



**Beyond Boundaries: The Power and Presence of Right-Wing Extremism in The Israeli Community**

By

**Ahmad Hijawi**

**Central European University & Bard College**

**International Relations & Global Studies**

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**Project Supervisor: Dr. Christopher McIntosh**

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## Chapter1: Introduction

The term "far right" in Israel refers to the following five parties and movements, listed in the chronological order of their official founding: Kach, Gush Emunim, Tehiya, Tzomet, and Moledet. The common denominator between them all is embodied in two things: (1) Preserving the "entire Land of Israel" under Israeli sovereignty is the central idea in its comprehensive outlook and the dominant focus of its activities; (2) A position on the part of Palestinian Arabs that calls (depending on the degree of extremism of each) for their deportation, all or large numbers of them, immediately or eventually. It should be noted that what distinguishes these political organizations from the rest of the right-wing parties, especially Likud, whose political positions are considered by Israeli standards to be the dividing line between the right and the "far right," is not the idea of preserving the "entire land of Israel" per se, as all right-wing parties share in this idea, but rather the differences regarding the strategies and policies that must be followed to achieve this goal, and the position towards the Palestinian Arabs. (Pedahzur, 2012)

With the joining of Major General (res.) Rehavam Ze'evi, of the Moledet party, to the Israeli government in early last February, the circle is complete and all right-wing parties stand as a united front to confront any political pressures that may arise after the end of the Gulf War, to force Israel to reach a political settlement with the Palestinians. The delay in the Moledet party joining the government that was formed last June, after the dissolution of the National Unity Government, was not a result of Likud's embarrassment in including a party that explicitly calls for the expulsion of Palestinian Arabs from the occupied territories in the government, as much as it was due to a refusal to Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir granted Ze'evi one of the ministerial positions he requested during the coalition negotiations to form the government. Hence, the

Moledet party's joining the government does not make it less or more extremist, and will not greatly affect its trends. It is the most extreme and ferocious government that Israel has known since its establishment, and it will remain so with and without Moledet. The Moledet party appears, by Israeli standards, to be more extreme than the rest of the parties participating in the government because it openly raises the banner of expelling (transferring) Palestinian Arabs. But in reality, it is not the only party calling for this, as this "honor" is shared by several parties that form with it the so-called "far right" in Israel. This is a phenomenon that recent surveys indicate a major leap in its growth, due to the ideological-political climate and the security and economic conditions prevailing recently in Israel. (Peretz, 1991)

Based on the intellectual premises, Gush Emunim and Kach can be classified as two national religious fundamentalist movements, and Yahya is a hybrid movement, and Tzomet and Moledet are secular movements. While the first two movements have a comprehensive ideological outlook, the other three movements lack such an outlook. Gush Emunim's ideological view in the writings and sermons of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, the spiritual father of Gush Emunim, and in the writings and explanations of his followers and students who received education from him in Yeshivat "Merkaz Harav" in Jerusalem. It is a view that does not differ in its broad outlines from the view of the rest of the Jewish fundamentalist movements, except for the emphasis it places on Jewish settlement in the occupied territories. (Sprinzak, 1986)

The Jewish people, in Gush Emunim's comprehensive view, are not a normal people like other peoples, and will not become so, as classical secular Zionism believed, even if the "diaspora" situation ends and they live a normal life. Rather, they are a unique, chosen, holy people, of divine origin in the covenant concluded forever between God and the Jewish people on Mount Sinai, and God chose them over the rest of the peoples to achieve through them and

through them His will in human history. The same applies to the “Land of Israel,” which, in the eyes of Gush Emunim, is not only the historical and spiritual homeland of the Jewish people, as secular Zionism tended to say, but it is also - and before that - a holy land that was “chosen even before the people were chosen,” as he wrote. Rabbi Kook, to form part of the Divine Covenant, which Gush Emunim summarizes with the following phrase: “The Land of Israel, for the people of Israel, under the Torah of Israel.” Even here, Gush Emunim agrees with other Jewish fundamentalists, but it goes further; The survival of the “Land of Israel” in its entirety and under Jewish sovereignty, and its settlement, are considered two religious obligations that are no less important than other obligations, and are even superior to them. There is also no room for postponing them, given that the process of “salvation” of the Jewish people, which the sacred Jewish genetic books spoke about, has already begun with this generation. (Lustick, 1988)

