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RAGHIDA DERGHAM With:

HE Hoshyar Zebari

HE Walid Joumblatt

HE Jeffrey Feltman

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Youtube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EaQYLeui5GA>

RAGHIDA DERGHAM: Good afternoon, good morning, good evening wherever you are. The guests for are e-Policy circle 3 are tremendously important and they would have a lot to say and it is an honor to have all four of them. I have from Erbil Hoshyar Zebari and I have from Beirut Walid Joumblatt from Washington I have Jeffrey Feltman and from Paris Amir Taheri and I am in Beirut Raghida Dergham.

Welcome and it's going to be a wonderful conversation today about a lot of things that matters to this region and our place in the world. I will start with Hoshyar Zebari, Former Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Iraq. The floor is yours. You have four minutes to bring to the table what you want, and we look forward to listening to what you have to say. Please.

HE Hoshyar Zebari: Well Raghida, thank you for inviting, for having me with these distinguished guests and leaders and I'm very pleased to be on one of your other forums of Beirut Institute I enjoyed the last one in Abu Dhabi it was really a big, big success and if you remember the conclusion we had before the end of 2019 when it was held. The conclusion was: what were the prospects for 2020? Politically in geopolitics, in regard to stability in the region, the relations with Iran, and the Gulf and everybody concluded really. It will get worse before it would get better that was the conclusion we came to. Nobody expected that Covid19 will spread globally, let's say, to cover all over the world but really those predictions were not far from the truth... still we see many problems, many difficulties. Iraq went through a crisis, by public demonstration since last October and it took us nearly five six months to form a new government. Finally we did, I mean ten days ago also we've seen a number of very significant development on Iraqi soil where the American-Iranian conflict has been taking place I mean the most serious development was in January when there was attacks on the American Embassy in Baghdad by popular mobilization forces and also the killing of general Qassim Soleimani and Abu Mahdi Al Muhandis, this was the most serious development in my view that has taken place and it was a clear message of the terrorists that if you keep pushing your luck with us everywhere you will be punished and that has a

big impact in fact in my humble assessment on the Iranian attitudes. I think since that incident apart from the retaliatory attack on Ain al Assad with some missiles really, they have taken the message that don't mess with the big power in this part of the world and you should behave yourself. And all the signs, the indications we are getting really, they are moving toward more moderation, trying to see how this year will end. It's an election year in the United State. So, they try to behave themselves as they are under tremendous pressure by the American economic sanction as you know, and also internally with the COVID-19 spread in Iran.

Iran is also one of the highest number countries with the number of deaths and affected people but maybe there is not enough transparency really here. But in terms of the future actually of Iraq and the region I personally believe there is a great deal of goodwill for the new government of Mustafa Al-Kazemi. He is a Shia, he is a liberal a moderate Shia, he is not a sectarian or politicized Shia as such and it came through consensus and even I believe there was some understanding between the Iranian and the Americans, let's say, that this could be a good candidate.

I personally have been in touch with both sides to promote him that he could be the best choice for the time being at the beginning the PMF the Iranian were seriously against him and considering him an American man in Iraq. They accused him of taking part in killing Soleimani and Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis, but then at the end they changed their attitude. But the war in Syria is going on still, you see the tension in the Gulf still there, Iraq had opportunity but it's not stable and we are all suffering facing by the crash in the oil prices by the economic hardship, and Iraq has a very entire state who depends ninety percent or in revenue on oil rather than you really is facing the most serious challenge. I hope it will not be an economic or fiscal meltdown.

RAGHIDA DERGHAM: I hope not. I have a quick follow-up question to you# Hoshyar Zebari because you said that you see a direction towards moderation- right- so you dispute those who are saying that they see more confrontation coming between the U.S. and Iran despite the escalation at least verbal escalation taking place about how far do you come close to my ships and you know what standing orders are there so that is one. And the second very quickly so you don't believe the news coming from Tehran said they think that government of Al-Kazemi is actually transitional and it's not going to last too long.

Just a quick question and then we're going to indulge in that later.

HE Hoshyar Zebari: Yes we have a number of an indications really even there has been some under the table talks, Jeff knows these things, the exchange of detainees I remember, once I was at the State Department with Jeff Feltman and Secretary Hillary Clinton and all of a sudden some Iranian were released to the [inaudible] given to the Pakistani embassy but we see something similar is taking place now.

RAGHIDA DERGHAM: Okay, so what about the duration of the Kazemi government?

HE Hoshyar Zebari: I think He's committed to be a transitional really, I mean the first act or mission Kazemi has is to prepare for a new election. A clean, safe, transparent, monitored

election and therefore according to the mission of how long this will take. I think they are giving it 16 months to two years almost, you see, more than a year to prepare the elections.

