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Israel Faces the Ultra-Orthodox Challenge: Why Now, and What Next?

The integration of the ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) sector into the general Israeli society has been at the center of the political agenda for over a year now, and is expected to grip Israel in the coming months and years with a relatively high level of intensity. It is a complex issue with many important and interconnected sub-issues, so finding a single quick 'solution' that would satisfy all concerned parties is highly unlikely. In principle, the dynamics of Israeli Haredim vis-à-vis the wider society involve three key problems: their economic integration as a productive sector that contributes to Israel's economy; equality in burden sharing – meaning, primarily, drafting Haredi youth for IDF or national service; and reformulating the cultural-religious status quo to diminish the Haredi influence on institutions that impact the lives of other Israeli citizens.¹ The rapid demographic growth of the ultra-Orthodox (forecasts estimate that by 2020, 50% of the Jewish first-graders will be ultra-Orthodox) reinforces the need for a timely response to these dilemmas. In the absence of appropriate solutions, they may prove intractable in the future.

This paper is an elaboration of some fundamental issues and how they have developed in the last year:

- Why has the ultra-Orthodox issue moved to the top of the political and social agenda at this particular time?
- What are the main components of proposed changes in the ultra-Orthodox sector's relationship with the larger Israeli society?
- What are the chances of implementing change, and what could facilitate or obstruct steps toward implementation?

Background: 'The Year of the Haredim'

Israel's 'Year of the Haredim' began with a legal crisis, continued with a coalition crisis, and concluded (for the time being) in a political reshuffling that holds both challenges and opportunities for addressing tensions between the ultra-Orthodox minority and the non-Orthodox majority in Israel.

The legal crisis erupted in February 2012, when the Supreme Court² decided to revoke the extension of the Tal Law, which is the legal basis for *Torato Omanuto* [lit. Torah Study is his main occupation]

arrangement, which exempted (couched as 'deferment of service') over 60,000 Haredi Yeshiva students from compulsory military duty. The court's action was the result of an appeal contesting the constitutionality of the arrangement allowing Yeshiva students to avoid military duty, arguing that such an arrangement "violates the right to equality as part of the basic right of human dignity." The Tal Law's annulment (August 2012) effectively toppled the legal structure enabling the exemption, and at least on its face, obliged

The Plesner Committee also considered conscription of Israel's Arab citizens

the Israeli government and the IDF to prepare for the induction of many thousands of Yeshiva students (in 2011 alone, 7,700 individuals, for the first time, formally declared Torah study their main occupation and had their military duty deferred). The urgent need to find an alternative to the Tal Law – which, on one hand, would exempt

the state from a legal obligation it does not want and probably cannot meet without expending considerable resources, and on the other hand, would curb the upward trend in the number of annual exemptions – triggered various political maneuvers culminating in the coalition agreement with the Kadima Party ('the Coalition of 94' [Knesset members]) in the summer of 2012.

In early May 2012, Prime Minister Netanyahu's governing coalition was expanded when Kadima,

the Knesset's largest party, joined under the leadership of Shaul Mofaz. This surprise move, which granted the prime minister a majority of 94 of 120 MKs, was justified by the two leaders in a press conference as heralding a new agenda with four key action items: first among them, as defined by Netanyahu, was "to pass a fair and equal division of the burden to replace the Tal Law"; in other words, to formulate a new law to replace the existing one exempting ultra-Orthodox students from military duty. Following the coalition's expansion, a commission 'for equality in the burden,' headed by Kadima MK Yohanan Plesner, was set up and tasked with formulating the replacement bill. The committee's term, however, was brief, ending abruptly in a political crisis after the prime minister canceled it for undisclosed reasons. Its conclusions, published only after it was clear that Netanyahu had no intention of endorsing them, asserted a key principle, 'military service for all,' and included a 2016 target draft rate of 80% of each recruitment-age cohort in the Haredi sector. Heavy penalties were also stipulated for draft evaders and the learning institutions harboring them. The Plesner Committee also considered conscription of Israel's Arab citizens, declaring that the principle of universal service should also apply to them. Nevertheless, the Plesner Committee avoided setting specific target numbers for Arab service, suggesting that they be defined by a future committee set up for that purpose. As mentioned, the prime minister had reservations about the committee's conclusions, finding its proposals exaggerated and "aggressive," and called for a more consensual and gradual

solution to the 'equal burden sharing' problem. In any case, the dismantling of the Plesner Committee rang in the demise of the short-lived 'grand coalition,' and soon after, Netanyahu called for early elections.