In Gush Emunim's comprehensive view, the Palestinian Arabs these days are similar to the Canaanites mentioned in the Torah. Rabbi Kook relies on the Jewish scholar Moses Ibn Maimon, one of the greatest religious scholars in the Middle Ages, to decree that what should be presented to the Palestinian Arabs are the same three options that Joshua Ibn Nun presented to the ancient Canaanites: departure from the country, or absolute submission to Jewish rule. Or fight. If they choose to fight, their fate will be like the fate of the Canaanites: destruction. From this view, Gush Emunim derived, at the time, its opposition to the withdrawal from Sinai, which it considered part of the Land of Israel, and from it derived its opposition to any political solutions that involved territorial concessions, and also its opposition to the autonomy of the Palestinians stipulated in the Camp David Accords. (Shahak, 2004)

Kach's ideology, or rather Kahane's ideology is a religious fundamentalist ideology, and its intellectual foundations do not differ much from the ideology of Gush Emunim, as they are both derived from the same Jewish religious origin. But what reached Kahane's "message" to his followers and to the general public was not his comprehensive, embellished ideology, but rather his position on the Palestinian Arabs. It is a racist position stemming from the gut, and characterized by a deep hatred that it is doubtful that any heavenly religion, or any interpretation of it, can tolerate. It is very difficult to sense this hatred without looking directly at examples of Kahane's political discourse. (Sprinzak, 1989)

As for Tehiya, which was formed in 1979 from right-wing elements (a splinter group from Likud led by Geula Cohen), religious elements (Gush Emunim), and left-wing elements ("the Complete Land of Israel Movement"), it is an intellectual with nothing in common except loyalty to the idea of "the Land of Israel". The movement's founders believed that combining these elements would achieve overwhelming electoral success by attracting supporters of the "Complete Land of Israel" from various intellectual trends. As for the Tzomet party, which was founded and united with Tehiya in 1984, splitting from it before the 1988 elections, and the Moledet party, they are essentially based on the reputation and efforts of their leaders, former Chief of Staff Rafael Eitan and Major General (res.) Zeev Gandhi, respectively. Both of them are military men who grew up in the embrace of the Haganah, and their intellectual roots go back to the Socialist Zionist Labor Movement, and they are affiliated with it in their intellectual starting points. (Sprinzak, 2019)

## Chapter 2: Historical Context and Political Evolution

Likud is an Israeli political party that believes in the idea of “Greater Israel” and “the specificity of the Jewish nation and the necessity of drawing inspiration and reviving its heritage.” It was formed in 1973 from a right-wing bloc led by the late Prime Minister Menachem Begin. He first assumed power in 1977, and a large portion of its members defected from it, led by Ariel

Sharon in 2005. (Shahak, 2019)

### Thought and ideology

The Likud Party adopted a right-wing, liberal orientation, and is known as a Zionist party that believes in neo-conservative thought. It laid down several foundations for itself that constitute its constitution or its doctrinal and political orientation, the most prominent of which is its belief in what it calls historical Israel, and the displacement of Jews from the Arab world and elsewhere. Among these foundations are “granting” the Palestinians self-rule while Israel retains everything related to foreign affairs and security, entering into direct bilateral negotiations with neighboring Arab countries, and signing individual treaties, in addition to the freedom and continuation of settlement. (Mitchell, 2013)

After the mid-nineties, the party witnessed an evolution in its composition, and it moved from an ideological, doctrinal party to a party dominated by sectarianism, especially the extremist settler faction, which pushed the party to adopt confrontational political discourse and behavior internally and externally. This transformation and transition intensified even more after the party began working with the internal elections system to select candidates for the legislative

elections, which gave great potential for the more hard-line movement within the settlements to influence the path of Likud. (Mousavi, 2015)

### **Chapter 3: The Dynamics of Right-Wing Politics, Contemporary Issues and Challenges**

#### **Thought fuels settlement**

The extreme right represents all religious movements within the Zionist movement, as it is considered the godfather of the settlement project in historic Palestine and the pillar of support for Israel as a Jewish state. The ideological and intellectual basis of religious Zionism relies on the