RAGHIDA DERGHAM: Thank you very much Hoshiyar Zebari. We will go into all these details in a bit. I give the floor now to Walid Joumblatt. Please the floor is yours.

HE Walid Joumblatt: Thank you. I think the title of our intervention today is Stability Redefined. But if you don't mind, I wonder when Lebanon was stable during the last 50 years maybe at the time of Fouad Chehab and paradoxically speaking and maybe between 1989 and 2000 during the time of the Syrian presence or occupation, call it whatever you'd like. Now we are on the verge of total instability not because of Corona but because of economic disaster, our fault of our governance which was very bad. Going to Syria. Syria is going to total instability. I remember when I met once a long time ago, in 2013 or 2012, Jeff Feltman and [inaudible] in Istanbul and I begged them to give weapons anti-aircraft weapons to the weapons at that time used to have adequate genuine rivets. It did not happen. Obama then hesitated and said no and came the hordes of Islamists and people and the Syrian Revolution was betrayed.

Going to Iraq I'm sorry to say, well, I hope this time it will stay stable and that the two parties will always agree for the sake of the Kurds. I'm proud to be from Kurds origin. I don't know if, you know, of course you have a central government in Iraq, but you have non-state entities, like we do have, I mean Hezbollah is also non-state entity, Hamas is a non-state entity. And sometimes these non-state entities are stronger than the States. Finally, Palestine, well Palestine, it's finally Mahmoud Abbas did the right thing today or yesterday, to accept that the 'two states', finally to acknowledge that the 'two-state solution' is over. And I hope that he will dissolve the so-called Palestinian Authority and accept to be under occupation, because there is no other way, there is no other way, of course it is total instability that will lead to instability. The old Zionists plan to have whatever deal, "Al Watan Al Badeel", East Jordan could be the Palestine. This is the idea, of [inaudible] and Ben Gurion. This is what I'm happy to say for now.

RAGHIDA DERGHAM: All right very good we're going to go into the details of the annexation plan and its impact on the region, definitely. I just want to know what from the point of view of a politician, a man who is part of the old guard Walid Joumblatt. You are also accused of being part of the problem, you amongst others, when they say "Kellon yaa'ne Kellon", you are seen as someone who's part of the problem not part of the solution. How can you make yourself part of the solution to bring stability to Lebanon?

HE Walid Joumblatt: I'm not saying that I would be part of the solution. It's up to the new generation, it's up just to the new generation, but at the same time, I mean changing, they want to change, the rebellions wanted to change the whole system. This system is one of the most strong systems of the world. I mean, my father tried to change it, he couldn't, he failed. And it would go into sectarian and permissions I don't know how to change it, I have no formula.

RAGHIDA DERGHAM: But are you for changing the system, the political and economic system in the country? Are you for it?

HE Walid Joumblatt: I am for reforming the action liberal system of Lebanon yes, reforming -drastic reforms- but not to abolish this system. We are on the eve of the hundredth anniversary of the Grand Liban created by Gouraud. Now you have people inside the government and outside that would like to nationalize the banks, that would like to destroy the banks, that would like to have a new Lebanon, like the cities did in in 1963 when they abolished everything, the vast part in 1963.

RAGHIDA DERGHAM: Thank You. Jeffrey Feltman please go ahead.

HE Jeffrey Feltman: Well thank you very much for this invitation to join this panel. It's not to be among the distinguished panellists and frankly personal friends who you've gathered today, so thank you very much.

I know that we'll be talking mostly about the region so I'd like to step back a bit and look sort of globally and historically, and think about the fact that there were two cataclysmic events in 20th century World War One and World War Two and there were two entirely different reactions by the United States and some other countries to those two cataclysmic events after World War One the United States basically turned its back on the world, abdicated leadership and responsibilities. After World War Two the United States led the world in building United Nations and building interlocking institutions and alliances -that yes served US interests- but also serve the interests of global stability and ~~in~~ development and if you look, if you think about it, it's been 75 years since there has been a global war. It doesn't mean there's been universal peace as people in the Middle East, Lebanon, Iraq certainly know better than I do, but there's not been a war between major powers. That's something significant. Now today we're facing another disruption of the same magnitude the combination of the pandemic and the economic crash.

And we know the grim, we know the statistics, the United States now has 36 million people registered as unemployed and that's probably an underestimation. Hoshyar, I know that I saw the statistics from Iraq that your oil revenues dropped from six billion dollars in January to 1.4 billion dollars in April.

