Speaker 2

70s now.

00:26:43 Speaker 2

One good illustration of what this deal is really all about is what Michael Hayden.

00:26:50 Speaker 2

Who was was ex director of the CIA.

00:26:55 Speaker 2

Said in Congress on the 12th of December 2013. So 8 years after this speech. And he basically said, I mean, so the whole the the uprising has started in Syria. I mean, there are masses of events can go, chemical attacks happened. And he basically said.

00:27:12 Speaker 2

Let's keep the al Assads.

00:27:14 Speaker 2

You know.

00:27:14 Speaker 2

They're going to guarantee the regional order.

00:27:19 Speaker 2

What he means by that is that if you get rid of the other cells, you know all the setup of the region which goes back decades is at risk.

00:27:30 Speaker 2

Including Israel, he says it's very clear in his speech to Congress. He says even even Israel is at risk if al-Assad is removed.

00:27:39 Speaker 2

Now this disposition that the Syrian regime or this Syrian regime was useful for.

00:27:49 Speaker 2

A regional setup in favour of international order was already very clear to the French. I mean back in the 80s.

00:27:58 Speaker 2

They would do.

00:27:59 Speaker 2

I mean, they've got of course quite some quite some quite some links to Syria and to Lebanon, but they would say that.

00:28:09 Speaker 2

The the Assads are a guarantor of stability for the region.

00:28:16 Speaker 2

Let's not forget that this whole argument that the.

00:28:22 Speaker 2

Assets play a positive role in the way the the the region is run has been used also extensively when the Islamist factions, Islamist militant factions were on the.

00:28:37 Speaker 2

On the news quite systematically from 2014 onwards so.

00:28:45 Speaker 2

He, as I used to say, well, I'm. I'm going to to stand with the minorities. I'm going to stand with the Christians. So the risk would be that is the mistake over et cetera, et cetera. So the, the, the this idea that.

00:29:02 Speaker 2

Al-Assad plays a positive role in the region, has been revoked quite recently.

00:29:08 Speaker 2

I mean the last decade.

00:29:11 Speaker 2

I mean one can compare to a certain extent what's so the role which has been attributed to al-Assad back in the 70s. I mean the the whole region was in, in, in

transformation in radical transformation. The Soviets of course plays a huge role back then.

00:29:29 Speaker 2

Yeah. I mean one of the comparisons, what I can make is with the Palestinian Authority, I mean, where the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank has responsibility of the doing the policing.

00:29:40 Speaker 2

You know, for Israel and they they they that's that's what their task is. OK and you can imagine a role attributed to al-Assad in the same manner by of course a different constellation of actors but for a broader well country like Syria.

00:29:59 Speaker 2

A broader the broader region.

00:30:01 Speaker 2

OK. So I'll just, I'll just move on with a couple of pictures. This was an article which came out in 23, so it was just before the reintroduction of Al Assad's in the Arab League, which happened in August 23.

00:30:18 Speaker 2

And he's, I mean, has a visit by the.

00:30:21 Speaker 2

Saudi Ambassador to Jordan things are getting back on track. OK. So, I mean, all these events of the uprising and whatever has happened, the massacres, sidnaya, whatever, you know, it's all forgotten. Let's get back to to, to business as usual.

00:30:38 Speaker 2

And you even have Le Monde. So the French newspaper which, which publishes in 24 in September 24, I mean the years left out of the scam. But it's September 24. Basically the war is over.

00:30:53 Speaker 2

Well, and he talks, I mean the the newspaper talks about the Royal women's play. I mean, this is an this is an article about Aleppo.

00:31:01 Speaker 2

But I mean, up until November 2024, the business was you know.

00:31:08 Speaker 2

It was settled Assad had.

00:31:09 Speaker 2

The war.

00:31:12 Speaker 2

You would get back to what great agreements were previously with actors of the region as if nothing had happened. I mean, he had gone away with the massacre of Hamas. I mean, his father had gone away with his, with the massacre of Hamas, 82 so Bashar al-Assad felt well. I mean, I took it, took me a bit longer, you know, but.

00:31:32 Speaker 2

This is how it works.

00:31:34 Speaker 2

Umm, now that it didn't workout quite.

