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QI Panel:

The Global South and the Gaza Assault

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Trita Parsi 0:37

Welcome to the Quincy Institute's panel titled The Global South and the Gaza assault. My name is Trita Parsi, I'm the Executive Vice President of the Quincy Institute, a transpartisan think tank in Washington that promotes ideas that move US foreign policy away from endless war and toward vigorous diplomacy. We favor a national security strategy that is centered on diplomacy and military restraint. Those are ideas that I think that right now is in dire need of American foreign policy. If we take a look at what is happening in Gaza right now, Israel's harsh and indiscriminate bombing following the attacks by Hamas on October the seventh has invoked a major and remarkably convergent response across the Global South states as diverse as South Africa, Chile, Mexico and Indonesia have initiated by forcefully participated in international legal action on Palestine, including a case at the International Court of Justice alleging genocide by Israel. Meanwhile, the United States continues to be by far the biggest backer of Israel's assault, including being the key supplier a weapon, it's cheap shield at the UN Security Council and giving it diplomatic and political protection, with Biden continuing to resist putting any material pressure on Israel to change course. How do different countries across the Global South View the war in Gaza? How has this increased the contradictions in the international system and what is needed to rebuild confidence and trust between the global majority on the one hand, and the United States on the other hand, given Washington's refusal to on the one hand stopped this conflict while at the same time pressuring a lot of other countries in the Global majority to support the United States in Ukraine?

We have a fantastic panel that will address these and other questions today. We are delighted to have with us Filipe Nasser, senior adviser to Brazil's Foreign Minister, Professor Samar al-Bulushi of the University of California Irvine and of course, Sarang Shidore, the head of Quincy Institute's global south program. For those of you who are joining via zoom, as always, please use the q&a function at the bottom of your screen to ask your questions. I will do my utmost to get to those questions throughout the conversation. If you're watching this on Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, you can also put in your comments questions in the comment section and we will try to get to those as well. So without any further ado, let me introduce our esteemed panelists. Filipe Nasser is a Brazilian career diplomat and current senior adviser to Brazil's Foreign Minister. Mr. Nasser has had several postings including in Brazil's embassy here in Washington, DC, but also at the UN mission of Brazil in New York. He founded and served as the first editor in chief of Yuka the yearly Journal of Brazil's Diplomatic Academy. Samar al-Bulushi is a non resident Fellow at the Quincy Institute, an assistant professor of anthropology at the University of California, Irvine. She's a former contributing editor at Africa as a Country and has published in a variety of public outlets on topics ranging from international

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criminal court to the militarization of American foreign policy in Africa. And last but not least, we have Sarang Shidore, who of course, is the director of the Global South program here at the Quincy Institute and also a senior non resident fellow at the Council on Strategic Risks. He is also a member and an adjunct faculty at the George Washington University where he teaches a class on the geopolitics of climate change. His areas of research and analysis are geopolitical risks, grand strategy and climate security with a special emphasis on the global south and Asia. So I'm going to turn to you first. Filipe Nasser, on October 1 of last year, Brazil became the president of the Security Council. Seven days later, you have the Hamas attacks 10 year days after that, the invasion and of Gaza by Israeli forces and the beginning of the bombardment. Brazil put forward a resolution at the time. That was quite benign compared to later ones. It did not call explicitly for a ceasefire in terms of using that terminology, but rather the term that was adopted by the Biden administration, which was a humanitarian pause. Nevertheless, the Biden ministration vetoed that resolution, the first out of three resolutions that Biden has vetoed since the beginning of this phase of the conflict. Walk us through what happened that month, but the thinking was on the Brazilian side and the reaction to this veto by the Biden ministration. And the reaction of other global south countries that supported Brazil in this and it should be noted, the United States was the only negative vote in that. Against that resolution. All others either voted in favor of it and one country. Abstain and that was the United Kingdom. Filipe, tell us what happened. You are on mute.

Filipe Nasser 6:10

That's becoming a habit readings from the seat of the foreign ministry in Brasilia. Thank you Trita, let me also greet my my fellow co panelists Samar, Sarang, it's good to see you again. So Brazil was an elected member of the Security Council at that point in time, we were of course serving a two year period in the council, the years 2022 and 2023. So by sheer alphabetical lottery, it fell upon us to chair the Security Council and the month of October 2020. And incidentally, if that's the right word, one week later, the crisis in Gaza struck. And the foreign minister at the time, the gentleman whom, under whom I serve now was touring Southeast Asia doing diplomatic work. So upon the orders by the president by President Lula, he traveled all the way to New York, to summon the the first emergency sessions that we held under the the the council's auspices to address the situation in Gaza. Few days later, we concocted a draft resolution that and I don't want to get this wrong, I'm gonna I'm gonna read it from from from the text, the draft resolution that we put together, a condemned the hideous terrorist attacks committed by a mass that demanded the release of all hostages, it condemned every form of terrorism. And that's, again a violent acts against civilians. And of course, it it called upon the Israeli government to resign the order of evacuation of civilians in the north portion of Gaza. And last but not least, proposed a humanitarian pause, which was, in a way a concession to the more direct and blunt blunt language of establishing a ceasefire. So the one thing that we must bear in mind when we think about the draft resolution put together by Brazil, the time at that this was not in Brazilian text, per se. This was an effort to interpret and sympathize the sentiment of the 15 members of the Security Council. So very high stakes diplomacy, we're taking what's taking place at a time to make sure that the resolution muster enough support to be adopted and held the situation on the ground. So these directives, these instructions contained in that

