

And the Winner Is...

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's decision to create a new centrist party, widely expected to evacuate more settlements in the West Bank, and Amir Peretz's surprise victory in the Labor party have created a political tumult in Israel that hasn't been seen in years.

The dominant Likud party has been fractured.

Sephardic Jews, new immigrants, and poor Israelis who have traditionally voted with the right are suddenly up for grabs.

Party activists and voters are being tempted to shift from smaller parties to larger ones—particularly Peretz's Labor party and Sharon's new party—while Israelis who have historically voted for only one of the larger factions are now considering their options.

It's anybody's guess what the final results of the race will be.

But this much is already clear: the Israeli peace camp now has a good opportunity to expand, while the limited electoral appeal of opponents to a two-state solution are readily apparent.

The Israeli public's broad embrace a two-state solution with the Palestinians is finally being reflected in its political system.

Although it takes different forms, the Israeli peace camp may now stretch from the center-right of the Israeli political spectrum to the left—from Sharon's new party through Labor to Shinui, Meretz, the Arab parties, and perhaps a few of the religious parties. It could include those who support Sharon's settlement evacuation initiatives, both past and future, those who support the Road Map, those who call for a return to negotiations with the Palestinians, and those who support the Geneva Initiative.

Meanwhile, parties on the right are fighting over the limited number of voters who vehemently opposed disengagement, a group that never rose much above 35% of the public during the pullout. And even on the far-right, there are proposals for dividing the land.

Peace Now and Americans for Peace Now have been working toward this moment for over 25 years. Our call for an end to the conflict through a two-state solution and the evacuation of settlements in the occupied territories is being accepted not only by the vast majority of Israelis, but also by their representatives in government. Through our ongoing work to advance a fair and viable territorial compromise, and with your support, the March 2006 elections in Israel can hold great promise for the cause of peace and security.

And the winner will be the Israeli people.

To learn more about how you can help promote Shalom Achshav and APN's efforts here in Chicago, across the US, with our elected officials in Washington, and in Israel, see our local web site at

www.chicagopeacenow.org or contact:

Americans for Peace Now

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