“Torah” as a basis that grants the Jews the “right” to establish a national homeland in Palestine, in contrast to other Jewish religious movements that see the establishment of “Jewish Israel” only achieved by the coming of the “Savior.” In addition to the biblical ideology, the followers of religious Zionism rely on the sermons of the rabbis and the inherent thought that comes out of the Jewish religious schools and centers spread across the West Bank and Jerusalem, which is the thought that fuels the settlement there. (Ghanim, 2021)

The far-right parties differ, politically and ideologically, from the traditional right, by calling for the imposition of Israeli sovereignty in the West Bank, declaring a Jewish state in all of historic Palestine, and refusing to grant any degree of autonomy to the Palestinians. While the extreme right bases its electoral popularity on the settlers, who number about one million in the West Bank and Jerusalem, it calls for supporting and devoting the Zionist project on these lands, especially without paying attention to external sensitivities and the American and European position.



### Jewish supremacy

The "fascist" right also relies for its electoral presence on the activists of the "Gush Emunim" movement, and the followers of the "Kach" movement, whose extremist settlement activity has returned to dominate the Israeli political and partisan scene. From the point of view of the "Jewish Greatness" party and the "Kach" movement, from which extremist MP Itamar Ben Gvir hails, the Palestinian people pose a threat to Israel as a Jewish state, "which requires their deportation by force." This reflects a racist ideology characterized by hatred of Palestinians and Arabs.

The Kach movement continues to incite against the Palestinians in its speech and electoral agenda and calls for their displacement, because "if their matter is not addressed, they will be a majority in the Land of Israel and in the Knesset to legislate laws that pave the way for the elimination of Israel as a Jewish state," according to the movement's statements. (Ghanim, 2021)

### **Netanyahu and the extreme right. Are they exploiting the war on Gaza to stay in power?**

Israel's society is still in shock at what happened on October 7, 2023. As the 200th day of the Gaza War approaches, it is evident that the Israeli people's life cycle and the country's history remain stuck at the "Al-Aqsa Flood," which is seen as a watershed in the future for Israelis' ties with one another. It marks a sea change in how the war with the Palestinians is fought. Research center readings and analyses have unanimously agreed that the war's prolongation pushes internal conflicts and divisions back to the fore and widens the rift within Israeli society, even as analysts have converging estimates that the government of Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israelis, has not accomplished any of its goals in Gaza. The rift in society reflects the truth of the false unity among

Israelis, which was visible from the outset of the conflict and which Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu attempted to portray by advocating that “Israel is waging an existential war,” demanding a rise above internal divisions and unity that quickly broke down in the face of the inability to free all Israeli detainees and the failure to meet war objectives.

### Israeli disputes

Israel is trapped at the events of October 7, and Israeli society is still in shock. The Netanyahu administration has emphasized that the conflict is existential, which is why it rages on despite its extraordinary casualties." Israel in every sphere—political, military, social, and financial, the internal Israeli disputes resurfaced with the war's prolongation, including issues of governance, religious and biblical legislation, judiciary amendments, and undermining the Supreme Court's authority. These disputes were in addition to the Israeli debate over the war's

goals and their likelihood of being achieved, as well as the division over the prisoner exchange agreement and the detainee file. In instances involving corruption, Netanyahu is on trial.

(Bergman, 2023)

### *The power of the right*

After reading about the phases of the Gaza War and how Netanyahu used it to further his own political ambitions, as well as how the far-right parties used it to keep the government coalition together at the cost of widening the rift within Israeli society, it is clear that Hamas has no choice but to go to war with Netanyahu's government. Reluctantly going to war, Netanyahu's government viewed the phases of combat as a tool to further its objectives, whether internal to Israeli society or even with the Palestinians. In order to keep the government from collapsing, Netanyahu's administration is waging war on the backs of Palestinian and Israeli civilian prisoners in the Gaza Strip. Despite the fact that none of the war's objectives have been met, Netanyahu is trying to strengthen the right-wing side in the third phase of the conflict so that it may win early elections and stay in power, even if doing so means widening the split within Israeli society in the process.

