



Ebrahim Raessi's & Iran's economic problems

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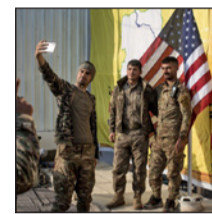
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Biden says Iran will 'never' get a nuclear weapon on his watch

During a meeting in the Oval Office with outgoing Israeli president Reuven Rivlin on Monday, President Joe Biden reassured his counterpart about the concerns expressed by Israel as a result of the ongoing talks in Vienna with Iran, and promised him that the United States will prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear arsenal on his watch.

"What I could say is that Iran will never get a nuclear weapon on my watch," Biden affirmed.

The US President confirmed that he had issued orders to carry out raids on Iranian-backed militias, on the Iraqi-Syrian border. Biden indicated that the strikes he ordered were to protect and defend the safety of American forces, weaken and disrupt the ongoing series of attacks against the United States and its allies, in addition to deterring Iran and its backed militias from launching or supporting further attacks on his country's personnel and facilities.



American president Joe Biden and his Israeli counterpart Reuven Rivlin

Brussels prepares to impose sanctions on Lebanon's officials

The European Union revealed that it is discussing, among other topics, imposing sanctions on Lebanese political officials, pointing out that as soon as the legal mechanism is ready, the EU will decide the names then things will be ready to implementation.

In a statement to a local channel in Lebanon, the European Union Ambassador to Lebanon Ralph Tarraf said: "We are discussing imposing sanctions on Lebanese political officials in Brussels, and as soon as the

legal mechanism is ready, we will decide the names then things be ready to implementation", adding that their "goal is not to impose sanctions on politicians, but rather to push them towards carrying out their responsibilities.

He said that the European Union's foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, conveyed a clear message to officials during his recent visit to Lebanon, saying to them that "you cannot continue political competition while the Lebanese people are starving."

Rome Conference: U.S. announces more than \$436 million for the People of Syria

While the world awaits a clear and specific position from the United States of America regarding the Syrian file, the American strikes on the pro-Iranian Iraqi militias in Syria came the day after the tripartite meeting held in Baghdad with Jordanian-Egyptian participation.

The strikes coincided with an international meeting of the coalition held in Rome recently, with the participation of 83 ministers and delegations from member states, during which the United States pledged to continue its efforts to uproot ISIS from Syria and Iraq.

In this regard, US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken affirmed in a statement issued by his ministry that his country "remains committed to supporting the Syrian people and promoting respect for the dignity and human rights of all Syrians."

Meanwhile, the United States of America announced lifting sanctions on tools, equipment, and devices related to the diagnosis and treatment of people infected with the Corona pandemic in Syria, and the provision of 436 million dollars in additional assistance to displaced Syrians and refugees inside Syria and neighboring countries.

Iran's presidential election in the sizzling summer!

In a situation where the scorching temperature in some parts of Iran has reached above 50 degrees Celsius, and some Iranian cities are being recognized as the hottest cities globally, in recent days, electricity in many parts of Iran has been cut off for various reasons for consecutive hours. As a result of this power outage, not only people can use the minimum cooling equipment to reduce heat pressure but also many production units have been shut down, and many other facilities, including hospitals without emergency generators, are facing increasing problems. The electricity interruption has caused the death of many patients with Covid-19 due to oxesion system failure.

presidential election This has raised the anger and protest of the people who, even without this problem, have faced other issues such as skyrocketing prices, unemployment and shortages of essential food items such as cooking oil, chicken meat, eggs, rice, etc. The people have to wait in long queues for hours to purchase these necessities. As a result of all these the discontent of the people towards the regime has reached an explosion level.

This dissatisfaction with the current situation shows itself in daily protest rallies, sit-ins, gatherings, in different cities across Iran. The people's demands include their back salaries, high inflation, unemployment.

The People have decided to showcase their dismay and dissatisfaction by boycotting the regime's sham presidential election scheduled to be held on June 18, 2021. The people



Elections headquarters staff work to register candidates for the June 18 presidential elections

are expressing their anger with the regime's hollow promises, mismanagement and corruption with their gatherings and in social media. They do not believe in the empty promises of the presidential candidates who, like in the past, offer promises and forget all of them once in power. The people are looking forward to a regime change and a free democratic Iran.

In reality, this election, like other elections in Iran, is a battle zone for different rivals and factions within the regime to grasp more share of power. The candidates by no means represent the people. This year, in particular, everyone knows that Ali Khamenei, the supreme leader, is trying to pull out Ra'isi's name out of the ballot boxes. For that reason, this year's presidential election is more meaningless than ever. The government has cited the lack of water behind the

dams as the main reason for the electricity shortage due to reduced snow and rainfall in the winter and spring. Still, people do not accept this and consider corruption in the government as the main cause of electricity shortages. Because after 42 years of mullah's reign, while Iran has the second-largest natural gas reserves in the world and can easily supply electricity to the whole country by gas power plants, the regime has spent tens of billions of dollars to build a nuclear power plant in Bushehr to follow its atomic programs.

Studies have shown that one of the reasons for the lack of electricity is the high consumption due to a large number of electronic currency mining farms. In order to compensate for some of its foreign exchange deficits, which it has faced due to the US embargos, the Iranian regime has, in recent years, set up large-

scale electronic currency extraction farms that consume a lot of electricity.

This has made Iran the second country after China to extract cryptocurrencies. Due to the low price of electricity in Iran, even other countries have officially and unofficially established cryptography farms with the agreement and cooperation of government agencies such as the Revolutionary Guards. Of course, the income from this investment is not benefiting the pockets of the people but the pockets of government affiliates such as the Revolutionary Guards. The revelation of this issue has increased the anger of the people so much that Hassan Rouhani was forced to ostensibly announce that the production of cryptocurrencies will be banned until the end of September and the electricity of all these centers should be cut off. By offering such

rhetoric, Rouhani, in the last days of his government, wants to reduce the people's anger. But the situation in Iran, according to some leaders of the regime, is very volatile.

It exemplifies a barrel of gunpowder that can explode any Day. Khamenei is well aware of the situation and had to ask the Guardian Council to disqualify ex-government officials such as Larijani (a two-time speaker of the parliament) and Ahmadinejad (a 2-time ex-president) as candidates to prevent any possible rivalry that would have potentially set the scene for a widespread uprising similar to the one that took the regime by surprise in November 2019. Because, Khamenei is now incapable of suppressing the demonstrations like then, and as a result it could lead to the overthrow of the regime.

Ebrahim Raessi's plans to solve Iran's economic problems!

