

MADAR's Strategic Report

2015
The Israeli Scene 2014

Executive Summary

The Rise of the "Third Israel"



MADAR The Palestinian Forum for Israeli Studies

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The Rise of the “Third Israel”

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The 2015 Strategic Report – the 2014 Israeli Landscape

The Palestinian Forum for Israeli Studies, MADAR, places “The 2015 Strategic Report for the Israeli Landscape of 2014” between the hands of the policy makers and the public. The report tracks and analyses the most prominent developments witnessed in the Israeli arena throughout the past year. It also tries to predict the developments for the near future, and specifically their effect on the Palestinian cause and its dynamics.

The report covers the Israeli landscape through its seven main axes: the Israeli-Palestinian relations, internal Israeli affairs, foreign policy, the security and military axis, the economic axis, the social axis, and lastly, the axis of Palestinians inside Israel. The report offers an executive summary that comprises the most significant strategic variables that affect Israel's internal and regional outlooks, hoping to shed light on the Israeli landscape and its main and influential factors.

This report was written and prepared by a team of researchers and specialists of Israeli affairs.

MADAR's team

Executive Summary

Honaida Ghanim

This year's report is published a little over two weeks after Israel's general elections for its 20th Knesset, and which took place on March 17th, 2015. To be noted is that these elections took place almost exactly two years after Benjamin Netanyahu's rightwing government was sworn in on March 18th, 2013.

In this report, we will try to monitor the elections' most significant implications and effects on the Palestinian question on the one hand, and on Israeli affairs on the other. We read these elections through the prism of the political, regional, and international developments, and link them with the internal and social changes as seen in several of the details in this current report.

What mainly characterized these elections was the deep polarization of the Israeli public, the elections' unexpected results, and the formation of the Joint List, emerging as third power in the Knesset.

1. The elections: horizons and background

1. Netanyahu's return and internal polarisation

Contrary to all predictions and polls, Benjamin Netanyahu won the elections, scoring a resounding victory over the “Zionist Union”, which is an alliance between the “Labour Party” and “Hatnua”. Netanyahu's “Likud” party won 30 seats as opposed to the 24 seats of the “Zionist Union”.

Netanyahu's win of a fourth mandate takes place at a time of internal political and social polarisation between a conservative, religious, settler, right wing Zionist stream and a centre-left Zionist stream that differentiates itself as a rational and democratic Zionist alternative. This state of polarisation was reflected in the recruitment of large groups, among which is the “V15” movementⁱ, founded with the announcement to dissolve the Knesset, and with an aim to overthrow Netanyahu. Among those groups is also the newspaper *Yediot Aharonot*, a large number of workers in visual, spoken, and written media, and representatives of cultural, social, and security elites – mostly rooted in Ashkenazi Zionist labour movements, which helped increase the number of Sephardic voters to Netanyahu. Thus, they deepened the polarisation

accompanying the elections campaign, especially with the increase in the condescending announcements and remarks made by Netanyahu's opposers against his voters, while hinting at the latter's eastern roots.ⁱⁱ Opposed to this campaign was also *Yisrael HaYom* newspaper, supported by American Jewish billionaire Sheldon Adelson.ⁱⁱⁱ

It could also be stated that this polarisation and Netanyahu's win of a fourth mandate have brought to mind the state of polarisation between rightwing and centre-leftwing encampments – similar to the case at the eve of the presidential elections in 1996. As was the case with these elections, then too the polls failed at predicting Netanyahu's win, which was followed by a media frenzy and shock at the victory of the same candidate who was considered one of the inciters for Rabin's death and against the Oslo Agreements. However, while the 1996 elections reinstated legitimacy to the Likud party and Netanyahu at the time, the 2014 elections have revealed it as settler religio-national party, and is further proven as such from the voting percentage it received from the big settlements. The Likud received 46.17% of the votes in Ariel, as opposed to 13.4% for the Jewish Home.^{iv} In Maaleh Adomim the Likud received 47.69% as opposed to 14.58% to the Jewish Home. Likewise in Givat Zeev, it received 33.9% of the votes as opposed to 10.42% to the Jewish Home, while Yahadout Hatorah received 13.4% of the votes.