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draft resolution are very objective, they were not only sharing an idea of what the situation should be, it was trying to get the situation on the ground, actually improved. So we put the resolution to vote with the expectation because of course, a high level consultations, as I said before, were taking place at a very high level in various capitals of the world. This was not only a war, a job carry out carried out very which they did very competently, by our mission to the UN in New York. This was also happening in various capitals in Europe, and across the world to make sure we had enough support to adopt the resolution. And we and quite honestly, we were under the impression that the resolution would have been would be approved. It came a little as a surprise that the one of the permanent members of the Security Council did not cast a positive vote to actually cast a negative vote to the proposal that we had concocted as an as a collective effort reflecting the sentiment of the council at that opportunity. After the draft resolution was vetoed, we were still met a president of the Security Council and we remain the non permanent member of the Security Council all the way through December last year and put every effort together to help establish a ceasefire or humanitarian pause for that matters help with the release of the hostages back to Israel and back to their original countries when that was the case. And we also put together a very sensitive diplomatic operation to release our own nationals that were both in Gaza and in Israel 13 flights, spearheaded or carried out by the Brazilian Air Force went went to first to Rome, then to the region, to pick up around 1500 resilience from Gaza and from Israel. And they were brought safely back home. And just a side note, with absolutely no charge for them. This was a humanitarian operation as far as we understood it, and those people are now they're either Brazilians, or the jewel, Brazilian, Israeli or Brazilian Palestinian nationals.

Trita Parsi 10:54

Very interesting. So the expectation was that the resolution would pass and that it would not get a negative vote. What was the reactions to the negative or both inside the Brazilian government and from other countries in the council as well as in the global south to this veto?

Filipe Nasser 11:15

I guess the answer to your question Trita is that no matter what the sentiment in Brazil's government was, and of course, we're very frustrated, having made the concessions to make sure the draft resolution was as reflective of a collective sentiment as opposed to our own views. I think what we felt was this was a wasted opportunity to help the people on the ground to stop the violence, to stop people from being needlessly killed on the ground.

Trita Parsi 11:45

Thank you. Samar, if I could turn to you, I had a conversation with a former senior African official who's very experienced in the foreign policy of the region as a whole. And she said something to me that I think stood out a little bit. She said that there's not a person in Africa that is not shocked or stunned. I think she said, by what Israel and the United States are doing in Gaza, essentially, presenting a view that this is not just something that Africans view, as an Israeli

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action, but is it a joint Israeli American action? Could you react to that? Is that a fair assessment? Is that a perception that is widespread in Africa that this is not just an Israeli action, but as an Israeli American action?

Samar al-Bulushi 12:40

Yeah, so I think it's important to state at the outset, Trita that, historically speaking, Africans have a long standing sense of solidarity with the people of Palestine. And that sense of solidarity extends as far back as the 1950s and 60s, in the anti colonial struggle, and is especially prevalent and present in places like South Africa, which has its own history of apartheid. And so we've seen people taking to the streets, in the masses across the African continent, in the last several months in solidarity with, with the Palestinians in Gaza. Now, as far as this, the sense of shock is concerned, I think that there are reasons to be shocked and reasons not necessarily to be shocked, in the sense that Africans have long been calling out the double standards of the United States when it comes to its so called commitment to human rights and the rule of law. And we've seen that most visibly in the in relation to the International Criminal Court, right, we know that Africans were among the first and the most supportive of International Criminal Court. And it's early days among the first to join. And in the last 567 years, we've seen them very clearly pointing out the ways in which this is fundamentally reproducing the very power inequalities that continue to structure the global order more broadly, largely, because the US has refused to become a member of much like other global powers, to the point that Africans have been expressing their protests and the resistance by in some cases threatening to pull out from the court. Right. So that's why I say that, you know, I think some people across the continent had reason to be shocked, and others, not necessarily so. But I do think that over the course of the last several months, the degree to which the US has maintained such unconditional support, both militarily and politically, for Israel in this relentless campaign, this genocidal campaign that I think inevitably, you know, at a certain point, you you have to be shocked.