Cyrus Yaqubi

While according to all Iranian and world economists, Iran's economy is in despair and collapsing so much that all economic affairs indicators show extreme instability, the presidential candidates in their election debates each make strange claims to remedy this situation. Of course, according to experts, none of them are real and practical. For example, while more than a quarter of the country's youth, amounting to more than 16 million, are unemployed, Ebrahim Raessi claimed that it would be easy not only to create jobs for these young people, but also to provide them with housing so that they could get married and start a family! He argued that while he was in charge of Astan Quds Razavi Foundation in Mashhad, he was able to solve the housing problem of several young people by building 10 blocks of buildings, and he could also build one million housing units in the first year of his term and resolve the unemployment problems of 16 million young people! According to him, the main problem of housing is land and Iran is a vast country and there is no shortage of land. His claim was made while,

according to the government officials, more than 35% of people in Iran's metropolitan areas have been driven to shantytowns in outskirts of cities due to inability to pay high rents and live-in squalid housings that lack the minimum necessities of a family.

Many attribute Ra'isi's claim to the fact that he received classical education only at the level of elementary school and then attended seminary therefore has no understanding of economic issues.

While inflation is currently above 50% in Iran and 80% of people live below the poverty line, and they should stand in long queues for hours to get the most basic foodstuffs like cooking oil, chicken or eggs at government rate, and thousands of production units have been shut down due to bankruptcy, and their workers have joined the ranks of the unemployed, Jobs that did not previously exist in Iran, such as dumpster diving, have become commonplace, and many have even resorted to subsistence by selling their organs such as kidneys and eyes, etc.

Without presenting any real and achievable plans, Raessi spoke of increasing production capacity and activating the maritime economy for job creation!

This situation is not only related to industrial production, but also

Iranian farmers are facing an even worse situation, almost everyday news of farmers' protests is seen in different parts of the country. They protest the loss of their products due to mismanagement of water resources and artificial price control not based on supply and demand, which of course are all rooted in institutionalized corruption throughout government agencies.

Because a small number of people connected to the regime's leaders are the mafia who control the import of all industrial and food items. They use government subsidies and import goods at government exchange rate, which is one sixth of the free market, and sell goods at free market exchange rate making huge profit. They have caused market instability and the collapse of domestic industrial and agricultural production.

A poultry farmer says that the price he must pay to buy his chicken feed is higher than the price he earns from selling his chickens because people connected to Regime's leaders control the chicken feed market. Other farmers were forced to abandon their onion and fruit crops because the cost of collecting and selling them was higher than similar imported products, and thus these farmers and poultry farmers not only went bankrupt but also could not even pay for expenses of their daily

lives.

Another important point that demonstrates Ibrahim Raessi's mentality is his disregard for women, who make up half of the country's population. Even in his unrealistic and empty claims about solving the economic problems of the society, he did not mention anything about the conditions of women in economic affairs or the elimination of discrimination against them.

For example, in the past year, more than 770,000 women have lost their jobs, which was 14 times more than men who have been unemployed during the same period.

He has not mentioned what role women will play in his future government either, and whether any woman minister will be in his cabinet. Of course, this is something that should not be expected, given his and other candidates' patriarchal mentality.

Therefore, the majority of Iranians, especially women, have stated that they will not vote in this election at all and have boycotted it because they believe that all these candidates are the same and whoever comes to power will not change the situation in Iran. Their demand is a fundamental change and overthrow of the Velayat-e-Faqih system. They believe that this situation can only be changed by regime change.



After Netanyahu unseated will the "alliance of necessity" withstand the challenges?

There is no doubt that Netanyahu will be the world's fiercest opponent, having lost the power he had held for nearly 12 years. He will use political evasion. The new government, indeed, represents only the minority because most Israelis tend to lean more to the right, and Netanyahu has vowed to work through the opposition to bring down the government, which he considered "dangerous" and "a failure."

The new Prime Minister of the Israeli government, Naftali Bennett, took advantage of the political split in the Israeli right to form this government, which is made up of parties with different ideologies.

Bennett has many obstacles that he needs to overcome, but it has for now won American administration's support. The US President, Joe Biden, congratulated Bennett after the Israeli parliament gave its confidence to the new coalition.

Iran was at the centre of the opposition leader's speech, Benjamin Netanyahu, who believes that the current government is weak and cannot confront the United States' desire to return to an agreement with Tehran or take actions against it.

The differing ideologies increase the fragility of the alliance

Observers believe that the diversity of the new government as a good thing, they see in it a group of people who know how to work together and compromise. It will be a unique set-up because there is no clear leader in the government.

However, the problem for this government is that its only common denominator is getting rid of Netanyahu. Observers anticipate that the new government will not survive beyond a few weeks because it combines three elements, the Right, the Left, and the Arabs, who do not have any common denominator. Hence, differences will arise once



Naftali Bennett

they have gotten rid of Netanyahu. Once in power, the new government will face several challenges, including tension in the public sphere, such as the right's controversial march. Hamas has threatened to respond to the march, known as the "Flags March." The rally was first called off on May 10 and again last week. Netanyahu had sought for the march to take place before Sunday's vote under a specific agreement between police and organizers.

His opponents accused him of inflaming the situation and using a "scorched earth" policy. The march was the first test of the new Israeli government, headed by Naftali Bennett.

Hundreds of ultra-nationalist Israelis chanting "Death to Arabs" marched across East Jerusalem on Tuesday, threatening to reignite violence after weeks of the war against Hamas militants in the Gaza Strip.

The Palestinians in Gaza responded by launching incendiary balloons that set at least ten fires in southern Israel. At the same time, Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid condemned those who chant racist slogans. It is a disgrace to Israel, adding, "There are extremists in Israel who see the Israeli flag a symbol of hatred and racism. It is a disgrace that could not be tolerated."



Binyamin Netanyahu

Re-escalation between Israel and the Palestinians

Bennett took over the government after protests erupted in East Jerusalem and the West Bank over threats to expel Palestinian families from their homes in Jerusalem's Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood for settlement associations. The ceasefire between Tel Aviv and the Palestinian factions in the Gaza Strip was violated for the first time.

There were reports of an attempted run-over and stabbing near Hizma village near Ramallah. The Israeli army spokesman, Avichai Adraee, reported an attempt to run over and stab in a double attack plot in the West Bank. The plot comes after clashes between Israel and armed factions in the Gaza Strip. The Israeli army launched airstrikes on a Hamas training site in the southern Gaza Strip in retaliation to launching incendiary balloons from Gaza towards Israeli farms. That was the first confrontation between the two sides since the ceasefire ended 11 days of fighting last month and resulted in hundreds of deaths and injuries, most of whom were Palestinians, in the Hamas-controlled strip.

