**­­­­­­Luiss Mediterranean Platform Roundtable Series**

30/04/2024, 15:30 - 17:00

Luiss University, Viale Romania 34, Aula 405

**The shadow of Netanyahu:**

**Israeli politics and society seven months into the Gaza war**

The Gaza war has reached its 7th month, and the Israeli military campaign shows no signs of abating. With the specter of a large-scale regional conflict looming, making sense of the domestic political scene in Israel is getting all the more difficult. This third Luiss Mediterranean Platform Roundtable will examine political developments in Israel and their posssible significance for the ongoing conflict as well as the country's trajectory in the aftermath.

Prime Minister Netanyahu is currently experiencing a significant decline in popularity, marking one of the most tumultuous periods in his extensive career. A majority of Israelis are vehemently opposing him and demanding elections, with a particular emphasis on prioritizing the release of hostages held in Gaza. Despite this opposition, there is still widespread support for the ongoing war among the population.

While Netanyahu appears resolute to stay in power at any cost, rivals like former Chief of Staff Benny Gantz are emerging as potential alternatives. However, the feasibility of a leadership change during wartime is dubious. Furthermore, it's uncertain whether such a change would result in a significant shift in policy direction.

The far right and religious parties in the ruling coalition, spearheaded by figures like Ben Gvir and Smotrich, have capitalized on the conflict in Gaza to advance hardline and uncompromising policies. This has resulted in a surge of settler violence and increased land dispossession in the West Bank and East Jerusalem in recent months. Despite the serious risk of escalating tensions across the Occupied Territories, these developments appear to largely evade public attention within Israel.

At the regional level, the reprisal Iranian attack on April 13 has intensified the sense of threat among Israelis following the events of October 7. However, it has also served to divert attention away from the international community's increased criticism of Israel's conduct in Gaza. Concerns about the potential for an extended regional conflict in the Middle East appear to have prompted the United States to adopt a more accommodating stance regarding a potential Israeli military operation in Rafah. Nevertheless, the ongoing war in Gaza is putting America's unconditional support for Israel to the test. It has also significantly damaged Israel's international reputation.

Could these developments potentially lead to a reassessment of Israel’s policies towards Palestinians and the broader regional environment? What can be anticipated from the growing popular opposition to Netanyahu and its probable impact on the balance of power within the domestic political arena? Are there emerging alternative visions within Israel regarding the country’s identity and its relationship with its neighbors?

**Moderators**:

• Virginie Collombier, Scientific Coordinator, Luiss Mediterranean Platform.

• Luigi Narbone, Director, Luiss Mediterranean Platform.

**Speakers**:

• Daniel Seidemann, Attorney and Terrestrial Jerusalem’s Founder.

• Eyal Lurie-Pardes, Visiting Fellow, Middle East Institute.

• Mairav Zonszein, Senior Analyst, International Crisis Group.

• Nomi Bar-Yaacov, International Negotiator and Associate Fellow, Chatham House.