Undoubtedly, Netanyahu's announcements the eve of the elections that the right would lose should people not vote for him, along with his incitement against Arab citizens during the elections day, warning that the Arabs are arriving to vote in droves, contributed to an increased number of rightwing voters who voted once more for the Likud party. Nevertheless, this turnout would not have been possible had it not had a nurturing and supportive settler base.

1.2 The Joint List: implications and probabilities

The 20th legislative elections have witnessed for the first time, as will the Palestinians in Israel chapter show, the unification of the active parties within the Arab society in a united joint list, which succeeded in turning into the third biggest parliamentarian mass in the Knesset after receiving 13 seats. The list includes the democratic front for peace and equality, the National Democratic Assembly, The Arab Movement for Renewal, and the Islamic Movement – the Southern Branch. Their unification came right after the electoral threshold was raised and with pressure from Avigdor Lieberman to 3.25%.^v And while Lieberman aimed with such a measure to eliminate Arab parties from the Knesset, the result was the opposite – it forced them to join forces in a Joint List and turn into the third biggest party in the Knesset. Let alone the addition of two new members. In addition, the unification itself opens up new horizons for political work and influence for Palestinians in Israel. These include:

- The reorganization of collective Arab institutes inside the Green Line, and mainly the reconstruction of the Follow-up Committee on the basis of inclusion and representation

of all movements and factions, strengthening its position as a representative body for Palestinians within the state.

- The Joint List becomes a significant pressure point within the internal political landscape, increasing its maneuvering potential at the internal political level through building tangible partnerships with Knesset members and parties – in order to pass certain bills and prevent others.
- Gives the Joint List wider legitimacy to represent Palestinian interests at the international level, and renders it a forum that international institutions and official organizations could address.

It must be noted here that the Palestinians turning into an electoral and political power is a double-edged sword. While it consolidates their parliamentary representation, it also could turn them into a target of racial incitement and legitimise their expulsion, delegitimising their organisation and political work, considering them as “agents” of foreign powers on the one hand, or traitors and enemies on the other. Netanyahu's proclamations during elections day are but a hint at the policy his government would follow in treating Palestinians as a threat to the desired Jewish configuration. It is also expected to provoke further racism and attempts at closing in on Arabs. That is in addition to the right's dominance in the political arena in the context of the already-tense atmosphere, grown more so after the racist treatment of Arabs as revealed clearly during the summer of 2014 – after the murder of Mohammad Abou-Khdeir, followed by the war on Gaza, and later by the murder of the young man Khair Hamdan in Kafr-Kana. And that is besides the continuous passing of bills that aim at excluding Palestinians, starting with the nation-state bill, and which would be reintroduced in Netanyahu's fourth mandate.

1.3 Elections results: the rise of the Third Israel paves the road for the right's dominance

The results of the 20th Knesset elections reflect two significant phenomena in Israel: the continuous rise of the right and the settlers right as well as the continuous state of internal political and partisan disintegration.

These changes are structurally connected to the historic colonial context of the immigrant community in Israel, the internal dynamics and conflicts of this discordant society, and its inability to bypass internal identity conflicts within the context of the conflict with the indigenous people – which could be seen from the data tracked in the social chapter of this report.^{vi}

While research shows a continuous dissipation of the socialist Ashkenazi secular Zionist movements, those which controlled the first stages after the establishment of the country and ruled Israel until 1977, various research shows deep demographic and social changes that have gradually turned Israel into an immigrant society that is both more religious and rightwing.^{vii} Furthermore, the results confirm that the Likud has become a dominant party in the Israeli political landscape, just as “Mapai” party had been in the first two decades following the establishment of Israel, as it had no competing party for the formation of the government.