The legislative and political crises resulting from the failure to find a Tal Law replacement were integral to the 2013 elections and the formation of a new coalition government. Haredi parties were not invited into this coalition, the result of an ultimatum by the two key leaders: Yair Lapid of the liberal centrist party Yesh Atid (There is a Future), and Naftali Bennett of the religious-Zionist party Habait Hayehudi (The Jewish Home). In the negotiations leading to the coalition agreement, both leaders insisted that they would not join the coalition unless the Haredi parties (Shas and Yahadut HaTorah) were excluded. Lapid explained: "I don't believe Shas and Yahadut Hatorah can sit in a government that will pursue the change for which we have campaigned: changing the criteria for housing, a core education for all, burden sharing, the requisite cuts in Yeshiva budgets."³ In this, Lapid effectively made changing societal arrangements with the Haredim one of the new government's top priorities. The prime minister, who wanted the new coalition to include the current member parties and the ultra-Orthodox parties, was forced to come to terms with a reality that encumbers him with a political agenda he never wanted. This new reality also found expression in the agreements the prime minister ultimately reached with his coalition partners. The key points are discussed below.

Why Now?

There is no single answer to the question why Israeli society has reached its moment of crisis in regard to the Haredim at this particular point in time. A confluence of several different factors and circumstances pushed the Haredi question to the top of the agenda, while clearing the agenda of other competing issues.

The Decline of the Peace Process

The set of factors behind the ascent of the Haredi issue to the top of the agenda certainly includes the marginalization of political/diplomatic issues, especially the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. This marginalization process actually began immediately after the collapse of the Camp David conference in 2000 and the outbreak of the Second Intifada, and has strengthened in recent years. A consensus opinion has crystallized in Israeli society that questions the probability of a diplomatic breakthrough vis-à-vis the Palestinian Authority, and of achieving a peace agreement.

67% agreed with the statement, "regardless of which party wins the elections, the peace process with the Palestinians will remain stuck for reasons unrelated to Israel, and there is no chance for any progress in the foreseeable future."⁴ This consensus

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has marginalized the Palestinian issue in favor of other topics on the national agenda, allowing a focus on a more 'civil' agenda compared to previous years. This preference has been evident in every sector of Israeli society, but it has been especially salient among centrist and center-left voters who, in previous years, had placed greater emphasis on the peace issue. In 2013, they opted to give priority to the top domestic/internal issues: religion, society, and the economy (80% of Yesh Atid voters; 51% of all voters).⁵

The perception that a minority rules the majority leads to agitation and demands for change

status. Because Haredi parties have traditionally focused on sectorial concerns, not showing much interest in external political issues, the political arena would often align itself according to their needs and demands. In a two-bloc reality, the bloc willing to allow the ultra-Orthodox more autonomy and to pay them in hard currency for their support would win their votes and enable the pursuit of that bloc's political aims, at least up to a point.⁶ With the political issue off the agenda,

This shift not only impacted the 2013 election results, but also the shaping of the new coalition. Historically, the political parties tended to align in a right-left bloc formation – i.e. 'hawkish' parties in one bloc and 'dovish' parties in the other, with the ultra-Orthodox tipping the scales and, thus, enjoying kingmaker

and with the two-bloc constellation no longer a central element in coalition-building tactics, the ultra-Orthodox have lost their bargaining position. This was especially visible in the pact between Yesh Atid and HaBayit HaYehudi, two parties with several political disagreements. They managed to locate considerable common ground on other issues deemed more urgent by their leaders, allowing them to join forces despite their political divide.

