

Netanyahu's Prospective Victory: Analysis of 33rd Knesset Elections with Diker, Bates and Gordon



Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu with Likud ballot

Two hours following the close of polls in Israel, [Dan Diker](#), executive producer of [Voice of Israel \(VOI\)](#) and host of National Security presented a live review on air discussion and analysis with Mike Bates, host of Your Turn at Northwest Florida's [1330amWEBY](#) and Jerry Gordon Senior Editor of the New English Review. You may listen to the discussion, [here](#). The following are some of the issues addressed during the interview. They were based on the early exit polls.

Israel Hayom [reported](#) the final results of yesterday's 33rd Knesset elections:

After the votes were counted, the final results showed Likud with 30 seats, six more than the Zionist Union's 24.

The Joint Arab List came in third place, with 14 seats. Yesh Atid won 11 seats, followed by Kulanu, which garnered 10 seats. Habayit Hayehudi received 8 seats, while the ultra-Orthodox parties, Shas and United Torah Judaism, won 7 and 6 seats respectively. Yisrael Beytenu got 6 seats and Meretz squeaked across the electoral threshold with 4 seats. Yahad Haam Itanu did not pass the threshold

Narrow Right Wing Coalition with Religious Parties. Netanyahu had [claimed](#) his narrow victory as a "great victory for our people", despite his opponent, MK Yitzhak of Zionist

Union, not conceding. Diker called this an important victory for Prime Minister Netanyahu, whom he deems more flexible in being able to put together a narrow working coalition than can Zionist Union leader, Yitzhak Herzog. Netanyahu had a one vote lead over Herzog, 28 to 27. Diker believes that Netanyahu may pick up center right and the two Orthodox religious parties, United Torah Judaism and Shas. He believes that Netanyahu could obtain 64 seats versus Herzog's 57 to obtain a majority for a ruling coalition. Diker's assessment is that within a few days of such discussions that Israeli President Reuven Rivlin would call upon Netanyahu to form a majority ruling coalition in the 120 seat Knesset. Diker credits Netanyahu's surge from behind by last minute appeals to right wing groups distancing him from discussions leading to a possible Palestinian State.

Isolation of Joint Arab List. Bates asked whether the third leading party with 13 seats, the Joint Arab List, could join with the Zionist Union? Diker suggested that would alienate other minority parties on the left. Thus the consensus that while isolated, the Joint Arab List might become the equivalent of back benchers in the Knesset.

Security, Political and Economic Reform. Netanyahu, while viewed as strong on security vis a vis Iranian and proxy threats, Al Qaeda, and ISIS in the Sinai, would have to deal with political and economic reform issues in the new government concerning rising costs of living, lack of affordable housing, income disparity and poverty.

Bates observed that next to Ben Gurion, Netanyahu could be the longest serving Prime Minister having three consecutive terms, four overall. Diker was clear that political reform had to be on the agenda in the 33rd Israeli government under Netanyahu as there have been 7 governments in the past 20 years indicating instability. That would be a prospect in the new Knesset given a narrow plurality if won by Likud and

negotiations and bargaining with coalition partners over ministries, budgets and special projects in the ensuing 42 days assuming Netanyahu is called upon to form a majority coalition.

In view of that Diker raised the possible prospect of a national unity government with an offer by Netanyahu for Herzog and two smaller parties to join a unified stand on the overriding security issues, radical extremist threats, Iran's increasing sphere of interest and nuclear project, assuming a P5+1 final agreement is reached.

Impact of Netanyahu's US Congress Speech. When Bates asked about the impact of Netanyahu's March 3rd address before a joint meeting of Congress, Diker observed that in the run up to the PM's Washington speech in late February, Likud gained in the polls, but fell back following his return from Washington giving the lead to Herzog of the Zionist Union. Diker observed that Netanyahu has great respect in Israel and Washington for his professional understanding of the Iran nuclear project and how to deal with it. Gordon asked if a Netanyahu's victory on March 17th might embolden US Congressional interests to bring up for consideration the proposed Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act of 2015? Diker thought that Netanyahu's victory would demonstrate Israeli support about US action to deter the threat of a nuclear equipped Iran.

On the impact of the anti-Netanyahu V 15 campaign and US Senate Investigation. Bates asked whether the controversy about the One Voice V-15 anti-Netanyahu vote campaign had any impact on Israeli voting? Diker did not think it did. However, he pointed that both Netanyahu and Likud officials repeatedly mentioned large amounts of funding from foreign countries backing the Zionist Union campaign. Gordon asked whether Netanyahu's victory might impact the US Senate Permanent Investigations Subcommittee looking into possible

abuse of Administration funding of the OneVoice V15 campaign. Diker thought that the bi-partisan Senate committee would still pursue its investigations to determine if any illegal activities occurred.

Capital and Media Abuses during Campaign. Gordon addressed the media biases against Netanyahu and the efforts by *Yediot Ahronoth* publisher Amon Mozes to unseat him. Diker pointed out that Mozes' son-in-law is Silvan Shalom, a Likud leader. Diker said this anti-Netanyahu episode was troubling as it should show in a small country like Israel the power of media abuse can pursue unsubstantiated criticism to unseat a Prime Minister.

Stalled Off Shore Natural Gas Development. Gordon asked whether Netanyahu might address ending the virtually stoppage of Israel's offshore gas and energy development? Diker said he thought Netanyahu had other priorities like cost of living, income disparities, housing and poverty. Nevertheless, Israel should not in his view be killing the growth of gas and energy resources to achieve energy independence and earn both tax and royalty income from export to Europe and other markets.

Building Housing in Area C. Gordon asked whether the housing issues raised in the Knesset campaign might give rise to construction in Area C in Judea? Diker suggested that was one viable solution for which the new government might provide incentives for production of affordable housing. He noted that the Palestinians had agreed to allow Israel to build in Area C in 1995. However, it is a political hot potato given opposition in both Washington and in the EU. He noted that Naftali Bennett, Jewish Home party leader, a likely Netanyahu coalition partner, had promoting this possibility during his electoral campaign.

Demise of Yisrael Beytenu. On the fall of the Yisrael Beteinu (YB) party during the waning days of the campaign, Diker

attributed that to corruption in the circle around its leader, Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, noting that YB lost half of its expected yield of 10 seats, reduced to five in the final tally.

Bates and Gordon will be interviewed on Diker's VOI National Security program on Sunday, March 22nd at 3PM (Israel Time).