The statistics reveal that about 10% of the residents of Israel are Ultra-Orthodox, and 40% are conservative Orthodox, as opposed to the percentage of secular residents, which is expected to diminish within the upcoming decades. The statistics also show that the percentage of fertility among the Jewish settlers outgrows the average within Israel. In addition, there are policies that focus on encouraging people to move in settlers and on continuously increasing their number. We also witness a deepening of the Zionisation of the Ultra-Orthodox movements, which is evident in the Shas and Yahad movement losses, the latter of which did not pass the electoral threshold.

And in this context we could note the three main stages that Israel has gone through and that are structurally integrated and interconnected with the social changes:

The first stage: the dominance of one movement. It is the stage where the secular Ashkenazi socialist movement founded the Zionist movement, and which lasted from 1948 and until 1977, actively led by Mapai party.

The second stage: the division of the political partisan landscape into two main encampments, based on the binary of the rightwing Likud and the leftwing Labour, and which started with the Likud's electoral victory in 1977. This period marked the rise of the “Second Israel”, which, among the Sephardic development-towns, included residents of the suburbs and the Ultra-Orthodox Jews, which the Likud tried to pull in through addressing their social reality, all the while following a liberal rightwing political policy. This stage was characterized by the Sephardim's move towards the rightwing Likud as a form of protest against the longstanding policy of the Labour party towards them. Then followed the establishment of Shas party^{viii}, reacting to what they considered as policies of marginalisation and condescension against them. This stage was characterized by the rise of the Sephardim, as well as by Shas gradually turning into an electoral power that determines the governmental and internal policy alliances in specific. However, and despite the changes in the political and partisan map, the main conflicts between the Likud and Labour were maintained – two parties that formed the two poles of the political spectrum until 1999, the year the third stage started.

The third stage is characterized by the dissolution of the two main parties into medium power parties, in parallel to the rise of new factional parties. It is characterized by many facets, and which are expected to affect the development of the conflict and occupation:

- Firstly, the consistent transition from rightwing liberal-socialism into rightwing neoliberal settler-colonialism, caused by the gradual rise of a new power – settlers – who today comprise 10% of the residents. For while the Sephardic right was a source of support for the Likud in the eighties (as the settlers' numbers were small then), this started changing with their growing numbers and impact on the Likud, infiltrating it through Moshe Feiglin's movement. The number of settlers in the West Bank in 1995 was about 135,000, in 2000 about 190,206, then jumped to about 350,000 in 2013, and is expected in some rightwing Israeli circles to reach about 500,000 in 2017. It is important to note here that 37% of settlers in the West Bank and the Golan are Ashkenazi Jews, 39% categorized as "Israeli-born" – pointing at the Jews whose fathers and mothers were born in Israel, and whose Ashkenazi or Sephardic heritage is hard to determine as the bureau of statistics does not trace their ancestors' origins. As regards the Sephardic Jews – they comprise 24% of the settlers. The studies show that 59% of the settlements are categorised as Ashkenazi settlements, 6.7% only as Sephardic, and the rest (40.3%) as mixed settlements. This supports the claim that the Ashkenazi right is an ideological one whereas the socialist right is more often Sephardic. Perhaps the "Kulanu" party led by Moshe Kahlon offers them the best representative model. These demographic changes will reflect back on the Israeli society, on its willingness to move forward in a political settlement that deserves the Palestinians' efforts. It is also expected that rightwing approaches will be further adopted – for religion and the rise of religiosity, as well as the spread of some of its radical forms predicts further movement to the right in political approaches and further integration between religion and state, as this report's chapter on the political partisan landscape shows. It is also seen in the messianic considerations that control the religious nationalists' minds, and whose impact is increasing in the political arena and within the army ranks. Naturally, the above will affect the future of the Palestinian cause and the relation with Arabs in Israel, as well as the relationship between the religious and the secular inside Israel.
- Secondly, the growth of the political "stardom" phenomenon, which is reflected in the rise and fall of certain parties that are linked to one person. This happened with "Shinuy" party, as well as with "Hatnua", "Kadima", and "Kulanu", led by Moshe Kahlon and "Yesh Atid" led by Yair Lapid, as well as "Yisrael Bateinu", which represented the Russian immigrants – however, it appears that its power has begun to diminish because the immigrants integrated and assimilated into the partisan reality as settled immigrants rather than newcomers. As such, the Israeli parties have become less democratic and led by one person – most Jewish parties did not organize any preliminary elections by which to choose their list.
- The mercurial phenomenon in the partisan landscape: the partisan arena is witnessing movements between the parties – splits and divisions sprouting out of personal rather than ideological affairs and accounts. One could simply note Tsipi Livni as a example,

