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The Current Head of UK Embassy in Libya All Foreign Forces Must Withdraw from Libya

The UK ambassador to Libya Nicholas Hopton confirmed that: «All foreign forces must withdraw from Libya» and that «the Government of National Unity will work to unify the country.»

He also confirmed the need to continue the political process. «We will work with our partners to support the withdrawal of the foreign forces from Libya, to transfer it to the elections and restore its full sovereignty.»

He added. A source from the

Libyan government revealed that the president of the Libyan Presidential Council Mohamed al-Menfi submitted an official request to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to withdraw mercenaries and Turkish military experts from Tripoli.» Al-Menfi, who visited Turkey last Friday, asked Erdoğan to stick to the requirements of the transitional phase in Libya which ends with elections on

December 24 this year and stabilizing the country through national reconciliation.

The issue of foreign mercenaries, which are about 20,000 fighters, is one of the most serious challenges the new Libyan authorities face.



Nicholas Hopton



China Oxgenates Iran with Billions of Dollars

On March 27, Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi signed a «strategic cooperation pact» to deepen trade, economic and political cooperation. As well, The two countries will also step up military cooperation with joint training, research and intelligence sharing. Iran-China 25-year Cooperation Program includes upgrading Iranian airports, harbours and railways, infrastructures, building new seaports, increasing cooperation in energy, oils and petrochemistry in addition to 450 billion-dollar Chinese investments in Iran. The US newspaper New York Times said that the deal could deepen China's influence in the Middle East and undercut American efforts to keep Iran isolated. But it was not immediately clear how much of the agreement can be implemented while the U.S. dispute with Iran over its nuclear program remains unresolved. The pact reflected China's growing ambition to play a larger role in a region that has been a strategic preoccupation of the United States for decades.

ISIS Appears in Mozambique ... and Takes over City

On March 27, after days of clashes, Islamist insurgents* seized the town of Palma, in northeast Mozambique, 10 kilometres away from a major gas project run by the French company «Total». A source told the «AFP» that: «Government forces have withdrawn from Palma so the town has been taken by a jihadist group.» Another source confirmed that: «The insurgents had taken the town and fighting in the area is still ongoing after clashes were suspended for months.» Witnesses said they saw bodies in the streets of Palma. Security reports stated beaches are strewn with headless bodies. The Mozambican newspapers Pinnacle News said that tens of civilians were beheaded and at least 21 members of the government forces were killed by ISIS insurgents who launched a three-pronged attack on the city of Palma.»

Turkey and Biden.. Unsuccessful Attempts to Fix What Erdoğan Ruined it

Turkey knows very well that the success of its expansion plans and preservation of what it sees as military gains -achieved with the help of its militias in Syria, Libya, Azerbaijan and elsewhere- largely depends on US cover or -at least- the lack of a real objection to its expansion in the conflict zones and exploitation of the civil wars in the Middle East to revive Turkish hegemony and fulfil the dream of Neo-Ottomanism.

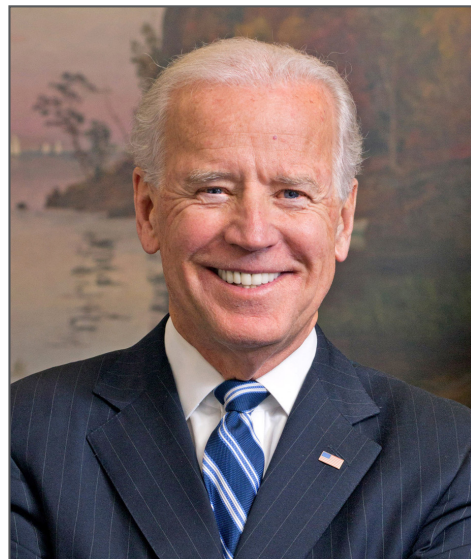
Therefore, Trump's defeat in the US presidential elections was a severe blow to Turkey's plans for more expansion and influence, especially that the Democratic president Joe Biden does not seem to favour Erdoğan.

Turkey Tries to Clear the Air

Turkey has tried to clear the air with Washington. It has made friendly diplomatic statements but the US is yet to reciprocate. On 10 January, ten days before Biden assumed office, Turkey's presidential spokesman Ibrahim Kalin said that «U.S. President-elect Joe Biden's transition team wants to communicate with Ankara» and that “They say they want to develop good relations with Turkey and turn a new page.» Speaking Turkish broadcaster, CNN Turk, on 10 Jan to Ibrahim Kalin added: “Biden, while he served as [Barack] Obama's vice president, came to Turkey four times and knows the region. Our contacts with the transition team so far are very positive”

Although these statements sound ordinary at face value, they actually send several messages. Some of these messages were aimed for domestic audience reassuring Turkish people that the Biden administration will not impose new sanctions and that Ankara can appease Biden and win him over. While others were aimed for Washington offering a truce to mend fences.

However, it seems that the Turkish messages were not as conducive as they were revealing, in terms of the the



The American president (Left) and his Turkish counterparts

reality of the tension between Turkey and the US. Reading between the lines of Turkish president's spokesman, only confirms the speculations issued by the former Ambassador to Israel, David Friedman, on 12 January regarding the state of tension and confrontation between Ankara and Washington, when he stated that «Biden is expected to take a hardline with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.»

Turkey's Hollow Vanity

When Turkey's diplomatic messages failed to extract any positive reaction from Biden, Ankara decided to escalate the tone. On 14 January Turkish Defence Minister Hulusthei Akar stated that it would be «very problematic» for Ankara to turn back on its purchase of Russian S-400 defence systems. He also reiterated that Turkey was in talks with Russia on obtaining a second consignment of the S400 defence systems. “We invite (the United States) to distance themselves from threatening language such as sanctions,» Akar told journalists in Ankara.

On 20 January, the US secretary of State Antony Blinken responded accusing Turkey of not acting like an ally. He noted that it was possible to impose more sanctions on Ankara over the purchase of S-400 missile defence system. «The idea that a strategic - so-called strategic - partner

of ours would be in line with one of our biggest strategic competitors in Russia is not acceptable,» He added. Blinken noted «I think we need to take a look to see the impact that the existing sanctions have had and then determine whether (there is) more that needs to be done «Turkey is an ally, that in many ways... is not acting as an ally should and this is a very, very significant challenge for us and we're very clear-eyed about it,» Blinken added in the same context. Turkey was not happy with the US attitude; it issued bizarre interpretations of the US refusal to accept the status quo under Erdoğan's rule. The funniest interpretation was when an MP of the AKP Orhan Miroğlu claimed that Joe Biden is actually a Kurdish descendent of the Biruki tribe whose ancestors emigrated to the US.

Ankara Submits to Biden

Less than a month after Akar's statements about the difficulty of turning back on purchase of Russian S-400 defence systems, he retracted his comments in the face of the Biden administration's firm resolve. In an interview published by the Hürriyet daily on 9 February, he said that his country will propose activating its Russian S-400s only partially, in negotiations with the United States. He said also that Turkey would be willing to offer concessions to

America, its NATO ally, on the Russian S-400 defence systems, if Washington withdrew its support for Syrian Kurdish forces (the Syrian Democratic Forces). “We can find a solution for the S-400s in our negotiations with the US but we expect them to see the facts about the YPG. If we cannot find a solution, we cannot go anywhere in relations with the US.”

Turkey Tests America's Reaction

Following an exchange of statements by both sides, Ankara tried to take advantage of its military offensive against the Kurdish fighters' strongholds on the border with Iraq. The attacks led to the killing of Turks who had been held captive by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) for years. The Turkish President accused the US of supporting the Kurdish fighters and claimed that the PKK militants executed 13 Turks in Northern Iraq. He also said that the US statement condemning the killings “if PKK's responsibility is confirmed”, was “a joke” as it implied scepticism towards the Turkish version of events. Turkey tried to frame the PKK for killing the 13 Turkish captives, while the PKK confirmed that they were killed by «friendly fire» as a result of the Turkish air strike on the camp where they were held.