### *Cracked start*

In terms of potential political events and shifts, David thinks that the far-right alliance may shorten the term of the emergency government, which was first established to aid the Israeli army in its conflict with Gaza. As he recalled the voices growing and the protests intensifying against the coalition of right-wing parties that insist on sending soldiers and officers to fight for the unachievable goals set for them by a divided, conflicting, and heterogeneous government,

which has brought Israeli society to an unprecedented disaster, David warned of the beginning of a crack even in the Israeli consensus on the war.

### Societal division

There is a trend in studies specialized in “Israeli sociology” that Israeli society has changed more during the past thirty years than it changed during the period between 1948 and the early

1990s. Among those who adopted this trend are Israeli academics, such as: Itamar Rabinovich and Mordechai Kremnitzer, along with foreign academics such as: Per Vilanova, who spoke about this matter in his study published in 2009 at the “European Institute for the Mediterranean” (IEMed), entitled: “Political and Social Restructuring in Israel and Palestine.”

The moment of the assassination of former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, in November 1995, at the hands of a follower of the ultra-Orthodox religious movement, is often referred to as a turning point, suitable for chronicling Israel's transformation into a more divided society with a right-wing tendency. This division was clearly evident in the parliamentary elections that were held after that, which resulted in weak coalition governments that were unable to complete the four-year period, or even approach it in a stable manner. The Israeli right - in its various versions - dominated that period, with the exception of the last government of the Labor Party, which was headed by Ehud Barak, from July 1999 until March 2001. Israeli public opinion was more stringent with regard to security issues, specifically the file of the conflict with the Palestinians. This is compared to what was the situation previously. This extremism deepened further after the Al-Aqsa Intifada of 2000, and the rounds of wars in Gaza (2008/2009 - 2012 - 2014 - 2021), leading to the current war that began on October 7, 2023.

Israeli public discourse has become unusually polarized, especially since Netanyahu's return to the premiership in 2009, and the conversation has become more about an Israeli society divided into five blocs: (Arabs, Russian Jews, religious Orthodox Jews, secular right-wing Jews, and secular left-wing Jews). With the right taking control of the reins of government, disagreements emerged between these blocs over issues of state and society, which in turn were reflected in disagreements between political parties. Society reached the peak of this division in the period from 2019 to 2022, which witnessed for the first time in the history of Israel's 5 parliamentary elections.

Finally, the current Netanyahu government came, in December 2022, which was classified as the most right-wing in the history of Israel. To embody all of the above; The wave of popular protests escalated to unprecedented levels, continued for 39 weeks, and stopped only with the beginning of the Gaza war. Many controversial issues have come to the fore. Starting with the rise of the right and its control over the aspects of the Israeli state, which was reflected in the growing power of religious people and the exercise of a guardianship role over all segments of society, through the judicial reform laws that worked to consolidate the previous situation, all the way to the conflict with the Palestinians and the growth of Israeli settlement in the West Bank. The societal situation that Israel was in before the current war was reflected afterwards, and appeared clearly in society's attitudes towards issues of war and security.

#### **Chapter 4: Impact on Domestic and International Relations**

**What is the impact of the rise of the extreme right in Israel on the army and foreign relations?**

In the Israeli Knesset elections in March 2020, the “Jewish Power” party was marginal and received votes well below the electoral threshold, but in the last elections held last November 2022, things seemed very different, as supporters of the right-wing extremist Itamar spread. Ben Gvir in various polling stations and the media highlighted him. Ironically, Ben Gvir, who was expelled from the Israeli “army” in 1994 due to his psychological abnormality, became the Israeli Minister of National Security with expanded powers that allowed him to launch a wave of settlement activities with government funding, as well as to control the Israeli “army”, especially in the occupied West Bank, after he became The Religious Zionism Party is the third party in the Knesset, and the second in the winning coalition led by Benjamin Netanyahu.

### Will the Israeli "army" turn into a "militia"?

Ben Gvir's presence in the new Ministry of National Security will enable him to be the de facto ruler of the occupied West Bank. In more precise terms, he will be the head of a government parallel to the so-called Civil Administration, reinforced with broad powers, and the chief of staff, not only of the police but also of the Border Guard and the National Guard as well, which the outgoing government of Yair Lapid decided to establish as an official “militia” to help provide security for the settlements and settlers. Hence, several fears were raised clearly by Israeli political and military officials regarding the transformation of the occupation “army” from a regular institution into a “militia.”