On Tuesday, East Jerusalem witnessed a demonstration of far-right activists in the Bab al-Amoud area, which resulted in more than 30 injuries

among Palestinians, according to the Palestinian Red Crescent.

Media reports stated that Israeli warplanes raided military compounds belonging to Hamas. According to the Israeli army, the raids came in response to the launching of incendiary balloons from the Gaza Strip towards Israeli territory. Israel launched airstrikes on the densely populated sector for the first time since it announced a ceasefire on May 22, after 11 days of fighting.

The Israeli government and the challenges of the Iranian nuclear program

In a speech by Naftali Bennett, at the opening of the Knesset voting session on the new Israeli government, he indicated that he plans to maintain Netanyahu's policies towards Iran, stressing that "Resuming a nuclear deal with Iran is a mistake that will legitimize one of the world's most violent regimes."

He made it clear that he would not allow Iran to acquire nuclear weapons, saying: "Israel is not part of the nuclear agreement, and will retain 'complete freedom of action' on Iran." He said that the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action granted Iran international legitimacy and billions of dollars to build terrorist outposts in Syria, Gaza and Lebanon. And Yemen.

Netanyahu warned that Iran was rejoicing at the formation of Israel's weak new government. He criticized Bennett, saying, "I heard what Bennett said about standing firm against Iran, and I'm concerned because Bennett is doing the opposite of what he promises."

According to Netanyahu, Bennett does not have the international standing, knowledge, government, or public confidence that could be taken seriously when tackling the Iranian threat.

What brings together Hamas and the Houthis in Yemen?



Rasha Ammar

Hamad sparked international outrage over the meeting that brought together the movement's representative in Sana'a, Moaz Abu Shamala, with leaders of the Houthi militia. The meeting took place hours after the "Ma'rib" massacre, that was carried out by the Houthi, and killed dozens of civilians, including children.

During the meeting, Abu Shamala praised what he described as the initiatives launched by the militia leader, Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, referring to the call to raise funds, which later on, provoked disputes between the militia leaders. In an official statement, Hamas described the meeting between one of its leaders and the Houthi leader, which involved awarding him "shield of honour", as an act that "does not represent us".

Experts and observers linked the meeting to the close relations between Hamas and Iran on one hand, as the Houthi militia is Tehran's armed group in Yemen. On the other hand, they pointed out that the meeting was part of ongoing coordination between the two parties under Iranian auspices, even if Hamas denies this and tries to ward off the relation.

Two sides of the same coin

The Yemeni politician, Muhammad al-Faqih, believes that Hamas and al-Houthi are two sides of the same coin, and they are linked by central cooperation with Tehran.

It is not surprising that the Hamas representative extended his gratitude to Al-Houthi hours after the horrific massacre they carried out in Marib and shook the world with pictures of burned children's bodies.

In a statement to "Leventnews", Al-Faqih highlighted the contradiction illustrated by Hamas, which sparked



Armed members of the Houthi movement visit the grave of Houthi senior official Saleh al-Sammad at al-Sabeen Square in Sanaa

widespread criticism. It portrays itself as the defender of the Palestinian people against aggression, however, it applauds a militia that commits crimes, including genocide, against the Yemeni people.

Al-Faqih points out the ongoing coordination over the past years between the Brotherhood and the Houthi militia in several Yemeni regions, as they seek to achieve the biggest possible gains. They share the same agenda and objectives dictated by Tehran and the international organization of the Brotherhood. The meeting is neither strange nor surprising, as some felt; it is simply part of a series of understandings that have been reached between the two parties aimed at extending the conflict and deepening the crisis in the country in favor of Iranian and Brotherhood agendas.

Iran is the key

The Yemeni political researcher, Majed Al-Daari, says that the links between the Houthis and Hamas are not new, rather an extension of the relations between Iran and all its allies in the region, whether with Hamas or some other Palestinian resistance movements.

What caused resentment to the

Yemenis and the Arab is the timing in which Hamas leader in Yemen honored one of the most prominent Houthi leaders, hours after Houthis carried out a horrific massacre in Marib, which killed and injured dozens, including children and women.

In a statement to Levantnews, the Yemeni researcher explained that the Houthis were keen to benefit from the wide Arab support for Hamas after its recent war with Israel, in which it hit Tel Aviv and many Israeli cities with advanced military missiles.

Regional axis

Ahmed Jumaa, a researcher in Palestinian affairs, says the problem with the Palestinian factions is that they drag Palestine into the regional players game to serve their political interests, whether in Gaza or the West Bank. Their actions indicate that they do not have the political will to for reconciliation, which led the Arabs to overlook the Palestinian cause.

Jumaa added, "Hamas recognises the importance of its relations with Iran and seeks to get closer to Tehran by strengthening its links to the armed factions that receive direct Iranian support, especially in Lebanon and Syria. This relation put Hamas in the

Iranian anti-Arab axis, which seeks to spread the ideology of Khomeini's revolution.

Trading with the Palestinian cause Juma'a says: "The Palestinian factions, specifically Hamas, have turned the Palestinian cause into a political card that the regional parties use to serve their own interests, it even declares its approval this exploitation.

Hamas thinks that gambling with the Palestinian cause card is crucial to resolving the crisis, but reality shows that the opposite is true.

He adds that Hamas, following the latest Israeli war on Gaza, tried to portray itself as the real victor, but the actual reality on the ground contradicts that.

Gaza is devastated, due to Israel's suffocating siege on the Strip, and Tel Aviv is adamant not to open the crossings and allow the entry of goods to Gaza.

He stresses the need for the Palestinian forces and factions to put the Palestinian cause aside and keep it away from the politics of regional powers. To him, it is a just because that should not be dragged into narrow factional and partisan conflicts. This will deprive the Palestine cause of a lot of support, pushing Arabs to abandon it, in light of the policies of the armed factions in Gaza.

Ilham Ahmed: The regime has received reassuring signals vindicating its policies, and we working on unifying the national opposition

Ammar Zeidan

"Levant News" interviewed Ilham Ahmed, head of the executive body of the Syrian Democratic Council, to talk about the relationship with the Syrian regime, what the SDC thinks of the pro-Turkish opposition, and the Autonomous Administration's decision not to participate in the work of the Constitutional Committee, among other issues.