Finally, Turkey had to try everything and say anything in its strive to disrupt the US support for the Syrian Democratic Forces and distract divert attention from Erdoğan's expansion plans in the region. On 20 February Erdoğan claimed that the leaders of US Capitol Hill attack had links to YPG. He claimed that: «The links of those who led the attack to the separatist organization's Syrian branch YPG/PYD were revealed,» referring to PKK as the separatist organisation. *

Erdoğan is still actively trying to get Biden on his side but to no avail. Biden said earlier that the Turkish opposition must be supported to defeat Erdoğan in the 2023 Turkish presidential elections.

Meghan and Harry: Racial Discrimination and Loss of Titles .. What's Next?

After Harry and Meghan announced in January 2020 that they quit royal duties, the royal family plunged into a crisis. Last month, Buckingham Palace confirmed that the couple will never return to royal life as they wish to start a new life independently in the US. Oprah Winfrey's interview with the couple has received widespread attention because of the bold statements that they made during it. Most notably, the fact that Harry felt let down by his father, Meghan's suicidal thoughts and the concerns within the royal family about Archie's skin colour. The interview shook the British royal palace as Meghan accused the royal family of racism, lying and pushing her into the brink of contemplating suicide. She said that her young son was denied the title <Prince>, while Harry said that his family had cut him off financially and that his father, Prince Charles the Crown Prince of Britain, had let him down and refused to answer his calls at some point. Royal biographer Anna Pasternak told the BBC: "It was a very soft-serving, soapy interview in Meghan's favour." Nobody asked her about her relationship with her father, nobody asked her [about] the astonishing fact that she only had one member of her family at her wedding. This is a woman who seems to make a habit of falling out with people, but none of Meghan's real behaviour was questioned. It was an absolute exercise in torching the House of Windsor."

In an article published on 9 March, the Daily Telegraph said that there was no point in the Royal family "hiding behind the sofa" as they "needed a bullet-proof vest as Harry and Meghan let rip". There were genuine concerns about the damage the interview could inflict on the British monarchy. The Conservative newspaper added: "From Meghan's revelation that she was almost driven to suicide by being in the Royal family, to the astonishing claim that Harry was questioned about the potential colour of Archie's skin,



From the Oprah interview last month

it's fair to say this two-hour tell-all represented a worst-case scenario for what the couple kept referring to as The Firm.

The BBC thought that the interview was destructive as it reveals "terrible pressure in the palace" and reflects the "image of careless individuals lost in the institution", sharing the same indifference. While the Times went on to say: « Whatever the royal family was expecting from this interview, this was worse. Meghan suffered suicidal tendencies. She was concerned for her mental welfare. She wept at an official engagement. And the royal family did nothing to help."

The picture that emerged was of a couple who were vulnerable, who felt trapped in their roles and who regarded themselves as unprotected by the institution. Harry also revealed how bad his relationship was with the rest of his family. He said relations with his father got so bad that the Prince of Wales stopped taking his calls. He also accused his family of cutting them off financially," the newspaper added, referring to the "harmful accusations". The Times believed that the interview broadcast by the American channel CBS "showed a picture of a weak couple who felt they had been imprisoned and left without protection from the royal family.»

The Daily Mirror highlighted the "deep sadness" of Prince Charles, Harry's father and his older brother William. The Daily Express condemned the couple's television interview with Oprah and said it serves to the interests of Harry and Meghan who have lived in the United States since leaving the royal family last spring.»

Like other newspapers whose pages were closed before the interview was broadcast, the Daily Mail published a "powerful" message sent by Queen Elizabeth II, Harry's grandmother, about the sense of duty, during her televised speech an hour before Harry and Meghan's interview. ITV used a military metaphor to describe what happened during the interview: "The couple shipped a B-52 bomber, drove it over Buckingham Palace and lowered their arsenal over it.»

The family had been previously accused of racism more than ten years ago in a well-known TV interview. This interview reminded us of similar accusations made by the Egyptian billionaire and former owner of Harrods, Mohamed Al-Fayed after his son Emad Al-Fayed, known as «Dodi», and «Princess Diana» were killed in a car accident in Paris in 1997. Al-Fayed accused the British royal family of «racism and hatred» in a television interview with Egyptian journalist Amr Adeeb. In 2008, Al-

Fayed described Prince Philip as a «Nazi» and «racist» in the Supreme Court during the proceedings of the lawsuit filed by the billionaire against people he believed were involved in the "assassination" of Princess Diana and his son Dodi. He pointed out that the hospital that could have treated Princess Diana was 10 minutes away from the accident site in the Alma Tunnel in Paris, but they were transported to another hospital that was more than an hour away from the site.

Prince Harry said in one of the two clips that he fears "history was repeating itself," referring to his mother, Princess Diana, who died at the age of 36, in a car accident because she was followed by the paparazzi to Paris after her divorce from Prince Charles. Harry said: «I'm just really relieved and happy to be sitting here talking to you with my wife by my side.» «I can't begin to imagine what it must have been like for her (Diana) going through this process by herself. It's been unbelievably tough for the two of us, but at least we have each other.» He added

Buckingham Palace has hired an external law firm to investigate claims that Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, bullied royal staff. The Palace initially said it would investigate after a British media report earlier this month cited unnamed royal aides as saying a complaint had been made against Meghan in 2018. A spokesman for Buckingham Palace said: «Our commitment to look into the circumstances around allegations from former staff of The Duke and Duchess of Sussex is being taken forward but we will not be providing a public commentary on it.»

This move comes as the Palace faces a crisis over the allegations made by Prince Harry and Meghan in their explosive interview with Oprah Winfrey. Harry and Meghan did not comment on Monday, but a spokesperson for the couple previously dismissed bullying accusations reported by The Times newspaper as «defamatory.»

Aid and Coronavirus a Focus on Africa..

Dubai Ruler inaugurates DIHAD Exhibition and Conference



Noor Martini

The outbreak of COVID-19 in late 2019 has exposed the weakness of the aid system around the world. Despite the numerous international organisations, which are supposed to be ready for such global disasters, the World Health Organization (WHO) was unable to fulfil medical needs. The world witnessed severe shortage of medical supplies and personal protective equipment, like surgical gloves and masks, the thing that created crisis between neighbouring states over the confiscation of shipments of medical supplies.

The shortage of medical supplies was not the only challenge; economies across the globe were seriously affected by the pandemic. The situation was dire in some countries that they faced food crisis. Some Arab countries managed to effectively control the pandemic and mitigate its impact on their economies, as much as possible. The UAE was one of the countries that managed the crisis competently. Moreover, it had an important role in providing aid, saving some disaster-stricken countries and supporting weak economies.

Against this bleak background, and under the theme "Aid and Coronavirus... A Focus on Africa"*, the 17th session of the «DIHAD» exhibition and conference discusses the most urgent issues with a focus on Africa and the issues that COVID-19 arose in addition to other issues such as the effects of military conflicts, humanitarian crises, climate change, population growth, urbanization, education, the shortage of job opportunities and many other issues. Levantnews Media Establishment covered the event, toured the exhibition and its pavilions and interviewed the participants. On

15 March, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President of UAE, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, inaugurated the 17th session of the Dubai International Humanitarian Aid & Development Conference & Exhibition (DIHAD), which took place between 15 - 17 March in Dubai International Convention Centre.

Why DIHAD is Important

Giuseppe Saba, CEO of the International Humanitarian City in Dubai, spoke of his delight to participate in Dubai International Humanitarian Aid & Development Conference & Exhibition (DIHAD), and said: «DIHAD represents an opportunity for exchanging lessons learned and improve our preparedness for the most appropriate emergency response. The IHC in Dubai, which is the largest Humanitarian Hub in the world, made extraordinary efforts in response to the Covid-19 epidemic.» He continued: «Dubai's excellent logistics infrastructure allows easy transit and transport of vaccines and collateral materials to developing countries and facilitates completing the vaccination campaigns to continue to respond to the pandemic.»