moving between the Likud, Kadima, Hatnua, and finally the Zionist Union, which leaves the partisan arena open and prone to continuous changes and limited judgment of their leaders' political behaviour as regards ending the occupation. Similarly, one could note Kahlon's separation from the Likud and Elie Yishai's from Shas, forming their own parties.

- The prevalence of socialist agendas within the Israeli left and centre, and the prevalence of security agendas within the right, the question of occupation disappearing from their agendas. This comes at a time of stability in terms of security, due to the lack of any direct security threats whether they be regional – with the collapse of the surrounding states armies, or due to its preoccupation with its own internal security or local affairs in light of the relevant calm in the West Bank, and especially in light of using the language of security to answer any confrontation with the Palestinians, decontextualising it from the reality of the occupation, even using it as a proof of the impossibility of reaching a settlement. And that is exactly what happened during the last war on Gaza, which came at a time of a political impasse, and Israel's attempts to manage the conflict rather than resolve it.

Besides its results and implications, the Israeli elections have taken place at a time brimming with diplomatic and military developments, further regional destabilisation, as well as growing international support for Palestinians as opposed to the escalation in international criticism of Israel, and the rising tensions between the American administration and Netanyahu's government. And, as it evident in the security landscape and the Israeli-Palestinian relations, Israel has adopted a dual policy that combines “hard measures” policies, as seen in Gaza, and “soft measures” policies, as seen in the West Bank.

2. The double standards used with Palestinians

Israel has managed its relations with Palestinians in 2014 through a dual configuration that combines both direct and soft measures, both of which are used to serve the general political goals determined by Netanyahu's government – managing the conflict rather than resolving it, all the while changing facts on the ground, forcing a one-sided resolution. It must be noted here Minister of Defense Boogie Ya'alon's personal interview^{ix}, which was held following the National Security Annual Conference, pointing at the structural relationship between Israel and the Palestinian Authority as organic and as inseparable as conjoined twins, adding that the current state is the only one that would determine any future resolution. Similarly, Netanyahu stated right before these elections that he is opposed to the establishment of a Palestinian state. 2014 has also witnessed efforts for applying Israeli law to the settlement areas, which in reality means the legal institutionalisation of the current state, hinting at an effective annexation of

further land to Israel, all the while narrowing down on Palestinians in Area C, escalating settlement projects, and trying to plant new facts on the Aqsa Mosque ground mirroring the division that happened at the Cave of the Patriarchs.

Netanyahu's third government has witnessed a large rise in settlement planning, especially near the isolated settlements – outside the bigger settlement blocks – the construction percentage has risen to 40% just as the percentage of job offers has risen to unprecedented numbers in 1967 areas. Similarly, Netanyahu's government supported what equals 460 settlement units per month, half of which are in isolated settlements^x.