Trita Parsi 14:54

Interesting. Sarang, what Samar is saying here is that essentially there is a large convergence in terms of African perspectives on this. Would you say that that extends beyond Africa that there is that convergence across the global south? Or are there different trends that may go in contradictory directions on this specific issue? And if so, what are the trends? Or what are the areas in which differences emerge?

Sarang Shidore 15:21

I think the short answer to that question Trita, and I'm glad to be on this panel and glad to share this stage with my distinguished co panelists. But to get your question, I think the dominant trend is that of convergence. I mean, you can look at the vote counts in the UN GA General Assembly. And you can see the numbers and the numbers speak for themselves. I mean, we had in the last major resolution at the UN GA in December, we had 82% of Global South states

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that supported an immediate ceasefire, no preconditions. That's a very large margin of states. And so I think one can simply say that the dominant trend is that of wanting this war to end. However, there are some differences that emerge. If you look carefully below the surface, when you look at especially the amendments that were introduced during the process of taking that vote in the USGA, specifically, there was a US backed, amendment introduced that called named Hamas in the resolute in the amendment, and label what happened on October 7, as a terrorist act, and condemned Hamas. Now, of course, all states practically that I've seen, have condemned what happened on October 7, so that there are no exceptions, almost almost in the broader global south space. But on the amendment, we see some differences because some states back that amendment. And that amendment did not refer to Israel, it only refer to Hamas. And this was the objection of many states that voted against the amendment, but significant set of states back this amendment, and these states include large and important states such as Chile, Peru, Singapore, India, Philippines, Kenya and others. However, again, to talk that it must be noted that none of these states let this amendment come in the way of supporting the final resolution. So the sentiment to end this war as the most urgent and unconditional thing to do was dominant and even this discourse.

Trita Parsi 17:46

But would you say that the convergence is simply because their perception of the facts on the ground on this issue? Or is it bigger than that? Is it about the fact that this is happening less than two years after the invasion of Ukraine by Russia and illegal invasion, and the very, very strong language by the vital ministration that that invasion was a threat to the rules based international order, which apparently seems to have no bearing on what happens between Israel and Gaza? Now, in fact, we looked at it and the Biden ministration, has almost stopped talking about the rules based order. The few instances we see senior people use that terminology is almost exclusively on Ukraine, never on Gaza. Is it just about what's happening on Gaza? Or is it something bigger that is yielding the sentiments in the global south about this issue?

Sarang Shidore 18:40

It's certainly something bigger. And I think that the fact that the rules based order rhetoric has been dialed back itself is a sign of where the winds are blowing on how the world and I'm going beyond the global South, even some European states and others have have taken this position, are seeing the hollowness of the rhetoric and the glaring double standards that exist in the international order today. So from that perspective, I think there are a number of points there that are worth noting. One is the fact that, you know, I generally believe that most states including those in the global south to act based on the national material interests most of the time. But there are moments in the international system, when there are events, so beyond the pale that are so destabilizing, and otherwise invokes such a major human response across the world, that something else emerges. That's something in this case, I think is beyond what is normally seen in international relations. What we are seeing is an ideational factor that has emerged the sense that international law is something important. In some cases, it has to be defended, even if that entails some risks for these relatively weaker countries. Most of these

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countries who are voting are not great powers by any stretch, some are middle powers, but certainly all are somewhat vulnerable or very vulnerable to responses that may emerge. So so there is certainly this sense that international law is something to fight for at some point in a crunch time. And secondly, I think the shadow of history in the Global South, the colonial history that some are referred to, emerges at these moments because Palestine has been seen by many states, not just as an ethnic issue, far beyond the issue of ethnicity, or race or religion. It's seen as a, the last one of the last holdovers of the colonial era. And, for example, a country like Indonesia is duty bound in its constitution to oppose colonialism and in all its forms. And that's true for many other countries. And they're taking the positions that they have taken also based on this historical context.

Trita Parsi 21:00

Filipe, if I could pose the same question to you international law is very central to Brazilian foreign policy, the rules based international order seems to be a much less preferred term from Brazil's perspective, and particularly mindful of some of the tensions that existed or irritation between the United States and Brazil, over how to handle Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine. How has the response of the United States and how things have developed in the Security Council effective Brazil's thinking of this conflict as perhaps being more than just a conflict between Israel and the people in Gaza right now?

