

Experts see trend toward a more conservative Israel

Likud-based coalition likely in parliament

By JOHN BAKHT
Staff Writer

A new conservative coalition government dominated by the right-wing Likud bloc of Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir is likely to solidify soon, leaving behind prospects for peace in the Middle East and four years of political deadlock in Israel, experts say.

The Likud Party cannot form a coalition without the cooperation of the religious parties that won 18 seats in the Knesset, Israel's parliament. The religious parties have not won this many seats since 1965.

In the election, the Likud bloc captured 40 seats, edging out the left-of-center Labor Party, which took 39 seats. Likud and Labor have been in a tenuous "national unity" coalition since 1984.

Labor and Likud both lost votes to the religious right in this election because they have essentially been a do-nothing administration for the last four years, said Herbert Bodman, Middle East expert and UNC professor.

The remaining 23 seats that fill the 120-member Knesset are divided among what are considered extremist parties.

Some analysts say last week's elections will ensure the preservation of what has come to be an uncompromising fight-fire-with-fire policy in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, where no end is in sight for the 11-month-old Palestinian uprising.

"If a rightist coalition is formed under Likud it would be less likely that (peaceful) negotiations will begin in the near-term future," Joseph Helman, graduate teaching fellow at George Washington University, said in a telephone interview.

"As long as people fail to realize that by violence nothing can be achieved, the uprising will continue," said a spokesman for the Israeli embassy in Washington, D.C. "We are determined to try and be very tough on those who incite violence."

Shamir has said it is likely that an increasing number of Jews will settle in the occupied territories, a process he favors. But the United States and the Labor Party in Israel consider that kind of expansion an obstacle to peace.

Shamir opposes an international conference on Middle East peace but will stick to the Camp David accord that calls for bilateral talks without

preconditions.

Labor supports both a conference and trading some land for peace.

Palestinians don't seem upset by the election results. "I don't differentiate between the Labor Party and the Likud Party," said Said Haman, deputy director of the Palestine Affairs Center in Washington. "Their policies toward Palestinians are the same."

It remains unclear what bargains will be struck at the negotiating table and what impact the religious right will have on a coalition. The National Religious Party, which won five seats in the Knesset, said Monday that it preferred joining a coalition headed by the Likud bloc. But Shamir concedes little to the extreme right. He has said he will not annex the occupied territories, nor will he "transfer" Palestinians there to Arab countries, as some potential coalition partners want.

It is also uncertain what concessions on social reform the religious right may get from the Likud Party. Fundamentalists Jews want greater restrictions on the Sabbath and a more conservative definition of a Jew, which would affect who can be called a citizen.

United States supports Israel on U.N. resolution

By DAVID BALL
Staff Writer

U.S.-Israel relations seem stable following a United Nations vote last week in which the United States and Israel were the only two countries to vote against a U.N. resolution condemning Israeli human rights violations in its occupied territories, experts say.

The United States opposed the resolution because it used inflammatory rhetoric and did not provide a fair appraisal of the issue, said Caroline Dulin, a press and public affairs officer with the U.S. mission to the United Nations.

"We basically felt the resolution was, as usual, a one-sided approach stating the problem only from the Palestinian viewpoint," Dulin said in a telephone interview. "It condemned the actions of only one party."

The United States believes that the best way to solve the problem is through negotiations among Israel and her Arab neighbors, Dulin said. The occupied territories are an internal matter for the Israelis alone to deal with, she said, and the United States has limited leverage to deal with the problem.

"We can only stress our concern

for the continuation of violence on both sides," Dulin said. "We feel often that the reprisals are too harsh."

But the United States has a history of supporting repressive regimes when national security issues are at stake, said Laurie Brand, author of "Palestinians in the Arab World."

"In general, when the U.S. has viewed that it is in its interests, the U.S. has been able to ignore human rights violations," she said.

U.S. support of Israel dates back to its role as one of the founding states of Israel and has continued because Israel has a strategic location and democratic government, Dulin said.

The recently-elected Likud government might increase suppression of the Palestinian uprisings, using tanks and heavier artillery, Brand said. If that occurs, U.S.-Israel relations could become strained, but given the past tensions that the relationship has survived, a significant change is not likely, she said.

"If that (a harsh crackdown) were

to happen, the U.S. might re-evaluate its relationship with Israel," she said. "I can't imagine this problem bringing the relationship to the breaking point."

Tensions are unlikely to significantly alter relations because the United States has historical ties to Israel, Dulin said.

