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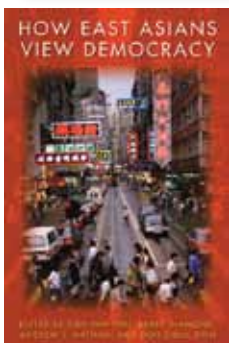
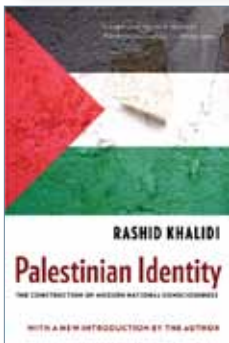
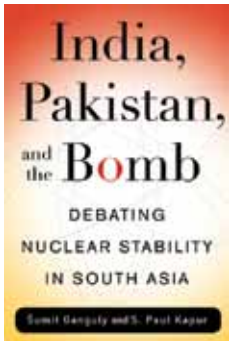
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CIAO Focus, October 2011: The Palestinian Bid for UN Membership

Capitalizing on the wave of popular protests sweeping across the Middle East and North Africa, Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas attempted to bypass stalled negotiations with Israel last month by petitioning the Security Council for full membership at the United Nations. Although the move generated much support and sympathy worldwide, the United States—which insists that the Palestinians can only achieve statehood through direct negotiations with Israel—has promised to veto what it sees as a unilateral declaration of independence. Approval for UN membership requires nine affirmative votes from the council's 15 members with none of the five permanent members (China, France, Russia, United Kingdom and United States) casting a no vote. The Palestinian request is currently under review, a process that could take many weeks or even months.

If the bid for statehood is stymied by a U.S. veto in the Security Council, an alternate plan backed by the Arab League, Turkey and several European nations (including France and Russia) would allow the Palestinians to petition the General Assembly to upgrade the status of the Palestinian Authority from nonvoting "observer entity" to "observer state." While a successful vote in the General Assembly would not officially recognize Palestinian statehood, it would enable Palestinians to join other UN bodies, submit resolutions and present legal cases before the International Criminal Court. This last prospect is of particular concern to Israel and the U.S. because it would empower Palestinians to challenge Israeli settlement building on the world stage.

The diplomatic confrontation at the UN puts the Obama administration in the awkward position of threatening to use U.S. veto power to block Palestinian aspirations for statehood after the president and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton have repeatedly supported the notion of an independent Palestine existing alongside Israel. Although the administration's stance on this issue has served to isolate the U.S. internationally, Obama does not want to waste his political capital at the United Nations right now and more importantly, with an election year

Advanced search

Source: Wikipedia

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