Filipe Nasser 21:43

Thank you. As a matter of fact, international law is so central to Brazil's foreign policy, it is exactly enshrined in our own national constitution. So we take it very, very seriously. And the idea, perhaps, which is the underlying idea of the concept of rules based international order, that it can pick and choose selectively, which rules to follow and abide by? It's not what we think it's not the way we think. As we've been saying, this, this war is a tragedy, the the how it affects civilians is hideous, but it speaks to a bigger problem. Of course, one, one of the bigger problems is the absence of Palestinian statehood. Brazil takes very seriously Israel's security. And if you allow me a quick historical digression at the end, I'll tell you a quick, quick cautionary tale. But we also think it's about time, we, the international community, settles on recognition of Palestinian statehood, and allows Palestine to be fully joined, fully, fully balanced and fully joined the community of nations. But even bigger as as an issue is the lack of reform of global governance institutions. And that's where I think and I think the word that's the wrong has chosen convergence among what's now called the Global South. It's the key concept. What will these countries have in common is that perception that international order is profoundly asymmetric and detrimental to their interests, and the way to go about it to correct those injustices. And the symmetries is reforming global governance institutions, including or primarily the UN Security Council. So the fact that that council was paralyzed the fact that we had three or four key draft resolutions vetoed in the council is a reflection of how the rules are, are bent against the global south or developing countries or however we want to call it. If you allow me to do that quick digression. I would go back to 1947 when the State of Israel was created, and it was created by the hands of a Brazilian, former foreign minister, former ambassador to

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Washington, called Osvaldo Attamon was the first actually the only president of the General Assembly to get reelected and serve two consecutive terms. And that's that gentleman chaired the session that approved resolution 8181 With votes 33 countries in favor. See that we had fewer members of the went back then 33 votes in favor, 13 votes against and 10 votes against the great the partition of Palestine. Therefore, the literature recognize that resolutions as Israel's birth certificate, it's no coincidence that as well do I own a museum nearby Jerusalem, not in Brazil and Israel. Now you have the gavel? That was all that used to gavel Israel's into existence in international community. We had the rule called spelling out the three votes in favor the 33 votes in favor, that gaveled Israel's into existence we do not take Israel's security and existence and lightly we take it very seriously. Regardless of the fact that made to Brazil's US Israel relations now. We are not going through its finest hour. Now with with that, we feel that also the question of Palestine is not only a matter of historical justice, although it is it's a matter of bringing peace and stability to the region to the Palestinians, including the and also the Israelis. Thank you.

Trita Parsi 25:18

Thank you so much Filipe, if I could turn to you Samar, South Africa is a country that did bring Israel to the International Court of Justice. And that seems to suggest, I mean, it's important in and of itself, given South Africa's own experience. But this is one of the first cases we see a country from the Global South, taking a state that is broadly supported by the West, a bit a break of a previous pattern, but also something that seems to have given Africa a new sense of confidence in terms of how international institutions can or perhaps should be working. Could you comment both on that as well as on the court case itself? If you can?

Samar al-Bulushi 26:07

Absolutely. I think that if to connect back with some of what we've been talking the last few minutes, the case brought by South Africa to the ICJ is one example of a much more assertive politics emerging from the global south that has that we've seen in the last few years. Right. So just to reiterate the point that this is not only about Gaza, that we can look back to the Russia Ukraine situation and the vote at the UN General Assembly, when so many countries from the global south chose either to vote against or to abstain, and roughly half of those who abstained were from Africa. As we know, the basis on which many of these countries made those decisions was not out of support for Russia, but to make a very clear point about the double standards that are governing the global order. So the South African case, I think, is significant for a number of reasons. The strain Maalik at The Guardian wrote a piece around the time that they launched the case. And she pointed out that it's not only Israel that's on trial here, and that South Africa is testing the West claim to moral authority. Right. So once again, there are much broader issues that are at stake. Malik said that the court case is emblematic of a wider confrontation that seems to ask if this human rights infrastructure is real, or just a theater in the service of some international caste system. So to answer your point, your question Trita, about whether I mean, absolutely the South Africa's leadership, in this case, I think has been a huge inspiration for countries across the global South, including within Africa, in the sense that

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they're, they're reclaiming these international bodies, right, from which they have constantly felt either excluded by or unfairly under the jurisdiction or the limelight in a way that other countries have not been. And so this reclaiming of these international bodies is tremendously significant. And I think time will tell, right, whether this represents a trend for the better.

Trita Parsi 28:20

It's very interesting, because what you're saying, you know, this is a new confidence in the foreign policy of many African states global south as a whole, I would say. But, Felipe talks about the importance of reforms to the governing structure of the world going forward. But it seems to presume that Demir taking the case to the court has had that impact. How do you think all of this will play out in terms of the belief that the court could be an instrumental element of a change, global order, as well as larger reform and the confidence of the global south in their foreign policy? If the court case decides that what is happening in Gaza right now is deplorable. But it is not a jettison, if you could go for summer?

Samar al-Bulushi 29:17

I think that's an excellent question. And I'm torn as to where I fall on an answer in the sense that, you know, my phone Mamdani when he was responding to the initial findings of the ICJ case, made the point that the law represents an opening for politics, so rather than place so much emphasis on the law on international criminal entities, whether it be the International Criminal Court, whether it be the International Court of Justice, we should view it simply as a starting point, rather than placing all of our eggs in one basket. And for that reason, I think that we would all do well, not to place so much emphasis and so much hope in these bodies as the primary solution to what are ultimately political questions. Right. And so, you know, in terms of what lies ahead, whether or not you know, I think it's more than likely that we will be disappointed by the ultimate findings of the court. And precisely for that reason, we should be mobilizing and thinking about other avenues towards justice.