The Frustration of the Silent Majority

For a while now, there has been a widespread sentiment in the public discourse objecting to what many Israelis regard as 'minority rule.' Different groups have identified this minority according to their worldviews: at times it has been the settlers, whom the Israeli left perceives as controlling Israel's Judea and Samaria policies; at other times, it has been the wealthy, perceived as controlling Israel's economic policy; and often, this minority has been the Haredim, who are perceived as patrolling and enforcing a religious-cultural agenda in Israel unacceptable to most of its citizenry. This perception that a minority rules the majority invariably leads to agitation and vociferous demands for change, with which the majority attempts to reclaim its turf and in so doing forces its own views on the minority. Such demands are discernible, for instance, in waves of pressure on the Knesset to pass laws curtailing the power of the media, the courts, the left, and the Arabs, all of whom have been accused of twisting the freedom they enjoy in Israel to impose their agenda on the majority.

The recent wave, which was largely curbed by the government and the Knesset, as well as by the increasingly vocal public demand to revise arrangements vis-à-vis the Haredim, attests to a yearning for the hegemonic reinstatement of the gainfully employed and army-serving Israeli-Zionist majority over Israeli society as a whole.

Lapid himself, in a sharp and widely publicized confrontation with Haredi MKs at the opening of the Knesset's 2013 summer session, expressed this feeling when he said to Yahadut HaTorah MK Moshe Gafni, "I don't take orders from his honor. The state stopped taking orders from his honor. For that reason you are no longer the chairman of the [Knesset] Finance Committee, because we are tired of taking orders from his honor."

This yearning for control is also at the root of the demand that the IDF, rather than ultra-Orthodox rabbinical leaders, arbitrate in matters related to which Haredim are drafted into military service and which are granted exemptions to continue religious studies.

The Rise of Socio-Economic Issues

Societal issues have claimed the top of Israel's agenda partly because there was an opening for this new discourse, but also for other reasons. Labeled in JPPI's last Annual Assessment as the "Revolt of the Undeprived,"⁷ which culminated with hundreds of thousands of Israelis taking to the streets in a summer of mass protests against the government's socio-economic policies, the 2011 protest movement was a clear manifestation of this trend.

The reasons for this trend are not entirely clear. It is probably the result of the interplay of numerous factors, including the rise of individualism; widening gaps in Israeli society; the 'sectorialization' of society, which diminishes the sense of collectivity; global trends related to the spread of capitalism and the repercussions of the global economic crisis. Ironically, the sense of relative well-being presently enjoyed by a large portion of Israel society engenders in these Israelis a stronger desire for a resource redistribution that would further benefit them. As Israel boasts of its hi-tech pioneers and 'rich and famous' success stories, more and more Israelis are seeking a larger share of the pie. A sharp resentment felt by the 'sucker' class (*frayerim*) – those who do more but receive less – toward the Israeli ordering of priorities was at the center of the 2011 summer protests. This sentiment helped Yesh Atid garner 19 Knesset seats, and has continued to fuel Lapid's speeches following his appointment as finance minister. He has spoken of an 'Israeli middle class' comprising families earning up to 20k shekels per month – well above the median income in Israel – who can afford to go abroad "once every two years." As mentioned, the shift in public attention to socio-economic issues partly explains the outcome of the 2013 elections; but for the ultra-Orthodox

The Haredi religious-cultural agenda is unacceptable to most Israelis

issue to become so critical in the formulation of the new coalition's agenda, another ingredient was necessary: the Haredim as a unifying thread that ties together disparate controversial subjects.

The Ultra-Orthodox as a Unifying Factor

As written in last year's assessment, "the present government and its successors will find it much harder to implement economic and social policies without consulting 'the people' first." And 'the people,' when asked their opinion, whether due to a principled choice or out of political necessity, often give confused and contradictory answers.

The social protest moved like a pendulum between the wish to help out a middle class that was not always defined in clear terms, and the desire to benefit and elevate the weaker classes. The struggle has also taken the shape of a political dichotomy. The Labor Party spoke on behalf of the protest, focusing on the weaker classes, education and income, while Yesh Atid put much more emphasis on the protest as a movement that gave voice to the frustration of young, highly-educated Israelis, whose income was incommensurate with their expectations.