The first of these warnings was issued by the outgoing head of the occupation government, Yair Lapid, who, in a tweet on Twitter, directed serious accusations against the ministers of the new government that they are inciting Israeli “army” soldiers against their leaders, especially the Chief of Staff, which is a dangerous, brutal and destructive incitement

against the “military” institution. Soldiers cannot obtain permission from ministers and members of the Knesset to violate the orders of their commanders, because the lives of Israelis depend on a strong army with a chain of command and combat discipline. This incitement disguised as support is dangerous and irresponsible, and destroys the strength of the “army.”

#### The rise of the far right and the fall of international relations

There is no doubt that the participation of the far right, led by Ben Gvir, will affect Israel’s international relations, specifically with the United States of America, as the leader of the Democratic majority in the Senate, Robert Mendez, warned Netanyahu that Washington’s relations with “Tel Aviv” would be negatively affected in the event of annexation. Ben Gvir to any government he can form. Based on official Israeli data, about 7 million Jews live in “Israel,” while more than 6 million Jews reside in the United States, and a few hundred thousand are spread around the world, taking into account that American Jews are mostly liberal and are considered to be in the advanced liberal camp. And leftism in American domestic politics. For his part, Israeli analyst

Anshel Pfeffer explained, “The relationship between Benjamin Netanyahu and liberal American Jews was often tense, but he never sought to sever ties. However, his coalition partners have other ideas, and he may be powerless to stop them.” (Pfeffer, 2024)

The rise of the Israeli extreme right will make Israel more invasive and aggressive in its dealings with the Palestinian people and holy sites, such as Al-Aqsa Mosque, but at the same time it will lead to the outbreak of an existential war with the Palestinian people and the outbreak of an open confrontation in the arenas of Gaza, the West Bank, and internal Palestine, and this is what the United States fears. The extremist incursion also means ending the Palestinian Authority and liquidating its existence, which opens the way for Israel to bear responsibility for

the consequences of its direct occupation of the West Bank and Gaza before the international community. At the same time, this will increase the chances of mass reactions occurring outside the borders of Palestine, which will embarrass Arab regimes that have normalized ties with “Israel,” such as Egypt and Jordan.

The Israeli extreme right challenges Biden and attacks American policy

### **36% of Israelis support Netanyahu’s policy towards Washington**

The support it provides to Israel, military, economic, political, media, and judicial, has not benefited the American administration, led by President Joe Biden, in the face of the right-wing and far-right forces that are partners in Benjamin Netanyahu’s government, as they attacked the American policy, which they considered “trying to impose dictates on the Israeli government,” and they also accuse it of being “It seeks to push us to commit suicide by establishing a Palestinian state, and it tries to prevent us from collecting the price for the Hamas massacre against the residents of the Gaza Strip.” The right has established a movement called “Ribonot” (Sovereignty), led by two women from the “The Greatness of Israel” party, which is led by the Minister of Internal Security, Itamar Ben Gvir, who say that “we have a rare opportunity.” With our soldiers proudly returning to our positions in the south, we must return fully, sovereignly and morally, to Gaza.” (Rabinovich, 2024)

“We do not like interference in our affairs.”

The head of the Religious Zionism Party, Bezalel Smotrich, who holds the positions of Minister of Finance and Second Minister in the Ministry of Defense in the government, said, “With all due respect to the American administration, which supports us in an unprecedented manner, we are an independent state that governs itself, knows its interests, and does not like



friends to interfere in its affairs”. When asked about his opinion of Biden’s criticism of the extreme right in Israel and his call for changes in Netanyahu’s government that would lead to getting rid of extremists, Smotrich said: “This is a certificate of honor for me and my party.” We constitute an insurmountable obstacle to projects to establish a Palestinian state, and we persistently demand that the most severe punishment be imposed on the Hamas movement and those who support it, and not that we reward them with withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.” (Kedar, 2023)

### *“The Gaza Strip Wound”*

While the extreme right claims that its position on the Gaza Strip stems from “the wound caused by Hamas to our Jewish people in the Gaza Strip,” it takes a negative position on the negotiations on a prisoner exchange and insists on the necessity of continuing the war even if many casualties fall, even though the majority of Israeli prisoners held by Hamas, whose lives are threatened by the war, are residents of the Gaza Strip.