00:31:39 Speaker 2

It's changed. Something changed. I mean, between the agreement, which is clearly announced in 2005, which allows Bashar al-Assad to be reintroduced first in France to the to the parad of the 14th of July.

00:31:56 Speaker 2

2008, where he stands next to Sarkozy, I mean, Bashar said after his speech will will really, you know, know a new experience, a new blossom.

00:32:05 Speaker 2

Of the international influence, at least up until 2011.

00:32:12 Speaker 2

The case.

00:32:13 Speaker 2

2023 and 2024.

00:32:17 Speaker 2

Where he's reintroducing the Arab League and an important European actor as Italian states through the government of Giorgio Maloney, really tries to open up again for Bashar al-Assad. The whole international community. It just doesn't work. I mean, there's something in the in the in the combination which is which is.

00:32:39 Speaker 2

Broken.

00:32:42 Speaker 2

Now.

00:32:43 Speaker 2

One of the.

00:32:44 Speaker 2

Essential questions, of course, is why are we not afraid or what are we? But I mean, why is the international community? Why is our regional and international and world actors not anymore afraid of the fauda? So this region in which the Assad would not be the policeman of?

00:33:03 Speaker 2

Regional order.

00:33:05 Speaker 2

Why are we not afraid of that anymore? And I've tried to to imagine some some elements, you know, but it's there is no definitive answer to that question, because even Biden, when he claims, I mean his role in the fall of Bashar al-Assad on the eighth of eight of the December.

00:33:26 Speaker 2

Speech, he said. He mentions that there is a risk, so they've taken this initiative to get to to to get.

00:33:33 Speaker 2

Of Assad.

00:33:34 Speaker 2

But there is a risk to that.

00:33:36 Speaker 2

The elements I've.

00:33:39 Speaker 2

Written down, but I mean what we can discuss that of course is first of all Syria, although it was reintroduced to the international and to the regional scene, was not able to function efficiently as a as a regional policeman anymore.

00:33:54 Speaker 2

I mean, they would continue to repress local population, but their influence inside the Palestinian movement was not relevant, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. So I.

00:34:06 Speaker 2

They were. They weren't able to guarantee.

00:34:09 Speaker 2

The real the set up that the set up was going to remain. That's one element, another element. Of course it's it's a way in which they made into radicalism.

00:34:14

I.

00:34:17 Speaker 2

It so I mean they they instigated the creation of dash.

00:34:23 Speaker 2

Played.

00:34:23 Speaker 2

Huge role in the development of Al Qaeda in Iraq in the years 2000. And I mean the international community had to get involved.

00:34:33 Speaker 2

You know.

00:34:33 Speaker 2

To deal with that, so that was of course not a very good point on on the CV of of Bashar Assad.

00:34:42 Speaker 2

There is a question of the Forever War of Israel.

00:34:45 Speaker 2

That Israel believes it doesn't need the other sets in Syria anymore. I mean, it can bomb anywhere wherever it wants. So why have these people there in power? I mean, you know, the new generation of Israeli leaders just think differently. And there is, as I said at the at the start, there is, there is a, there is a distinction to be made.

00:35:06 Speaker 2

Israeli.

00:35:09 Speaker 2

Elite or political class people believe in some way. I mean some there is what? There are different approaches, but obviously what happened after the 7th of October 2023 has unleashed a level of violence which.

00:35:26 Speaker 2

Region has not really experienced before on the part of the.

00:35:30 Speaker 2

And.

00:35:33 Speaker 2

Well, in that case, I mean, if you've got the tsunami going through the region, perhaps.

00:35:38 Speaker 2

Powerhouse like the LSA is not necessary anymore. I mean that's 1.1 other element which I think needs to be considered is that Biden was so he claims his role in these events was afraid of Trump, of what Trump would do.

00:35:54 Speaker 2

Because let's not forget that when.

00:35:58 Speaker 2

We had the first presidency of Donald Trump, he went.

00:36:03 Speaker 2

Nearly to North Korea.

00:36:06 Speaker 2

So what would be, you know, the scenario of Trump going to the Moss and shaking hands with Bashar al-Assad? I mean, that's not really what traditional at least Democrats establishment in the United States is looking for.

00:36:23 Speaker 2

And one element I do think is important and I I.

00:36:28 Speaker 2

I I mentioned that earlier is this idea that.