■ **How do you see the relationship between the Autonomous Administration in north and east Syria and the Syrian regime after the presidential elections? Is there any communication between the two parties?**

■ In fact, the Syrian regime has not shown any openness towards its opponents, especially the national democratic opposition that accepts a political solution. The regime still sees the military solution as the main and only solution to the Syrian conflict. We have seen how the regime responded to international pressures and participated in Geneva and Astana talks with the armed opposition, which has committed the most horrendous violations against Syrians in Idlib, Afrin, Ras al-Ain and Tal Abyad.

As for the Autonomous Administration, it has expressed its readiness to engage in dialogue and find a formula for a political solution, in line with UN Resolution 2254. However, the regime rejects any dialogue with the Autonomous Administration, and wants to return to the pre-2011 government structure.

In my opinion, the regime is trying to win time and avoid making any compromise. We believe that the signals Damascus has received from some Arab and Western capitals,



Ilham Ahmed

reassured the regime about the advisability of its policies. We believe that this strategy leads to wasting more opportunities to bring about stability in Syria. Moreover, reconstruction is linked to the political process in Syria, therefore the economy and the living conditions cannot improve while the regime continues to reject any political solution or initiative.

■ **Does the Autonomous Administration seek to gain the regime recognition, in parallel with external recognition and support?**

■ We believe that it is fundamentally important for the dialogue and solution to be Syrian in the first place. This is crucial for enhancing the necessary national competence to carry out the work and fulfil our political project. We have always made our position clear regarding the importance of internal Syrian dialogue, not only with the regime, but we insist on including the national and democratic Syrian opposition, in which we see a real partner and a front to push the regime to accept the political solution. However, we are facing a serious problem with the opposition affiliated with Turkey; there is no room for democracy in its ideology or actions. We are also aware

of the importance of the international factor in the Syrian crisis, and the difficulty of achieving any progress without international legitimacy.

■ **How does The Syrian Democratic Council see the Turkish-backed opposition? Are we going to witness an agreement between the SDC and those parties in the coming period?**

We were and are still open to dialogue with all Syrians without exception. It is a fundamental principle for us. We feel empowered by our clear national and political project, which we are happy to discuss with various parties. However, the problem with some Syrians is that, driven by them strive to survive and protect their families, they have become pawns in the hands of the regional players which have exploited their plight to serve their own interests.

■ **What does the Syrian Democratic Council think about the Kurdish-Kurdish dialogue and its implications on the regions of northeastern Syria?**

■ This is a different course, but it is complementary to the rest of the internal Syrian dialogues. It has been welcomed by the public and officials alike. It has also been closely

followed by international powers. The Kurds are an important part of the Syrian people. They have made great sacrifices throughout the years of the Syrian crisis. They fought against the terrorist organizations, and they are now subjected to the worst forms of abuse and violation. They have been victim of systematic displacement in Afrin and Ras al-Ain; while their social identity has been targeted in the rest of the regions. Therefore, it is only natural for them to seek to resolve their struggle and enhance their existence in any political process related to the Syrian crisis.

■ **What is the future of Syria in general and the regions of northeastern Syria in particular?**

■ I would have liked to talk about the possibility of a solution soon, but Syria is, unfortunately, is torn by a bitter conflict. Its social and political structure is disintegrating. There are many parties that do not want this conflict to end; they to see further divisions and fragmentations among Syrians. The scene is uncertain, especially when Syrians are not capable of making their decisions independently.

We cannot predict the future, but we hope that we will overcome this predicament, embark on establishing sustainable peace and stability, and end the occupation of Syrian land. This can only be achieved through delivering justice for all Syrians, and recognising and respecting the ethnic, religious and cultural diversity of Syria. The central government cannot solve Syria's problems and will not make it a strong and stable country. We also believe that northeastern Syria and the form of self-administration based on social contract between the components of the region is the best approach to resolving the Syrian conflict.

The rebirth of Palestinian Islamic Jihad



Sami Moubayed

Days after the ceasefire was announced in Gaza on 21 May, Commander of the Quds Force Esmail Ghaani sent a letter to Akram Ajouri, a member of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)'s nine-man command. He also got on the phone with Ziad Nakhleh, the secretary-general of PIJ, showering him with praise for his role in latest round of conflict. Some analysts are pointing to those correspondences, saying that they signal a chance of heart in Tehran, which they claim is now viewing PIJ as equal to Hamas, rather than subordinate. That analysis is flawed, however, and politically incorrect. Since its inception back in the early 1980s, PIJ has always been far closer to Iran than Hamas. In fact, it had two friends only, being Iran and Syria, unlike Hamas, which remains is on excellent terms with countries like Qatar and Turkey, and good terms with Russia, China, Malaysia, and South Africa.

The Nasser/Khomeini Influence

For many years, few have paid close attention to PIJ. The lion's share of research and media attention has always gone to Hamas, which stood out as the most aggressive of Palestinian groups since the 1980s. Islamic Jihad was often mentioned in appendix, or as a footnote, to Hamas, and thus few knew much about the organization. To better understand the group, we need to go back to its founders, Fathi al-Shaqqaqi and Abdulaziz Awda, two former members of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) who were exiled from Egypt to Gaza after the 1981 assassination of President Anwar al-Sadat. Shaqqaqi was a most unusual leader, inspired mutually by Gamal Abdul Nasser and Ayatollah Khomeini—two figures who stood on opposite ends of the political spectrum of world history. He was also inspired by the Brotherhood founder Imam Hasan al-Banna—another fierce opponent of Nasser—until his defection from

the Brotherhood in 1979.

In 1988, PIJ leaders were once again exiled, this time to Lebanon, where they reached out to Iran and were trained by Hezbollah. They shared a common ideology with Hezbollah, refusing the 1993 Oslo Peace Accords and accepting nothing less than pre-1948 Mandatory Palestine. Their first recorded operation was in August 1987 with the killing of the Israeli military police captain in Gaza, months before the first intifada, followed in 1989 by an attack on a bus commuting between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, killing 16 people. A handful of successful operations followed, which put PIJ on Israel's hit list, leading to the 1995 assassination of Fathi al-Shaqqaqi in Malta. A three-way siege was laid to group, led on one front by Hamas, which originally viewed them as Brotherhood defectors, by Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), and of course, by Israel.

The era of Ramadan Shalah (1995 -2018)

After Shaqqaqi's death he was replaced by Ramadan Shalah, another peculiar figure in Palestinian military history. With a PhD in banking and economics from the University of Durham and a brief teaching career at the University of South Florida, Shalah was a fiery orator and popular figure both in Palestine and beyond. During his leadership of PIJ Shalah helped both improve the group's image in the Arab World and successfully increased funding from Iran. Meanwhile, he staged operation after operation within Israel, striking at a Tel Aviv shopping mall (March 1996), a bus headed from Jerusalem to Nazareth (March 2002), and a Haifa restaurant (October 2003).

