

THE ISRAELI SOCIAL MOVEMENT



© All rights reserved

A CHANCE FOR PEACE?

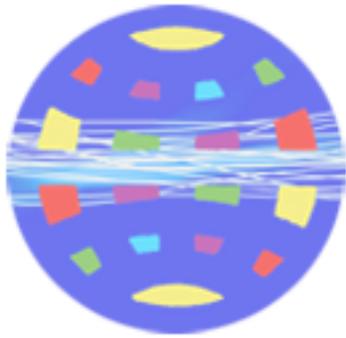
Marc Finaud

Special advisor to the Director of the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP)

Valérie Fert

Chairman of GMAP





THE ISRAELI SOCIAL MOVEMENT: A CHANCE FOR PEACE?

By Marc Finaud

Special Advisor to the Director of the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP).

The author expresses personal views.

Never has the domino theory been so fascinating to observe in action. Initiated in Tunisia at the end of 2010, the movement that shook the Arab world spread to Egypt then to Libya, Bahrain, Yemen, and Syria. The peoples rid Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya of their dictators, and even where they still suffer violent suppression, a point of no-return has been reached. The Palestinians, for their part, did not so much rebel against their leaders from Fatah or Hamas, although they had good reasons for doing so, but they rallied behind the claim for an independent state. As for Israel, it looked at those developments with mixed feelings of fear and scepticism. It may have to face losing the Egyptian government as a strong ally, regional instability, or takeover by hostile Islamist radicals. Its worst nightmare would be that support from western countries to the Arab revolutions deepen its isolation.

But Israel was not spared either by the wind of change blowing on North Africa and the Middle East. Its population did not revolt to overthrow its political system. Israel still rightly considers itself as the only democracy in the region. Some even call it “hyperdemocracy” or *democracy*. Indeed, its parliamentary regime based on full proportional representation allows any sector or lobby to be voted in the Knesset. Thus such a group having joined the government coalition, even as ultra-minority, is in a position to threaten the cabinet of causing its overthrow if its demands are not met. This is how the West Bank and East Jerusalem settlers lobby, hardly representing half a million people, but supported by a handful of members of Parliament, determine the policy of a country of 7.7 million. This system dates back to the establishment of the State in 1948. It corresponds to the great diversity of Israeli society, a fact often overlooked in the West and in the Arab world, content with a more homogeneous image.

What did the Israeli “Indignated” then rebel against? Mainly against growing poverty and cost of living, especially for housing, as well as social exclusion resulting from a neoliberal policy to which Benjamin Netanyahu attached his name as Prime Minister (1996-1999 and since 2009) but above all as Finance Minister (2002-2005). That policy consisted in gradually substituting the welfare state put into place by the Labour governments with an oligarchy

dominated by large conglomerates owned by tycoons or big families.

For instance, the Super-Sol group now has 40 percent of market share in retail trade, and it can decide alone on retail prices. The Tnuva dairy company holds 52 percent of the market. Finance is in the hands of five main banks agreeing to maintain high service fees and interest rates. Movements of boycott against those companies, supported by street demonstrations launched on Facebook and occupation of public places by hundreds of thousands of Israelis, forced them to yield to the pressure.

The Prime Minister had to promise the construction of 40,000 new affordable housing units. The committee that he appointed under the chairmanship of economist Manuel Trachtenberg recommended a set of measures, among others on competition, taxation, free preschool education, the price of basic goods, and public transport for young people. Some of those measures in fact go even farther in the dismantlement of the welfare state: wage cuts and restrictions on trade unions in the state monopolies (power and water distribution, railways, ports, etc.). Moreover, in order to alleviate the burden of social spending, employment of the ultrareligious Israelis who now live on state allowances will be encouraged. In order to fund this programme, the committee proposed cuts in the sacrosanct defence budget, which reaches 16.3 billion euros (i.e. 15% of the state budget and 6.3 percent of GDP). But, due to resistance from the military lobby, Netanyahu limited that cut to 0.5 billion euros. One should remember that, every year, Israel receives 2.17 billion euros of military aid from the USA.

The Israeli “Indignated” of course did not consider that those measures were up to their expectations. The fact is that, without wanting to subvert Israel’s democracy, they do not trust it any longer, and seek a more direct representation of civil society. As their counterparts from Cairo, Athens, or Madrid, they crave for social justice but above all for dignity and recognition. In this regard, a recent event is likely to give them hope and make them aware of their own strength. Last August, they had invited to one of their rallies the father of Gilead Shalit, the Israeli soldier captured by Hamas five years earlier. The hostage’s father publicly accused Netanyahu of being unworthy of leading the country since he did not show any will to have his son released. Alerted by that criticism and severely negative polls, the Prime Minister undertook the indirect negotiation with Hamas that led to the swap of the soldier against a thousand Palestinian detainees. Can the wish, expressed by Gilead Shalit that his release would contribute to peace between Israelis and Palestinians, come true?