In addition, the *Jerusalem Post* newspaper stated on November 5th that the Regional Council of the Jordan Valley is planning a three-fold increase in population throughout the upcoming ten years, aiming to consolidate Jewish presence there and deny access to the Palestinian Authority. The plan also comprises a commercial campaign that would encourage Israelis to settle there. Other sources have noted that Netanyahu has wired 70 million shekels for the expansion of Beit-El settlement. Similarly, the finance committee in the Knesset has decided on December 21st to spend \$3.3 million to construct a tourist centre in Barkan settlement in the northern part of the West Bank. Israel's budget for 2015 has witnessed an increase in the settlements section – 240%. Stav Shaffir from the Labour party said that 75% of this budget is directed towards Jewish settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, which leads to the conclusion that the settlements budget will be 140 million shekels as opposed to 58 million shekels from 2014 – explored in detail in the economy report. In addition, Israel has sought to restructure the rules of the game with the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

On another level, Israel has opposed the PLO's efforts for Palestinian international recognition, and attacked the countries that recognised the Palestinian state, using the Palestinian tax revenue as a political pressure card. In parallel, Israel started a war on Gaza, claiming to weaken the resistance, and especially Hamas, and to restore deterrence. Israel did not aim for big goals such as eliminating Hamas' rule, but rather announced that it would only destroy the tunnels and restore deterrence - goals that cannot be clearly verified as the only tangible results of the war were the large numbers of Palestinian civilian martyrs and the ugly destructive and extermination operations that got to whole families on the one hand, and the unprecedented reach of Palestinian rockets, disrupting the daily lives of Israelis. In this context, some analysts have noted that the recent wars that Israel has been leading since 1982, confronting non-state militias and armed groups has overturned their understanding of winning and victory, which were no longer possible, as scoring a military victory was no longer possible either, but rather mere attempts at restoring the deterrence force which resorts to turning civilians into pressure points and tools for sending messages. In this context, new concepts have entered the new Israeli dictionary and its wars: reducing the percentage of terrorism, reaching a reasonable level of personal security, and using the psychological factor – the battle's aim is to hurt the enemy both morally and socially.^{xi}

The dual Israeli policy captures the general Israeli approach and its real attitude towards the conflict: it both claims to refuse negotiations in light of what it calls “terrorism” and legitimises its siege and war on Gaza by claiming that it is “defending its citizens” from the terrorism of Hamas and the other Palestinian organizations, but simultaneously avoids reaching any agreements in light of the relative calm that presides in the West Bank. And, most importantly, it uses that calm in order to create new facts on the ground, which prevent any possibility of meeting Palestinian demands.

We could summarise the most significant result of the war on Gaza as transforming the latter from an occupied place into a humanitarian crisis zone, which turns the international and humanitarian organisations into “bureaucratic brokers” that facilitate the connection between Gaza and the outside world. However, the danger in such a state lies in taking Gaza out of the context of occupation and turning it on the one hand into an isolated humanitarian question administered by the United Nations and international organisations, and into a security problem that Israel manages through “grooming” on the other. In addition, it also reinforces the state of division by treating Gaza and the West Bank differently.

3. The variables of the regional and international reality

These developments have taken place at a time of continued regional instability, the rise of the Islamic State, in parallel to the Iranian intervention in Yemen, Syria, and Iraq, as well as the rearrangement of alliance partners in the region, mainly based on sectarian divides (Sunni-Shia), along with the rise of new warring encampments, with which Israel has effectively turned into a marginal factor within the bigger alliances among the states in the region – whereby Iran has been rendered the compass when rearranging alliances, relations, and priorities.

