New American

Written by **James Murphy** on March 3, 2020

Netanyahu Wins Israel's Third General Election in a Year; Still Short of Governing Majority

The State of Israel held an historic third general election in the space of one year on Monday, and the results were similar to the first two. Long-time Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud Party won the most seats, but the conservative coalition failed to win the 61 seats needed to form a new government.

With 97 percent of polling stations reporting, Netanyahu and Likud look to have won 36 of the 120 Knesset seats available, with their main rival Benny Gantz and his center-left Blue and White Party garnering 32 seats.

The remaining three percent of the vote consists of absentee ballots from IDF soldiers and diplomats and other citizens abroad. There is also a small cache of votes that come from countries where they might have been exposed to coronavirus, which will be counted in a tent outside the Knesset on Wednesday.

Being short the proper amount of seats might be the least of Netanyahu's troubles going forward, as he is scheduled to go on trial on March 17. Netanyahu is accused of taking more than a quarter of a million dollars' worth of gifts, including cigars and champagne, from wealthy businessmen in exchange for regulatory assistance from the government.

Netanyahu vehemently denies any wrongdoing and claims he is the victim of a witch hunt by political enemies and a hostile media.

Despite the roadblocks ahead, Netanyahu was still thrilled to claim a victory on Monday night. "This is a victory against all the odds, because we stood against powerful forces," the prime minister told supporters Monday night. "They already eulogized us. Our opponents said the Netanyahu era is over."

In a somewhat defeated tone, Gantz promised to carry on in his cause. "We won't let anyone destroy the country. We won't let anyone separate between us. We won't let anyone dismantle Israeli society and crush democracy," Gantz told supporters. "Even if it is difficult, we will win at its end."

The conservative bloc, which includes Likud, Shas (10 seats), UTJ (seven seats), and Yamina (six seats), has 59 of the 61 seats needed. The center-left bloc of Blue and White and Labor-Gesher-Meretz (seven seats) has 39 seats.

The far-left Joint Arab List Party, which consists mainly of Arab nationalists and socialists, scored 15 seats and would likely join in a coalition with the Blue and White Party. This is a problem though, as the remaining party, Yisrael Beytenu, won seven seats in the election.

Yisrael Beytenu split from the Likud Party in 1999, and its leader Avigdor Lieberman, who seems to enjoy his role as "kingmaker," has vowed never to sit in a government with the Joint Arab List.

New American

Written by **James Murphy** on March 3, 2020

Lieberman is also not a Netanyahu fan, and has said he would not form a government with Netanyahu.

At the same time, Lieberman has promised followers that there will not be a fourth election. This might indicate that he would allow a defection or two from his camp to form a coalition with Netanyahu. Yisrael Beytenu lines up closer policy-wise with the conservative camp, and even if he were to line up with the center-left, they would still be short of the 61 seats needed to form a government.

Some have suggested that the Likud Party and the Blue and White Party join forces and create a so-called unity government since their ideological differences aren't major ones. After all, both Gantz and Netanyahu have endorsed the Trump administration's Mideast Peace Plan, which would create a conditional path to statehood for Palestinians while still allowing Israel to maintain sovereignty over the majority of Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

However, the tenor of the campaign, with both sides slinging mud and charging the other with corruption, would seem to make even that agreement a moot point. Gantz has already ruled out any partnership with Likud as long as Netanyahu is in charge, and unless Netanyahu is convicted, he's not going anywhere.

With three general elections in one year, the people of Israel are likely election-weary by now. Netanyahu and his surrogates are already making overtures, trying to get at least two members of other parties to join the conservative bloc. Netanyahu, a close ally of President Trump, would like to have a government formed by the time his trial begins on March 17.

Photo: AP Images

James Murphy is a freelance journalist who writes on a variety of subjects, with a primary focus on the ongoing anthropogenic climate-change hoax and cultural issues. He can be reached at jcmurphyABR@mail.com

Subscribe to the New American

Get exclusive digital access to the most informative,
non-partisan truthful news source for patriotic Americans!

Discover a refreshing blend of time-honored values, principles and insightful perspectives within the pages of "The New American" magazine. Delve into a world where tradition is the foundation, and exploration knows no bounds.

From politics and finance to foreign affairs, environment, culture, and technology, we bring you an unparalleled array of topics that matter most.