A feeling of quasi national unity can now be observed both in Israel and in Palestine. Netanyahu’s prestige is restored, and commentators agree in admitting that he can thus overcome the social movement. However, the joy of homecoming in each camp may still be followed by the return to the vicious circle of revenge. In the short term, the Israeli Prime minister may feel strengthened vis-à-vis a Mahmoud Abbas made less popular than Hamas, and hope that the recognition of a Palestinian state will be postponed. It certainly would be bad calculation, the same that Ariel Sharon made for the unilateral withdrawal from Gaza: Hamas leaders will have no effort to make to convince many Palestinians that the armed

struggle (including hostage taking) pays off more than negotiation.

Moreover, even if he took the risk of ignoring his until-then untangible principles (“we don’t negotiate with terrorists; no release of prisoners with blood on their hands”), Netanyahu clearly demonstrated that, sooner or later, Israel would have no other choice but to negotiate with the Islamist group in control of Gaza. Several commentators recalled that a short time before the historic Oslo accord, any contact with the PLO was punishable with prison. Instead of torpedoing any plan of reconciliation between Palestinian factions as he has been doing with western support, he should seize the opportunity to resume peace negotiations with Fatah as well as with Hamas. As was the case in the Oslo talks and the prisoner swap deal, secrecy will need to be preserved until a final accord is reached to avoid overbidding from the extremists of both camps.

If Netanyahu displays the political courage and vision of his predecessors Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres, he may enter history as a man of peace. The Israeli “Indignated”, just like their Arab cousins, could then rejoice in having contributed to changing the situation in the region. ■

THE ISRAELI SOCIAL MOVEMENT AS SEEN BY THE COGNITIVE SYSTEM “GLOBE EXPERT”

By Valerie Fert

Chairman of GMAP

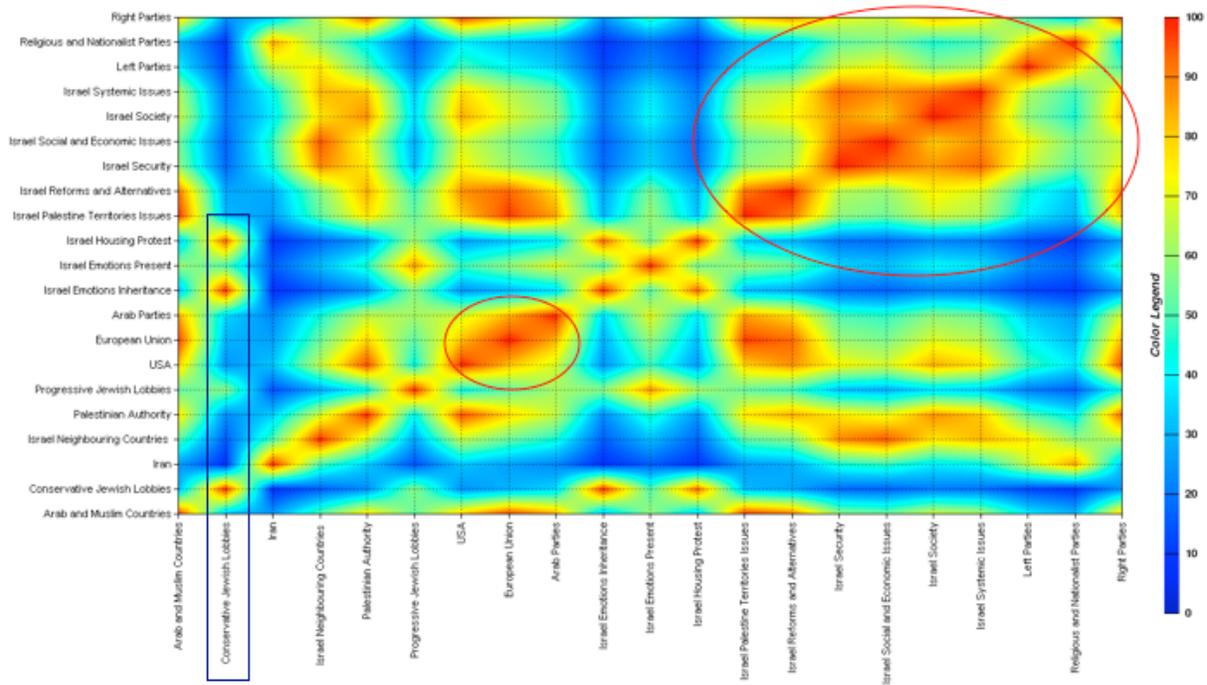
A TENSE SITUATION

So amazing as it may seem, when working on the interplay of information signals, artificial intelligence does not proceed in a temporal dimension of the same proportion as our human perception. Its only limits are the scalability of a state until completion of all possible mathematical combinations. Usually, this completion, which represents the extreme equilibrium of a situation, is reached around 120 loops. In the case of the Israeli social movement, the system reaches its full stability after 43 loops. As we are talking about ecosystem stability based on the Lotka-Volterra equation and model called “Prey and Predator”, this neither indicates a positive trend nor a negative one, but a tense situation, that is to say an ecosystem that has almost reached its level of maturity.

