

Former Likud Member: Netanyahu Has ‘lost it’

Written by **Ilana Messika/TPS** on March 22, 2017

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu will conclude a whirlwind state visit to China Wednesday and return to Israel tonight, landing into a [political hurricane](#) that could plunge the country into an election campaign two years before the current government is scheduled to stand for re-election.

The prime minister, who wants to repeal a 2014 law to establish the Israel Public Broadcast Corporation, reneged last weekend on a compromise deal with Finance Minister Moshe Kahlon, who supports the new Corporation. Netanyahu has threatened to dismantle the coalition if the Corporation begins broadcasting on April 30 as planned – a move that could backfire not only on the prime minister, but also on the entire right-wing of Israel’s political spectrum.

“It is important to remember that we now have an electoral threshold of 3.25 percent [for election to the Knesset, according to the terms of a 2014 election bill],” Dr. Emmanuel Navon, a lecturer in international relations and former member of the Likud Central Committee told TPS.

“That means it could well happen that all those right-wing parties who do not pass the threshold – former Defense Minister Moshe (Boogie) Ya’alon herl would essentially take votes away from the Likud. That could drastically reduce the right-wing’s presence in the Knesset.”

Dr. Navon explained that the push for early elections is also not exactly a “safe” political move for Netanyahu: Recent polls indicate a strong showing for the Yesh Atid and Jewish Home parties, alongside a drop for the Likud. Perhaps as a result, several members of the coalition, including Education Minister Naftali Bennett, and Likud Knesset members such as Yisrael Katz and Gila Gamliel, have spoken forcefully [against the move](#), and Shas Party Chairman Aryeh Deri has warned Netanyahu not to take ultra-Orthodox support for granted should he call early elections.

Furthermore, Likud Party by-laws specify that a loss at the polls would trigger new elections for the party leadership. That would open the door for popular, younger Likud members such as former Education Minister Gidon Sa’ar to challenge Netanyahu for top spot.

Not that all of that will necessarily influence Netanyahu to back down.

“Netanyahu has been in position of power for 11 years,” said Navon. “Statistically, when people stay in power for too long they [not only] lose popularity but they also lose sight of the common interests. And Netanyahu has clearly lost it.”

“Pulling the trigger on a coalition [over this] squabble at this point would be senseless, [but] I am not sure Netanyahu is behaving rationally. His recent behavior has been very puzzling. For example, after it was announced earlier this week that Geula Even Sa’ar [Gidon Sa’ar’s wife] had been appointed main news anchor for the IPBC, he suggested the Corporation go on air without television.

“How to explain it? Obviously, I’m not sure. But one cannot deny that the criminal investigations and the influence of his wife are major factors on his current state of mind. That could definitely shed some light on his behavior,” Navon said, but it clear that Netanyahu has lost it,” said Navon.

**Additional reporting by Andrew Friedman*