

Analysis: It's all over, except...

David Horovitz, THE JERUSALEM POST

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It's all over. Just look at those eleventh-hour surveys.

In Monday's final pre-election poll published by *The Jerusalem Post*, Kadima and the parties potentially willing to support it mustered a staggering 95 to 97 seats in the 120-member Knesset.

How does that arithmetic work? As follows:

Kadima: 33-34 seats; Labor, similarly prepared to relinquish West Bank territory: 20-21 seats; Israel Beiteinu, keen to relinquish even territory inside pre-1967 Israel: 11 seats; Shas, whose Knesset leader Eli Yishai told the *Post* six weeks ago that the notion of retaining all the settlements was "outdated": 10 seats; United Torah Judaism, ready to sit in a coalition with any of the major parties: 6 seats; Meretz, advocates of negotiation first and unilateralism as a fallback: 6 seats; and the Arab parties, certain to back any Israeli withdrawal, albeit from outside the coalition: 9 seats.

That adds up to almost five-sixths of the Knesset, not all of which would necessarily sit happily together, but which is nonetheless committed neither to the Likud's "stay put for now in Judea and Samaria" mindset nor the National Union-NRP's "permanently retain every inch we now have" ideology.

And though there are discrepancies among the various polls, the final surveys in *Yediot* and *Ma'ariv* point in much the same direction, giving that identical constellation of parties (plus the pensioners' list) 98 seats and 92-99 seats, respectively.

Except (1) ...

Except that there are other ways of building blocs, and arranging the parties according to how it was traditionally assumed they would prefer to align themselves provides a very different picture.

Building from the Right, those same surveys show a potential anti-Kadima bloc far, though not impossibly far, from attaining its target of 61 seats, enough to thwart an Ehud Olmert-led coalition.

In the *Post* poll, the potential anti-Olmert camp musters 51-52 seats (Likud, 15; Israel Beiteinu, 11; Shas, 10; NU-NRP, 9-10; and UTJ, 6). *Yediot's* poll also gives those parties 51 seats; *Ma'ariv* lifts them to 54 to 55 seats (57 if you include the pensioners). And just think of the potential combustion within Kadima if the party cannot easily coalesce a dominant bloc.

Except (2) ...

Except that those traditional preferences can no longer all be so confidently assumed. Relations between various key Kadima figures and some in the Ashkenazi and Sephardi haredi camp are particularly warm. And where recent history shows Shas and UTJ readily opting for the Likud over Labor in coalition-building, the same does not necessarily apply to a choice between the Likud and Kadima. (Remember, UTJ stayed in the coalition through disengagement last summer.) The fact is that Shas, UTJ and Israel Beiteinu want to be in government, almost any government.

As of the day before, then, Netanyahu would appear to have a mountain to climb, and Olmert cause for quiet confidence.

Except (3) ...

Except that the turnout among those not on the ideological Right is expected to be lower than ever in Israeli history; that, on the other hand, some of those Israelis most aggrieved by disengagement may not vote either, and that account must be taken of both the last-minute decisions of the undecideds and the complex redistribution of the tens (possibly hundreds) of thousands of votes cast for parties that fail to clear the 2-percent Knesset threshold.

All of that, and all manner of pollsters' potential errors, could certainly yet make a mockery of all the arithmetic.

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