Global North, global south, rich countries, poor countries, they're all facing the same crisis. So the question is: How will national leaders, today, react to this disruption? What will the populations expect their national leaders to do? Is there going to be a retreat? Like the US after World War One? Or will there be revived efforts to strengthen the multilateral cooperation to deal with the economies, to deal with the health issues, to deal with inequality and so forth. Now rationally the corona virus and the economic recessions, affecting everybody, should reinforce this idea of cooperation of partnership. And I've seen encouraging talks. People talk about build back better, which basically means: seize the opportunity that the crisis presents to build better institutions, to build economies, that don't lead to the world being uninhabitable because of climate crisis. But frankly Raghida, I fear that this pandemic and the economic toll, are going to reinforce some quite negative

trends. They reinforce the isolationism the, xenophobia, the inward-looking, the nationalism on the part of many world leaders including here in the United States.

These factors like xenophobia and increased nationalism were already present before corona virus hit, before the economy crashed. But these crises seem to be reinforcing these trends and I think strongly that we need to be trying to create the innovative atmosphere and the international solidarity that's more akin to 1945 than to 1918. And the key to doing this is sustainable economic recovery. How can we use existing institutions? Can we come together to make a mechanism that will address the economic issues that every world leader and most of the world's citizens are concerned about right now? to build a more equal, to build more equal societies, more sustainable economies and deal with things like climate change. We have to try.

RAGHIDA DERGHAM: Alright thank you. I'm going to stop you here; I'm not going to follow up with you because I'm losing a lot of time that I want to use in detail questions. I'm going to go to Amir Taheri, and then I'm going to open up the discussion.

Go ahead Amir.

HE Amir Taheri: Yes, I understood you want to talk about stability, you know, as a kind of idea. But what I observe is that you know for the past at least twenty years, we haven't had this stability at all. We have had this stagnation in all the countries in the world, the international organizations, have remained stagnant. They have lost their direction. The United States has been eroded in his leadership role. All in all. And because, you know there was a lot of money and the party mood there was no attention paid to the fundamental weaknesses of the international system and the changes that can happen.

So, we did not lose stability, we lost a stagnation. And what we are facing now is the management of instability because we are going to be unstable for a while. So, in the middle of this management of instability, some are talking of grand ideas for example, in the case of Lebanon, to create a new Lebanon, to create a new United States.

I think you know we have to be more modest you know to pull down our vanity a little bit and look for practical solutions to many problems.

You know there isn't time in in four minutes, to go into the details. But what I would like to see is an end to the diplomacy of the circulation [inaudible] by the United States, return of the United States as the guarantor of the international order. This has not been happening for the past ten years. Still at this stage whether you like them or not, it is still an important player in the international scene.

But when you see, you notice the diplomacy of the circulation specializes in mistaking rivals for enemies, competitors for foes. For example, I'm sure if the United States looked more carefully, there will be little or no confrontation with Russia under Putin. You know the Russians really crave to be taken seriously, even you know as a second partner in international affairs. But you know the US regards them as enemies. Now the casting of China in the role of the foe, of the enemy and the Yellow Peril, and so on is also, I think, wrong. You know, all these powers they want to be noticed on a smaller scale just as Kim

Jong-un wants to be noticed, just as Ayatollah Khamenei wants to be noticed so what we have to look for is a longer-term view, more patience... but firmness.

You know the problem has been short term so far. You come and do something, and you think that from one election to another, you solve the problem. From one CNN news bulletins to another CNN news bulletin, things don't work like that. Knowing that in our own region, the fundamental problem we face is Iran's attempt at making the rest of region like itself. Either the rest of the region has become like Iran or Iran has to become like the rest of the region.

I think you know the second option is more likely. And now that Mr. Khamenei has full control of all the leaders of power, because now he, now controls the Islamic Majles as well. Maybe he will be more pliable, I don't think there is going to be a military clash between Iran and the United States because neither side wants it. Neither side is ready for it.

I don't agree with my friend Minister Zebari that Soleimani's death was fundamental, very important thing, as it is already forgotten in Iran, even they have set up a foundation and are distributing money as always. And I don't think it has changed fundamentally the direction of the Iranian regime's policies.

RAGHIDA DERGHAM: Jeff let me take the point that is made right now. So listen, Jeff let me take the point by both Hoshyar Zebari and by Amir Amir Taheri that they don't think there's going to be an American Iranian confrontation. Would you also agree with them and would you rule this out before the elections, or do you think the chances of some sort of a confrontation is likely before the US elections in November? Jeffrey Feltman.