Moreover, based on the Israeli estimates that the security chapter in the report explores, in the upcoming years, Israel will not be facing any state armies, but rather armed groups – the Iraqi, Syrian, and Egyptian armies have pushed aside by the establishment of the armed groups and non-state militias. Israeli analyses, especially that of Defense Minister Boogie Ya'alon, point at four warring encampments in the Middle East, among which Israel so far has acted as an observer. The first encampment is the “Shia encampment” which includes Iran, Syria, Hizbollah, the Islamic Jihad, and the Houthis in Yemen. The second, which it calls “the moderate encampment”, includes Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf countries, Qatar having recently joined them. The third, the military arm of the “Muslim Brotherhood” – to be found in Gaza, Israel, Jordan, Egypt, and Syria. And finally, “the Sunni Jihad encampment”, which includes ISIS the Nusra Front, and “the Supporters of Jerusalem” in Sinai, as well as tens of smaller groups that surround them.

3.1 Israel between regional dissolution and international changes

The state of regional deterioration that the Arab world is going through, along with its preoccupation with healing its own gaping wounds and seemingly never-ending conflicts, has led to the marginalisation of the Palestinian question both on the popular and official fronts. However, in parallel, and especially at the international level, one could note, as the foreign affairs chapter shows, there has been a change in the general atmosphere and an increase in the popular complaints about Israeli policy. This was clear during the war on Gaza, and it was reinforced when the PLO moved the confrontation with the occupation from the frozen negotiations table and into the international halls, coinciding with other BDS victories in the United States and Europe, as well the increasing recognition of the state of Palestine. However, it has yet to affect the Israeli decision makers as regards the Palestinian question.

3.2 Tension with the American administration

These developments also take place at a time of rising tensions between the American administration and Netanyahu, due to their differing positions on the Iran nuclear talks, along with the stubborn position that Netanyahu had adopted as regards the peace talks and the Kerry Initiative, and breaking his promise to release the fourth batch of prisoners. And Netanyahu's speech that he gave in the Congress on March 3rd, 2015, having been invited by the republican congressman John Boehner, going around the Obama administration, which caused further tension between the two parties. Netanyahu had received Boehner's invitation one month after moving the elections date backwards on the calendar, which was considered as an attempt to use the republican-majority Congress as an electoral platform, as well as an intervention between the partisan conflicts, which left many among the Democrats skeptical about Netanyahu's intentions. The press release given by Nancy Pelosi, the leader of the Democrats in Congress, expresses the Democrats' anger: "I was saddened by the insult of the United States as part of the P5+1 nations, and saddened by the condescension toward our knowledge of the threat posed by Iran and our broader commitment to preventing nuclear proliferation."^{xii} Netanyahu's announcements at the eve of the elections also showed that he no longer supports a two-state solution and included incitement against Arabs on elections day, further deepening tensions. One cannot undermine this tension in light of Netanyahu's fourth mandate and as head of a radical rightwing party. Moreover, as some predictions note, this charged state could form an important factor in pushing the American administration towards firstly initiating political action, and secondly pressuring Netanyahu to take serious measures for ending the occupation. In this regard, one could point at Denis McDonough's statements, White House Chief of Staff, during his talk to the Jewish organisation JStreet: the occupation that has lasted for 50 years must end,^{xii} adding that the tension between the two sides are not due to personal problems between Obama and Netanyahu, but rather due to divisions of opinion in dealing with political questions.^{xiii}

And if we take into consideration the number of times Netanyahu has responded to pressure, one could expect that these would contribute to changing Netanyahu's positions. Such was the case in the 1997 Wye River Memorandum for redeployment in Hebron. All the while, one must note that this does not mean the equation will change strategically; it must also be stressed that the tension with the United States, though significant, has not and is not expected to affect the core of the Israeli-American relations. Similarly, Netanyahu is expected to continue to try managing

the relations with the Obama administration through a crisis management policy rather than a serious confrontation.