Trita Parsi 30:35

Filipe, could you give a quick reaction to that as well, I think what southern is saying at the end of the day, a lot of people would agree with, which is the changes in the governing structure of the world, as well as the voices of global south more equity cannot be limited just to this court case, but it has become a very potent symbol of it. If it goes in the direction in which it's determined that it is not a genocide, for whatever reason, technical or non technical. What do you think that will do to the growing efforts to see changes in the global governing structure of the world as well as this more confidence, greater confidence in the foreign policy of many global south countries?

Filipe Nasser 31:24

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It's a really good question. But I think in a way that the reform of global governance and structures is already happening, you know, the Brazil's also chairing the G 20. This, this this this year 2024. And a lot of the action now happens on the sidelines of the UN fora, such as such as the G 20. It's not what Brazil wishes for, we place a very, very high importance attach great importance to to the United Nations as the prime multilateral forum of the world. But if the decisions are not made, countries who tend to resort to the platforms where you can get the decisions and actions taken. Of course, Brazil endorsed South Africa's move to petition the International Criminal Court of Justice. We've been following the case very, very closely. And we hope it produces a concrete result for the Palestinian people, for the people in Gaza, we're suffering the most that ceasefire is established and violence can stop. But again, without Palestinian statehood, we do not see a promising future in the region we need. Perhaps not not so much a peace process, but peace itself, not so much a credible pathway to Palestinian state, or but Palestinian statehood, and wider national recognition to it. Now we've been, we have the summit of the future and the UN General Assembly come September this this year. And Brazil, again, is chairing that G 20 of those efforts will try and be a merge somehow to bring a more meaningful conversation about how to bring about a reform of global governance structures. I think that the state of the world now, as opposed to perhaps 10 or 20 years ago, when we had serious problems, the problems were not by a what they are the way they are now, if we could do not reform those global governance structures, they date back to the 1940s to the post world war two international order, we will keep seeing violence, a break in various parts of the world, the use of force to be very apt to be resorted to very liberally in several hotspots across the world. And it will be Ukraine would be Gaza. But there will be other places too. And what we can do to make sure that the voices of global south are factored in into decisions is reforming those structures and making sure that the norms are more favorable to a broader constituency of the international order. And not only the political legalistic design that we have, as of now.

Trita Parsi 33:55

Huh, very interesting. So feel free to answer that same question as well, but also want to take it back a little bit to Gaza itself. I mean, we've seen that there's been quite a lot of frustration and irritation across the world with the Biden Administration's position is standing in a way of a ceasefire. And that's what we've seen in the last five months, three resolutions at the UN that were veto, the one that was watered down into oblivion, and then it was a veto, but the US still didn't vote in favor of it. Let's say that this goes on for another three months and you have another two resolutions, or at least one other resolution vetoed again by the United States. The Israelis may go into Rafah and we will have even more bloodshed. Tell me how you think this will affect the relationship between the United States and so many countries across the globe, not in terms of the bilateral relations they will still want to be friends with the US, but to the point in which they are still supporting of or accepting of the idea of American leadership if this conflict continues in the manner that I just described.

Sarang Shidore 35:06

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Yeah, just to add a couple of thoughts to what Samar and Filipe Nasser ust said, I completely agree that law and law has utility, well beyond law, that it is a core element of shaping politics. I mean, just imagine a counterfactual where we have had we had had no processes internationally, nobody went to the International Court of Justice. By the way, there are two cases winding through it on Palestine, there's a previous one that was triggered in December 2022, which is a broader question on Israeli acts in Palestine. But there are also referrals to the International Criminal Court, one that dates back to 2014. And another one that Mexico and Chile have invoked recently. I don't know any other issue, maybe I'm wrong, but I don't know any other international issue that is subject to so many legal proceedings as Palestine. And with that generates, that generates a kind of a normative shaping of global thought, global action, perhaps even local action, perhaps you we would not have had the kind of vote we saw in Michigan, coming back to American politics had it not been for the for all of these international cases, the process itself has an impact, regardless of the final decision. So I think it's extremely important that the legal process, we have to see the legal process is actually extremely important in this entire entire discourse, regardless of where it ends up.

Secondly, your question on where this is, this is going, I think, in terms of US relations with the broader global south. There are, before October 7, us credibility on upholding the rules based order, quote, unquote, and on acting as a great power. And I am emphasizing the word glades, not in the military sense, but in the sense of sort of being scaffolding for a fair and reasonable decent governing structure that, of course, also delivers for national interests, but that was already quite weak. I think, as Samar mentioned, Ukraine, the responses to Ukraine, the various other trends, we have seen Iraq prior to that had already weakened us reputational clout across the world. And I think you're quite right that in bilateral situations, countries tend to be narrower, they're focused on what they can get out of a negotiation. The real symbol of this emerges in global multilateral structures, this is where states start articulating their their overall unease. And frankly, at this point, their alarm over whether the international system is going or not going, it's creaking at the seams, it is potentially heading towards many more serious crises, and reforming those structures is is essential. So the US will expect or should expect much more resistance over time because of incidents like these and global fora. And there are ways for the US to stem these losses to its own interest in reputation and actually reverse reverse some of this course.