HE Jeffrey Feltman: Raghida, thanks. I'm not surprised given the wisdom of Amir and Hoshyar... I agree with them fully. I don't think either Iran or the United States has any interest in provoking war before the elections. I think that Trump knows that the American public would not welcome another military adventure by the United States in the in the Middle East and Gulf area right now. And I don't think Iran wants one. Iran has its own issues to focus on. I don't think Iran wants to move in that direction so I can't see either party moving toward war before the elections. And if Biden is elected, I think that you would see a revival of some attempts to come up with some kind of channel of communication with the Iranians. I simply don't see war as being something Trump wants, that the Iranians want or that if a Biden administration would want.

RAGHIDA DERGHAM: Okay that's clear let me take this question, to Walid Joumblatt and then I would like the input of Jeffrey Feltman because really Jeffrey it doesn't help that the United States is practically blessing the annexation. The Israeli annexation of the Palestinian territories further and the West Bank in particular. And like Walid Joumblatt said this is practically the implementation of the good old "Jordan is the substitute State of Palestine". But the additional part of this is that my information coming from Iran is that this is, music or not music, this is an ammunition in the hands of the Revolutionary Guards because they feel that right now they have legitimacy from their point of view to beef up an armament for Hezbollah, to beef up giving them all the supplies and capabilities needed because they want Lebanon to be the country where the answer to the annexation should come from. Let me take this first to Walid Joumblatt first please.

If it is in fact, this decision that Lebanon should be the place where you answer to that Israeli annexation of the West Bank through Hezbollah what is your position on that?

HE Walid Joumblatt: Let me just tell you, or answer, in my own way. There is already a war between the United States and Iran on Lebanese soil. It is an economic war and I called Jeffrey Feltman just after the Revolution and I told him, I think if I'm not mistaken that well. If you think that an American administration think that they can weaken Hezbollah by imposing sanctions on Lebanon. Hezbollah will not be weakened. We will be as Lebanese as collateral damage. Now this is my opinion, this was my opinion, this is still my opinion. Now it's up to us as Lebanese government to be transparent, able to deal seriously with the IMF and the World Bank. But this is conditioned by of course by American approval. Second, the Iranians long time ago after the failure of the Arabs, long time ago, took the banner of Palestine— rightly or wrongly that's something else. But they took the banner of Palestine on the soil of Lebanon and well they have their own, let's say, legitimacy. Now will this action-tension ~~will~~ lead to a war. I also don't know, that is why there are always possibilities. Nobody knows about the aggressive character of the Israelis, the Israeli administration like we used to know for decades, war after war, invasion after invasion.

RAGHIDA DERGHAM: What is your opinion nevertheless Walid Joumblatt of using Lebanon as the springboard to answer the Israelis annexation of the West Bank?

HE Walid Joumblatt: Nothing will happen here, nothing happened even when I mean Mr. Trump announced the annexation of Jerusalem. The next phase will be the Jordan Valley. Nothing particularly happened unfortunately. I see the danger of this famous plan. They are mostly on the Hashemite Kingdom and maybe displacing some Palestinians to Sinai, but Egypt refused that. But I see basically Jordan in danger. This is why Jordan should be helped by what is left of the Arab world, and to hold economically and to hold socially.

RAGHIDA DERGHAM: Jeff Feltman, can you quickly address this, what do you read between the lines and the fact that there may be a beefing up of Hezbollah's arms so that they could, you know, revenge of the annexation from Lebanon. Could address this issue and I see Amir Teheri might want to come in on this issue, he's shaking his hand.

So go ahead quickly Jeff.

HE Jeffrey Feltman: I mean you're right Raghida. I defer to you and Walid on analysis for Hezbollah as you're both in Beirut. I don't see right now that Hezbollah would have an interest in provoking war. I can see they have an interest in provoking deterrence, an interest in provoking fear. I don't see that they would have an interest in war, but I do agree strongly with Walid that as Lebanon becomes impoverished that all Lebanese are hurt, Hezbollah becomes relatively stronger. Hezbollah may be hurt too but Hezbollah becomes relatively stronger because they have other mechanisms for money. In terms of the Israeli-Palestinian issues, it seems to me that Netanyahu believes he can have both things he wants that he can have annexation, and he can have normalization with the Arab world, he can have both things. I think it's what he believes, and the Trump administration helps him achieve both of those things. It seems to me that what the Arabs should be doing is making it clear that he cannot have both those things. That the annexation makes the normalization

he believes will eventually fall into his hands absolutely impossible. In order to provoke the type of debate in Israel that's not happening. There is no debate in Israel over annexation.

RAGHIDA DERGHAM: Nobody's stopping the Israelis from having that debate I mean come on Jeff, they have been talking since forever.