He also said: «We are proud of having partnered with Emirates SkyCargo, Dubai Airports and DP World and launched all together the «Dubai Vaccine Logistics Alliance» to speed up distribution of COVID-19 vaccines around the world through Dubai.»

Ahunna Eziakonwa, Assistant Administrator and Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), said:

«In an era of reducing aid and the still -transmitting impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, now, more than ever, the

international community must be more purpose-driven in pivoting from delivering aid to ending need.» She continues: «To succeed, we must activate the humanitarian - development nexus through joint design, financing and implementation approaches. We must support Africa and herald its promising future and use all tools at our disposal to support African governments, communities and people, in their efforts to harness the full potential of this land of unmatched opportunity.»

Parallel Events

This year DIHAD agenda includes the 'International Humanitarian Hackathon' final pitch day; the eight qualified teams from Egypt, KSA, USA, and UAE will present their creative ideas and solutions for tackling the identified humanitarian challenges.

The importance of the 'International Humanitarian Hackathon' lies not only in the role it plays in bringing the world's most brilliant minds together, but also in utilizing the potential

zones. It is a unique initiative that was launched from the UAE, the land of possibilities, to serve the whole of humankind.

In parallel to the conference, DIHAD featured a rich exhibition with participation from 600 of the world's most prominent non-governmental organisations, humanitarian governmental associations, businesses, suppliers and international brands.

Additionally, the 17th edition of DIHAD brings together the biggest donors, stakeholders, and major UAE based charities and foundations like 'Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Initiatives' (MBRGI), the 'Dubai Future Council on Humanitarian Aid', the 'Mohammed Bin Rashid al Maktoum Humanitarian and Charity Establishment', the 'Islamic Affairs & Charitable Activities Department', the 'Emirates Red Crescent Authority', the 'United Nations', 'Dubai Cares' and 'International Humanitarian City'. Many international organisations participated in the event, such as the 'Red Crescent and Red Cross Movements', NGOs, and other institutions to further explore the most urgent needs of people facing huge humanitarian challenges in Africa and to learn from their experiences and expertise in different fields

The exhibition features various activities and hosts the France Pavilion and the UN Pavilion, in addition to several workshops.

This UAE initiative comes at a critical moment as Coronavirus and its deadlier variants are sweeping the whole world while Ebola is breaking out again in Africa.

Thus, it represents a beacon of hope for the countries that suffer from poverty, famine and humanitarian crises.



The Battle of Constitutional Competencies

Does Ennahda See Its Last Hope in Public Support?



Murhaf Dwardari

Following the Tunisian Revolution in 2011, the government in Tunisia adopted a hybrid political system which is a mixture between presidential and the parliamentary systems, which has deepened the disagreements over the constitutional competencies between the two highest ranking officials in the country i.e. the President and the Prime Minister. The current political system that was established by Beji Caid Essebsi and Rached Ghannouchi, and enshrined in the 2014 constitution, divides executive powers between the President and the Prime Minister, but gives the PM more powers. This hybrid system is the main reason behind the crisis that Tunisia is currently witnessing. It is neither a parliamentary system where there is a flexible separation between the executive and the legislature, nor a presidential system where there is a clear division between the two powers.

The 2014 constitution determines the concentration of the executive power in the parliament and the government. Observers see that there are clear limitations to the President's intervention in the executive especially in defence, national security and foreign relations, as he represents the sovereignty of the state. While the powers of the Prime Minister are confined to setting the general policy of the State. However, it seems that the real concentration of the executive power does not currently lie with the government but with the presidential palace in Carthage; the thing that keeps the crisis about the Cabinet reshuffle in Tunisia ongoing. The crisis has taken a constitutional form; a conflict over power between the two main powers. Ennahda movement, which has a parliamentary majority together with its political allies, has threatened with calling its supporters to take to the streets.

«I Watch», the non-governmental organisation which is specialised in

monitoring corruption, issued reports confirming that there are suspicions conflict of interests and corruption surrounding eleven ministers who were named by Prime Minister Hichem Mechichi to complete the process of the Cabinet reshuffle which endorsed by the Assembly of the Representatives of the People. The President of Tunisia Kais Saied has completely rejected this Cabinet reshuffle and repeatedly reiterated that some of the new ministers are suspected of corruption. Saied did not reveal the names of the ministers under suspicion, despite Mechichi's demands.

Mechichi dismissed 5 ministers to increase the pressure on the President and force him to approve the ministers -who are supported by the ruling coalition led by Ennahda- and receive them in Carthage palace to take the oath of office. Mechichi claimed that he had asked the independent national anti-corruption agency about the ministers and it confirmed that there were no suspicions of corruption about them.

A statement for the Tunisian Presidency on its Facebook page stated that Mechichi sent a letter to Saied «about the legal aspects of the Cabinet reshuffle especially those that override some of constitution provisions.» «The letter also included a reminder of some principles which state that the political authority must reflect the will of people, and that

taking the oath is not a mere formality rather a commitment to the words of the oath and its consequences this world and the after life.»

Ennahda movement, which leads the Tunisian ruling coalition and whose leader Rached Ghannouchi is the speaker of the parliament, mobilised its supporters to take to the street to project its powers to its political opponents and respond to President Kais Saied and the calls to dissolve the parliament. The movement said in a statement: «Our country has witnessed for months frequent irresponsible attempts to destabilise our democracy its relevance. Moreover, these attempts aim to disrupt the government work and the state's sovereign institutions.» It added: «These attempts have lead to a deterioration in poor living conditions and diminished the focus on social, economic and healthcare affairs.» The demonstration of the Ennahda movement, which was named «Defending the Legitimacy, the State Institutions and the Constitution», was a response to a counterdemonstration that was held in support of President Kais Saied, calling for the resignation of the government, the dissolution of the Parliament and changing the political system. The slogans raised at the counterdemonstrations were hostile to Ennahda movement and its leader, Rachid Ghannouchi, accusing it one of being the main reasons behind the political crisis in the country.

In return, the Workers' Party called its supporters to take to the streets to denounce, what it described in a Facebook post, as «messing with the government system, and the interests of Tunisia and its people.» The workers' Party demonstration took off from Babel el Khadra Square towards Bourguiba Street; the thing that raised fears of potential confrontation between the two demonstrations, amid warnings of an escalation towards violence and chaos.

Rached Ghannouchi faced a no-confidence vote in July as four political blocs in the Parliament proposed a motion of no confidence in July to remove him from office. The vote failed to remove him; with 97 votes in favour, 16 against and 18 invalid. He stayed in office thanks to his ally Heart of Tunisia party.

However, some political blocs and independent representatives (MPs) were convinced that confidence must be withdrawn from Ghannouchi in light of the violations he committed which could amount to threatening the country's vital interests and national security. They started signing a new petition in the hope of meeting the required quorum, so that it can be put forward for voting in a general parliamentary session. More voices spoke out in parliament warning against keeping Ghannouchi in office because lest it impacts the Parliament performance and the country's political stability.

Tunisian sources revealed that a deal was signed between one of the Tunisian parties and Ghannouchi to save him from the no-confidence motion. MP Badr al-Din al-Qamoudi asserted that the petition to withdraw confidence from Rached Ghannouchi will succeed this time despite Ennahda movement pressures. Al-Qamoudi did not hide that Ennahda is pressuring some MPs to reject signing the petition. He noted that Ghannouchi is on hot seat and is facing criticism and complaint from the MPs of the Heart of Tunisia party who threatened to sign the petition because their leader Nabil Karoui was not been released from prison.