Trita Parsi

Filipe, we have a question from the audience: How does the global south view their responsibilities in establishing and maintaining the New World Order? Not necessarily just a right to lead? For instance, what are they willing to do an act in, in addition to resolutions and talk? So it's it's putting a little bit of a pressure of responsibility on the Global South countries. And I'm going to change it a little bit and say, in terms of resolving the Israeli Palestinian issue, obviously, one should not dismiss the tremendous importance of putting forward those resolutions and the work that Brazil and other countries didn't, and negotiating that. But is that the end of it? Or are there other things that the global south needs and can do, given the fact

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that it is claiming that it needs to have a stronger voice that it does need to have a larger seat at the table? What would it bring to the table?

Filipe Nasser 39:29

Thank you for the question and for the question of the audience. Brazil does not claim to speak for the Global South. I want to get this out there at the beginning. But I can say from the point of view of our own national interests, and our own repertoire of action, and international politics, and that we choose diplomacy, dialogue, cooperation, respect for international law, preference for the peaceful resolution of vicious as a means to express ourselves International. So when it comes to specifically to the Israeli Palestinian conflict, the long standing Israeli Palestinian conflict. What we can give as a contribution is our good offices is our ability to speak to pretty much every country around the world, and to help set up perhaps a multilateral framework for for talks to happen. But it is an I'm afraid this perhaps will disappoint a little bit our audience, it is diplomacy, dialogue. And international law means to relay your messages and make sure our national interests and and points of views are heard.

Trita Parsi 40:33

But you did say something earlier on that I thought was quite noteworthy. Because you made clear that what Brazil would like to see is a Palestinian state, not a pathway to a Palestinian state, which is a very crucial difference. This is the language that the Biden administration is using right now. And it's the language that has that reflects what is what's been going on for the last 30 or so years, when which there's always a path to something but never actually the achievement of it. Do you think that the war in Gaza now how it's being conducted the war crimes that are being committed, whether it's genocide or not, is going to transform into something bigger in terms of greater pressure from the international community and the global south for a real resolution of this conflict, rather, one more peace process with a lot of nice words that at the end of it does not produce anything?

Filipe Nasser 41:32

We've been having meaningful conversations with the administration, including about the Palestinian issue and the war in Gaza. And we feel like the way they're framing the issue might represent a step in the right direction. You know, Secretary Blinken was in Brasilia, and in Rio and early February, for the G 20 ministerial meeting, and he had both an audience with President Lula and a conversation with Foreign Ministers data. And of course, the situation in Gaza was addressed in both conversations. So there is some level of convergence between the US position right now, now, but I think we may need to move more decisively to towards international recognition of Palestine as a State as an independent sovereign state and international community, which is what something that Brazil did, as early as 2010. And after Brazil's unilateral recognition, and that that's the word that several Latin American countries follow through, and and also recognize a Palestine as as a state. This is this is the time to make a decision. And this is a Brazilian Brazil's foreign policies opinion, to engage in the kind of

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diplomacy that will result in Palestinian statehood, as opposed to one more process. And we're willing to, to keep talking to keep engaging, to make sure that result is finally open and achieved.

Trita Parsi 42:52

Samar, if I could ask you to react to that. But also, early on, you mentioned how African states have tended to have a sympathetic view to the Palestinian issue, or the Palestinians, because of a sense of camaraderie, the colonization aspect of it. We saw that in Ukraine, the African states stepped forward and put forward a proposal of their own and try to make an effort to see that conflict resolved. Do you think that there is a momentum and the capacity in Africa or broader global south to do so and to break the deadlock, in which the only processes that have been in place have been led by the United States and they have failed, and we're now at a point in which the US has credibility to lead future efforts, not saying that they shouldn't be involved, but saying that the manner in which the US has lost credibility makes it very difficult for it to lead such an effort. But Will there be alternative costs constellation of countries that could lead it in? Could Africa potentially step up for that?

