

“AN EXPERT VIEW FROM ISRAEL”

Perspective 54



KEY POINTS FROM A ‘MIDDLE EAST FORUM’ WEBINAR



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In a brief ‘Webinar’ session organized by the Washington based MEF, Ashley Perry, an adviser to Israel's minister of foreign affairs and deputy prime minister in 2009-15, provides weekly updates on Israeli politics.

SUMMARY OF ASHLEY PERRY’S WEEKLY COMMENTS

Perry devoted his entire weekly briefing to an issue that has overwhelmed Israeli politics in the past week, namely the potential departure of Benjamin Netanyahu from Israeli front line politics.

This development that has been dubbed as ‘the Big Bang of Israeli politics’ comes in the aftermath of ripened speculations that Netanyahu might accept a plea bargain option that would bring an end to his various court cases involving, ‘fraud, breach of trust and perhaps most importantly, bribery’.

It is understood that in the event of such a development, Netanyahu might be spared a prison term but he would instead need to abstain from involvement in Israeli politics for a period of perhaps 3-7 years (depending on final arrangements).

The reason why the matter has come up at this time, is the imminent departure (at the end of January 2022) of Avichai Mandelblit, the Attorney General of Israel who had been previously appointed to this position by Netanyahu in 2016.

Although, it was at Mandelblit’s behst that the charges mentioned above against Netanyahu were made (much to the chagrin of all right-wing supporters in Likud and other political parties), according to Perry, Netanyahu still stands a better chance of getting an acceptable plea bargaining deal with him that his successor who will be appointed by Netanyahu’s political enemies in the current coalition government.

However, Perry adamantly pointed out that any deal reached would still have to be ratified by Israel's Supreme Court as well.

The consequences of such a deal which Netanyahu seems like wanting, is that it will undoubtedly put the future of the current coalition in serious doubt. This is due to the fact that most of the right-wing parties currently in the coalition would have no problems working with anyone else but Netanyahu in the Likud Party (e.g., the likes of Gidon Sa'ar of the 'New Hope' Party and PM Naftali Bennet himself of the Yamina Party).

Were Netanyahu to leave, there will follow a leadership battle in the Likud which could last a few weeks but then the horse trading within the coalition would begin, placing above anything else the agreement between Foreign Minister Yair Lapid and Naftali Bennet for Lapid to succeed Bennet as PM in 2023 in serious jeopardy.

Perry pointed out that in the event of the falling apart of the coalition, it may be quite possible to form a new government without having to call for another general election.

Perry ended his comments by saying that Netanyahu's possible departure from front line Israeli politics will no doubt lead to the start of the 'ticking clock' for the coalition.