It is noteworthy that the Israeli right is raising its voice and increasing its political activity in preparation for its electoral campaign, despite the war. Polls indicate that he will almost certainly lose power in the elections, the latest of which was published by Maariv newspaper on Friday, showing that 51 percent of Israelis prefer Benny Gantz over Netanyahu to head the government. The government coalition will fall from the 64 seats it has today to 43 seats, while the opposition’s share, including the Arab parties, will increase by one seat to 77 seats. Likud alone will lose about half of its power, from 32 to 17 seats, and “religious Zionism” led by Smotrich and Ben Gvir will decrease from 14 to 11 seats, while Gantz will rise from 12 to 39 seats. (Toi, 2024)

## Chapter 5. The Future of Israeli Politics

### A political race in Israel towards extremism and the winner is crowned leader

In 1994, the Israeli government announced the “Kach” movement, which belongs to the extreme religious right. In 2022, Itamar Ben Gvir, who was previously involved in that movement, took over the Ministry of National Security in the government of Benjamin Netanyahu, and between the two dates many changes occurred in the political arena. Israel, which observers agree is moving more and more to the right.

Although most of Israel's prime ministers belong to the right since the assassination of former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995, Netanyahu's government, which took power in December 2022, was described as more extreme, after it included Ben Gvir, who is the head of the far-right "Jewish Power" party. As well as Bezalel Smotrich, the leader of the “Religious Zionism” party, which held the finance portfolio, they are known for their extreme positions hostile to everything non-Jewish and supportive of the settlers.

These extremist voices emerged especially in the wake of the outbreak of the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip after the attacks of last October 7, when many extremist right-wing politicians called for the displacement of Palestinians from their lands. These are ideas that, although they had been proposed previously, were rejected by government ministers. It set a precedent that required rejection and denunciation, whether from Israel’s neighboring countries, such as Egypt and Jordan, which are threatened by ideas of displacement, or even from Tel Aviv’s traditional allies, such as the United States, France, and Germany.

### Displacement Ideology

The difference between the traditional right is that the extremist agenda revolves around displacing the Palestinians, rejecting the two-state solution, using violence and force against the Palestinians to force them to submit completely to their policies, and viewing all the Palestinian people as extremists, in addition to embracing religious ideas that Palestine is a “promised land” that must be controlled. It is completely owned by the Jews and it is exclusive land for the Jews and everyone else must leave it, in addition to ideas beyond that expressed by Smotrich about the possibility of occupying other countries such as Jordan and Syria if the opportunity arises, and other expansionist ideas.

The rise of the extreme right will affect the Arab countries, despite the existence of peace treaties with many countries such as Egypt and Jordan, but the extreme right will not stop at this point, because its policies talk about Israel’s control over the entire region and the displacement of Palestinians from their lands, and looking at the environment. Israel is present in it, considering it “hostile and must be completely controlled and subjugated,” with a lack of trust in any neighboring parties. He stressed that it is not possible to separate the rhetoric of extremist ministers like Smotrich and Ben Gvir from the government’s policies because they are part of it, and if they leave the ministerial formation, it will fall. The Arab countries are currently required to take clear positions towards the extremist right-wing ideas in Israel, and to speak with one voice regarding confronting the rise of the right. He stressed the need for the Arab countries to rely on themselves and develop their capabilities, indicating that they cannot rely on external forces to protect their national security. (Sokol, 2024)

*Choosing Racism*

There is a consensus in Israel to reject the establishment of a Palestinian state, allow the return of refugees, or give up occupied East Jerusalem, which unites almost all the voices of politicians, whether they cover their speech with flowery phrases or not, explaining that 30 years after the Oslo Accords, current events have proven that Israel has chosen the idea of The racist occupation no longer desires a settlement, and the thought of the Israeli street has become more right-wing and extremist, indicating that fundamentalism is rooted in Israeli society, which is confirmed by opinion polls regarding Knesset seats in any future elections. On the contrary, those with leftist and liberal ideas will fall.