In contradistinction, there was almost no political division around the ultra-Orthodox issue. While there were differences of nuance and emphasis

between various leaders as they addressed the Haredi challenge, an examination of voters' attitudes clearly shows that there were no real gaps between centrist and leftwing parties. In fact, this is almost the sole area where the will of the majority coalesced into a consolidated and clear statement, predicated on the total or nearly total nullification of the Haredi exemption from military service; the revocation of economic subsidies that benefit the ultra-Orthodox "at the expense" of the general public; and accelerated calls for Haredi economic participation as a productive segment of the population.

This aspect of the people's demands is consistent with the findings of nearly every public opinion poll.⁸ An overwhelming majority of the Israeli public clearly supports equal burden sharing with respect to security and military duty. Israeli economists and captains of industry have been warning for years that Haredi dependence on state support could not last long. In recent decades, the ultra-Orthodox society has become one of 'learners,' in which the employment rate of males over 25 years of age is below 50%, and the poverty rate is extremely high (56%).⁹ In Israel, the average income of ultra-Orthodox households is about half that of non-Haredi households.

Under these circumstances, focusing on the ultra-Orthodox issue in the political arena is a very tempting proposition for leaders of non-Orthodox parties. The risk of losing non-Haredi votes as a result of an uncompromising demand to deal with the ultra-Orthodox sector is almost nonexistent – certainly not for leaders of secular parties (76 % of the population supported the establishment of a

The majority of Israelis perceive the ultra-Orthodox as a burden

government without Haredi parties.)¹⁰ From the politicians' perspective, the ability to formulate a resounding popular message is an obvious advantage. The majority of Israelis perceive the ultra-Orthodox as a burden, whose contribution to the general good is inadequate, and whose demands from other sectors are unjustified. In the religious-cultural context, the 'year of the ultra-Orthodox' could not have come at a worse time for the ultra-Orthodox themselves.

Concurrent with the legislative and political crises described above, several events have taken place in the last year or so, which helped to concretize negative images of the ultra-Orthodox in the minds of Israelis. Prominent among them was the story of an eight-year-old Bet Shemesh girl who was spat upon for alleged "immodesty," as well as stories about women being banished to the back of (illegally) gender-segregated buses to preserve modesty.

It is, therefore, unsurprising that many of the political parties that stressed societal and economic issues in their election campaigns found the uncompromising demand to address the problem of the ultra-Orthodox sector an irresistible game. Kadima, led by Shaul Mofaz, was anxious to leverage the Plesner Committee, which it chaired, into a campaign that demanded to "pay soldiers what yeshiva students are paid."¹¹ Yesh Atid posed this question to the government: "Where's the Money?" insinuating that ultra-Orthodox allocations lacked proper returns for Israeli society. The leftwing party, Meretz, used the Labor Party and Shelly Yachimovich's, its leader, obvious reluctance to attack the ultra-

Orthodox to win over voters to Meretz, arguing that "Yachimovich will join the ultra-Orthodox and the Settlers."¹² In their self-imposed isolation from the rest of society, the ultra-Orthodox could not find a channel for rapprochement that would diminish some of the intensity of the alienation and rage directed at them.¹³ At the same time, in light of their total dependence on state subsidies, they found themselves vulnerable to an immediate deterioration of their situation unless they were willing to accept the new rules of the game.

The Elections and their Results

The results of the January 2013 Israeli elections were a surprise and dictated a new coalitional order. The two parties, Yesh Atid and HaBayit HaYehudi, emerged much stronger from the elections and with an immensely significant impact on the new agenda – as long as they remained united – placed the 'burden-sharing' issue at the center of coalition negotiations. The result of these deliberations dictated two major changes. First, a coalition without any Haredi representation, and in effect free, at least in theory, from any political dictates stemming from subordination to the ultra-Orthodox agenda. Second, relatively detailed

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coalition agreements were drawn up, which included a specific commitment to an accelerated revision of arrangements pertaining to the ultra-Orthodox community.

It was obvious that, deprived of the key political positions they occupied for so long (chair of the Knesset's Finance Committee; ministerial posts in key strongholds such as the Interior and Housing Ministries; de facto control of the Ministry of Health), the ultra-Orthodox would be

Some within the coalition are reluctant to 'burn bridges' with the ultra-Orthodox community

unable to directly affect the new arrangements concerning them. They could wield some indirect influence through both civil activity (demonstrations, non-cooperation) and preserving existing ties with parties within the coalition government reluctant to 'burn the bridges' with the ultra-Orthodox community. It

is no secret that the prime minister had objected to the demand to keep the ultra-Orthodox out of the coalition, and that he would continue to try to represent and keep his former (and possibly future) partners' interests close to heart. The means of the struggle mounted by ultra-Orthodox leaders to counter the planned measures may be very limited, but they are now free to do so without fear of losing key positions or coveted budget allocations.

