



IL Elections Take #2 Edition – a two page analysis

As you all know, a snap legislative elections were held in Israel two days ago to elect the 120 members of the 22 Knesset. Following the prior elections in April, incumbent Prime Minister Netanyahu (Bibi) failed to form a governing coalition, the first such precedent in Israeli history.

Here are the results (91% of the votes):

Party	Mandates
Kachol Lavan	32
Likud	31
Joint Arab List	13
Israel Beiteynu	9
Shas	9
Yahadut Hatorah	8
Yamina	7
Labour and Gesher	6
Democratic Camp	5
Habait Hayehudi	1
Chadash	1

Leaders of Kachol Lavan and Likud: Benny Gantz and Netanyahu with their wives



With over 90 percent of the votes now counted, the centrist Kahol Lavan (Blue and White) party led by Benny Gantz looks to have won the largest number of seats in the Knesset (Israel's parliament) - 32 out of a total of 120. Right-wing Likud led by Netanyahu came in a close second, with 31 seats.

There is no clear-cut winner, and once again neither the right nor the left had the numbers to form a coalition, and neither one of these parties has enough for a parliamentary majority on its own. This means they will either have to make some kind of power-sharing deal with each other and form a "national unity" government or else cobble together some sort of coalition out of the seven smaller parties who made the Knesset.

It remains to be seen which party will be able to form the government, as the Right wing side+ ultraorthodox have 55 mandates and Israel Beiteynu will play an important role in the ability to form a government, no matter who will be elected to try and form a coalition, which requires at least 61 mandates out of the 120 Knesset Seats.



So who will come out on top here?

The next step is for Israeli President Reuven Rivlin to meet the leadership of all parties (probably attempting to convince the sides to compromise) and then task either Gantz or Netanyahu with trying to form a governing coalition based on who he thinks has the best chance to do so (the one will have 28-42 days to complete the task).

One possibility is a broad national unity government, which would likely include Kahol Lavan, Likud, Yisrael Beiteinu, and possibly others. Earlier this morning Netanyahu called on Gantz to meet with him as soon as possible to start the process of forming a coalition together. However, throughout the campaign, Kahol Lavan's leaders said that they would not sit in a government with Netanyahu as long as corruption charges remained over his head. This can be also interpreted as a spin from Netanyahu making Kahol Lavan (Blue and White) look like those who refused to be part of a unity government.

If Gantz does agree, it's possible that Netanyahu would remain prime minister in this arrangement. Or Gantz to be the lead, but I found it very very hard to believe with Netanyahu around. There is even a possibility that the two of them would decide to rotate power, taking turns being prime minister (not kidding, it's happened before in the Israeli system). So, we'll wait and see...

Let's try to make sense out of the chaos (:

The best way to think about Israeli politics is in terms of two major ideological blocs, defined principally (but not exclusively) by stances on the territorial and Palestinians issues and the relationship between religion and state.

There's a center-left alliance, which includes down-the-middle Kahol Lavan (Blue and White), center-left Labor, the left-wing Democratic Union, and the Arab minority's Joint List (which came in a strong third in this election). Then there's a right-wing grouping, which includes Likud, the Orthodox parties Shas and United Torah Judaism, and Yamina (mainly associated with pro-settlement agenda).

Current results show the center-left bloc with 56 seats and the right-wing bloc with 55. The remaining nine seats in the Knesset go to Yisrael Beiteinu (Israel Our Home), which kind of straddles the divide. Yisrael Beiteinu considers itself as right-wing, secular and liberal (regarding religion and state issues) party. Due to the current situation, its leader, Avigdor Lieberman, is widely described as a "kingmaker" in the Israeli press.

Feel free to stop by chatting over this or any other Israel related topics!

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