Hichem Mechichi

Moammar Al-Eryani to Levant News: Houthi Crimes and The Solution Yemenis Want

Hajar al-Desouki

In a telephone interview with «Al-Eryani», he revealed the extent of crimes and violations committed by the Houthi militia. He gave his analysis of the reasons behind prolonging the war for nearly 6 years. The Yemeni Minister of Information talked about several issues, including the nature of the current relationship with the new US administration and the impacts of its decisions. He also addressed Iran's plans to use the Houthi militia in implementing its expansionist agenda and spreading chaos and terrorism in the region. The interview coincides with the sixth anniversary of Operation Decisive Storm, on 25 March, which was led by Saudi Arabia to restore legitimacy in Yemen to save the country from the Iranian-backed militias.*

■ To what extent are you pinning your hopes on the new US administration to end the war?

“The current US administration is more experienced in Yemen; it was involved in the events that the country has witnessed since 2011. It was part of organising the Transition Process, in accordance with the Gulf Cooperation Council initiative, and its implementation mechanism,* and the National Dialogue Conference which included all political components, in conjunction with the Houthi militia's coup against the conference outcomes and the proxy war it launched against Yemenis to fulfil the Iranian agenda.

The initiatives recently announced by the US administration to end the war and bring peace to Yemen were welcomed by the Yemeni government and people. The Yemeni government asserted its support for any efforts made by brotherly and friendly countries to establish a just and comprehensive peace in accordance with the three terms of reference (i.e. the GCC initiative and its implementation mechanism, the National Dialogue outcomes, and relevant Security Council resolutions) and the efforts made by the United Nations Special Envoy for Yemen in this regard to put an end to the suffering of Yemenis.”

■ But the new US administration delisted* the Houthi movement as a foreign terrorist organization. How do you interpret this?

“That was disappointing. It confirmed that the international community is still oblivious to the reality of the Houthi militia and their actions, which are not different to those of terrorist organizations; in addition to their inherent relationship with the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps. The international community must come to the realization that the effective way to force it to settle for peace and end the war is by intensifying political and military pressures.* The Biden administration took that decision as part of a comprehensive review of all the policies that the previous US administration had pursued against the Iranian regime and its militias in the region. It is an attempt to incentivize the Iranian regime to engage in negotiations on the nuclear program.

However, the Iranian regime and its militias in the region responded with their usual indifference to the US administration's approach and resorted to an all-out escalation of the conflicts in the region, increasing the terrorist attacks in Iraq, Syria and Yemen, and targeting Saudi Arabia and merchant vessels in the

International North-South Transport Corridor.»

■ Are you saying that revoking Washington's designation of the Houthis as a terrorist organisation has emboldened them and led to the escalation of their attacks on Marib?

Yes! The political, military and humanitarian conditions have deteriorated since Washington delisted the Houthi movement as a terrorist organization. The Houthi militia interpreted the decision as a green light for committing more terrorist attacks. They have escalated their political and militant activities on all fronts of the Marib governorate, targeting civilian infrastructure and civilians in Marib and Saudi Arabia, in an attempt to take advantage of the regional and international developments to achieve military progress and impose a fait accompli on the ground.»

■ Various warnings have been issued against the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) plans to thwart the Riyadh agreement, as seen in the attempt to tighten the noose on the capital Aden with Turkish support. How do you tackle this?

“The signatories of the Riyadh Agreement are aware of the big responsibilities laid upon them in light of the challenges that Yemen is facing, especially countering the Iranian expansionist agenda. There is a common awareness of the dangers of turning the country into an open field for regional conflicts and the need to unite to restore the state, bring down the coup, normalize the conditions in the liberated areas, improve living conditions and alleviate the Yemenis' suffering.»

■ What are the Houthi militia's most notorious crimes that have been detected in relation to child recruitment?

“The Houthi militia's recruitment of children is the most dangerous and heinous crime in a long catalogue of abuses and violations committed against innocent Yemenis. It is a flagrant and unprecedented violation against international humanitarian law and child protection agreements that prevent using children in wars. It is estimated that the Houthi militia has recruited nearly thirty thousand children since the beginning of the

coup. It lured them away from their homes and schools into brainwashing courses indoctrinating them with hateful slogans and sectarian ideologies imported from Iran, and filling their heads with hatred, and terrorism before they are thrown into bloody battles to fulfil the Iranian agenda. We have repeatedly spoken out against the dangers of the abuses that are being committed in the Houthis controlled areas. They continue to weaponize education, distort school curricula and recruit children, which will produce a generation of terrorist who will threaten security and stability in Yemen and the whole world.

■ Against this background of concerns and warnings, what are the main challenges facing the legitimate Yemeni government?

«The challenges that the government faces are grave and substantial. The terrorist and barbaric attack on Aden airport by the Houthi militia illustrates the major difficulties it faces and the various Houthi attempts to thwart the legitimate government and the Riyadh Agreement.» We are aware that the challenges and obstacles facing us on various levels, are great; namely: achieving economic stability, implementing the security and military part of the Riyadh Agreement, normalizing conditions in liberated areas, paying salaries, providing basic services to citizens, and improving living conditions. We have no choice but to work hard to rebuild the country, provide a decent standard of living and the bright future Yemenis deserve.

■ How do you evaluate the Arab coalition efforts to support the legitimacy in Yemen in the past years?

Since the crisis broke out in Yemen as a result of the coup, the Arab coalition, led by our brothers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, has provided unlimited support to the Yemeni government and people, whether political, economic, military or humanitarian. The Yemeni leadership, government and people, value their sincere and support assistance for Yemen in its crisis. We hope that it will continue until Yemen recovers and resumes its role as an active and constructive member of the Arab region.

Moammar Al-Eryani





Euphrates River basin in turkey

Turkey is weaponising the Euphrates water against Kurds



Zara Saleh

Since the occupation of Afrin in March 2018 and Serekaniye and Tel Abyad in late 2019, Turkey has been directly at war with the Kurdish-controlled region of northeast Syria. In the few recent weeks, the Turkish authorities have decreased the water level of the Euphrates River by 50% or more that directly affects Raqqa province and other areas in Syria; and again the water is now being weaponised against the Kurdish population and self-administration autonomous that is led by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). However, the water level has been recently dropped dramatically and Syria now is receiving only about 200 cubic meters per second. Eventually, it has

affected people's life, agriculture, food security, fishing, and other environmental sectors that could lead to catastrophic outcomes in the future and even the region could suffer from drought.

By using water as a weapon of war, Turkey with the Syrian opposition mercenaries that affiliated with the Syrian Coalition began to bomb the water station since the occupation of Serekaniye in 2019. Furthermore, the water has been shut-off repeatedly, denying nearly one million population of Hassaka province of access to water, after their occupation of Allouk water pumping station in 2019.

Arguably since the Turkish government completed the Ataturk dam in 1990 on the Euphrates River with other dams later, the use of water as a weapon became a priority in their strategy. Turkey began to take control over the water supply to

Kurdish, Syrian, and Iraqi neighbors downriver of the Euphrates and Tigris. Suleyman Demirel, the former Turkish Prime Minister who became known as "the king of dams" at that time he said, "Arabs sell oil, why don't we also sell our water?". Furthermore, during the UN General Assembly meeting in 1997, Turkey refused to sign the International Waters Convention, and they argued that both rivers, the Euphrates and Tigris are located only in Turkish territories and it is not necessary for them to share their water with the neighbouring countries.

Despite the fact that Turkey, Syria, and Iraq have reached an agreement about sharing the Euphrates water in 1987 that allows Syria to receive a flow of water 550 cubic meters per second. According to that agreement, the Syrian government can use 42% of the water, whereas 58% will be

for Iraq. Later on, the agreement has been failed due to the rise in tension between Turkey and Syria because Turkey accused the Syrian regime of supporting the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK).