The Test of the Coalition Agreements

At this early stage in the life of the new coalition, it is difficult to speak of implementing decisions that would transform the patterns of relations between the ultra-Orthodox and non-Orthodox in Israel. Nevertheless, the coalition agreements stipulate both principles and resolutions scheduled to take place according to an agreed-upon timetable. Monitoring the implementation of such understandings in the coming months should provide a clearer indication of the government's pace and seriousness of intent in this matter.

The first test of the coalition's earnestness was passed immediately after Passover, when the government met the provisions of the coalition agreement by establishing a ministerial committee assigned with writing a bill to replace the Tal Law. Chaired by Yesh Atid minister, Yaakov Perry, the Perry Committee (known as the Knesset Committee for Equal Burden Sharing, but officially, 'the Ministerial Committee on the Integration of ultra-Orthodox and Minorities in Military and Civil Service, with the Aim of Integrating them in the Labor Market and Creating Equality in Burden-Sharing') submitted to the government a draft of a proposed new law on May 23, which implements and regulates the recruitment of Haredim to the IDF and civilian National Service, after having been accepted by all coalition member parties. The proposed new law covers the entire range of 'equal burden sharing' issues, rather than focusing solely on the revision of the *Torato Omanuto* arrangement with the ultra-Orthodox. Thus, it also addresses reduced mandatory IDF service terms, as well as provides the option of national service

for those who do not wish to serve in the IDF. In the initial discussions disagreements emerged, among other matters, in regard to the degree of coercion to be exerted on those slated for Haredi military service, and the timetable for implementing the changes (the chairman wished to shorten it from that originally set in the coalition agreement). However, in the end, a compromise agreeable to all was found.

The establishment and efforts of the Perry Committee constitute the first, but certainly not the last, test of the depth of the changes expected during Israel's 33rd government's term. The coalition agreements stipulated in advance that revisions to the *Torato Omanuto* arrangement be gradual, taking effect progressively over at least the next four years – and other agreed-upon changes. In any case, the move would be initiated during the incumbent coalition's term, but its final stages are scheduled to take place during the term of another, future coalition; and as long as the move has not been completed, it is possible that a variety of political contingencies could obstruct its progress, or even reinstate former arrangements.

Key ultra-Orthodox-Related Economic Changes

A considerable portion of the coalition agreements between Likud-Beytenu, the senior coalition member, and its two main partners, Yesh Atid and HaBayit HaYehudi, are dedicated to transforming the relationship between state institutions and the ultra-Orthodox population. The proposals for change are significant and many, and factor into nearly every provision of the coalition agreement.

For instance, the section on education stipulates that the minister of education – a member of Yesh Atid – “will consolidate a ‘core studies curriculum’ [including Math, Hebrew Language, English, and Civics] for the education system within the first six months of the government’s term.” This provision is, first and foremost, yet another attempt by the state to insist upon ‘core studies’ in ultra-Orthodox schools – an issue that all previous attempts to regulate have failed. The state views the introduction of a core studies curriculum in ultra-Orthodox schools as a *sine qua non* condition for the ability of ultra-Orthodox youth to eventually join productive vocational frameworks that would contribute to the Israeli economy and relieve the state of the economic burden of permanently supporting a population that chooses to live below the poverty threshold.