The impact of the rise of extremist politicians such as Smotrich and Ben Gvir on the Palestinian issue is the end of the settlement, the two-state solution, the dismantling of the Palestinian Authority, and the expansion of settlement policy. Therefore, their influence is strong and very dangerous on the Palestinian cause, as they do not want the Palestinian people to exist on their land in the first place, or at least they want to use them as workers and treat them like “slaves.” **Why is Israeli society moving more to the right after the Gaza war?**

The outbreak of the current war in the Gaza Strip, since October 7, 2023, was accompanied by a state of crisis that Israeli society was suffering from, which was manifested in the protests against the extreme right-wing government of Benjamin Netanyahu, which continued for nearly nine months. These protests were the culmination of the transformations that this society has undergone over the past three decades, which made it more divided, less consensual, and clearly moving toward the right.

The Gaza war came to strengthen this situation, starting with the state of uncertainty that prevailed in Israeli society regarding security issues, which may give the upper hand to these types of issues during the next decade, which opens the way for more right-wing policies and personalities that may convince the Israeli inside that they are capable of controlling the security equation. in the country. Therefore, it was not surprising that the Gaza war gained support from segments of society, and that the voices opposing it remained hidden.

It also appears that Israeli society is rapidly moving towards armament after firearms sales in the country were highly restricted for decades, and decreased from 185,000 pieces in 2009 to less than 150,000 in 2021. Those sales are back on the rise. More than 236,000 Israelis have applied for permits to carry weapons since Operation Al-Aqsa Flood on October 7, which is equivalent to the number recorded over the past twenty years, according to the Minister of National Security,

Itamar Ben Gvir. The latter has already promised to deliver 20,000 free weapons to settlers in the West Bank and has eased the conditions for weapons acquisition licenses so that 400,000 people can obtain them. These developments, and others that are currently taking shape under the surface, portend dangerous security repercussions, as the end of the current war will only be the beginning of an extremely dangerous and chaotic security phase. This may be what prompted Israel Avisher, head of the Firearms Licensing Division of the Israeli Ministry of National Security, to resign on December 4, in protest against the ministry's policy of arming settlers.

### Mounting doubts

Following the “Saif al-Quds” battle between Israel and Hamas in May 2021, or Operation “Guardian of the Walls” as Israel called it; The American think tank New Lines Institute for Strategy and Policy organized a “podcast” that included a group of researchers specializing in the

field of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Among the conclusions reached by these researchers was that the May 2021 war showed that Israeli society is “extremely angry” and does not feel that the moral burden falls on Israel in the wars against Gaza. In these wars, it equates the Hamas movement with the Gaza Strip as a whole.

This conclusion remains valid for describing the interaction of Israeli society with the ongoing war in Gaza, and it can even be said that it has gone deeper than it was in the May 2021 war. Since the beginning, the Israelis supported waging a comprehensive war on the Gaza Strip, and the Israeli military movements there received the support of society. He saw it as a “just war,” as he described it. This support included all segments of society, including left-wing forces, academics, and activists in peace movements, who launched global calls to support Israel in its war against Gaza.

But as the war entered its second month, and the Israeli army was unable to quickly resolve or liberate the hostages held by Hamas, without a truce agreement; Voices began to emerge talking about the outcomes and prospects of the war. How long will it last? How will it end? Will the

Israeli army succeed in eliminating Hamas? How will Israel manage Gaza in the post-Hamas era? Israeli public opinion asked these questions day after day, and doubts began to increase about the path the war should take, especially after Hamas demonstrated its ability to confront the Israeli army. The Israeli army spokesman, Jonathan Conricus, stated on December 4, coinciding with the announcement of the expansion of the ground operation to the south of the Gaza Strip, that the Israeli army did not completely defeat Hamas in northern Gaza, but it had made “good progress,” stressing that “the fighting with... "Hamas will take a long time."

These military estimates not only make Israeli society question the way the Netanyahu government is managing the war, or the logic of this war itself; But it warn him that he will likely have to bear the burdens of the war for several months to come, including human losses (whether among the soldiers or the rest of the detained hostages), and economic losses that the Israeli Ministry of Finance estimated, as of December 4, that they will reach 51 billion dollars. In light of the absence of 750,000 Israelis from the labor market; because of war. Despite the logic of the socalled “just war” that Israeli society adopts in the face of Hamas and the Gaza Strip, it may gradually be exposed to continuous rifts as the war prolongs and its prospects become unclear.