Consequently, with the other pressure on the Kurdish region such as an occupation, an economic embargo, and food insecurity due to the lack of water supply, Erdogan now is committing a war crime against Kurds by using the Euphrates River as a weapon of war. The results of such Turkey's policy towards the Kurds in Syria due to Erdogan's "phobia" of establishing a "Kurdish State" or independent autonomous in northeast Syria, could lead to catastrophic humanitarian outcomes in the region, and the UN and International Community should respond to this serious crisis caused by the Turkish government.

Britain's right royal rumpus



Ian Black

In a rare piece of royal good news the other day, the Duke of Edinburgh, commonly known as Prince Philip – Queen Elizabeth II's husband or “consort” – was discharged from a London hospital to rejoin his wife at Windsor Castle to the west of the British capital.

Prince Philip, aged 99, had spent nearly a month being treated for a heart condition and an infection before he was able to go home – though not to Buckingham Palace. Philip has spent most of the lockdown at Windsor with the Queen for their safety, alongside a reduced household staff dubbed “HMS Bubble.” The couple, who have been married for 73 years, received their first Covid-19 vaccinations in January.

Philip was also lucky to miss the bombshell of his grandson Harry's appearance, with his wife Meghan Markle, on the Oprah Winfrey chat show on March 7. “The family are very keen that he's not aware of the full extent of the interview,” one royal expert was quoted as saying. Had Philip died, it was reported after the event, it would have been postponed.

That controversial 50-minute interview with the star of American prime time TV has generated an unprecedented torrent of comment about the current status of the British royal family in the Queen's 69-year long reign.

It was indeed sensational, but actually not that surprising. Meghan, a Hollywood actress, is mixed-race and she reported “concern” amongst the royal household, about how dark their baby son Archie's skin would be when she was pregnant. Loneliness was another serious problem, prompting “very scary” thoughts of suicide.

Neither Meghan nor Harry would reveal who made these remarks, saying to do so would be “very damaging”. Winfrey later clarified it was neither the Queen nor the Duke



Prince Philip the Duke of Edinburgh

of Edinburgh. Later, Prince William, Harry's elder brother and the heir to the throne after their father Charles, the Prince of Wales, told reporters: “We're very much not a racist family.”

Buckingham Palace responded, two days after the interview, with a short statement in the name of Queen, just 61 words: “The issue raised, particularly that of race, are concerning. Whilst some recollections may vary they are taken very seriously and will be addressed by the family privately.” Britain's right

It was not the first time that complaints about the royals' attitudes had gone viral, generating a frenzy of coverage in the British media. Back in 1997 William and Harry's own mother, Princess Diana, was killed in a car accident in Paris after she and Charles had divorced. Diana, who was both white and very English, had her own difficulties with her husband's family – just like Meghan.

In 1995, Diana's candid interview with the BBC's Panorama programme was watched by 23 million people in the UK. Hailed as the “scoop of a generation,” it was three years after she and Charles had separated. It exposed their unhappy marriage, substantiated rumours and confirmed

that both she and her husband were having extra-marital affairs.

The aftermath was deeply damaging. It completely compromised Diana's relationship with the rest of the royal family, who knew nothing of the interview in advance, leaving her isolated from any palace support.

Fast-forward a quarter of a century and the impact of Meghan's may be similar. She and Harry had already attracted headlines last year by deciding to give up their royal duties, move to California and fund their lifestyle with lucrative media deals – though they took care to make clear that were not rewarded financially for their Winfrey interview.

Harry in particular emphasized the impact of “bigoted” tabloid newspapers on the couple's well-being. Meghan successfully sued the Mail on Sunday after it published a private letter she sent to her estranged father.

Reactions in the UK reflect changing attitudes towards the royal family. Different generations view it differently. Younger people are more likely to see the monarchy and the British press as institutionally racist, believe Meghan should have been

given more support and that she was entirely justified in airing her grievances in public. Her accusations clearly dealt a reputational blow.

Britons over 50 and older are more likely to feel that Meghan is an adult who should have thought harder about joining the royal “firm” – in which the institution of monarchy is deemed more important than individual members.

Queen Elizabeth has now reigned longer than any other British royal and heads the biggest monarchy in Europe. And she is more popular, wiser and less controversial than ever, disarming even the most republican-minded critics with a poll last year finding that two-thirds of Britons want to maintain the status quo.

Problems will escalate, inevitably, when she is succeeded by Charles, who is now 72, has been the Prince of Wales for more than half a century, and is known to want a “slimmed-down” royal family. A recent survey found that more Britons want William to succeed the Queen than want Charles himself to do so. Still, advocates of abolishing the monarchy and electing a British head of state have not made much progress. But trouble may well be brewing in the future.

Britain's Foreign Policy Reset



James Denselow

Boris Johnson's Government is owning some pretty major choices in the course of its short time in power to date. It managed to famously 'get Brexit done', although with predictable plummeting rates of trade with the UK's main market. It's handling of the Covid pandemic saw the worst hit economy and the worst rates of per capita deaths on the planet, yet its vaccine development and rollout has been one of the best resulting in a subsequent poll bounce. Britain

Now a long-awaited review of the UK's foreign and defence policy is being launched, representing a significant change in direction for the country's relations beyond its borders. Originally it was supposed to be a foreign, defence and aid policy review but with the merging of the Ministry for Development into the Foreign office and a cutting of its budget that decision appears to have largely pre-empted the larger

review.

The headlines around the review have grasped on the decision to end 30 years of gradual disarmament since the collapse of the Soviet Union. It would appear a strange choice to invest in more nuclear warheads, the hardest of hard weapons, months after the Ministry of Defence set out a 'Integrated Operating Concept' that focused on conflict below the level of war and the rise of nefarious weapons including cyberwarfare. Britain Yet the review laid out the nature of the threats the UK currently faced, with particular reference to hostility from Russia, Iran and non-state armed groups and decided that this was one of the answers to them. There is more of course and the spectrum of weaponry that the UK is keen to acquire more of ranges from the planet killers to more sophisticated drones that can infiltrate hard to reach parts of the world and have the ability to provide near continuous surveillance.

Another key component of the review is what it doesn't say as much as what it does. The term 'Global

Britain' has been used liberally in the shadow of Brexit as a placeholder for those worried that leaving the EU would diminish the UK's influence. The review promises 'new ways' of working with the EU, who is currently taking the UK to Court over supposed breaches of the Brexit agreement, and is clear that the US remains the essential strategic ally. Beyond the homage to the traditional 'special relationship' between the UK and the USA, is the interesting "Indo-Pacific tilt". Pre-briefed as a 'pivot' it is part of the narrative around that part of the world being home to the most significant areas of growth; economy, population and military and therefore where the UK needs to be at the races. The report reminds readers that it is "the world's growth engine: home to half the world's people; 40% of global GDP". Britain That wasn't exactly a secret, but the key question is how the UK expects to exert influence so far away from its own neighbourhood, especially considering how soured it has managed to make things between its former closest allies. Sending an aircraft carrier to the region –

supposedly one of the tactics – smacks of old school gunboat diplomacy of a completely different age.

There is a key Orwellian twist to be aware of when assessing the Government policies. It is a campaigning administration that is able to pump up rhetoric far and above the reality of its own actions. The review promises that the UK will be leading in "dynamically shaping the post-Covid order" yet the mainstay of much of its policies to date have been inward looking; 'taking back control' and removing plank upon plank of soft power influence as its dialled down its overseas aid.

There remains, of course, huge questions as to how a review so ambitious in scope can be turned into a reality and despite the evidence to date the UK Government should be given the chance to prove its willingness to be a more, not less, active participant on the world's stage. Vaccine distribution and the role of the UK scientific and health community in involvement in a more global vaccination effort is a prime opportunity to see a genuinely "Global Britain" in action.



Boris Johnson speaking in the house of Commons

Can Egypt-Turkey Reconciliation Make the Disturbed Waters Sleep?



