

# “AN EXPERT VIEW FROM ISRAEL”

Series Report #79



## SUMMARY OF A ‘MIDDLE EAST FORUM’ WEBINAR



27 JULY 2022



*In a brief ‘Webinar’ session organized by the Washington based MEF, Ashley Perry, an adviser to Israel's minister of foreign affairs and deputy prime minister in 2009-15, provides weekly updates on Israeli politics.*

### SUMMARY OF ASHLEY PERRY’S WEEKLY COMMENTS

- Perry began his weekly comments by asserting that while some ninety plus days still remained before the Israeli elections on 1 November, it was nonetheless a fact that because of upcoming Jewish holiday season which would take much of September and October, there was not a huge amount of time that would be left open for campaigning purposes. As a result, a series of serious activities had already begun.
- First and foremost, amongst new developments was the announcement that Ayele Shaked’s Yamina Party (successor to Naftali Bennet) would be joining forces with fellow conservative Yoaz Hendel of the little known ‘Derech Eretz party’ [formed in 2020] in forming a new party called ‘Zionist Spirit’.
- Hendel had earlier been left out of another merger that had taken place between Benny Gantz’s ‘Blue and White’ and Gidon Saar’s ‘New Hope’ Party.
- At the same time, Yisrael Beiteinu Party of Avigdor Lieberman has also been in search of new allies from the more secular and liberal sectors of the Israeli right, in a kind of direct competition with Netanyahu’s Likud Party.
- However, according to Perry, despite all these activities, there has been very little mention of either policy or ideology in all that has transpired in the past few weeks.
- While all the recent mergers have taken place amongst forces opposed to Netanyahu (mainly for personal reasons as opposed to policy differences), Netanyahu himself, whom Perry termed as an excellent campaigner with a highly professional team to back his campaign, has

also been quite busy with his own plans for regaining the premiership in Israel.

- Perry said that last week, by concentrating the main theme of his campaign on the issue of rising costs of living, Netanyahu was seen in a supermarket meeting with people, blaming the government for this problem (as well as on other issues such as the rising costs of energy (electricity and petrol) as well as subsidized bread).
- Perry said that the government's insistence that the indicators for 'Macro economics' for Israel were good, was not cutting any ice, especially since Netanyahu had concentrated on saying that the government was failing miserably at the 'Microeconomic' level.
- Turning to the polls, Perry said that the situation was still close and no one was at this time predicted to obtain the magic 61 seats that were needed in the next Knesset - something that could change dramatically over the time that still remained.
- Perry said that so far no one has matched Netanyahu, though there was still a long road ahead. He said that in the event that Netanyahu did not secure the 61 seats he need for the formation of the next government, it was quite possible for the ultra-conservatives to help pave the way for Benny Gantz to become the next Prime Minister for the first leg of another rotational premiership.
- Perry ended his comments by making reference to the worsening state of affairs between Israel and Russia following the closure of Israel's migration agency in Russia. He noted that the worsening state of affairs was impacting Israel continuing campaign against Hezbollah and other Iranian and Iranian backed proxies in Syria.

