

New Round of PM Kadhimi's dancing with Snakes

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In six months the Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi for the second time has confronted with Iran-backed militias, but this time compare with the confrontation in late June was more serious. This time's tension between PM and militias which earlier he called as "dancing with snakes" was with Asaib Ahl al-Haq movement which is second Iranian proxy following Hizbullah brigades. One of the cadres of Asaib (Hisam Zrijawi) was accused of been involved and arranged launching 21 rockets at US embassy in the green zone. Of course this has bigger dimension than geography, internal situation and is part of the regional and international tensions between Tehran and Washington in the Middle East. And this occurring while Iraq is preparing for the upcoming early elections (set for June, 2021) the Iraqi parliament and public are busy with analyzing consequences of the financial crisis and devalue of Iraqi dinars. Accumulating all these complex issues will make the situation more complicated and uncertain.

The new Iraqi government does not have political and parliament support, is under pressure and in difficult condition, controlling weapon is key part of the cabinet program. It's moral and legitimacy sourced from the protests known as "the October 2019 revolution" which their main slogan was "want a homeland" meaning to retake back the country from non-state actors power. And there are external pressures on the Iraqi government to limit the militias' power and actions as these militias consider attacks on the embassies as their great achievement. When government faced with Asaib Baghdad was on the edge of bloodshed and clashes. Following the security tensions in Baghdad "Hizbullah brigades" made uncommon threats. In this circumstance government was at the crossroads that whether repeat scenario of releasing Asaib's cadre and other 5 fellows similar to releasing 14 Hizbullah members in last summer which known as (Albu Eessa) event, or emphasize on the protecting at least his dignity and making redlines for the situation and prepare for the early elections in June 2021, which is an important development for all.

Some of the indications and results show us although government could not control the situation urgently and radically but compare to the round one Kadhimi made some progress and we can see it as below:

-The PM has broken his silence on the rocket attacks which this was the tradition of previous governments regarding to all attacks on the green zone and they stayed silent, and directly he put Asaib as responsible of the attack on US Embassy in Baghdad, this could have impacted position of Asaib a lot as later Asaib has condemned attack on the American Embassy and said "Baghdad cannot stay in the hands of armed groups forever" and excluded themselves from Shia radical armed groups. The tradition of breaking silence although show the weakness and retreat of state against movement and capacity of militias, but is one step better than tolerate it. And some believes that such embarrassment is not in the interest of militias as now heading towards elections, the Iranian security and political needs made these militias to make some crazy actions.

-Despite that it was announced in the press that senior Asaib cadre will be handed to the PMF security and a document leaked on this but immediately the Iraqi interior ministry denied such deal with Asaib, but most believes those were arrested are still in government hands. the words and confessions of arrested members of Asaib will be embarrassing evident for the movement at this stage especially that Asaib except its issues with government also has issues with the Shia public due to tensions with the PMF of Shrines (Hashd al-Atabat or al-Sistani's Hashd) which Asaib's leader Qais Khazali considered them as they are part of the Israeli and American project, Khazali has started conflict with one of the pillars of holiness in the Shia world which is the PMF of Najaf and Karbala.

The news leaked from Kadhimi's meetings indicates that how he is happy and confident after the recent tensions in Baghdad in dealing with the developments regarding to the militias, but if he has achieved anything in the recent

confrontation with militias was due to some factors such: in the last days of Trump administration Iran does not want any big clash with the US either directly or through its proxies. Except that Iran makes some small movement to show off as power and pressure card. And Sadrists also backed Kadhimi's government position against militias even Muqtada al-Sadr called government to declare a state of emergency in Baghdad or emphasize on avoiding Baghdad from threats, security tension and rocket attacks. And more importantly recently Sadr has addressed a message in English and Persian to Washington and Tehran to keep their tensions out of Baghdad. And this along with other civil, state and external supports is important in providing support for Iraqi government although Sadrists position on Asaib was related to their own interest and old hostility with Asaib.