Dalia Ziada

The world is closely watching the intense diplomatic rapprochement between Egypt and Turkey, over the past month. The many disagreements between Cairo and Ankara kept the two countries apart for nearly eight years. But, eventually, the two countries found themselves drawn towards each other, not only by the mutual interest in realizing the fruitful potential of their unique alliance, but also by the need to settle the disturbed waters in their surroundings; either in the eastern Mediterranean or in the Nile River.

On one hand, Turkey's primary concern, at the moment, is to settle its century-long disputes with Greece and Cyprus over the maritime delimitations in the Aegean and the Mediterranean. The Lausanne Treaty, signed in 1922 under the fog of war, prevents Turkey from enjoying its basic right to benefit from seabed resources, despite the fact that it owns the longest coastline in the eastern Mediterranean. As a result, Turkey cannot drill for gas, which is a matter of life or death for the Turkish people. Every year, Turkey pays more than 40 billion dollars to import gas, mainly from Iran and Russia.

Over the past two years, Turkey has been, particularly active in fighting for its rights in the Mediterranean. In December 2019, Turkey decided to get politically and militarily involved in Libya, in hope that it could help improve its situation in the Mediterranean. Then, in the summer of 2020, Turkey started seismic research for gas in the disputed waters. This aroused military tensions with neighbor Greece and Cyprus, which attracted other navy forces from Russia, France, and the United States in a way that threatened the security and stability of the countries sharing the Mediterranean basin.



Turkish President Erdoğan and Minister of Defense Hulusi Akar

Amidst this chaos, Greece succeeded in convincing Egypt to sign a maritime agreement that designates an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), which crosses with the zone previously delaminated in Turkey's maritime agreement with Libya. For decades, Egypt used to turn Greece requests to sign an EEZ agreement out of respect for Turkey. However, this time, motivated by the need to secure its own national security which Turkey threatened from the north, in the Mediterranean, and from the west, in Libya, Egypt decided to sign the EEZ agreement with Greece, in August 2020.

The Greece-Egypt maritime agreement and the formation of East Med Gas Organization, excluding Turkey as a member state, further complicated Turkey's situation in the Mediterranean. However, by the beginning of 2021, Egypt decided to tone down its standoff with Turkey. In March, Egypt decided to limit its gas drilling activities in eastern Mediterranean outside the area which Turkey unilaterally designates as the delimitation of its continental shelf. Egypt's respect for Turkey's demarcations, despite its EEZ agreement with Greece, was warmly welcomed by the Turkish Minister of Defense, Hulusi Akar.

"Egypt's respect to our continental shelf is important. We have many historical and cultural values in common with Egypt. The activation of these values could make a

difference in relations in the coming days;" said Hulusi Akar, who also hinted that a maritime agreement between Turkey and Egypt should be created in the near future. Hulusi Akar's brief but honest statements, on March 6th, aroused a lot of controversy in the region, especially in Greece and Cyprus, but were positively received in Egypt. Despite being part of Erdoğan's regime with its infamous profile of flawed foreign policies, Hulusi Akar is widely respected and trusted for his word. Hulusi Akar's statements were the spark which initiated a round of positive statements from both sides and opened the door for actual steps to be taken towards the long-delayed reconciliation between Cairo and Ankara.

On the other hand, Egypt's primary concern, at the moment, is to settle the waters of the disturbed waters of the Nile River, by ending its dispute with Ethiopia over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), which was illegally founded in 2010. Ethiopia's insistence on filling the GERD, despite legitimate objection from other Nile valley countries, especially Egypt where the Nile River ends, represents a serious threat to the lives of the Egyptian and Sudanese people. For two years, Egypt has been lobbying the international community, in vain, to stop Ethiopia from proceeding with building and filling the dam. On March 16th, the United States

indirectly withdrew itself from acting as a mediator between Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia. Some observers argued that the current diplomatic dispute may escalate into a military conflict between Ethiopia, on one side, and Egypt and Sudan, on the opposing side. At the beginning of March, Egypt and Sudan signed a military cooperation agreement that enables the two countries to join forces to counter regional threats.

Meanwhile, Turkey signaled that it could intervene as a mediator in the GERD crisis, if Egypt agrees. On March 12th, Erdoğan's special envoy to Iraq said on a televised interview that Turkey is ready to mediate in the GERD, provided that western countries do not intervene, because their intervention may complicate the issue. Turkey enjoys a massive political and economic influence over Ethiopia, that has continued for decades. According to the official statistics of the Ethiopian Investment Commission, Turkey is the third biggest investor in the operational capital of Ethiopia, after China and Saudi Arabia. Over the past seven years, Turkey supported Ethiopia in its conflict with Egypt over the GERD, due to the long political rift between Cairo and Ankara. If Egypt wins Turkey as an ally, or at least neutralizes Turkey's involvement in the GERD crisis, this would definitely give leverage to Egypt in its negotiations with Ethiopia.

"Suuyur" or "water sleeps" is an idiom the Turkish people use to push away the evil and give power to the good. If Cairo and Ankara manage to successfully settle the political disagreements that kept them apart for almost eight years, their future cooperation may change the geopolitics of the eastern Mediterranean and alter the outcomes of several conflicts in Africa and the Middle East. But, most importantly it may help them work together on making "water sleep" in a way that serves their national security and the welfare of their peoples.

Better to live not die for your country



Sami Moubayed

During the Suez War of 1956, a young Syrian navy officer named Jules Jammal volunteered to fight with the Egyptian Army. He blew himself against a French vessel and died instantly, becoming an overnight legend in both Egypt and Syria. Jammal was Christian not Muslim, dying for Egypt not Syria. At the time, nobody described his act as “amaliya istishadiyah,” coming from the word shahada (martyrdom) that is mentioned explicitly in the Holy Quran. Rather, it was called a “fedayii operation,” from the Arabic word fedayeen, which has since entered the English dictionary and means “guerrilla fighters” linked specifically to attacks against Israel.

That was the secular term by which Yasser Arafat’s operations were known throughout his military career, which started in the mid-1960s and lasted until signing of the Oslo Peace Accords in 1993. Nobody ever described Arafat’s men as carrying out “amaliya istishadiyah,” or what was subsequently called by the West and by Israel as a “suicide operation.” That term was only invented by Hamas during the first intifada in 1987 and then popularized throughout the second, which started in 2001. Prior to Hamas, neither the resistance nor any of its operations were confined to Sunni Muslims only, and Palestinians were very proud of the Christian components in their revolution. In fact, Christian revolutionaries like George Habash and Wadiah Haddad did more for the Palestinian Cause than Ismail Haniya and Khaled Meshaal, who hijacked the Palestinian resistance, leaving no room for both non-Muslims and non-members of Hamas.

Suicide bombing, as a phenomenon, first became a public phenomenon when the Japanese kamikaze pilots crashed their explosive aircraft into US military targets in the Pacific at Pearl Harbor in World War II. The first time the term “suicide bombing” was used was in The New York Times on August 10, 1940 in reference to

German tactics in World War II. It started applying to the Japanese by 1942. It disappeared from the 1940s until the early 1980s, resurfacing in the Lebanese Civil War.

By definition, a martyr is “a person who is put to death or endures suffering because of a belief, principle or cause. The death of a martyr or the value attributed to it is called martyrdom.” The first martyr in Islam was the old woman Sumayyah bint Khayyat, the first Muslim to die at the hands of the polytheists of Mecca. Hamas and the Brotherhood, and their version of Islam, is simply not Islam because it justifies the killing of fellow Muslims. Their definition of martyrdom is distorted, perverted, and ultimately wrong. Their martyrs kill indiscriminately, striking at children, women, elderly—and fellow Muslims. That is a red line the Prophet Mohammad would never allow. In the Holy Quran, there are verses calling on Muslims to take up arms against aggressors, but not a single verse says that Muslims should kill fellow Muslims in order to destabilize governments. There is even a clear verse that, if read correctly, would prevent Muslims from blowing themselves up against civilian and fellow Muslim targets. In the Holy Quran (verse 6:151) it reads, “And take not life, which Allah has made sacred, except by way of justice.”