Past attempts to introduce and regulate a mandatory ‘core curriculum’ in ultra-Orthodox schools have failed

The agreement's section, ‘Groups and Sectors Advancement,’ stipulates “the government shall address the issue of women’s exclusion and examine the exercise of legal means to prevent it in the public sphere.” If a decision to employ such measures is reached, these will be used primarily to thwart ultra-Orthodox attempts to compel gender segregation on public bus lines. The section on housing, as well the ‘Miscellaneous’ section, feature similar – and critical – provisions regarding

the regulation of government support in the ultra-Orthodox sector. These stipulate, “upon submitting the budget, the minister of finance will formulate a plan for the gradual integration of the ‘realization of earning potential’ criterion, in any benefit, allowance, or exemption granted by government

Under the proposed arrangement, the cost of not joining the work force would become more onerous, perhaps even intolerable

ministries.” Reliance on such a criterion – which also appears explicitly in the section on housing as a substitute for ‘years of marriage’ – actually puts the ultra-Orthodox in a distinctly worse position in terms of eligibility for benefits and allowances if they opt to study in a yeshiva rather than seek employment. We should note, however, that

implementation of this provision is not immediate, but rather one of ‘progressive implementation,’ and thus may not be fully put into practice. Even if it is, it is always possible to reverse under different political circumstances in the future.

The coalition agreement contains many more provisions that limit direct or indirect government support of the ultra-Orthodox sector. For instance, it asserts that the Ministry of Welfare will no longer be allowed to transfer support budgets unless they are allocated to “rehabilitation or treatment institutions.” It also stipulates that eligibility for daycare discounts (for which yeshiva students are eligible) would be in effect for “up to five years of support,” rather than the indefinite period

currently in effect. The agreement stipulates that reductions in health insurance and national security payments would also be limited – to a period of seven years – as opposed to the current arrangement, which includes no time limitations. In effect, if implemented, the proposed arrangement would force ultra-Orthodox citizens to face a much harder decision when choosing between employment and Torah study (which bears no distinct economic fruit). The cost of not joining the workforce would become more onerous, perhaps even intolerable.

The Proposed Change in the Military Service

The basic policy statement of the new government stipulates that it will “take steps to increase equality in burden sharing...whether through military or civil service.” The agreement’s appendix asserts that “Israeli society is ripe” for a shift “toward bringing the Torah-studying sector within the sovereign sphere.” This Appendix outlines the agreed-upon plan to phase out the *Torato Omanuto* scheme, and the gradual transformation of ultra-Orthodox society from economic dependence to greater productivity commensurate with other population sectors.

The plan asserts the universal duty to serve, while affirming the importance and centrality of Torah study “as a central value in the State of Israel.” Key tenets include:

State Authority: The IDF will decide who gets drafted. This provision is a bitter pill for the Haredim to swallow as it expropriates their

control, effectively subjecting the world of Torah students to state control and priorities.

Recognition of Cultural Differences: Integration into military or civil service will be carried out with utmost consideration of special cultural characteristics, while attempting to provide dedicated programs that would allow the ultra-Orthodox to remain in ultra-Orthodox environments, even within the state framework, to counter allegations that this is a governmental attempt to ‘secularize’ the Haredim.

Economic Measures: As detailed above, the duty to serve the state will be enforced through sanctions against conscription evaders, i.e. through withholding benefits rather than direct confrontation.

Striking a Balance between Sectors: Concurrent with increasing the ultra-Orthodox’s share of the service burden, a parallel initiative (albeit on a much smaller scale) in the Arab sector will be advanced. Allowances and benefits to sectors that perform military duty in large numbers (economic rewards to those who carry the burden) will also be offered.

Progressivity: The steps outlined in the agreement will come into effect over four years. In the interim, the ultra-Orthodox will enjoy a grace period in which they can either join the military, stay in yeshiva, or work. This interim period is designed to allow the Haredim to begin the fundamental process of social change expected of them if the decisions in the coalition agreement are in fact implemented.

It should be noted that the burden equality plan,

even if not fully implemented, leaves certain islets of inequality intact: it fails to address the role of Haredi women, leaving the present situation as is (i.e. ultra-Orthodox women are exempt from any form of duty, military or civil, and will remain so); it enshrines the special status of ‘Hesder yeshivas,’ which combine short military service with Torah studies; and while it does posit the goal of “increasing the number of minority groups doing national service,” it refrains from specifying enforcement measures, unlike its ultra-Orthodox policy.