PIJ in 2018-2021-

Shalah's illness was a heavy blow to PIJ, leaving the organization both headless and heartless. His successor, Ziad Nakhleh (aka Abu Tarek) had none of his educational merits and was soft spoken, mild, and rather

uncharismatic. Although having spent 14-years in Israeli prisons, and having served on PIJ's Shura Council, he didn't score well in comparison to Hamas' new leadership, embodied by fiery nationalists like Yehya al-Sinwar and Mohammad Deif. Under the first two years of his leadership, PIJ sunk into obscurity, remembered as a military group that used to be active in the Palestinian underground, like the now mostly dysfunctional Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP). As PIJ slipped from the limelight, Hamas was adjusting to the new world order, accepting conditional truce with Israel, while cuddling up to Qatar and Turkey.



Meanwhile, Iran was putting plenty of effort into reviving PIJ. That was evident from the latest conflict, when Islamic Jihad fired what some estimate as half of the 4,350 rockets that landed in Israel. Ten days after the ceasefire was announced, it staged a big parade in Gaza, showing off its rockets to the Palestinian Street. It is now poised to play a much larger role in Palestinian domestics, threatening the very same group that had brought it back to the limelight: Hamas. Unlike Hamas, PIJ has not served in government. Meaning, it shoulders no responsibility for years of corruption and bad government. According to Michael Horowitz, head of intelligence at Le Beck, an international security consultancy firm: "Hamas and PIJ still have around two-third of the total number

of rockets they had at the start of the Israeli operation. This means that they may still have up to 17,000 rockets between the both of them, when compared to the 4,350 rockets that were fired during the 11-day conflict." Some intelligence groups claim that PIJ has up to 8,000 rockets, all-short range, and many being primitive, handmade in Gaza. With Iranian, that can change quickly.

Its setbacks are numerous, however, prime of which is that five of its nine-man command are based outside of Gaza, unlike Hamas, whose top leaders resides inside Palestine. Another setback are internal divisions within PIJ, which although currently on the backburner, might surface in the not-to-distant future, as the group embarks on a new chapter in its history. Most Palestinians consider

PIJ as partners in the Gaza "victory" and thus, eligible to play a stronger role in Palestinian affairs. They had originally announced that they would not be participating in the parliamentary elections that were due for this year (which have since been postponed by President Mahmud Abbas).

If that position changes and they do run for office, there is a high chance that they might defeat Hamas—or at least, pose a real threat to its current leadership, especially in Gaza. That certainly won't please men like Sinwar and Deif, who will try to clip PIJ's wings, possibly by fanning tension within its leadership. It's an open secret in Gaza PIJ leader Mohammad al-Hindi sees himself as more worthy of leadership than Ziad Nakhleh. Hindi currently serves as deputy secretary-general, having nominated himself for the top job back in September 2018, coming in third after Nakhleh and Akram Ajouri. Hamas very might invest in that tension, using it to break what seems like a united command.

All of that remains speculation, however, at least for now. The only solid fact is that Islamic Jihad is back and more powerful than ever. That is a hard reality that all stakeholders, Hamas and Israel included, will have to accept, digest, and deal with.

How will Bennett differ from Bibi?



Ian Black

Israel's new government, led by Naftali Bennett, a former settler leader, had its first cabinet meeting on June 20, three months since the country went to the polls for the fourth time in less than two years. Binyamin "Bibi" Netanyahu, after 12 years in office and the country's longest-serving prime minister, is finally no longer in power. But how much difference will this change make?

On domestic issues, potentially quite a lot. Bennett's unwieldy coalition includes an unprecedentedly wide range of participants, from his own ultra-nationalist Yamina movement through secular and leftist parties such as Meretz to an Arab Islamist party – the first time in history that a party representing Israel's Palestinian community has taken part in any government.

That could have an impact in terms of achieving greater equality between the Jewish majority and the 21% Arab minority, especially since the rioting that took place in mixed cities like Lod, Ramle and Haifa triggered by the recent escalation between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip which left 256 Palestinians, including 66 children, and 13 Israelis dead – the worst outbreak of violence since 2014, and a bleak reminder of the long-term unsustainability of the status quo. Bennett is religiously observant himself, but his new government may also reduce the influence of the ultra-Orthodox parties that benefitted from Netanyahu's long rule, especially if, as planned, he hands over to his alternate prime minister and foreign minister, Yair Lapid, leader of Shinui (Change) after two years. Lapid is a former TV presenter who embodies Israeli secularism and its hostility to religious communities – especially in the light of their non-observance of Covid pandemic restrictions.

The Bennett-Lapid coalition breaks a political deadlock that has resulted in four snap elections since 2019. During that time, Netanyahu, who



Binyamin Netanyahu

is famous for his political skills, managed to keep his rivals bickering and divided while he clung to power, even after he was indicted in three criminal corruption cases on charges he denies.

Netanyahu has been in office for so long that – after last Sunday's confidence vote dethroned him – he unthinkingly returned to a Knesset seat reserved for the prime minister. After being discreetly prompted by an MP from his own Likud party, he moved to a seat designated for the opposition. And he has still not evacuated his official residence in Balfour Street in West Jerusalem, the scene of mass demonstrations against him in recent times.

It is hard to overstate the significance of Bibi's defeat. "The political establishment in Israel is embarking on a new path, after two and a half years of irresponsibly drifting from one election to the next, after 12 years in which one person drew all the political oxygen from the room," wrote Nahum Barnea, the star columnist for the country's leading Hebrew daily, *Yediot Aharonot*, last week.

According to coalition agreements with eight separate partners, the Bennett-Lapid "government of

change" is to focus mainly on economic and social issues, for example passing a state budget and building new hospitals in the wake of pandemic pressures.

Another key question is how Bennett will respond to pressure from the administration of Joe Biden, which greeted his victory but seems determined to downplay expectations of any breakthrough on Israel-Palestine and to reduce the US commitment to dealing with the Middle East in general, while focusing on reviving the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran. Yet another is how Netanyahu will behave as the leader of the opposition: the assumption is that he will act, as ever, in an entirely self-serving way.

Last week's planned march by far-right Jewish nationalists through Palestinian neighbourhoods of East Jerusalem was Bennett's first challenge in the wake of last month's Gaza 11-day flare-up. The march was re-routed to avoid provocation but the participants still shouted "Death to Arabs". In response incendiary balloons targeting southern Israel were launched from Gaza and Israel carried out airstrikes on the Gaza Strip, although no casualties were reported this time and its blockade

eased slightly.