To terrorism-apologists, a bomber has not committed suicide, an act usually associated with cowardice and despair, but rather, committed a brave deed of self-sacrifice that qualifies him or her for entrance into heaven in the afterlife. It actually depends first and foremost on who the targeted enemy is, whether it’s a fellow countryman, or a foreign occupier. At some point, however, when too much blood is spilled in the Middle East, the differences between bombings (and their targets) becomes blurred to the point of indistinction. All the world sees in them are scenes of senseless gore, blood and anguish raising the eternal question: “Is it better to live or die for one’s country?”

Two examples from Palestine

Let us take two examples from modern Levantine history. One is Wafa Idris who was the

first woman to blow herself up in an attack against the Israelis in Jerusalem on January 28, 2002. She was 28 years old, divorced and working with the Palestinian Red Crescent. She justified her attack as one against her declared enemy. She did not detonate a bomb against fellow Palestinians. She became a symbol for many others, most notably Ayat al-Akhras, an 18-year old girl who on March 29, 2002 detonated explosives at a supermarket in Jerusalem, killing two Israelis, one a 17-year-old Israeli girl. Her age, gender and the fact that one of the victims was her age caused a loud outcry in the international community, with people asking why is it that these two innocent teenagers had to suffer, and die, for such a bloody conflict that they had inherited from their fathers and grandfathers? Akhras had been an A-student who wanted to go to college and study journalism. She was engaged to be married in July 2002. US President George W Bush talked about the affair, saying: “When an 18-year-old Palestinian girl is induced to blow herself up and in the process kills a 17-year-old Israeli girl, the future itself is dying, the future of the Palestinian people and the future of the Israeli people.” Both attacks, of course, were glorified by Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood.

Death by suicide

Since 2003, thousands have died by suicide attacks in Iraq, especially under ISIS rule in 2017-2017. Most of them were Iraqi citizens who blew themselves in crowded areas, killing fellow Iraqi citizens. The most recent of these events was a twin suicide attack at a Baghdad market earlier this year, which killed at least 32 Iraqis and wounded over 100. In March 2006, an Israeli expert on terrorism, named Reuven Paz, conducted research on jihadi operations in Iraq and concluded that contrary to common belief most of the suicide bombers were not young, neglected, poor, desperate, and deprived souls. They were family people, married, educated, living in decent homes and working in decent jobs. This

was the same with the hijackers of September 11. Many, Paz said, were from wealthy or middle-class families.

This idea was backed by the anthropologist, Scott Atran, and Alberto Abadie, a professor of public policy at Harvard University. Abadie published a paper on the subject, saying that very seldom are the suicide bombers from poor families. Rather, he said violence and terrorism is a direct result of political instability and lack of freedoms in the bomber’s country. Very rarely have the bombers been motivated by despair. In fact, it is hope that motivates them—hope that they can destroy the enemy and, in the process, achieve emancipation for their cause.

Learning from the Bahaiis

The Bahaii faith, which came after Islam and is therefore, widely considered as an unorthodox faith in the Muslim world, decrees that a martyr is one who sacrifices his or her life in the service of humanity in the name of God. Abdul-Baha, the son of the faith’s founder Bahauallah, said that the “truest form of martyrdom is life-long service to society and mankind,” claiming that “life should be preserved—not wasted because it was given by God. And nobody but God is entitled to take it away.”

The Bahaiis champion protecting one’s life, claiming that it is better to live than die for one’s country. That may sound unorthodox and ultimately wrong to millions of believers in Islam. It is true that at certain junctures of a nation’s history, sacrificing life, rather than preserving it, are permissible, even necessary, for a nation’s re-birth. That applied to all peoples under occupation throughout history. But this is not the eternal trend. It is just a moment in time that eventually, will pass, even if it takes another 100 years. The real service to the nation would be to live, produce, learn, love, have children, and give to a nation’s psychology, well-being, and development.

All innocent life is precious. People should have all lived, not died for their countries.

What has been happening in Syria since March 2011 is a civil war and not a revolution



Amir Darwish

The people have long misunderstood words such as ‘freedom’, ‘liberty’, and ‘rights’, and therefore the violence has been unleashed and is not stopping. A similar condition was present in England between 1642 to 1651, when the country went into civil war. At that time, the situation prompted the English poet, translator, physician, and philosopher, Thomas Hobbes, to write the most important work of his life (the Leviathan) to rescue his country from bloody civil war. Liberty and freedom can be dangerous when put together. Freedom, taken to its extreme, can result in anarchy, and some in the pursuit of freedom engage in actions that include taking others’ lives, as we have seen over the last ten years in Syria. Similarly, liberty has included the allowance of man to hurt others.

Hobbes believed the wrong understanding of liberty caused much of the trouble at the time where freedom was seen, as a matter of living independently off arbitrary power under free states as free men and opposed to monarchy.

The definition of ‘free man’ was fashionable in England’s 1640s, as is the case in present-day Syria. Often it was connected to the Magna Charta and other liberal definitions, such as the right to free trial, freedom from arbitrary arrest, and political rights. Likewise, the definition of freedom is fashionable in Syria and connected to freedom of speech and expression, political rights, and indeed freedom from arbitrary arrest. By stating ‘every man has a right to every thing; even to one another’s body’, Hobbes pointed out very clearly that all men have the right to take each other’s when they are in a state of war and nothing restrains them. Hobbes also insinuates that this

entitlement to each other’s bodies leads to violence, and violence leads to a constant state of war. This state is man’s pre-political condition and shows human beings are generally not yet mature enough to enter the world of politics. Everyone in the state of nature begrudges, distrusts, and eventually fights one another, as is the case currently in Syria. That is when life, as Hobbes put and, as it is now in Syria, becomes ‘solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.’ This is avoidable by having one absolute sovereign who is able to act firmly against those who let their human nature take over them and start to kill others for possessions, political interests, or other forms of gain. To avoid the state of nature, the pre-political condition, and the state of war, the people in Syria have to enter into a contract with a ruler. For Hobbes, this means men will go back to the state of nature where their several interests cause war against all if they refuse obedience to the Leviathan (the ruler). The latter will avoid and end future wars.

Additionally, this absolute sovereign serves as a divine, unbreakable law to keep everyone safe.

Men then can renounce the state of nature by promising obedience to the Leviathan who spares their lives from the cruel state of nature in Syria. That way also people enter into society in a more civilised way than they are doing now in Syria. This is done as the Leviathan is the only sovereign absolute ruler who has no others to compete with and cause conflicts as in the state of nature.

Where human rights are concerned, they are very basic when they are in a state of war, as Thomas Hobbes calls it. These are the right to breathe, and the right to move without being fear of being killed. Man is free to do as he pleases, and this includes moving, eating, drinking, dressing, and self-defence.

Noteworthy, just as the Leviathan was, the sovereign in Syria will be a creation of their own people in order

to restrain man’s nature and avoid war in the state of nature.

Hobbes reinforces the point that people made the sovereign, ‘This is more than Consent, or Concord; it is a real unity of them all, in one and the same Person, made by Covenant of every man with every man’.

This means the ruler and the ruled are one, automatically; neither of them can dominate the other, as man in his nature (according to Hobbes) does not like to be dominated.

Hobbes gave people the power to end the sovereign whenever they wanted, and the Syrian people can do the same. When the Leviathan stops protecting them, that’s when they can collectively decide to remove him or replace him.

Not only that, not only can the people end the sovereign when the protection ends, but they can also end it whenever they think the sovereign is no longer good for them.

That means the people in Hobbes’s proposal are the final judge of their destiny, and they are the ones to decide who rules them and when, something the Syrian people can do. If anything, Hobbes’ words limit, undermine, and prevent the abuse of sovereign power. This makes the sovereign an absolute protector who provides safety; the subjects, on the other hand, have the absolute right to end the sovereign when safety ends.