HE Jeffrey Feltman: But I think that they believe that everything will happen, normalization will happen, annexation will happen. And there should be a much stronger choice put before them to try to provoke some kind of debate.

RAGHIDA DERGHAM: Amir Taheri, you wanted to say something on this. I see you shaking your head or nodding your head. Either way I think I want to give you the floor on the issue of Hezbollah's arms and in the Israeli equation and the potential dangers for Lebanon coming really by countries such as Iran.

HE Amir Taheri: The way you see Hezbollah in Lebanon is not the same as we see Hezbollah from Iran.

To you, in Lebanon, Hezbollah of course appears very big, you know, it's a huge player mutually [inaudible] of the country. But from Iran it is one player, among many and don't forget that each time Mr. Nasrallah the leader of Hezbollah comes to Tehran. The Iranian media says Nasrallah came, he was given an audience by Imam Khomeini and given his instructions and sent back. So, you know where it is, two different things. And I don't think Hezbollah could be treated as an entirely independent player of course, you know they have some margin of manoeuvre inside Lebanon, but the Islamic Republic has contacts with all other communities from the President of Lebanon downwards. And they consider Hezbollah as one of the players. Don't forget that the two wars that Hezbollah got involved in with Israel were really provoked by Iran and the cease fires were also negotiated by Iran quite openly.

The Iranian Foreign Minister and the French Foreign Minister negotiated the first ceasefire. And I don't think that the Islamic Republic at the moment is really looking for a fight with Israel. They have even cancelled the so-called "The Jerusalem Holocaust Day" this year for the first time in 41 years because of coronavirus they say, but you know their representative in London was supposed to organize it says it is because there isn't much enthusiasm from Islamic groups for this at all. So, at the local Khomeini is going to make a speech. He is going to say they have found the final solution for Israel but we don't know what it is. You know the problem is, you know, the relationship with Iran itself, you know, not if you like it sort of surrogates like Hashd Al Chaabi in Iraq, Hezbollah or the Houthis in Yemen.

If the Iranian problem is solved all these surrogates may not amount to much.

RAGHIDA DERGHAM: Let me take it to Hoshyar Zebari because you've mentioned Hashd Al Chaabi in Iraq and which is similar to Hezbollah in Lebanon the paramilitary forces that. It's really broadening the concept of sovereignty of this traditional meaning and let me ask Hoshyar Zebari, Mr. Minister. Maybe you could sit up a little it so that we could see you because [inaudible] it's better. So what does it take to have full sovereignty in your country, in Iran and bring in the Hashd Al Chaabi to be to be a part of the army which you tried and you never really succeeded as long as Iran's grip is on Iraq I don't think you're going to

succeed. It doesn't look like it. Is this being talked about at all? Does it take for example a Fatwa from Ayatollah Sistani who really is the man by his decision, there was something formed called Hashd Al Chaabi. Hoshyar Zebari.

HE Hoshyar Zebari: Yes, thank you Raghida.

First, we are honored Walid Beik to see you are of Kurdish origin, really. We and the Druze feel very, very close emotionally, culturally, but we follow your news all the time and Kurdistan is safe as well at the moment but really, we are on this ship all together you see and the stability in the region. No region is immune from all these challenges, but I will go to your question Raghida.

Al Hashd Al Chaabi, the key challenge for Mustafa Kazemi's new government is really to bring Al Hashd Al Chaabi under some state control or to have some discipline. There is a legislation that made them part of the of the national defense system in Iraq but really the act outside the state, outside the army, outside is the police. There are a number of Hashd Al Chaabi or PMF units, those who belong to Sistani whom recently I agreed that they will follow, they will be integrated, into the Defense Ministry and those other who are more leaning toward Iran or Iranian influence really, those are the one who refused to be brought under any sort of control. So, in Lebanon you have Hezbollah, it's an organized party, it has all its machinery in business, in economy, in banking, in trade, you name it. Here we have a dozen of popular mobilization units, dozens of Hezbollah really.

And so far, three governments failed to bring them under any control. Everybody thought that after the war was successfully ended against ISIS, or Daesh, that there would be another fatwa by Sistani that you've done your work and you could be disarmed, reintegrated into the security forces, and you've done your job but that fatwa hasn't come. And I don't think it will come again really. This is the same system the Iranian Revolution used and Amir Taheri knows this very well, when there was the army and they established the Revolutionary Guard because the army was not trusted by the Khomeini regime at the time so there was a parallel structure.

