

## ***The Votes are Counted***

With most of the votes counted in Israel, it appears that former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his Likud government are headed for a “decisive” victory. A decisive victory in Israel means more than 60 seats in the 60-seat Knesset. This is a remarkable and resounding comeback for a man who has served as Prime Minister for 12 years and took Israel from being a backwoods third world socialist country to a modern miracle, with a mixed economy.

The Associated Press is already at it. The first sentence of the first article from the AP characterizes Netanyahu’s win in Israel as a victory for extreme right wingers. That is untruthful.

By American standards, Netanyahu, on social, economic, and safety net issues would be considered a mainstream Democrat. On security issues, Netanyahu would be centrist, and possibly a bit right of center. Benjamin Netanyahu, when he had the opportunity, did not bomb the nuclear weapons facilities in Iran. Many think he made a mistake, and his political opponents certainly attacked him for not so doing. When Syria welcomed Russian troops so that President Assad could murder 400,000+ of his own people, Israel did not intervene militarily. Rather, Israel welcomed refugees to its hospitals, but it did not attempt to precipitate a regional war.

Hezbollah, a major terrorist group in the Middle East, has essentially invaded and occupied Lebanon and most of Syria, and all Israel has done is take limited military action from the air to keep the terrorist group from building up its arsenals in southern Lebanon. Netanyahu refrained from delivering a knockout punch to Hezbollah in Lebanon, when he could have.

When another band of terrorists, Hamas, in Gaza, rained 4,000 missiles on Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu had the country engage in an extremely limited, several day action. Israel refused to bomb houses where missiles were stored, if civilian casualties were possible. Rather, Israel engaged on the technique of “knocking on the roof,” meaning that residents and occupants of the terrorist-utilized buildings were warned of impending Israeli airstrikes.

Netanyahu was seen by many on the left and right as not being as decisive on security as he might have been. Israel also has a problem of murderers and terrorists coming from Arab cities and towns, both within Israel and in the area administered by the dictatorship; the Palestinian Authority. The Palestinian Authority is headed by President for Life, Mahmoud Abbas, who shows no interest in peace but continues to demonize the Jewish people in Israel, training school children to be future killers.

Israel lives in a very bad neighborhood, and “Bibi” certainly has his detractors, mostly on the right.

What is true is that some parties than Likud more to the right have become mainstreamed in this election. That is the fault of the leftwing in Israel, which routinely failed to deliver on economics, safety, or security. The danger to Israelis has driven the electorate to a more so-called “rightwing” habitat.

Let us not forget that Jews are not allowed to live in the area administered by the Palestinian Authority, a region that the blatantly undemocratic regime claims for its own country. The only reason why the Palestinian Authority has not become the Nation of Palestine is that they are dissatisfied with their geographical domain and seek all of Israel. There will be no peace in the Middle East, so long as there are no peace-loving people within the Palestinian Authority, the Gaza Strip, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Iran, and well, you know, the list goes on. Those who argue that Israelis should only be permitted to live within the area of the 1948 Armistice Lines, when the undefended nation was invaded by six Arab countries, should be ignored.

The victory of Benjamin Netanyahu is a victory for experience; success; a stable economy; and at least a modicum of security. It is not a victory for extreme rightwing politicians. Do not listen to the bluster of Americans who know little or nothing about Israel, or who themselves are shedding crocodile tears for the extreme left in Israel. They are not telling you the truth.

Israel is and remains a robust democracy, in essence a coalition of different parties.

One of the complaints that the extreme left in Israel and the United States has, is that Netanyahu would embrace more religious Jewish principles. Heaven forbid that the Jewish country would remain Jewish. One of the attractions of Israel is that public transportation is not run on Saturdays, and that most people, even those who are irreligious, respect the seventh day as a day of rest. People who are irreligious in Israel are far more deferential to the fundamental tenants of the Judeo Christian ethic than are irreligious Americans. Notwithstanding the ability to obtain abortions within Israel, the number of abortions actually performed are very low. Alcohol is readily available, and yet alcoholism is minimal. Many of the “vices” common in western European democracies and America exist at a much lower rate in Israel, or not at all. The reason for that is the Jewish character of the nation.

In America, when school prayer was found to violate the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, it was a famous rabbi who came up with the idea of a “minute of silence.” While that was rejected uniformly by public institutions, the United States Supreme Court recently supported an athletic coach praying before a game. So, what is wrong with private prayer?

It will be difficult for Americans to read about the election in Israel without being tainted by our press which neither understands the country, nor appreciates the mindset of what it means to live in the only democratic nation which the Middle East has ever seen or likely will ever see in our lifetimes. Rather, American publicists and media would like to treat Israel as the 51<sup>st</sup> state; a second California. That is not Israel, notwithstanding the great diversity of people within that nation and the extraordinary tolerance shown for others with different points of view. Many people do not appreciate, for example, that Israel is a nation made up of Jews, Christians, Muslims, Druze, Bahaists, and others too numerous to mention. The tiny country is an oasis of freedom for groups that would otherwise would have been subject to genocide in the Middle East.

While I am not ready to say: “BiBi Hamelech, King BiBi,” it is worth recognizing that political success is often a result of legitimate capability and success.

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