It is worthy to note here, as the sovereign is the people, she has identical rights to the people, which means an attack on her is an attack on a member of the public. This way, if individuals in Syria decide to attack the sovereign, at that time the sovereign shall retaliate, as that is an attack on all Syrians.

When such a contract is achieved, life will become rich; Hobbes’s reference to ‘Contentments of life’, without the fear of losing safety, is to state that man has the freedom and liberty beyond the physical meaning of impediment. It is the allowance of

humanity to prosper as safety gives birth to knowledge, and then science into economic success, and so forth. That way, man’s obedience in Syria will be exchanged for peace, safety, property protection, and an overall physical shield from other subjects. In turn, this will cause the society and its economy to flourish.

As man’s right to violence is abandoned, but not his right to defend himself; in other words, when someone attacks him, he will retaliate back, but he should not initiate the violence.

The Leviathan in this way became an absolutist proposal, where the people of Syria would make the ruler. This allows man to decide his fate and provides him with true freedom. Hobbes’s proposal guaranteed safety, protection of subjects, liberty, protection of property, protection of rights, entitlement to make laws, and overall freedom to change the sovereign when inadequate. Yes, the Leviathan is an absolutist in providing all these, but above all, the Leviathan is not an absolutist in the negative authoritarian connotation of the word. Hobbes could not make it any clearer when referred to the Leviathan as ‘covenants without the sword’. When man ends the sovereign, at that time his rights, freedom, and liberty to be violent again will come back and the war will start again. This is not a recipe for dictatorship or despotism, but rather a recipe for living life safely without thinking, ‘Can I leave the house and come back to it safely?’ It is a recipe to save lives.

It does not matter who rules Syria as long as they show proper governance and the ability to restrain the violence, giving people the right to live again without fear of being killed, as that’s the most important ‘right’ of all. Whether the ruler is called Bashar, Peter, Paul, or whatever—it is security and safety the people of Syria need and not just free speech or freedom of expression.

Russia's Persistent Extortion of SDF in North-eastern Syria



Jwan Dibo

The concerns of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) have recently escalated following the fifteenth round of negotiations in Astana among the three 'guarantors': Russia, Turkey, and Iran. SDF's apprehension stems from the possibility that Russia and Turkey can reach a clandestine deal at the expense of the influence of SDF. Russia's short history in Syria is replete with such disgraceful covert agreements with Turkey at the account of prolonging the tragedy of the Syrian people.

Since Turkish occupation of the Kurdish city of Afrin in March 2018, Russia has never stopped extorting SDF by intimidating them through Turkey. Detachments of Russian Military Police withdrew from the city of Afrin in January 2018 prior Turkey began an offensive against Kurdish forces. Russia abandoned Afrin in return for Ghouta based on the shameful deal, later known as Afrin for Turkey, in exchange for

Ghouta for Russia and Assad regime. Russia's aim behind giving Afrin to Turkey was to force Kurdish-led SDF to negotiate with Assad regime without preconditions. Likewise, to weaken US influence in Syria by undermining its local ally, namely SDF.

Nowadays, Russia is exerting the same dirty policy towards SDF in the town of Ain Isa In Raqqa and the town of Tal Tamer in the countryside of Hasakah. Russia threatens SDF that it will pull back its forces from Ain Isa and Tel Tamar if SDF will not acquiesce to Russia's agendas in Syria. Consequently, SDF will be in asymmetric confrontations with Turkish army.

On the ground, Russia implemented recently partial withdrawal from both mentioned towns before coming back shortly. Later, the move was understood as a kind of redeployment in order to confuse SDF.

Since Kurdish-led SDF became the essential partner of US in Syria in late 2015, Russia has not stopped to incite other parties in Syria against SDF. It started with using Iranian and pro-Assad militias against SDF

in Raqqa and Deir Ezzor. After the failure to shrink SDF's influence due to American persistent support, then Russia found that Turkey is the best way and power to minimise SDF role and size.

Therefore, Russia has always blessed Turkey for its expansionist policies in Syria, especially those targeting the Kurdish-led SDF. For Russia, Turkey has practically become an ally throughout the Syrian crisis. Russia initially won when it succeeded to create a rift between America and Turkey. Moscow culminated this victory in signing the S-400 missile deal with Ankara. This deal, which caused a deep fissure between Turkey on the one hand, and US and EU, on the other hand.

When Russia fights SDF, it implicitly challenges US influence in Syria. Therefore, in this case, Turkey is the best method for Russia to harass the American influence in Syria by curbing the leverage of SDF, which is Washington's only partner in Syria.

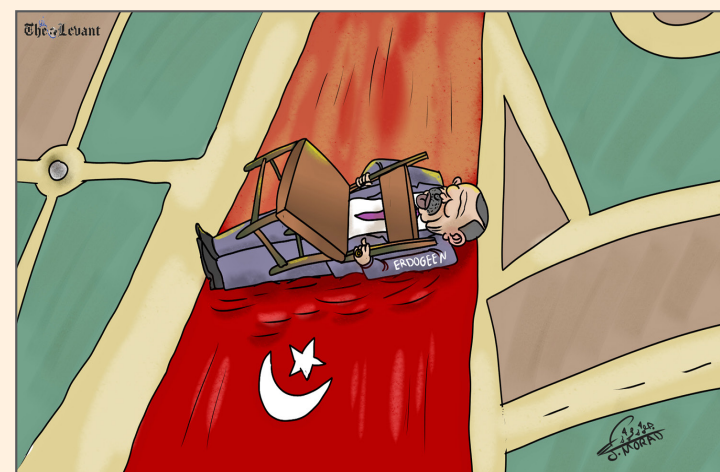
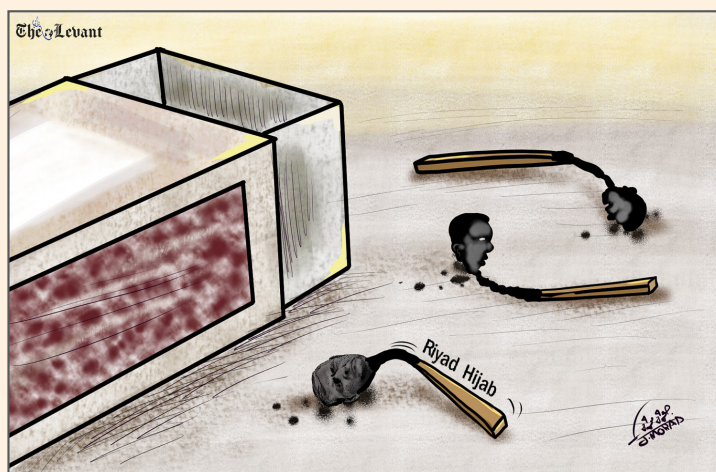
The options for SDF are very limited. The survival of SDF and the Autonomous Administration of Northern and Eastern Syria is

linked to the US military presence in Syria. If US withdraws from Syria, everything will collapse because SDF will be in an unequal clash with the Turkish army. Moreover, Russia and the Syrian regime's army will not hesitate to attack SDF, which the Syrian regime considers it a separatist project.

Apparently, Russia will continue blackmailing SDF in northeast Syria via Turkey since the balance of power on the ground tend to be in its favour. Moscow was even able to make Turkey join to its coalition by exaggerating the alleged Kurdish threat. The common factor among Moscow, Ankara, Damascus, and Tehran is fighting the US military presence in Syria. In addition, fighting Kurdish aspirations for liberation in the three countries is the old – new goal for the three countries.

But the scene may turn upside down if Biden's administration adopts more firm and clear policies regarding the Syrian issue. This scenario remains possible, knowing that it is somewhat improbable due to the absence of a clear-cut American strategy in Syria.

The Levant
CARICATURE



@thelevantnews0
Info@thelevantnews.com