

**“AN EXPERT VIEW FROM ISRAEL”**  
**REPORT # 60**  
**SUMMARY OF A ‘MIDDLE EAST FORUM’ WEBINAR**  
**2 MARCH 2022**  


*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 focused the majority of his weekly webinar on Israel precarious position with both Russia and Ukraine in the current standoff situation between them.
- ◆ From Israel’s perspective, Russia’s current military presence in Syria – an area with tremendous security implications for Jerusalem, is a serious and crucial consideration.
- ◆ This is mainly due to the understanding that has come to exist between Israel and Russia for Israel to take military action (in the shape of air raids against Iranian and Iranian backed proxies) in Syria to both prevent a foothold for Iran in and around ‘Golan’ and other Israeli borders as well as preventing as much as possible the shipment of Iranian weapons and equipment from Syria to Hezbollah in Lebanon.
- ◆ In this context, the Russians have looked the other way in what has come to be known as the ‘diffraction mechanism’ (?), that essentially allows Israel to have unlimited aircraft sorties over Syrian soil for purposes of destroying Iranian targets (and those of its proxies).
- ◆ While Russia has allowed this to happen, - something that is of crucial importance for Israel , there have been times when Russia had been angered – e.g., when a Syrian air defence missile landed in a Russian base resulting in the destruction of a Russian plane along with other damages.
- ◆ In the context of the current conflict that is raging between Russia and Ukraine, Israel according to Perry is “one of the few democratic countries that maintains an open line of communication with both belligerents”.
- ◆ Perry said that on 2 March, PM Naftali Bennet had spoken with both the Russian and Ukrainian presidents, making him a serious interlocutor for carrying messages and the like.
- ◆ However, despite President Zelensky’s request for military hardware, Israel has refrained from any involvement on that front, limiting its help only to matters pertaining to humanitarian aid (medical field hospitals etc. on the Polish and Moldovan borders).

- ◆ It is a fact that Israel is in a tight-rope. While the Prime Minister is trying to maintain relations with both parties, Foreign Minister Lapid has been trying to cater to the needs of the US and the Europeans by instructing the UN Ambassador to cast Israel's vote in favour the UN General Assembly vote in favour of Ukraine that was carried out in New York on 2 March.
- ◆ Perry noted that Israel was at the same time most concerned about the supply of Russian air defence systems to both Iran and Syria.
- ◆ It was nonetheless a fact that in the greater scheme of things, at the end of the day, Israel needed to have a balanced position in its ties with both the US and Russia

### **ON JACPOA**

- ◆ These talks were being made more complicated because of the war given that Russia was a key player, though in Vienna, the general perception have been that both Russia and China "are in the Iranian camp".
- ◆ The complication is in part due to the fact that while differences between Russia and the US exist over Ukraine, there is a great deal of unity between them as far their joint desire for resolving the JCPOA issue.
- ◆ Perry noted that Russia and Israel have spoken on this issue and Russia has been cognizant of various Israeli sensitivities.

### **ON ISRAELI POLITICS**

- ◆ Perry noted that the past few days had once again been a troublesome period for the governing coalition (this time with Meretz saying that promises made to it by the PM (over budget at the Health Ministry had not been honoured) .
- ◆ He attributed some of the trouble to unruly behaviour on the part many members of the Knesset that had led to some being forcefully ushered out of the chamber.
- ◆ He noted that the opposition had also used the occasion of the visit of the German Chancellor to speed up the process of voting on a piece of legislation that went against the Coalition due to the fact that that the PM and foreign minister were not able to be in the chamber (bearing in mind that the coalition has only a majority of one'.

In a brief 'Q&A' session, Perry stated that Israel was unlikely to enact any sanctions (restricting flights or financial) on Russia. This was due to the fact that are more than 1 million Israelis with dual citizenship from Russia.

Perry also stated that Russian speakers in Israel came from many countries aside from just Russia and Ukraine (e.g., Baltic States, Moldova and the like). He noted that some Israelis of Ukrainian stock had gone back to the Ukraine as volunteers in order to fight in the war.

