



Aluf Benn

Bennett raps PM but stays in gov't; Netanyahu: 'We have year till vote'

PM just launched election campaign

Jonathan Lis, Chaim Levinson, Yotam Berger and Noa Landau

Education Minister Naftali Bennett on Monday harshly criticized Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's security policy but announced that his Habayit Hayehudi party was dropping its demands and remaining in the governing coalition.

Netanyahu became defense minister Sunday following last week's resignation of Avigdor Lieberman after the Soviet-born politician's Yisrael Beiteinu party left the coalition over Israel's cease-fire with Hamas in Gaza.

Bennett had said Habayit Hayehudi would also quit if he was not appointed defense minister, but he backtracked Monday.

"There's no apocalypse on the way. There are enemies, but not an enemy that worries me," Bennett said. "Something bad is happening on the inside, including during the last decade in Netanyahu's governments – the State of Israel stopped winning," Bennett said.

"I saw that with my own eyes during the Second Lebanon War, I saw ... the confusion, the lack of determination, I saw the lack of spirit.



Education Minister Naftali Bennett and Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked speaking at the Knesset on Monday.

Emil Salman

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's election campaign is going to highlight his vast experience, his authority on security issues and his reservations about military and diplomatic adventures. It will be a replay of David Ben-Gurion's successful "Say 'yes' to the old man" campaign in the 1959 elections.

Ben-Gurion was 72 at the time, three years older than Netanyahu will be when he contends in the 2019 elections. The message will be updated and adapted to the era of tweets and streaming news, but its essence won't change; Israel needs steady hands at the wheel, not inexperienced revolutionaries.

Netanyahu actually launched his campaign last week in Paris, at the press conference in which he rejected calls to intensify the confrontation with Hamas in Gaza. He maintained the theme at the state memorial ceremony for Ben-Gurion, and on Sunday he sharpened the message during his brief speech at the defense establishment's headquarters in Tel Aviv, in which he appointed himself defense minister, not Naftali Bennett, who was demanding the post. Netanyahu got support from former chief of staff and current political hopeful Benny Gantz, who

spoke against "exploiting our just, defensive war for personal or political gain." What he was really saying was: "Bibi, wait for me; don't appoint Bennett defense minister. I'll be there soon to rescue you."

Netanyahu justified his readiness to let Bennett go and drop his alliance with the radical right by citing secret security risks that he couldn't reveal to the public, only to the General

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Staff and the heads of the intelligence community. Rely on me, he said, without elaborating.

But it's difficult to conduct an election campaign around mysterious security risks and hope that the military brass will support him with briefings on increasing Iranian strength in the north or tensions with the Russians in Syria. It's hard to rely on the Israel Defense Forces for political support; Netanyahu got into his current predicament because of two special operations that ended in frustration – a bombing

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Yossi Vertter

Amos Harel

Anshel Pfeffer

Ravit Hecht

Netanyahu's still on top

There on the Knesset podium stood two young politicians, articulate and promising, who – despite their relative inexperience in politics – have managed to develop and cultivate ambitions of premiership. In a country where managing crises that roll into his office like the waves of the sea is part of the prime minister's daily routine, the grade these two get for their management of this crisis, which they themselves created, is zero.

Naftali Bennett has been

acting completely frenetically of late, behaving like a teenager at the far end of the hyperactivity spectrum. He spent his time from Thursday to Sunday running around and promising, or threatening: defense portfolio now – or elections now! He dragged Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked, into all this mania: Out of loyalty to him, she had to cooperate. Every few hours the two would raise their bets. But finally, after declaring a personal

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PM's deterrence still works

What began as a resounding ultimatum on Thursday afternoon ended as an embarrassing U-turn on Monday morning. Government ministers from the Habayit Hayehudi party returned to the warm embrace of the prime minister with their tails between their legs. Benjamin Netanyahu has perhaps lost some of his deterrent power against Hamas and Hezbollah recently, as Naftali Bennett himself maintains, but he remains as strong as ever when facing his coalition

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Why Bennett couldn't bring down Bibi

The first half of Naftali Bennett's statement on Monday morning read exactly like a resignation speech. Because that was what it had been meant to be. He gave all the reasons from his perspective why he and his colleagues from Habayit Hayehudi could no longer sit in Benjamin Netanyahu's government. "Israel is in a security confidence crisis" he said, and the source of the crisis is not its external enemies, but that "during the last decade in Netanyahu's gov-

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The coup against Netanyahu failed