Samar al-Bulushi 44:03

I think that the question really is because there is no there is no doubt that African states have consistently shown leadership on the global stage and consistently offered alternative plans the plans of their own and I can think of the example of the lead up to the US NATO intervention in Libya, where the African Union did present a clear alternative plan that the US just outright ignored. And so what to me that is revealing of is two things right one is the consistent disregard and under appreciation of precisely the kind of geostrategic thinking of African states that the US has shown and to the fundamental power inequalities that continue to be at play in the sense that it was possible to simply ignore the a US plan and proceed with The US plan. Now. I think the other thing that's significant here is the shifting demographic demographics of the world as a whole. And Africa in particular, which by 2050, will represent 25% of the world's population, which is all the more reason why we need to be taking Africa seriously. And the global south more broadly, seriously, right, as a global majority, we cannot continue to think of African states and Africans as charity cases. Because the fact of the matter is, as I've been saying, they are offering their own their own solutions, right. So I think time will tell the fact that South Africa did take such a significant step in launching this case at the International Court of Justice is hugely significant. And I do want to underscore what what Sarang also said in terms of the symbolism of it. And the degree to which it is empowering, inspiring, and likely to feed into other forms of mobilization, whether it is in relation to Gaza, specifically and Palestine, Israel, specifically, or other other issues. And the final point I'll make is that, you know, the US released a US Africa policy and new policy in 2022, that coincided with the Russia, Ukraine conflict, and with the more assertive politics that we were seeing come out of Africa at the time, right, in the sense that most African states were saying, Look, we do not want to align. So they were invoking a politics of non alignment. And ironically, even as the US was championing its so called partnerships with African states behind the scenes and within Congress, you were also

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seeing very patronizing language telling African states Well, we're going to be monitoring very closely who you cooperate with, especially in regards to China and Russia. Right. And so that kind of double, I guess, contradictory set of diplomatic relations with Africa is not lost on African states. And I think it's likely that they're going to be weighing very heavily and thinking very heavily about the practical ways in which the US is willing to engage with them right, rather than consistently only prioritizing US interests or needs.

Trita Parsi 47:28

We have several questions in the chat from Timothy rush to David Spiele, Rosemary Gali in regards to the BRICS. And I'd like to ask you Sarang, and of course, it's complicated because with Russia's involvement in the BRICS, as well as us sensitivity about China, although the Chinese are now sending some signals of wanting to play a bigger role in resolving the conflict in Gaza, but do you see Sarang the BRICS being able to play a role here is that outside of what were bricks wants to be or can be useful?

Sarang Shidore 48:10

I think for the moment, it is unlikely, because we have, as you mentioned, rather disparate, different powers, there are different inclinations on Gaza or different interests that they have with respect to the US that outweigh any such joint attempt. There are, of course, the new members, but the new members are joining have just joined. And I think that the influence of the older ones will remain a little more significant for the time being. But I think the broader question that Filipinos are raised about the reform of global governance, this is ultimately the root problematic in the global south view of the world. It's two things. One is the rise, the global south countries, wherever they may be middle powers or less, have powers want to do better want to be more prosperous and want to be more influential. But the global south powers also want to create a world order, including institutions, whether they're multilateral development bank's the United Nations and other spaces of the sort that are more equitable, where they have more of a say commensurate with their current economic and political influence the mismatch we are stuck in and olders framework from the 40s 50s and 60s and many things have changed. So this is where I think BRICS' energy is most focused on all of this is tied to things like Gaza because the reason why problems like Gaza fester escalate explored is because we don't have a system where we can have a sort of a shared responsibility shared accountability and shared decision making. And this is I think, where the BRICS will have an impact this will be a longer run process. But this is how I see BRICS position in this in this question.

Trita Parsi 50:18

Filipe, as the B in BRICS, I'd like to pose the same question to you, you did not mention the BRICS in terms of the diplomacy that Brazil is engaging in in order to resolve this conflict. Do you see it as such that this should be done outside of the BRICS or can the BRICS play a role in this?

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Filipe Nasser 50:40

I feel that the BRICS is both more and less what some, perhaps a Western media outlets would try to portray it to be. It's more in the sense that it's not irrelevant. And it's less, but in the sense that it's not an anti Western coalition, by any way we want to see it. What it is, is a platform for dialogue and coordination on the political level. So when it when these countries come together, whether at the ministerial level or at Summit level, these leaders can talk and share notes, and perhaps bring a point of view that will percolate across the system, primarily through the United Nations as a platform and a chief, multilateral body of world. Of course, there's a more economic dimension to the BRICS, which I feel it's very positive, including the New Development Bank, which helped spearhead development projects across the world, but mainly in the in the BRICS members, including the new, the new BRICS member, the BRICS plus members. But politically, this is a platform for dialogue. Countries, they go to the meetings, they go to the summits, they talk about the issues, big issue statements, they go back to their capitals, and perhaps with a more united sense of how to move forward in terms of reform of global governance. They can speak not in one language, but they can speak a similar language, which is not to say that they have the same positions or they share the same points of view. Again, it's a platform not of notice, not a coalition of any sort.

