

“AN EXPERT VIEW FROM ISRAEL”

Series Report #74



SUMMARY OF 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 began his weekly comments by asserting that as he had earlier predicted the Coalition government of Naftali Bennet had at best days or weeks before its final collapse, following a last-minute meeting on Sunday between Bennet and his Yamina Party rebel, Nir Orbach which did not result in any kind of a reliable agreement, both the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Yair Lapid took the initiative of declaring ‘the end of the government’.
- However, following the decision to disband the Coalition that had been reduced from a majority of 61 to a mere 56, the delayed vote for ensuring the status of Israelis living in the West Bank (an all-inclusive bill that deals with numerous issues ranging for their health and education to the status of Palestinian prisoners held in those areas) was passed on Wednesday by a vote of 110-0.
- As a result of these manoeuvrings, the clock is now ticking for another possible election which could be held in October/November.
- According to Perry, there are certain other options that can prevent the need for calling a new election, at a time when certain political parties such as Gidon Saar’s New Hope, Meretz and Labour could be in danger of not obtaining enough votes for meeting the required threshold.
- The first of these options is for Netanyahu and Likud (with a total of 54 seats at this time) to obtain the support of a number of MKs (members of Knesset) that would give them the 61 votes they need to have a majority.
- This could be achieved for Netanyahu if he can obtain the support of Benny Gantz or Gidon Saar, though the prospects of such an alliance

seems at best very bleak, given the animosity and distrust that is felt by these two politicians for the person of Netanyahu.

- However, according to Perry, behind the scene talks on behalf of Likud were being pursued by Moshe Gafni who is a Member of the Knesset, and leader of the Ashkenazi Haredi party.
- Perry was just the same of the view that chances for such talks in achieving anything meaningful were slim at best, especially as Netanyahu (contrary to his gestures in the past) has ruled out any kind of an Alliance with the Arab Raam Party of Mahmoud Abbas.
- In the event that an election is called, Lapid is to become the interim PM with Bennet becoming the alternate PM and Foreign Minister.
- But according to Perry, Bennet was signalling that he wanted to step aside and possibly resign from the Knesset and bide his time for a future return (in which case the post of Foreign Minister could most likely be offered to Gidon Saar).
- Perry concluded his remarks by saying it was difficult to bet against Netanyahu despite the fact that there were still many unknown factors.
- On other issues, Perry said that irrespective of these developments, the Biden visit to Israel in July would proceed as planned before.
- Perry said that Israel-Turkish cooperation in the aftermath of Lapid's trip to Ankara and in face of the terrorist threat posed against Israeli tourists by Iran had been productive and bilateral ties between the two states was once again on the upswing