Little change is likely on that front but these underlying issues are simply not going to go away. Palestinian expectations of the Israeli government were unsurprisingly low. As Mohammed Shtayyeh, prime minister of the Palestinian Authority (PA), declared: "We do not see this new government as any less bad than the previous one, and we condemn the announcements of the new prime minister in support of Israeli settlements". It is hard to argue with his statement that "the new government has no future if it does not take into consideration the future of the Palestinian people and their legitimate rights." Hamas, of course, is even more hostile.

Lapid will want to renew relations and cooperation with the PA, but he may face opposition from Bennett, who is unlikely to proceed with the unilateral annexation that Netanyahu, backed by Donald Trump, supported. Nothing much is expected to happen on the central, indeed existential, issue of relations between Israel and the Palestinians. In the words of Daniel Seidemann, a well-known Jerusalem peace activist: "Israel will end occupation, or occupation will be the end of us."

The Dangerous Flaw in the New Israeli Government



Dalia Ziada

The new government in Israel, known as “the government of change,” will hold its first cabinet meeting, on June 20th. However, it has already started working with full capacity and utmost pace since it was sworn in, before the Knesset, on June 13th. There is a lot of optimism inside Israel for finally being able to change Netanyahu after record 12 years in power, enhanced by the failure of four elections, within only two years, to install a new government. However, there are a lot of uncertainties, on regional and international levels, on whether this new government, with its coalition of odds, can appropriately handle the many domestic and regional challenges facing Israel.

Israeli Government

According to the legally-binding coalition agreement upon which the government is formed, the government will be ruled by two prime ministers on rotational basis. For the first two years, Naftali Bennett, from Yamina Party, will keep the Prime Minister’s office, until August 2023. Then, Yair Lapid, from Yesh Atid Party, will take over the Prime Minister position until November 2025. Right now, Lapid serves as the Foreign Minister under Bennett. Meanwhile, the coalition forming parties shall contribute to decision-making.

The coalition forming the government is composed by a relatively large number of political parties that fall at extreme opposites of the political spectrum. From the right wing: Yamina, and Yisrael Beiteinu. From the left wing: Meretz, and HaAvoda (the Israeli Labor Party). Liberals from the center: Yesh Atid, Blue and White, and the New Hope. Hanging at a weird spot somewhere on the spectrum is the United Arab List (Raam), which is led by the Islamic Movement, a political Islamist group operating inside Israel, since 1970s. This is the first time ever for the Israeli Arabs to participate in forming an Israeli government. Arab Israelis



Yair Lapid and Naftali Bennett

represent nearly 23% of the Israeli population. Most of them are young. According to Colonel Wagdi Sarhan, Chief of the Minorities Unit at the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), dozens of the young Israeli Arab Muslims challenged the norm and volunteered to join IDF, in the past few years. In that sense, it may not seem strange for the Israeli Arabs to be part of the coalition forming the new government.

However, the furious reaction by the Israeli Arabs against their Israeli Jewish neighbors, during the latest episode of war between Hamas and Israel, in May, should raise an alarm. In the heat of the conflict, they clashed with the Jews, inside Israel, and put the country on the brink of a civil war. Now, as the Arabs, who are also Islamists, have become an integral part of the Israeli government, how they are expected to react, should a new round of violence erupt between Hamas and Israel.

Nevertheless, the existence of the Israeli Arabs is not the only indigenous flaw threatening the cohesion of the vision of the new government. In fact, the structure of the coalition, which gives decision-making and veto powers to the many included

parties, shall make it very difficult for the government to operate, especially on issues related to internal economic policies and handling the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In that regard, we may see in Israel a scenario similar to the decision-making impasse, that the three-presidencies government of Tunisia has fallen into, in the past two years, and caused a lot of sufferings to the Tunisian people.

However, on the foreign policy level, the odd structure of the coalition government is expected to benefit Israel. Apparently, all of the political parties forming the government agree on the main outlines of the foreign policy that they should apply. Unlike the Netanyahu government, which mostly depended on a fait accompli policy, the diversity of the new government may force new compromises and diplomatic priorities, especially with neighbor Arab countries and the United States. On one hand, the government-forming political parties, collectively, desire to normalize relations with more Arab Gulf countries, while strengthening old relations with Egypt and Jordan. On June 18th, the new Foreign Minister of Israel, Yair Lapid, made his first phone call with the Egyptian

Foreign Minister, Sameh Shoukry. They discussed Egypt’s role in Gaza and the ceasefire deal and agreed to meet in person in the near future. Since 2015, the security and economic cooperation between Egypt and Israel have reached unprecedented horizons, and is expected to strengthen further in the next years.

On the other hand, all of the parties forming the government have a clear unified position against Iran and its proxies. About one week after the election of the Israeli government, a new president in Iran got elected. On June 19th, Ebrahim Raisi, the senior Imam, and Chief Judge, who with cold blood had sentenced tens of peaceful political activists to death, has been elected as the new President of Iran.

Israeli Government
Looking at the bigger picture of the Middle East region, in light of these developments, one can hardly be optimistic that this new Israeli government may be able to manage its many domestic and regional challenges with this coalition of odds, that includes an Arab Islamist party. This is the biggest flaw that may eventually lead to an early collapse of the coalition or an early collapse of the entire government.



G7 leaders pose for a "family photo" at the opening of the summit

Communique Diplomacy



James Denselow

The state of the world according to its most powerful people took the form of the two communiqes issued this week following the G7 annual meeting and the NATO Summit. These documents, products of intense negotiation between specialist diplomats, are an important barometer as to what these alliances consider to be the challenges of our time as well as setting out the broad brush strategy they plan to adopt to tackle them. The G7 looked, from an external perspective, a huge amount of fun. A combination of global leaders not having had many face-to-face meetings in the last year as well as the retreat nature of a getaway to the Cornish coast in the glorious sunshine helped. So did the celebrity chefs, the flybys by Red Arrow jets and the chance for their partners to be photographed enjoying the sea air. Yet the summit's communique, very much its most business end feature, was illuminating in what it did and didn't focus on.

It read like a slightly retro document signifying perhaps a return to more conventional multilateral diplomacy

of the later parts of the Cold War. Russia was mentioned seven times, China four. There was a stress on the 'rules-based' system and despite being amongst the worst conflicts of a generation; neither Yemen or Syria was mentioned at all.