Here also we see the same thing and this is one of the main challenges I think. Kazemi has a mission he has tried to [inaudible] I mean you have to wait and see, I don't think it's an easy problem these militias or this popular mobilization forces just like Lebanon have established a network of interest, of business, of penetration and a different part of the state or become part of the deep state in Iraq.

It means really bold decisions bold leadership in order to be able to confront them or to put them under some control.

RAGHIDA DERGHAM: Absolutely. I do not want to let you off the hook quickly but because I want to discuss the corruption aspect both in Iraq and Lebanon. And I just want to ask Hoshyar Zebari, you're part of the old guard. What are you willing to do to respond to these young people or older people wherever they are, who are going out to the streets to say enough corruption, enough the old government? What is your personal involvement, investment in that? And make that in like thirty seconds please, because I want to go

around and speak about many different things. Just don't want to let you off the hook as if it's all others.

HE Hoshyar Zebari: The popular protest, the popular protest movement, started in Beirut and in Baghdad almost simultaneously or at the same time so there are many similarities really and most of the protesters in Iraq were coming from Shia town, Shia corners, the majority were well Shia Youth, I would call them, and it was a protest against the ruling regime or the system as a whole and it has been ongoing and it has been sustaining itself.

It's fizzled out because of the corona but they are still alive on the street. One of their key demands - not of them but of many other leaders, of other friends of Iraq, that there is a pandemic called corruption also in Iraq. It has to be eradicated and no government will succeed, no government will fix the finances, the economy, unless it is fixed, it is controlled. We have many successful examples in fighting corruption really, I mean not from advanced countries but a country like Georgia I think was very successful in taking severe measures against this way of corruption, the stealing of the... Lebanon also actually has the same problem.

RAGHIDA DERGHAM: Let me just stay with that, with the issue of corruption and it is rampant in Lebanon, Walid Joumblatt. It's totally rampant in Lebanon. It's an intolerable economic situation... you know basically, shouldn't you be afraid of a mob mentality? Shouldn't you be afraid that people are going to say "I've had it" and then nothing will be under control and then the whole country would be mobilized into becoming a mob... I would be very afraid, and not only as a decision-maker if I were in your place, but like common person here because it is really out of control. Are you afraid of that or are you more afraid of a civil war in Lebanon Walid Joumblatt?

HE Walid Joumblatt: I'm not afraid of a civil war in Lebanon and the people are entitled to a revolt and now we will be faced by a revolt of hunger. But let me just go back to the non-state entities like I mentioned before. The non-state entities are part of, let's say, the Iranian, if I may say so – Empire – in Lebanon, in Syrian, in Iraq, in Yemen. And answering Jeff, 'where is the Arab world?', there is no more Arab World, no more Arab World. The Arab World used to exist at one time when Egypt was a major factor. Egypt was removed from the Arab world in 1979 with Camp David. Now these are the good old days. Saudi Arabia, well they have to find a way because this is what is left out of the Arab world. We have to find a way to get out of Yemen. Nobody in history conquered Yemen. Nasser was defeated and the British did not stay in Yemen. But now, we have a new power called Persia or Iran with their non-state entities, I'm not criticizing but I'm just noting that they are everywhere. And the profit of the failure of the so-called nation-state, Lebanon was never nation-state, it was a combination of sects and tribes and this is why they can sustain more than us the hunger population, the hunger revolt, which will come.

RAGHIDA DERGHAM: You are expecting a hunger revolt. I'm calling it 'mob mentality' and you're saying a 'hunger revolt', but what shape would... I mean, I mean actually a hunger revolt is...

HE Walid Joumblatt: It started, it has started, now every party, every chief of tribe, every chief of community is trying to satisfy his own people. The government now is trying to do

something, we are expecting, theoretically speaking, the 500 million dollars to come from the World Bank...

RAGHIDA DERGHAM: You mean from the IMF?

HE Walid Joumblatt: No this is from the World Bank. I mean nobody can, nobody can, unless we have some miracle to hold the Lebanese pound, the Lira like that, by jailing some people. It's not the solution, the solution is major political and economic reform, which I think it's difficult nowadays.

RAGHIDA DERGHAM: So, you don't expect the IMF to be satisfied, Walid Joumblatt, if there is no economic and political reform in the plan particularly submitted by the government, the IMF is expected to say "sorry but no sorry". Is this what you are thinking Walid Joumblatt? Please would you correct me if I read you correctly?

HE Walid Joumblatt: Some of our people, some people in the government, they think that they can get 10 billion from the IMF and 10 billion from Cèdre, this is bullshit. Because of corona, I mean now you have so many nations pledging for IMF aid and IMF is putting conditions. We have to apply these conditions reforms. Up till now we are at the second session of discussion and it's going to take time but time is running out.