## Conclusion

The current Gaza war ended a series of protests against the Netanyahu government, some of which witnessed an unprecedented escalation and expansion, and the confrontations that broke through others almost brought Israeli society closer to the prophecy of former Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, of the outbreak of a “civil war.” The Gaza war may have ended the series of protests, but it did not end the popular anger directed against Netanyahu. Perhaps there is agreement among many trends and trends within Israeli society that Netanyahu, and his policies extending over the past 14 years, are responsible for the Israeli failure in the current war. Each trend has its own reasons. The opposition public of secularists (right and left) saw - in recent months and through the judicial reform project - that Netanyahu had “hijacked Israel”, made it “coveted by its enemies”, neglected the army and security policies, and ignored the warnings of the security services regarding the danger of the “reserve crisis” and its effects on security. The nationalist. As for the masses of extremists (right-wingers and religious), they saw that the

leniency of Netanyahu's security and economic policies towards Hamas was what gave it strength and made it able to launch the October 7 attack, and therefore they hold him responsible for "the Israeli failure that occurred at the beginning of this war."

In light of the extremist public's support for the continuation of the Gaza war at any cost, until Hamas is eliminated; The leftist and some moderate right-wing movements may not oppose the logic of the war itself, but they oppose Netanyahu leading this war, based on their view that he is leading it driven by his own political agenda, and not "Israel's security agenda." Here, some estimates believe that the current Gaza war may mark the end of Netanyahu's political career, so he wants to prolong it, in order to achieve a military or political breakthrough that will give him the "kiss of life" again. It is expected that Netanyahu will try to delay his resignation, and he may be stubborn in remaining in the government after the end of the war, but the protest against him will be great, which may push members of the Likud Party to rebel against him. Many party leaders have come to see Netanyahu as a burden on them, and that his continuation detracts from their political capital.

Therefore, the most important question currently may revolve around what can be described as the post-Netanyahu phase. Who will succeed him? Which movement can take the lead? In this regard, opinion polls for the Israeli newspaper Maariv and Channel 12, conducted in late November, indicate that Benny Gantz, head of the National Camp party and former defense minister, may be the most likely to assume the position of next prime minister, as he His party is likely to obtain several seats ranging between 36 and 42 seats, which is about twice the number of seats that Likud is expected to obtain. 50% of respondents indicated that they see Gantz as the most suitable person for the position of prime minister, compared to 29% for Netanyahu. Polls



also indicate that the ruling coalition's seats have now declined to 42, compared to 78 seats for the opposition.

These results indicate the logic of the Israeli public in dealing with security crises, as there is greater confidence in the army and security personnel, especially because Gantz is the most military-experienced current politician, and his involvement in the current war government has given some confidence in the performance of the Israeli army. But given Gantz's political history in recent years, and his abandonment of the opposition ranks to form a unity government with Netanyahu in 2020; The task of forming a government will not be easy.

Regardless of the identity of the next prime minister, the transformations that Israeli society may produce in the post-war years may take political life to a completely different direction. The political impact of wars usually appears in societies after years of fermentation. The historical rise of Menachem Begin and the... Likud came to power in Israel four years after the October War of 1973. Perhaps something similar will happen in the coming years.

It is not unlikely that the parties of the extreme religious right, such as: the "Religious Zionism" party led by Bezalel Smotrich, and the "Jewish Power" party led by Itamar Ben Gvir, will succeed in expanding their electoral base, convincing large segments of society of their security vision towards Gaza and the Hamas movement, and dealing with... The Palestinian issue in general. The seats may change during the next five years, and Smotrich or Ben Gvir will succeed in forming a right-wing government that is more extreme than the current version.

Although the previous conclusions indicate that Israeli society has shifted more towards the right in the period after the Gaza war, there are different voices, which rose specifically during the truce period between Israel and Hamas, and after the return of dozens of hostages who

were being held in the Gaza Strip. These voices confirm that eliminating Hamas - if it happens - will not end the conflict with the Palestinians, and it is necessary to address the roots of this conflict and return the “two-state solution” to reality. Because the military alternative would be costly. In any case, it may take several years for the effects of this war to appear in Israeli society, not to mention that the path it takes will be one of the most influential factors in any transformation that may occur in this society.

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