"I certainly would never see a break in relations," she said. "Morally we have a commitment as one of the founding states of Israel."

Prospects for peace are bleak, said a State Department official who asked not to be identified. The violence seems to have hardened the attitudes of both sides, he said.

"The violence has not been escalating; it's been ongoing, organized, and carried out with a political objective," he said. "Clearly the Israelis have the stronger hand."

Dulin said the United States favors negotiations in a bilateral context and remains actively engaged in efforts to reduce tensions in the region.

Canadian election may affect trade pact

By SUSAN HOLDSCLAW
Staff Writer

With less than two weeks before Canadian voters go to the polls, new fears that the Liberal Party will gain power and jeopardize a trade agreement with the United States have emerged. But a Canadian political expert said he doesn't foresee disaster around the corner.

A poll by the Environics Research Group, published in Globe and Mail Newspaper, showed the Liberals with 37 percent of decided voters and Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's Progressive Conservative Party with 31 percent.

The socialist New Democratic Party was third with 26 percent.

Anything less than a majority Conservative government could harm the trade agreement signed by Mulroney and President Reagan in January. The pact, already approved by the U.S. Congress, would begin a 10-year period of phasing out remaining tariffs between the neighbors Jan. 1. However, the agreement has not been approved by the Canadian parliament.

Alec Douglas, a Canadian member of Duke University's Center for

Canadian Studies, said the Liberals have a good chance of winning on Nov. 21 because they have strong support in Ontario, a key province in past elections.

However, the trade agreement may remain intact. "Although Canadians say tearing up the trade agreement will cause severe economic hardship in Canada by causing the dollar to go down and jobs to be lost . . . in my opinion, the pact agreement will stay in place," Douglas said in a telephone interview.

"It's a very good political weapon to play with because they can alarm Canadians with a loss of national identity with free trade," he said. "The value of the dollar will probably go down anyway. It's overpriced according to all economic indicators in Canada."

Unlike the American electoral system, Canadians vote for a party rather than a specific candidate. Citizens vote for a local member of Parliament, and the party gaining the largest number of seats wins the election. The leader of the majority party then becomes the prime minister.

"Elections in Canada have more to

do with the ideology than the man," said Marion Salinger of Duke's Center for Canadian Studies.

"They vote for a party, but the charisma of the prime minister has an influence on most constituents across the country," Douglas said.

The Liberals have soared in the polls from their third-place low since Mulroney called the election Oct. 1. Their success has shocked the Conservative Party, which played a dominant role in Canadian politics for much of this century.

Douglas described the election as one of the most volatile and interesting elections in Canada this century, with the media playing a prime role in image-making.

The latest Environics survey was based on interviews with 1,538 voters after the Oct. 24-25 nationally televised debates between Liberal leader John Turner, Mulroney and New Democratic leader Ed Broadbent.

The poll had a 2.5 percent margin of error.

During the debates, Turner accused Mulroney of selling out Canada with a document that could turn the nation into a U.S. colony.

Mulroney responded that the agreement was a mere commercial document, capable of being canceled at six months' notice.

Yet Mulroney generally speaks of the agreement as critical to future national prosperity, and many Canadians were confused or angered by his seeming contradiction.

"There has been a lot of distortion in describing what the free trade agreement will do for Canada," said Anne Chappell, a media relations officer at the Canadian Embassy in Washington.

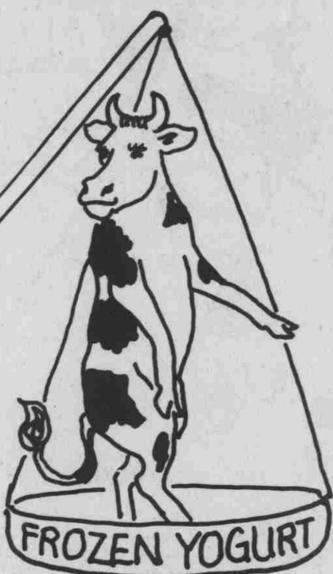
The debates crystallized the trade agreement as the dominant campaign issue, but Douglas said defense would also play a major role.

The Conservative party has established a program to buy eight to 12 nuclear-powered submarines for the Canadian Navy during the next 25 years. However, the Liberal Party has pledged to cancel that program and buy conventional submarines instead.

"It will make a difference on what the Navy looks like in the future," Douglas said. "In my view, (the election) is probably more important on the defense program than on the trade issue if the Liberals get in."

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