Some allege that the government is attempting to ‘secularize’ the Haredim

Conclusion

The mounting public interest in burden equality and ultra-Orthodox integration issues, the results of the last elections, the composition of the current coalition and the coalition agreement – all indicate a significant and fundamental change in the relationship between the Haredim and the state. Nevertheless, the change process is neither immediate nor irreversible. It may be halted at various stages, for reasons that include:

- A political situation that necessitates a reversion to the classic agenda of defense and security policy, pushing socio-economic issues down the state’s list of priorities; and
- A change in the domestic political/coalitional situation, which would increase the ultra-

Orthodox parties' power to thwart the new arrangements. Such a change could occur during the term of the incumbent government, or as a result of future elections.

Since most measures for effecting the change will come into effect step-by-step, with some only scheduled to commence years from now, numerous obstructions may appear that impede the progress of change, possibly ending it altogether. Nevertheless, it currently appears that, even if there are further delays in the plan's full implementation, there is a growing realization in Israeli society (including within the ultra-Orthodox community) that the status quo is unsustainable in the long run. We expect the change process to continue for the following reasons:

- The ultra-Orthodox society's economic dependence weighs heavily on the economy, as well as on the ultra-Orthodox community itself.
- Social change within the ultra-Orthodox society amplifies the power of sub-sectors interested in change (in varying ways and degrees).
- The alienation of ultra-Orthodox from the non-Orthodox population greatly diminishes the motivation and willingness of the larger Israeli society to carry the burden of supporting the ultra-Orthodox (economically and in terms of security). The public regards this issue as crucial and is sure to charge anyone standing in the way of reform a hefty political price.

Assuming that change processes will continue and intensify, several questions remain open and include:

- What shape will a working ultra-Orthodox society take?
- Would it be able to retain its separateness, or would the integration process inevitably lead to increased cultural assimilation?
- How will Israeli society as a whole deal with increasing friction between the ultra-Orthodox and the non-Orthodox, which would inevitably occur if they were fully integrated in the economic life, defense system, and the general Israeli society?
- Might an economic strengthening of the ultra-Orthodox society, combined with its continued demographic growth, lead to yet another eruption of social strife, in which the Haredim would be much more powerful actors?

Notes

1. In this context, see Dov Maimon & Shmuel Rosner, 'The Haredi Challenge,' JPPI, February 2013.
2. *Ynet*, 21 February 2012: 'Supreme Court Revokes Tal Bill as Unconstitutional; Bill to expire in August.'
3. *Jerusalem Post*, 2 March 2013: 'Lapid: "Haredim in the Opposition is not a Disaster; Bennett: 'I Will Keep my Promise to Him'.
4. Tamar Herman and Ephraim Yaar, 'The Peace Index,' December 2012, Israel Democracy Institute.
5. Tamar Herman and Ephraim Yaar, 'The Peace Index,' January 2013, Israel Democracy Institute.
6. In effect, most ultra-Orthodox voters identify with the right bloc's ideology, so that their leaders' room for political maneuvering has been limited to begin with. The ultra-Orthodox recoiled at the last minute from supporting 'the stinking trick' played by Shimon Peres in an attempt to form a government in the early 1990s. But they did support the Sharon government's Gaza Disengagement plan.
7. 'Summer 2011 in Israel: The Revolt of the Undeprived: What it was, How it was, what's left,' *Annual Assessment 2011-2012*, JPPI.
8. Dror Walter and Hanan Cohen, 'Public Attitudes toward Yeshiva students' recruitment,' Israel Democracy Institute, August 2012.
9. Plessner Committee figures.
10. Channel Ten Opinion Poll, 1 March 2013, Prof. Camil Fuchs and Midgam Ltd.
11. *Channel Seven*, 26 December 2012: 'The Demand by Haredi Public Figures to Disqualify Kadima's Campaign as Inciting is Rejected; Elections Committee: "Kadima's Campaign is not Incitement"'
12. *Haaretz*, 22 October 2012: 'Meretz Campaign: "Yechimovitch will join the Ultra-Orthodox and the Settlers'.
13. The most complex and highly-charged score to settle is the one between the ultra-Orthodox and the Religious-National sector, with which they also have an ideological dispute regarding the role of the state, as well as a power struggle for control over jobs and budgets earmarked for religious services. Equally painful is the emotional score that they must settle, due to the ultra-Orthodox's endorsement of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's Disengagement plan.