RAGHIDA DERGHAM: Right, and we don't have time. Jeffrey Feltman, on the IMF, quickly do you think Washington would agree to anything less than full reform or would agree to the IMF giving Lebanon money if it doesn't address the issue of Hezbollah? Because I have another question for you but answer this one very quickly please.

HE Jeffrey Feltman: Raghida I am concerned about the US position. I don't think the US has a clear policy on Lebanon right now. Sanctions are not a policy, but sanctions are an important tool of a policy. And if one is trying to get the Lebanese to think about Hezbollah in a more profound way, to get the Lebanese in the United States to think about what they might be doing inadvertently to indulge in Hezbollah's pretensions of trying to be a national movement rather than just a sectarian movement or an Iranian proxy, that I think they need to think about what Gebran Bassil has done, all the way back to the memory of understanding between the Free Patriotic Movement, the party that he represents, and Hezbollah. Hezbollah can posture as representing the country, not just the sect or just its own members, because of the fact that Gebran Bassil has given them the Christian cover. Ans so that's what I find mysterious, that given all the sanctions that the US has put on those that aid and abet Hezbollah on the run, that Gebran Bassil has somehow escaped notice.

Raghida Dergham: I don't have time to follow up, I would have loved to follow up. Anyway, listen I've got a total of eight minutes so I am going to combine the last question to each of you, you know, hoping that you could sneak through it your last sort of line that you would like us to leave with. I am going to go first to Amir Taheri. Amir Taheri, you have written that the missiles, the talk of missiles in Tehran, that these missiles are sort of obsolete missiles, you said. Are Hezbollah's missiles also obsolete? And what about the argument that right now, the revolutionary guards are stronger than ever before because of the US sanctions, and that in fact they have taken over even the Mullahs? You are an expert on Iran. Is that

correct? Do you challenge that? And what is that state that you spoke about, you know, sort of the 'dream state; that you are talking about, the nation-state of Iran, are you ever going to see it, you think? Amir Taheri, in two minutes, I know it is nice and it is not fair but go for it.

HE Amir Taheri: Before I answer that can I say something about Walid saying that Lebanon is not a nation state. I think Lebanon is a nation state despite different communities because there is no standard model for a nation state. If you think that the presence of different communities and religions prevent you from becoming a nation state therefore India isn't a nation state, Russia isn't, the United States, Iran...many, many other countries. So there is a Lebanese-Ness that makes Lebanon a nation state and don't forget that Lebanon, although it's a newly created state is still one of the oldest members of the United Nations because most members of the UN were created after Lebanon. As for the missiles in my article I divided Iranian missiles into three generations: one generation, it is antiquarian, you know the archaeological interest, the others do not respond to Iran's myths in military terms, there is no time to repeat the article, and the third one have a nuisance effect, the ones in the hands of Hezbollah, are the ones that have nuisance effect. Of course, they can send some rockets over Israel and so on, but you know in a war what matters is the final outcome and as we see the Israelis are bombing Iranian bases, and Hezbollah bases in Syria, almost every week. Hundreds of Iranians have been killed in these airstrikes the Iranian media reports as attacks by unidentified aircraft. Who is unidentified? It is the Israelis, so you know it shows that the Islamic Republic, despite its huffing and puffing and its slogans, is really scared of getting involved in a military clash with Israel or the United States. And Hezbollah as I said does not have an independent existence, maybe on the ground it has, maybe it controls Beirut Airport and so on, but its umbilical cord is in Tehran. You know if there is a change in Tehran, Hezbollah is finished as well.

RAGHIDA DERGHAM: But quickly yes or no. Are the Revolutionary Guards, in control, fully as we are told, yes or no?

HE Amir Taheri: Well it depends what you control, you know Iran is really in a very poor situation, there is no time to go there, you know the economy is in shambles, the regime has lost its popular base in the recent elections, only 40 percent of people voted. So the faction led by Ayatollah Khamenei has been strengthened, but the regime as a whole has been weakened and it happened many times in the final ends of the end of the Soviet Union a faction led by Yanayev and so on were strong enough to command the coup, but the regime itself could not survive.

RAGHIDA DERGHAM: Thank you very much Amir Taheri, thank you so very much.

Hoshyar Zebari, I have got to ask you, very quickly again about Syria and continue from where Amir Taheri left but I want you to address kindly Turkey's role in particular towards the Kurds in Syria and also Iraq Syria. Can you do that in less than two minutes?