Trita Parsi 52:12

That's interesting. And at the same time, as someone in the chat asked, what we're seeing is a stronger reaction, at least, that's what the person behind the question says, of some countries in the Global South South Africa, taking the case to the ICJ, for instance, then what we're seeing from some Arab states in the region themselves, and Samar, I would love to see your comment on that as to why it is that it appears that this issue is now driven more by global south countries in Africa. We saw the Malaysian Prime Minister yesterday essentially schooling the German leader on this issue. We're seeing it in Latin America with Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, others than we're seeing from the Arab world itself.

Samar al-Bulushi 53:04

That's an excellent question. And I imagine that at least part of the explanation lies in the fact that Israel has been so aggressive in pursuing and and deepening its diplomatic ties with a number of Arab States in the last several years, such that at the very least, economically, there's too much at stake for many of these Arab states to be confronting Israel in the way that we're seeing South Africa do today. And with that said, Israel has also been very proactive in trying to deepen its relationships with African states to the point that it's requested observer status at the African Union. And so I do think that we shouldn't entirely we shouldn't think of the African continent entirely as Pro Palestine, because I think the reality is actually a bit more complex. And a lot of African states have been much more muted in in their response in a way that contrasts with the way in which they responded, for example, to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. With that said, South Africa in particular, it's it makes sense, right, historically speaking, why they have taken a particular leadership role, precisely the historical ties of between

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resistance movements, right, that of the African National Congress today is the ruling party, consistently invoking that history of resistance such that it is it feels only natural that that the South African South African government would be the one to take the lead.

Trita Parsi 54:49

Interesting. Interesting. We have a question in the q&a by Joseph garrison. It's a good question, but it's falling. I mean, it's pointing out how the United States has been To the global South, which is an arena of competition between the United States and China. And of course, the perspectives in the global south tend to be that there's so much more than that. That's not even the primary thing that they constitute. But the question is how has this conflict in Gaza and the US is support for Israel here affected? The competition between the United States and China in the Global South? Sarang, if you want to go first on that?

Sarang Shidore 55:33

Well, I think, in general, China is geographically far from the region. But it's taken a pretty strong stance about opposed to collective punishment, and generally supporting a process supported all the UN resolutions for a ceasefire. Just in the last few days, we are seeing some shifts in the Biden administration on the rhetoric towards the war, we have seen Chuck Schumer speech yesterday, there seems to be some sort of a shift going on in Washington, perhaps tentative, perhaps limited towards trying to put more pressure to bring this conflict down. And China sending its envoy may be a case where China sees an opening, that the US is not as strongly opposed to anything it would do. Does that open up an opportunity for the United States and China to talk about this, behind the scenes? Indeed, not just US and China, but really some of the global south middle powers as well and Russia? Well, that's unlikely, but at least some of the states and try to come to some sort of understanding on how to nudge and push this war to an end? I don't know. But I wouldn't entirely rule it out the last couple of days are showing some some shifts on that. And China may may get drawn a little more into it than it's been.

Trita Parsi 57:14

Filipe, I'm gonna give you the last word, and I'm gonna say, looking back at Lula's previous term, he stepped in and actually managed to get an agreement between the Brazil Turkey and Iran that met the requirements that the Obama administration had put forward in regards to Iran's nuclear program. Unfortunately, the Obama ministration changed its mind rejected the agreement that had been reached. Lula also weighed in and tried to eat tested, a put his feet into the water testing to see whether he could play a role in the Israeli Palestinian issue. Brazil is no longer in the Security Council, you have mentioned about the work that Brazil is continuing to do in terms of diplomacy on this issue. But outside of its role in the G 20. Outside of its role in the Security Council or the BRICS, what pathways do you see for Brazil to play in order to materialize what you said not just the peace process, not just a pathway, but an actual state of the Palestinians that would bring security both to the Palestinian people and to the people of Israel?

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Filipe Nasser 58:30

Thank you Trita, although I don't know how to answer that question. What I can tell you for sure, is the foreign minister is now traveling across the Middle East to express Brazil support and a two state solution and take the pulse of key stakeholders in the region to see what happens. But honestly, we can only convey our message is conveyed our support, offer good offices. And this is how diplomacy is done through shadow diplomacy, going around spreading the message and telling relevant actors and stakeholders that if we move towards towards this direction, more war, peace and stability will also bring more economic progress will bring more commerce will bring more trade more investment, this is the way to go about it. So a foreign minister, as of now is traveling through Jordan and Palestine, Lebanon a couple other places with with a very clear message in support of the two states and Palestinian statehood.

Trita Parsi 59:29

Very good, we're delighted to hear that and of course, hoping that both Brazil's efforts as well as those others, hopefully in conjunction with the United States can bring a final end to this conflict and security for both of the people there as well as ending the escalation risk that the conflict is fueling throughout the region as a whole. With those words, I just want to thank all of you in the audience for participating for asking your excellent questions. And of course, a huge thank you to Filipe, to Samar, and to Filipe for participating and sharing their insights with the rest of us and I look forward to seeing you all soon again. Thank you so much.