The sense of being a return to more traditional ways of working was strengthened by the US and the UK agreeing a grandiose new 'Atlantic Charter' just before the meeting to help the world recover from Covid crisis, boost trade and protect democracy. The new charter will 'form the foundation of a sustainable global recovery' as Prime Minister Johnson and the US President promised the world a 'better future'. The G7 communique is of course not a legal document, nor one that will suddenly result in the foreign or defence policies of any of its members suddenly changing direction. Instead, it provides a compass that more detailed and distinct policy will steer these major powers towards, with the strength of consensus providing the political capital to prioritise and resource better.

The fact that Afghanistan and Iraq are mentioned in passing reflects a transition away from the counterterrorism focus of much of the post-9/11 period into a

recognition of strategic competition with a disruptive Russia and the need for a more nuanced relationship with China, which is largely recognised as the single biggest strategic question of our time. The communique explains that the G7 will cooperate with China "where it is in our mutual interest on shared global challenges, in particular addressing climate change and biodiversity loss in the context of COP26 and other multilateral discussions. At the same time and in so doing, we will promote our values, including by calling on China to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms". There is of course and inherent tension between the cooperation elements and those that promote policies that are juxtaposed with those currently held by the Government in Beijing and it is here that a critical focus will need to be maintained to assess the state of the relationship between the world's traditional economic powers and its new rising competitor.

Whilst the headlines focused on President Biden announcing that the US was "back" and contrasting himself to his more disruptive predecessor, there was also insight into the G7 and its expectations of what it can achieve in the limits of the agreements made. In particular the

call for the most powerful countries to lead on a mass global vaccination effort. According to the WHO some eleven billion vaccines are needed to protect the world along the adage that "nobody is safe until we're all safe". This nice and potentially fluffy sounding motto has very real-world consequences seen most recently by the fact that the Indian 'Delta' variant of the virus has forced the UK to delay further unlocking by a month.

Yet despite 11 billion shots being needed, the most the G7 could commit was 1 billion. As former UK Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, explained "we need to do for the world what Britain has done for itself: to construct a virtuous circle, starting with guaranteed G7 funding that underwrites the pooled purchasing of vaccines, which in turn generates new manufacturing capacity on every continent". But perhaps we shouldn't be surprised that in the new era of global competition that the G7 has set out its stall around, it is not the answer to all the world's problems but just a significant piece in a jigsaw that is made up of many others. The central question remains whether China accepts the jigsaw analogy and whether they and the G7 are able to collaborate constructively around its rules and processes.

Behind the debates: Iranian Influence in the UK



Paul Stott

As the Iranian elections near, western media coverage of Iran tends to focus on two things. Firstly, the vote scheduled for Monday 18th June. Secondly, the stalled nuclear agreement between Tehran and the world's powers. An early priority of the Biden administration is the reconstitution of the nuclear deal Barack Obama signed with Iran, that Donald Trump withdrew the United States from in 2018. Behind the headlines surrounding Iran's Presidential candidates or the intricacies of reconstituting the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), what are Iran's intentions towards the UK? How does it conduct itself in Britain, and what influence does it possess? Iranian Influence Here, Iran pursues a twin track approach to developing and maintaining influence. One is perfectly legal and open, the other comprises the type of online disinformation and chicanery western liberal democracies have come to expect from countries such as Russia, China and North Korea. The first approach is headed via diplomatic staff based at its embassy, under Ambassador Hamid Baeidinejad, one of the negotiators of the JCPOA. Diplomatic relations between Iran and the UK have historically been mixed, and as recently as 2011 staff were ordered to leave Britain after the Iranian authorities had allowed a mob to smash up the British embassy in Tehran.

Iran is fortunate that its religious structures in this country have not been interfered with by the British authorities. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei's current representative in the UK is Seyed Moosavi, based at one of London's most prominent Shia religious sites, the Islamic Centre of England, in Maida Vale. Mr Moosavi's predecessor, Mohammad Ali Shomali, has said of his time in post "Regarding the role of the representatives, it is religious in nature and not political." Iranian

clerics in the UK are enthusiastic participants in inter-faith initiatives and outreach work with local elites, and Mr Shomali was considered important enough to meet with senior Scottish officials and politicians at the annual Peace and Unity conference in Glasgow.

Separating the political and the religious, when it comes to a country like Iran, appears impossible. And the merging of the two impacts upon this country. Last year Tehran condemned a film, *The Lady of Heaven*, written by an exiled Kuwaiti Shia cleric now living in Buckinghamshire, Sheikh Yasser al-Habib. He is denounced by Tehran for allegedly criticising Aisha, one of Muhammad's wives. After the Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, Ali Shamkhan, called on Britain to ban *The Lady of Heaven*, Ambassador Baeidinejad weighed in. Pointing out the film had been made here in Britain, Baeidinejad described it as an attempt to divide Muslims. Writing to Sunni and Shia Islamic centres across Britain, he called on Muslims in the UK to condemn the picture,

and push, within the law, for its proscription. Where, in this dispute, is there a demarcation line between the political and the religious? Such actions also make Britain nervous. Those with long memories will recall the damage to social cohesion on the streets of England when the Ayatollah Khomeini sentenced the British author Salman Rushdie to death for blasphemy, following the publication of *The Satanic Verses*. Iranian Influence

As well as demanding the laws of Islam be upheld in Britain, Iran has developed a second approach to gaining and maintaining influence in this country. Since at least 2013 the Islamic republic has been behind a series of fake Facebook pages designed to support the Scottish nationalist cause. Here, the intention is to weaken the United Kingdom by encouraging the break-away of one of its constituent parts. Whilst Russian online disinformation often seeks to accelerate division in liberal democracies, stressing opposing viewpoints simultaneously, Iran prefers to establish camouflaged sites

which support its politico-religious aims, or at the very least damage an opponent. Sites uncovered in a 2020 US investigation clearly reflected regional Iranian ambitions – Syria-victory.com or Yemenpress.org – but also a surprisingly reflective approach. Who would have associated the domain name *criticalstudies.org* with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps?

Despite this history, Iran possesses a surprising degree of soft power in the United Kingdom. For some in political traditions on the left, the 1979 Islamic revolution remains a beacon for potential change. Iran is typically viewed as more sinned against than sinner. Those in the anti-war movement who have vigorously critiqued America's conduct in the Middle East, and Britain's support for it, have struggled to grasp Iran's ambitions in Lebanon, Yemen and especially Syria.

We need to understand Iran, and its hostile intentions, far better. Re-establishing the nuclear agreement is not the way to start that challenging test.



Syria's Kurds in Biden-Putin Summit



Jwan Dibo

The US president will hold two separate summits during this month. One of them is with Russia's president on 16th June, and the other is with Turkey's president on 14th June. Indeed, Kurdish issue in Syria will be an essential part of the talks in these summit meetings. It can, even, be said that the Kurds in Syria are the common subject between the two distinct meetings.