HE Hoshyar Zebari: I'll do my best Raghida. Turkey is playing a very adventurous policies not only in Syria and Iraq, Kurdistan and Libya in western Libya, and really I agree with the Walid

Beik that unfortunately there is no Arab World anymore or Arab regime anymore now the two countries who dictates the feed, the future of the regions' countries of the Arabs are Turkey and Iran, unfortunately. And we felt that for many years. But Turkey has ambitions, definitely territorial ambitions in northern Syria, and Turkey is contemplating really the areas they have lost after the first World War and Walid Beik is an expert in this history of the region. I mean the Mosul Vilayet, Aleppo, certain part of northern Syria, I mean they say it! Before it was taboo, you see, to mention these things. Now it's become very, very normal. The situation in Syria is very complicated, definitely and still the big powers are the main players, Russia, the United States, Iran, Turkey and Assad also has his own control of the Sahel of the main population centers but really there is no solution for Syria I mean one cannot see a solution in the near future.

RAGHIDA DERGHAM: I'm going to leave it there. Hoshyar Zebari, thank you so much. Jeffrey would you please give me one minute because I've got to give Walid Joumblatt two. Just a question, from Alistair Burt actually, he says do the speakers, well to you as you speak now on behalf of the speakers, "Do you think that there has been a slight pulling back on the annexation after Secretary of State Pompeo's visit and some of other remarks?" Please Jeffrey just do it in 30 seconds.

HE Jeffrey Feltman: I agree with the premise behind my friend Alistair's question. I think there has been a slight pulling back. I don't think it's sufficient. I think what the Trump administration wants is more of a stronger acknowledgement from the Israelis about the eventualities of a Palestinian state in the Trump definition. I don't think in the end it's going to make that much of a difference though.

I think if Netanyahu decides to move, he will move, and Trump will have no choice but to go along because it's elections' evangelical base. So yes, I think there is a slight pulling back, I don't think it's sufficient.

RAGHIDA DERGHAM: Thank you very much Jeff, thank you. Walid Joumblatt, you've got two minutes to answer this question, very tough question actually. You say that you support the uprising in Lebanon, but some are accusing you of paying lip service to it in that support rather than to be seriously taking actions and the question is "Are you for early parliamentary elections?" And the second question is "Do you think Lebanon could be normal as long as it is in the grip of Hezbollah?" Please Walid Joumblatt.

HE Walid Joumblatt: [inaudible] I think early election is a waste of time. I think now we have to see how to solve our economic problems to try to fix up in adequate a reform accepted by the IMF and the World Bank.

I just don't agree with you Amir about the famous superiority of reasons. I was in Beirut during the siege of Beirut and they are not superior the Israeli soldiers, we chased them out and the Palestinians fought very well and the people of the south of Lebanon, Hezbollah, or Amal, or others fought very well. They can destroy, they can kill, but they cannot win, they will not win over us.

Okay now going back to Lebanon, going back to Lebanon, elections with this law, with this confessional law, is useless. Are we going to be able, I mean the new generation, one day, to

have a non-sectarian Lebanon? The non-sectarian Lebanon that my father fought for well thirty years ago? I don't know... I wish them good luck, I wish them good luck, but I don't know.

I said good luck if they can change, I hope so because it's the only way to get out of this tribal system. It was never a nation state, it was created by the French in 1920. At one time we had good old days with great leaders like Kamal Joumblatt, Kamil Chamoun, even Pierre Gemayyel, Rachid Karamé, Saeb Salam. Now the old generation died, nobody's left, nobody's left. We need a new system but this Arab world that we used to know has been also disorganized and destroyed by American Policy, the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and now, and now by Trump's policy to allow the Israelis to annex the whole of Palestine. So, you have also a New World Order different than the order of 1945 that is going, that's leading the world to chaos like corona.

RAGHIDA DERGHAM: I wish, again, I had more time to follow up on the many things that you said Walid Joumblatt, but I will hopefully have you all again because we're going to go on with e-Policy Circles till November, because Beirut Institute Summit in Abu Dhabi has been rescheduled because of Corona to March 2021.

You all have honored me by being with me. I appreciate your time and your input and until we meet again, thank you all Walid Joumblatt, Hoshyar Zebari, Jeffrey Feltman, Amir Taheri and thank you for joining us everyone.

Raghida Dergham with you, until next Wednesday at the same time, we will have with us next Wednesday HE David Schenker with us, we will have from Germany his counterpart HE Philipp Ackermann, we will have Hossam Zaki, the Assistant Secretary General for the League of Arab States, and then we will have Ghassan Hasbani, Lebanon's former Deputy Minister. That is next week, at the same time, join us! And thank you for tuning in good day, goodbye.