00:36:32 Speaker 2

Israel did not win 11.

00:36:36 Speaker 2

I mean, I know this is not the mainstream analysis of events, but Israel, to my understanding, did not win in Lebanon. They didn't manage to get a foothold in the country. I mean, they went some kilometres inside the country, but I mean, for anyone who knows in history of Israeli invasions in Lebanon, I mean.

00:36:57 Speaker 2

Peanuts. I mean, not the level of destruction.

00:37:00 Speaker 2

The level of destruction is meets, you know, in the South, in the here, in the southern suburbs of Beirut, also elsewhere in the Beka. But the the foothold on the ground is really not significant. And there were different battles. The Israelis could just not move forward.

00:37:18 Speaker 2

So my understanding is that they face real military difficulties on the ground that Hezbollah has not been massively downgraded militarily.

00:37:28 Speaker 2

And therefore something else needed to be done in the region to have a change of of contest with Iran and the easiest element which could be taken.

00:37:42 Speaker 2

Of the equation was pasala sub.

00:37:45 Speaker 2

However, Bashar Assad was also part of.

00:37:50 Speaker 2

Brought a.

00:37:52 Speaker 2

Day, as I've said.

00:37:54 Speaker 2

So taking Abbas al-Assad as, as Biden says himself, has some risk.

00:38:00 Speaker 2

It too.

00:38:01 Speaker 2

So the fall of Assad is also.

00:38:06 Speaker 2

Getting rid of someone, or at least with the dynasty that has worked together with Western interests, I mean, the European Union was involved in Syria massively, I mean.

00:38:17 Speaker 2

This idea that Iran has been defeated.

00:38:19 Speaker 2

And that.

00:38:21 Speaker 2

You know everything is going for the the better on the start of the Israelis. I don't. I don't. I don't agree with that opinion.

00:38:30 Speaker 2

I don't think.

00:38:33 Speaker 2

What I'll try, but if I've just got 10 minutes. Yeah. OK. What I'll do for the last. Well, I don't if you if it's going to take 10 minutes, but I'll just try to show how I come to this different kind of conclusions which are.

00:38:49 Speaker 2

Well, what I.

00:38:49 Speaker 2

To do is bring philosophy into.

00:38:51

Issue.

00:38:52 Speaker 2

That is, you have the events, you have a circle. Have I mean transformation but you try to understand what is the underlying dynamic, what are the underlying demand dynamics and if there is any coherence to the succession of events.

00:39:08 Speaker 2

And so my work is not only to describe what you know happens in a country from.

00:39:15 Speaker 2

81 to 86 and go through, but I tried to distinguish why things happen and.

00:39:23 Speaker 2

What might happen in the future if one manages to distinguish trends? I mean, I had quite a tough discussion on this approach with the colleagues in the in Beirut in June last year where they really didn't go along with this idea that you connect.

00:39:41 Speaker 2

Events in history and try to distinguish trends. I mean, history should also only be about describing.

00:39:47 Speaker 2

You know, perception or or singular moments in history. OK, whereas what I tried to do is, but I'm not the only one of course, but is is to indicate the root of transformation and if those.

00:40:04 Speaker 2

Dynamics continue.

00:40:06 Speaker 2

They probably lead to transformation in the future and also with state actors involved.

00:40:12 Speaker 2

They act really following patterns whatever, whatever the politicians are. I mean, whoever the politicians are, whoever is in power states function like patterns. I mean, with patterns. And one good example of that is France in connection to Lebanon.

00:40:31 Speaker 2

They always go back to the Lebanese.

00:40:35 Speaker 2

Well, or play I mean to the country to, I mean they will always try to re advocate their role in Lebanon. So I mean, even if the politicians change these, these underlying trends of of involvement by countries or states continue.

00:40:52 Speaker 2

I'll just show you this piece of work, which.

00:40:56 Speaker 2

As Jenny said, it's it looks like a work of art, but it isn't. What I've tried to do here and I'll. I mean, this is basically the way I work on this kind of events.

00:41:03 Speaker 2

On.

00:41:08 Speaker 2

And try to find coherence among.

00:41:14 Speaker 2

Well, all things that happen, I mean, I'm sorry the projection is is quite bad. So I know that there's a, there's a printed copy which is going to go around. So I mean, even if if I finish and you know questions get going, you can still look at the printed copy.