3.3 Tensions with the European Union

As the chapter of Foreign Affairs shows, tensions have also seeped into the Israel-EU relations. Sweden's recognition of Palestine towards the end of November 2014, along with other consecutive symbolic recognitions – the British House of Commons, Spain's parliament, the French National Assembly, the Irish Assembly – have contributed to the rising tensions. And while Israel condemned these steps and their preceding ones of boycotting settlement products, Israel adopted the crisis management approach, which Netanyahu perfects, and which effectively seeks to maintain the lowest level of stability in these relations, without reaching any real confrontation. Simultaneously, using its diplomatic arms, Israel has resorted to trying to divert attention from the occupation by focusing on the Iranian question, considering it the real threat to world peace. Thus remained the Iranian nuclear question the main topic in Israel's foreign affairs, as it seems that it will remain so for Israeli diplomacy in Netanyahu's fourth government – it will probably link all its problems to regional and international terrorism.

4. Israel: Where to?

4.1 Scenarios and predictions

Israeli estimates show that the conflict “can be managed” only but not “resolved”. As such, Israel will have to develop measures to contain the conflict, manage and adjust it to serve its interests, rather than resolve it.

Below are a few main directions that Israel is expected to follow in the upcoming stage, in which it mainly aims at managing the conflict on the one hand, and planting facts on the ground that turn the two-state solution into nearly impossible. All the while, it will work on consolidating the Jewish identity of the state, disregarding its civil components:

1. Reinforcing settlement and transforming the demographic reality on the ground through escalating settlement plans in Jerusalem and Area C. In this context, it must be restated that Netanyahu's victory of a fourth mandate was thanks to the votes that he received from the settlers, who gave him their votes, rather than the Jewish Home. He won due to his settler-rightwing address and announcing that the Palestinian state will not be formed during his mandate – which means that the voters will demand that he fulfill his promises, not by maintaining the situation, but by deepening it.
2. Continuing the delegitimation efforts of any Palestinian movement, be it official-political or popular, as well as work towards linking the Palestinian struggle to “Islamic” terrorism, as represented by groups such as ISIS, Boko Haram, and stressing that Israel

stands at the forefront of fighting terrorism, acting as deputy of the civilised “Christian-Jewish” West in confronting the dark Eastern Islam.

3. Continued efforts to delegitimise European motions to pressure Israel by recycling expressions taken from the contexts of anti-Semitism, historic racism, the Jewish question and the Holocaust, and try to remanufacture it politically and use it as a scarecrow for counteracting European steps, framing Israel as facing new Europe-supported Islamic anti-Semitism.
4. Rising tensions in the Israel-US-EU relations. Many sources point at Obama's recent freedom from electoral pressures, as he will not be nominated again, and which could lead to adopting a more assertive policy towards Netanyahu's government. In parallel, Netanyahu is expected to keep gaming on internal American tensions between the Democrats and the Republicans, resorting to the Iranian question to avoid any responsibility towards ending the occupation. However, despite the rising tensions, the depth of the strategic relations and the security cooperation between the two countries would likely not be affected.
5. Efforts to deepen the rightwing settler prevalence in the public sphere, including both legislative and executive branches, and the attempts to dominate the general policy and the civil society institutions.
6. Erosion of the political-ideological barriers between settlers and settlements on the one hand, and Israel inside the Green Line on the other. The increment of the mixing and integration of settlers inside the Israeli society, considered an organic part of the social classes and strata, and their continuous rise as elite.
7. Continued efforts towards reinforcing the Jewish identity of the state and the narrowing scope of citizenship – through passing the Jewish nation-state bill among others that reinforce the Jewish character and exclude the Palestinians, stifling their demands and movements.
8. Continued coupling of each political action with factional interests and internal-partisan accounts. In this context, any party that is part of the coalition, regardless of its size, will effectively influence the probabilities for a resolution or for reaching an agreement, in case it is reached in the negotiations halls.
9. Continued prevalence of factional and social agendas over the centre parties and the Zionist Union – as they have not provided an alternative political agenda. This is expected to be in direct proportion with stabilisation of security: the more security they have, the less the attention they give to the occupation, and the more attention is given to the bigger social rights issues.
10. Adopting a “grooming” policy to deal with Hamas in Gaza. Hamas as such is treated as an acting authority in charge of maintaining security in Gaza, and is punished if it fails to do so, but without completely destroying it [Hamas].

