Abstract Points

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1.US political agenda since September 11:

There are five "I's" governing the US foreign agenda:

a. *Islam-phobia:* started with a war on terrorism in Afghanistan and with building alliances in that region ie. Pakistan, India, and was later transformed to focus on Muslims as extreme Islamists. Within few years, the concept of Islam and the representatives of the Islamic faith became the obsession and fear in the US in general and has had great impact on Europe as well as on moderate Arab Islamic countries.

b. *Iraq:* American Military Occupation in Iraq to topple a dictator-secular regime under the pretext of Iraq's possession of nuclear weapons, led to the defacto collapse of Iraq's political system, army, political parties, civil society institutions. Within three years, a civil war prevailed in Iraq with the rise of three religious powers, Shiites in the south, Sunnis in the center, and Druze in the north. The US occupation of Iraq has also impact on the whole region in particular the Gulf States.

 c. *Iran:* with the American war and occupation in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as the continuous visible presence in the Gulf, Iran has risen as the victorious regional power with a clear and challenging political agenda. Again the US has tried to use the issue of the possession of nuclear weapons as another excuse to challenge Iran. Yet, Iran with its geopolitical, economical power in the region, is becoming a backbone for the support of Islamic national resistance movements in Lebanon and Palestine.

d. *Israel:* continued to be a powerful military base in historical strategic alliance in the US and Europe . Yet, it has faced a crisis in its leadership, vision and mission , and with the rise of the Jewish religious parties and institutions, and has acquired a new face for the Jewish secular state after more than 50 years of its establishment.
e. *Intelligence:* which means today's global culture, media, communication, psychological warfare and information.

2. Europe: moved to be closer to US- Israeli agenda as portrayed in the following episodes:

a. Danish cartoons controversy
b. Solana contradiction statement visa-vi the dialogue with Iran.
c. Enforced siege on Palestinians after Hamas elections.

d. Long delay in pushing for cease-fire during Israeli war on Lebanon in July.
e. Adopting the US agenda on the global war on terror.

3. Palestinians
a. Factors shaping Hamas agenda
   1) The political transformation of its doctrine by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin before he was assassinated on the 22 of March 2004. This doctrine includes:
   1. Calling for truce or Hudna with Israel instead of recognition
   2. Sharing political power
   3. Calling for elections to legitimize their seat in the government
   4. Accepting a Palestinian State on the 1967 borders, meaning acceptance of a two-state solution.
   5. Leaving the responsibility of negotiations to the PLO establishment with the condition that any draft agreement should be put for the people in a referendum.

   2)The Palestinian elections of January 2006 have legitimized Hamas as a partner to the PLO and Fatah, particularly in the representation of the Palestinian people .Hamas has come to head the PLC and the government but has shown to lack experience and professional caliber.
   3) Faced daily challenges by Fatah Movement as well as by President Abu Mazen in the following authorities: financial, media, foreign policy, control of the crossing points and within each of the ministries.
   4) Hamas leadership (Masha'al, Zahhar, Hanieh , Siyyam) succeeded in leveraging funds and guns, and broke the Arab siege. The Arab League as well as Arab capitals, and the organization of an Islamic Conference (OIC) in Jeddah received Hamas leaders with support**.**
   5)Hamas government claims that Abu Mazen has no authority and no legal base to call for dismissing the government or an early election.
   6)Lebanon's current crisis with the rise of his eminence the master Hassan Nasrallah is becoming a model for Hamas to copy.
   7) Hamas at a the crossroads to become a political party with Islamic ideology sharing political power in the PA or with the continuous siege, challenges, prison culture to move towards political Islam.
   8)Their final position is for a national unity government with 9 seats for Hamas out of 24.

b. Fatah position:
 1) A need to overcome the current financial and political siege.
 2) A need to form a unity government agreeing on the 3 conditions by the quartet i.e. recognizing Israel, renouncing violence and accepting all previous agreement signed between PA and Israel.
 3) Fattah leadership is divided between the old guards and the young guards.
 4) Fatah has no political agenda to convince the public of the change since its defeat in the elections.
 5) The PLO executive committee lead by Fatah have been meeting with empty statements as well as contradiction in its referendum.

6) The majority of the PA civil servants (160, 000) are resisting the authority and decisions taken by Hamas ministers.

7) There has been continuous clashes and innocent killed by both parties in Gaza and the West Bank.

8) Abu Mazen adopted the PLO executive committee recommendation to call for an early election for the PLC and the President at the same time leaving the door open for the formation of a national unity government. Yet, this has been used as a ploy to pressure Hamas for concessions.

c*. Secular position:*

1) The elites of the NGOs based in Ramallah have no contacts or influence on the grassroots.

2) Most of these elites have been portrayed as "political hypocrites" interested in their own survival in their institutions.

3) There has been various attempts to unite their forces behind a political agenda with no success.

4) They are not trusted by Fateh or Hamas yet they have been used as messengers between the two.

4. Israel: Facing a crisis of leadership and a lacking vision Olmert claimed a Prime Minister should not have an agenda. His party Kadima which was established on the thesis of unilateralism could not carry out the mission after Sharon. The Labor party has been divided between the old generals and the new politicians with a serious crisis when they had to agree for their political survival in the government to include the extremist Lieberman in addition to the Israeli army's defeat in their war on Lebanon in July which was portrayed as the first Iranian-Israeli war. This means that the Israeli society at the crossroads was:

a. Too reluctant to overcome the separation wall culture and meet the Palestinians on the Quartet Agenda.
b. Too reluctant with many reservations to accept the Arab initiative for recognition and normalization by ending occupation and becoming citizens of the Middle East.
c. Partly enjoying being the children of Europe with a strategic military alliance with the US.
d. Obsessed with the rise of Iran as a regional power and pushing Washington for an early attack.

5. Prospects for restarting the peace process:

1. To focus on Palestinian society in terms of siege, unemployment, poverty, and to overcome the current separation between various cantons ie. Nablus, Ramallah, Hebron, Gaza.
2. To Release detainees and stop the military incursions and unify local security system.
3. To reconstitute partnership on the implementation of the Quartet agenda.
4. Olmert-Abbas meetings should not ceremonial.
5. Cairo-Amman-Riad embracing a national unity government.

6. Europe to enter profound dialogue on engagement on the ground, economy and security with no boycott or sanctions, or apologies , but a fair position, and hold all parties accountable in practical terms. ie. clear statement on right and wrong.
7. to reconstitute the Quartet to become Quartet Plus i.e adding the term "for a Palestinian state 'on the borders of 1967'".
8. Calling for a regional conference including Syria and Iran.

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