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Israel

Israel: Bibi, is it over?

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Is the announced government, if it is given a vote of confidence by the Knesset, not so surreal that it risks exploding at the first serious obstacle, possibly giving Netanyahu a chance? For this two-headed team (first Naftali Bennet, then Yair Lapid) ranges from the Islamists of Raam (Mansour Abbas) to the ultra-nationalists of the Right (Bennett), from the left-wing Zionist party Meretz (Nitzan Horowitz) to the New Hope of the ex-likudnik Gideon Sa'ar, from Labour (Merav Michaeli) to the Russian party Israel Our Home (Avigdor Liberman), without forgetting the "centrist" There is a Future (Lapid) and the remnants of the Blue White party.

A very right-wing government

Another question: assuming that this coalition really takes shape, will its policies really differ from Netanyahu's? Certainly, the quartet that should lead this government - Bennett, Lapid, Sa'ar and Liberman - will necessarily take into account the presence of the "Zionist left", without which it would not have a majority. He has already had to promise something for the Raam party. But it would be more than surprising if the Islamists, Labour and even Meretz were to oppose the "heads" of the cabinet head-on, assuming they want to, at the risk of breaking up the combination and thus allowing the return of... Netanyahu.

In short, we are dealing with a government that is clearly leaning to the right, even if it has the merit - let's hope at least - of "clearing out" Netanyahu, a *sine qua non* condition for any evolution. Bennett, Liberman and Sa'ar are ideologically and politically right-wing, and even, for the first, far right - and what can we say about Ayelet Shaked, who once posed next to a bottle of perfume entitled "Fascism"? Their Palestinian policy is no different from that of the outgoing government - Right Wing is an annexationist party and Israel Our Home a transferist formation [\[1\]](#), and both promise the settlers that they will not stop... settlement. They also share with the Likud a neo-liberal vision of the economy and society. They will even be able to pursue these "external" and internal policies by taking advantage of a certain newfound virginity. Some people like to claim to be part of the movement which, since last summer, has gathered massive but heterogeneous crowds, united by a single will: to finish with Netanyahu.

Reasons to hope?

The only likely change is that this team will be less sensitive to blackmail by the ultra-Orthodox parties, which, for a while at least, will not be part of it. As a result, the "secularists" - who are not only Horowitz and Michaeli, but also Lapid and Liberman - could push the coalition to take better account of the majority's aspirations for civil marriage and divorce, for the operation of public transport on Saturdays, for a certain control of the religious education sectors - in short, for the state to distance itself from the Synagogue.

Another (timid) hope on the left in Israel is that the change of team will put a stop to the authoritarian evolution of the last governments. What about the "Nation-State of the Jewish People" law and the apartheid it formalizes? What about the liberticidal arsenal voted by the Knesset? What about the threats against the status and competences of the Supreme Court? Given the overall balance of power and within the coalition itself, a real reversal of the trend would however require a popular mobilization for the preservation of what remains of democracy after fifteen years of Netanyahu's reign.

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How, moreover, can we envisage a clear and unambiguous break with the course chosen by the previous governments? Four successive elections have confirmed that, if a (small) majority of Israelis no longer wanted Netanyahu, a (large) majority was still on the right, on the extreme right and in the ultra-Orthodox camp: a total of 72 deputies out of 120. Let us add that, on the Palestinian question, neither the Zionist "left" - except Meretz - nor the centrists have a clear perspective, certainly rejecting the annexation but without advocating the creation of a real Palestinian state.

PS:

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[1] The "transferists" advocate the "transfer" (i.e. expulsion) of Palestinians from Israel.