11. Reinforcing Israeli relations with the rising world powers, and especially with India, whose strategic relations have become first-rate. Reinforcing Israeli presence in new regions, especially in Africa, whereby it has become clear to Israel that these countries could play a role in making important decisions, such as the case was with Nigeria and Rwanda abstaining from voting on a Palestinian state.

ⁱ There is not enough information neither about the movement nor about its funding. The movement identifies itself on its website as a youth initiative who have become sick of Netanyahu and seek an alternative. However, the right, and especially the Likud, has claimed this it is a foreign-funded movement established to overthrow him. See: <https://v15.org.il> (Last access: 21.3.2015)

ⁱⁱ For example, the famous Israel writier Yair Garbuz said during a protest for the Zionist Union and Meretz in Rabin's squre that a few of the “Mezuzah-kissers, tomb-worshippers, and swindlers rule us” See the news on *Walla*: <http://elections.walla.co.il/item/2836085> (Last access: March 21st, 2015)

ⁱⁱⁱ Many consider the dissolution of the government was adopted to prevent its free distrubtion. For more, please see the political-partisan landscape in this report.

^{iv} See the official webpage of the Central Elections Committee: <http://www.votes20.gov.il/> (Last access March 23rd, 2015)

Also the results as they were published in *Haaretz* newspaper, March 18th, 2015 at this link: <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/elections/1.2593032> (Last access March 20th, 2015).

^v On Netanyahu's and Lieberman's bill to raise the electoral threshold please see *Haaretz*· December 26th, 2013, at the following link: <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politi/premium-1.2200192> (Last access March 24th, 2015).

^{vi} Tens of books and studies were written about the settler-colonial character of the Zionist enterprise, as well as on the controversy of the relationship between obliteration and absolution between the indigenous and the coloniser. To delve deeper into it, please check:

Lorenzo Veracin, 2011, “Introducing settler colonial studies”, *Settler Colonial Studies* ,Vol.1.No.1.

Patrick Wolfe, 1999, *Settler Colonialism (Writing Past Imperialism)*, Bloomsbury Academic.

Patrick Wolfe, 2001, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native”, *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, 4. p. 388-409.

Ghanim, Honaida, 2008. “Thanatopolitics: The case of the colonial occupation in Palestine”, In Ronit Lentin, (ed.) *Thinking Palestine*, Zed publications.

^{vii} These changes are connected to the overflow of Sephardic Jews, especially in the fifties, and the increase in their birth rate as well as among the Ashkenazi Ultra-Orthodox and the Arabs. On the other end, the birth rate within the secular Ashkenazis has decreased during the first decades after the establishment of Israel. For details, please check the social landscape in this report.

^{viii} Shas: a Sephardic Ultra-Orthodox party that aims to express the needs of the Sephardim in general and the Orthodox ones in specific. It was established in 1982 at the eve of the municipal elections of Jerusalem and entered the Knesset elections in 1984. The party was established as a protest against the marginalisation and racist policies practiced by the Ashkenazi Orthodox.

^{ix} Boogie Ya'alon, a special interview, Israel's conference.

^x Peace Now report, published on February 2nd, 2015. Available on the movement's official page, at this link: <http://www.peacenow.org.il/2014ConstructionReportHeb> (Last access March 15th, 2015)

^{xi} M.S.

^{xii} Pelosi Statement on Prime Minister Netanyahu’s Address to Congress, 3.3.2015 available at : <http://www.democraticleader.gov/newsroom/pelosi-statement-prime-minister-netanyahus-address-congress/> (Last access: March 20th, 2015)

^{xiii} News on *Maariv* website . March 23rd, 2015. Available at this link: <http://www.news1.co.il/Archive/001-D-362334-00.html> (Last access: March 24th, 2015).

^{xiii} *Ibid.*