Last weekend, the Habayit Hayehudi party felt the moment had arrived. Not just the moment for party leader Naftali Bennett to get the defense portfolio – a portfolio he has coveted ever since he entered politics – but also for something bigger than that. Even though Bennett repeatedly says he won't run for prime minister as long as Benjamin Netanyahu remains in the picture, the feeling in the successful political start-up run by Bennett and his party colleague Ayelet Shaked was that a rare crack

had opened that could start the process of toppling Netanyahu's reign – a harder job than toppling Hamas. "You know how things are in a dictatorship," a senior party figure told me. "You need one person who will come out against it and sacrifice himself, and then he creates an opening for the rest." The person this senior party figure had in mind was Gideon Sa'ar, a former senior minister and Knesset member from Netanyahu's

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AG to Netanyahu: You can't collect info on left-wing groups

Noa Landau

Attorney General Avichai Mendelblit told Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday that he does not have the legal authority to collect information on left-wing organizations. Mendelblit added that the prime minister must get rid of any information already collected on civilian organizations, and may not make use of it.

The attorney general's statement comes in response to a letter sent by attorney Shahar Ben Meir

on the topic and reports in Haaretz about Netanyahu's attempts to act against European funding for several left-wing groups, including the Freedom Protection Council, a consortium of civil society organizations, and the Akevot Institute for Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Research.

In August, Netanyahu said he had blocked European Union funding for the Council, and vowed that it was just the beginning: "We will continue to take firm action against organizations that act to delegitimize the

State of Israel." Following that report, Ben Meir wrote the attorney general that it seems the government is monitoring civilian organizations without any authority to do so. He added that the government doesn't have the authority to use its power to stop funding for civil organizations either.

"It seems that this behavior represents a pattern by the prime minister," Ben Meir wrote. "Monitoring and attempting to hurt

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Airbnb to remove listings in West Bank settlements

Noa Landau, Yotam Berger, Jack Khoury and Reuters

Home-renting company Airbnb Inc said on Monday that it had decided to remove its listings in settlements in the West Bank, enclaves that most world powers consider illegal for taking up land where Palestinians seek statehood. In response, Israel's Tourism Minister Yariv Levin instructed the ministry to restrict the com-

pany's operations across the country. A statement on Airbnb's website said: "We concluded that we should remove listings in Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank that are at the core of the dispute between Israelis and Palestinians." It did not say when the decision, which according to Airbnb affects some 200 listings, would take effect. Strategic Affairs Minister Gilad Erdan called on

Airbnb hosts harmed by the decision to file lawsuits against the company in accordance with Israel's anti-boycott law and added that he will ask senior U.S. officials to check if the company's decision violated the anti-boycott laws "that exist in over 25 states." He said that "national conflicts exist throughout the world and Airbnb will need to explain why they

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Mulugeta Ayene / AP

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Study: Early humans invented 'high-tech' stone tools more than once

Ruth Schuster

They say great minds think alike. Now a paper in Nature suggests that very early humans, or possibly even hominins predating modern humans, may have invented advanced stone-tool manufacturing technology more than once, in different places around the world.

The thinking has been that the Levallois technique of knapping stones into tools was born in Africa and/or Europe, and spread to Asia. But the sophisticated method may have developed independently in each continent, postulates Prof. Ben Marwick of the University of Washington, writing with Bo Li and Hu Yue of the University of Wollongong, after discovering Levallois-type tools in China from a period way earlier than had been expected.

Pre-hominins were making stone tools over 3.3 million years ago, but their products and technique were crude. Simple hand axes were made by banging a suitable flint rock using another flint rock, until one of them acquired the desired shape. Levallois (pronounced Le-val-wa) takes brains and finesse. This type of



Stone tools with burn marks from Geshur Benot Yaakov.

IAA/Courtesy of the Israel Museum

implement – "the Swiss Army knife of prehistoric tools," Marwick calls them – required planning. The first stage involved gingerly banging at a flint core around its edges, carefully sculpting it into a specific shape. The second stage was to give the shaped rock one great, skillfully aimed whack that would knock off a flake, already roughly in the desired form and size. Thusly, much sharper

and finer tools could be made. "Featuring a distinctive faceted surface, created through a sequence of steps, Levallois flakes were versatile 'blanks,' used to spear, slice, scrape or dig," the researchers explain. However, is it possible that the germ of the Levallois concept goes back as much as 800,000 years, before Homo sapiens was even a gleam in some Homo heidelbergensis' eye? Prof. Naa-

ma Goren-Inbar of Hebrew University believes she has identified "incipient" Levallois cores at Geshur Benot Yaakov in Israel – a prehistoric site that predates modern humans by hundreds of thousands of years. Another Israeli researcher, Prof. Ran Barkai of Tel Aviv University, has identified Levallois tools (or incipient) going back half a

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