00:41:30 Speaker 2

So what I've done here is that I've tried to identify the main events. So this line you've got in the middle are the main events.

00:41:40 Speaker 2

Happening between.

00:41:44 Speaker 2

March 2011 and.

00:41:47 Speaker 2

Autumn 2018 in Syria. OK, so these are basically the events with the dates. I mean, I've, I've, I've, I've signalled only the dates, but.

00:42:01 Speaker 2

What really was to my understanding, the most relevant of what was happening now, all the dots you can see above, you know or underneath at different colours.

00:42:13 Speaker 2

Again, I apologise because it's not easy to see it from where you're sitting, but there are different. There are 14 different colours, 14 different actors, so I've distinguished United States, the AU, the European Union.

00:42:28 Speaker 2

Turkey.

00:42:30 Speaker 2

Iran, NATO. I mean, I've made a list of actors that my understanding are playing a role in Syria. Back then, we're playing a role, and if they if you have the dots, which corresponds to a day.

00:42:43 Speaker 2

And a country that means and it's in.

00:42:46 Speaker 2

Upper parts.

00:42:47 Speaker 2

That it means that it's taken an initiative. OK. So for example, if Erdogan, you know, invites rebel factions to constitute.

00:43:00 Speaker 2

The Free Syrian Army in Istanbul, it would be up here. OK, now under here, you would have the same list of actors with.

00:43:12 Speaker 2

Events if they.

00:43:14 Speaker 2

If they.

00:43:16 Speaker 2

Have the consequences of actions of others, so the results of other of the others actions on them. OK, I don't know if that's clear enough, but the interesting thing is that you notice from the start of the.

00:43:32 Speaker 2

You know.

00:43:33 Speaker 2

As they move on.

00:43:35 Speaker 2

Is that?

00:43:36 Speaker 2

Have more and more of the countries which are in the lower part of the map OK.

00:43:45 Speaker 2

This part I mean the amount of countries in the lower part grow.

00:43:50 Speaker 2

That means that you have more and more people who are watching what happens in Syria, OK, I mean countries, that's what I mean. And of course, at the start, you don't see a lot of international actors involved.

00:44:07 Speaker 2

And that's exactly what the Syrians experienced.

00:44:11 Speaker 2

That you had a bad. I mean that they were basically.

00:44:15 Speaker 2

For months.

00:44:16 Speaker 2

To what the the assets wanted wanted to do.

00:44:24 Speaker 2

One also one point which is which is interesting I think is that this line which is up here but again which is a bit difficult to see is United States.

00:44:35 Speaker 2

Now 1 actor, which is rarely mentioned as having constantly work on Syria, is United States.

00:44:44 Speaker 2

I mean, one talks about Iran, one talks about Russia, Hezbollah, et cetera, et cetera. Of course. I mean Israel's always also in the picture, but I mean.

00:44:55 Speaker 2

America has, I mean, the United States. They've played a huge role. I mean, they were all everything. They were just following all the all the all the file that all their different agencies imply implicating the whole thing up until November.

00:44:58

Control.

00:45:11 Speaker 2

I mean, even even with the four of Assad, so you can really see.

00:45:15 Speaker 2

Do some some you know some detail like this that.

00:45:21 Speaker 2

The policy of the United States as a as a state act, you know, I'm not talking about the single individual or the single politician, but as a state actor to maintain.

00:45:33 Speaker 2

An actor or a regime like the Assad regime in Syria.

00:45:40 Speaker 2

Is illustrated in the amounts of work they.

00:45:42 Speaker 2

Into it.

00:45:44

You know.

00:45:46 Speaker 2

And umm.

00:45:48 Speaker 2

Of course, when, for example, when the when the Russians got involved in September 2015, then they had to, the Americans had to to adapt to that. So they put up the Syrian Democratic forces so.

00:46:03 Speaker 2

The the base of Al Tanf, which is on the motorway between Damascus and and Baghdad.

00:46:08 Speaker 2

Was put out.

00:46:09 Speaker 2

I mean, the Americans, they're not completely.

00:46:15 Speaker 2

How do we say that they're not passive? They take initiative on the ground too. But up until November 2024, in a really, really measured map. Well, thank you very much.

00:46:29

I.