For the Kurds in Syria, the US-Russia summit is more important than the US-Turkish one. There are numerous reasons behind this belief. First, the US and Russia are two great powers involved in Syria, and any potential solution for Syria's impasse, must be approved by the two states.

Second, the possibility of reaching a common understanding between Washington and Moscow on the rights of Syria's Kurds is much greater than between Washington and Ankara. Third, Biden-Putin summit is pre-scheduled and will be held independently, while Biden-Erdogan's meeting will be held on the sidelines of NATO summit in Brussels on 14th June.

Fourth, the Kurds no longer have any hope of a positive change in Turkey's position on their rights. On the contrary, pessimism prevails and dominates these days, because of the open war that Erdogan's Turkey is waging against the Kurds, whether inside Turkish Kurdistan, Iraqi Kurdistan, or Syrian Kurdistan.

The US and Russia are on opposite sides in Syria. Russia has supported Bashar al-Assad's regime, while the U.S has backed Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). A slew of thorny dossiers between both superpowers including political future of Syria await the two leaders. The problem was, and still is, that the Kurdish role throughout the Syrian crisis has been a subject of a sharp dispute between Washington and Moscow.

Russia has always wanted the Kurds



Fighters from the Kurdish-led and American-backed Syrian Defense Forces (SDF)

to work for the Syrian regime, while the US has always urged them to stay away from al-Assad regime. The biggest problem was, and still is, that both countries want to use and co-opt Syria's Kurds for free. Both countries, especially the US, has not, even, protected them against successive Turkish invasions and occupations.

It is true that the Kurdish-led SDF are backed by the US, but the US has not adequately protected them against Turkey's threat, nor has not worked to mitigate the effects of the stifling economic crisis plaguing their regions. This reflects the absence of a clear American strategy in Syria. Moreover, it shows that the future of the Kurds in Syria is not a big matter to US and is not one of its priorities. The Kurds in Syria were and still are the weakest player in the Syrian conflict. Their enemies are much more than their friends. The US and Russia have used them more than once to blackmail Turkey. On the other hand, Russia has threatened and intimidated the Kurds more than once by encouraging Turkey against

them. Turkey, in turn, has several times invaded and occupied their territories by concluding secret deals with the US and Russia together. The Syrian regime and Iran were and still are igniting unrests in the areas of the Kurdish-led Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, through their militias. In addition, political forces of the Syrian Kurds are divided and not united. There are many direct and indirect outstanding issues between the two superpowers, including the future of the political settlement in Syria. But it seems that the Syrian issue does not occupy an important place in the context of those pending problems, and more precisely the Kurdish issue in Syria.

All countries, especially the major ones, act according to their interests only, and solving the Kurdish issue in Syria does not serve the interests of U.S. and Russia together. In other words, it is not an issue of importance to US foreign policy. In addition, the two countries can reach temporary or semi-permanent settlements for some important issues by making

some bargaining at the expense of minor issues, for them, such as the rights of the Kurds in Syria.

The hopes that some or most of the Kurds have held for the administration of Democratic President, Joe Biden, seem to be illusory. The recent Turkish escalation against the Kurdistan region of Iraq under the pretext of fighting PKK fighters without any reaction from the U.S. is sufficient evidence. Note that Turkey cannot invade and occupy more of the lands of the Kurdistan region without obtaining the American green light. All U.S. did, so far, was that its ambassador to the United Nations expressed its concern about the recent Turkish escalation against the Kurdistan region of Iraq.

The rights of the Kurds in Syria were not and will not turn into a point of disagreement between Washington and Moscow. On the contrary, it may turn into a bargaining between the two sides in order to reach settlements for other outstanding issues, of course, at the expense of the Syrian Kurds.

Intra-Kurdish negotiations in Syria and the new Guinness record



Zara Saleh

When the “Guinness Breweries” director Hugh Beaver from Ireland went on an entertainment shooting party, he discovered by the ‘game bird’ that the golden plover was faster than the red grouse. Then the Guinness Book of Records idea became a fact in 1955, essentially based on achievement and success. Hence, the idea of such world records is always related to the success of any aspects of life that can benefit humanity. That is why the majority of Syrian Kurds are disappointed regarding the Kurdish-Kurdish marathon of negotiations and they believe that such ways of dialogue don’t even have a chance to knock the back door of the Guinness World Records.

Going Back to the current ongoing intra-Kurdish negotiations in Syria, the Chief Commander of the Syrian Democratic Forces SDF general

Mazloum Abdi in late 2019 launched a new initiative between Kurdish parties after the Turkish occupation of SereKaniye and Tel Abyad and Afrin in 2018. The initiative for dialogue between the Kurdish National Council KNC and the Kurdish National Unity Parties KNUP was also supported by the former US envoy William Robak. In 2020 both parties have reached the first and second phase of the agreement that includes a joint political vision for Syria, a federal system of governance, the Kurdish question, and the establishment of the Kurdish political authorities. Since September 2020, the third phase of negotiations has been a dead-end despite the fact that four American envoys have repeatedly been changed including the current one David Brownstein who is leading now the rally of the talks.

Before the US initiative for Kurdish negotiations, France also has launched an initiative in August 2019 for intra-Kurdish dialogue with

the purpose to unify the Kurds to participate in the peace process in Syria, but unfortunately, the initiative did not succeed. At a glance at the long-term history of intra-Kurdish negotiations, we will be found that the first dialogue has begun between the PYD and KNC in June 2012. The two parties have signed the Hawler Agreement and established the Kurdish Supreme Committee with three joint committees that include: Political Committee, Military Committee, Services Provision Committee. In December 2013, the Presidency of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq called for the Hawler 2 conference. Despite both parties, PYD and KNC, has reached the new agreement but again they failed to succeed because of many unreasonable causes. Like other agreements, in 2014 the KNC and PYD met in the Kurdish city of Duhok under American auspices, and they agreed to form the “Kurdish Political Authority,” a 30-member body—12 representatives from each party and



Mazloum Abdi

six from independent parties, but differences returned again as usual. Arguably, the two Kurdish parties should understand the importance of the dialogue for the Syrian Kurds and their presence in the Geneva peace process and in the Constitutional Committee as well. Consequently, the Kurdish reconciliation will be the only way, with the American presence, to protect the Kurds from the Assad’s regime, Turkey, opposition, and Iranian militia, and with the Russian green light. Otherwise, such an opportunity of change in Syria and with the presence of such international coalition and US, might not repeat again under such period that Kurds in Syria can fulfil their ambition of autonomy or federal region.

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