00:46:35 Speaker 1

So thank you for that immensely well informed lecture.

00:46:42 Speaker 1

I I was intrigued, particularly with the.

00:46:45 Speaker 1

American, part of which you can emphasised near the end, the premise of your lecture was was, I guess.

00:46:53 Speaker 1

I.

00:46:54 Speaker 1

Mean, I said, saying from the beginning. Either you have media chaos.

00:46:59 Speaker 1

But arguably Syria got both.

00:47:01 Speaker 1

Just a decade and a half, we got both the chaos and still Bashar al-Assad and you and you're suggesting that the United States was basically working to maintain.

00:47:12 Speaker 1

In that situation, I understand that correctly. So my question is what happens now? I mean you when we were talking earlier, you were saying that the biggest wild card was Israel, that you could kind of predict the interests of most of the other.

00:47:17 Speaker 2

Exactly.

00:47:28 Speaker 1

Foreign powers that were involved in Syria but that Israel is less predictable. I mean the the either me or chaos is a kind of transactional logic. And now you've got and you know America ruled by somebody who's like a champion of transactional politics.

00:47:45 Speaker 1

And so I'm wondering, I mean, what's going to happen now that we've got?

00:47:50 Speaker 1

An American regime that is intensely transactional, I mean, are they now going to turn around and say they want something different from Syria? I mean, what can you speculate on what that might mean?

00:48:02 Speaker 2

You mean the Trump administration?

00:48:04 Speaker 1

Yeah, I mean, you mentioned earlier that Biden was afraid what Trump would do and he would go in and start talking to Assad directly, I guess.

00:48:12 Speaker 2

That semi policies in my part, I mean I don't have hard proof of that, but I think that's a rule but.

00:48:18 Speaker 1

Of course, now the situation is.

00:48:21 Speaker 2

Yeah, I think I think.

00:48:23 Speaker 2

Is he's not unhappy with with job, with with the situation he inherited and I didn't have any trace of him saying he wanted Assad back.

00:48:37 Speaker 1

But maybe he'll want something else you want. You know, a Riviera and Syria as.

00:48:40 Speaker 1

Well as and.

00:48:42 Speaker 2

Well, I think, I mean, Biden, when he left, he introduced the Saudis to the file.

00:48:51 Speaker 2

So there was a real idea that Saudi Arabia should play an important role in the future of of of Syria, I mean.

00:49:01 Speaker 2

I think that Saudi Arabia is also very surprised by what happened. Qatar was on board. I mean, they played an immense role in, in, in well in encouraging and supporting this, this the takeover.

00:49:15 Speaker 2

But if if Saudi Arabia is involved and Trump has some kind of connection with Saudi Arabia, as we've seen, you know, I mean they're they're Minister of Foreign affairs. I mean, Minister of United States Foreign Affairs and Russian counterpart have met in Riyadh or it was in Saudi, Saudi Arabia anyway, so.

00:49:37 Speaker 2

That that will appease Trump.

00:49:42 Speaker 2

And I think he's really busy.

00:49:46 Speaker 2

Other other yeah. I mean other subjects in the region, I mean.

00:49:52 Speaker 2

Palestine being one.

00:49:54 Speaker 2

And it's not only it's.

00:49:56 Speaker 2

Only raaza, of course.

00:49:58 Speaker 2

And Lebanon is another one. I think they must be.

00:50:03 Speaker 2

But I mean, I could be mistaken, but thinking too much about Syria and the impression I get from the ground.

00:50:11 Speaker 2

There is that the Syrians themselves have not yet understood who is really going to take an initiative.

00:50:18 Speaker 2

I mean, there is a there is there are there being demands repeatedly that the European Union lifts sanctions, for example.

00:50:26 Speaker 2

On the Syrian states, but there is a law of decision making.

00:50:33 Speaker 2

And one interesting dimension, for example is the informations people get people in Syria. The information they receive. What kind of news do they get? And it's extremely confusing.

00:50:47 Speaker 2

It's extremely confusing what the country's going to look like, who's going to do what, who's going to be in charge, what the so there is there is uncertainty and I think that must mean that there is no real initiative taken on the part of Trump.

00:51:03 Speaker 2

For the time being.

00:51:05 Speaker 1

Please join me in thanking Professor Wardenberg for an excellent presentation.