A CATALYST OF THE FABRIC OF REALITY

When looking at the map of the concepts manipulated by information, we observe that the Israeli housing protest, the core of the social movement, is currently converging with the emotions inherited from the Jewish past and memory - i.e. the spectre of a repetition of extermination, conviction of the others’ detestation, belief in isolation and abandonment among the nations, and difficulty of resilience - but not with the main convergences, which combine all the Israeli issues - economic, political, social, systemic as well as the security ones - on the one hand, and USA, Europe, Israeli Arab parties and territories questions on the other hand. It does not mean that the social movement is disconnected from other matters, but acts as a catalyst and thus reveals the basic questions, which could be summarized as follows: **which State, which society, which security?**

PROXIMITY RELATIONSHIP MAP



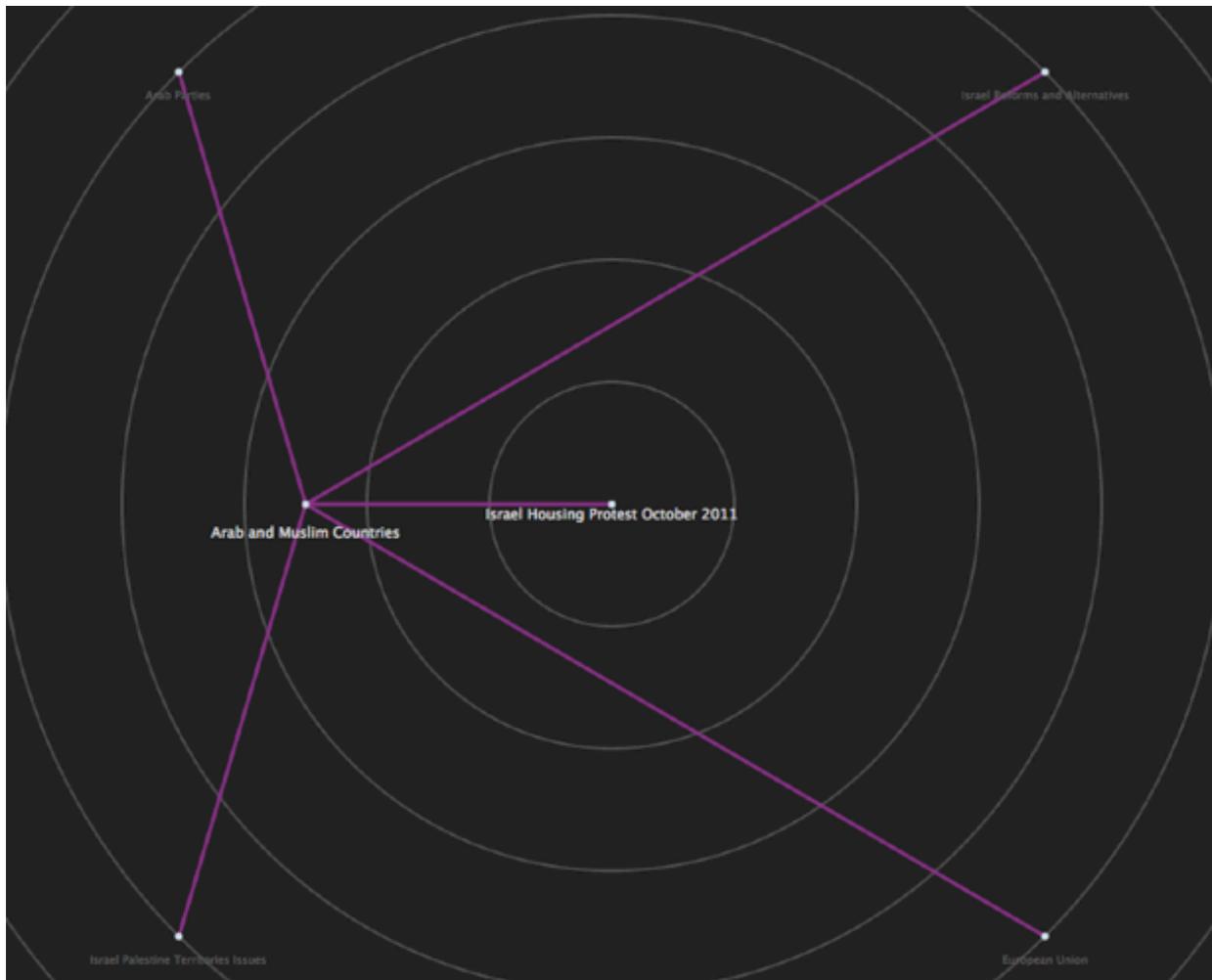
Map of convergences: the blue rectangle outlines the convergence between the Israeli housing protest, Israeli emotions inherited from the Jewish past and conservative Jewish lobbies. The main convergences are circled in red. At the top right, Israeli issues. At the centre left, USA, European Union, Israeli Arab parties and territories issues. © Globe Expert

A SILENT UNDERLYING QUESTION

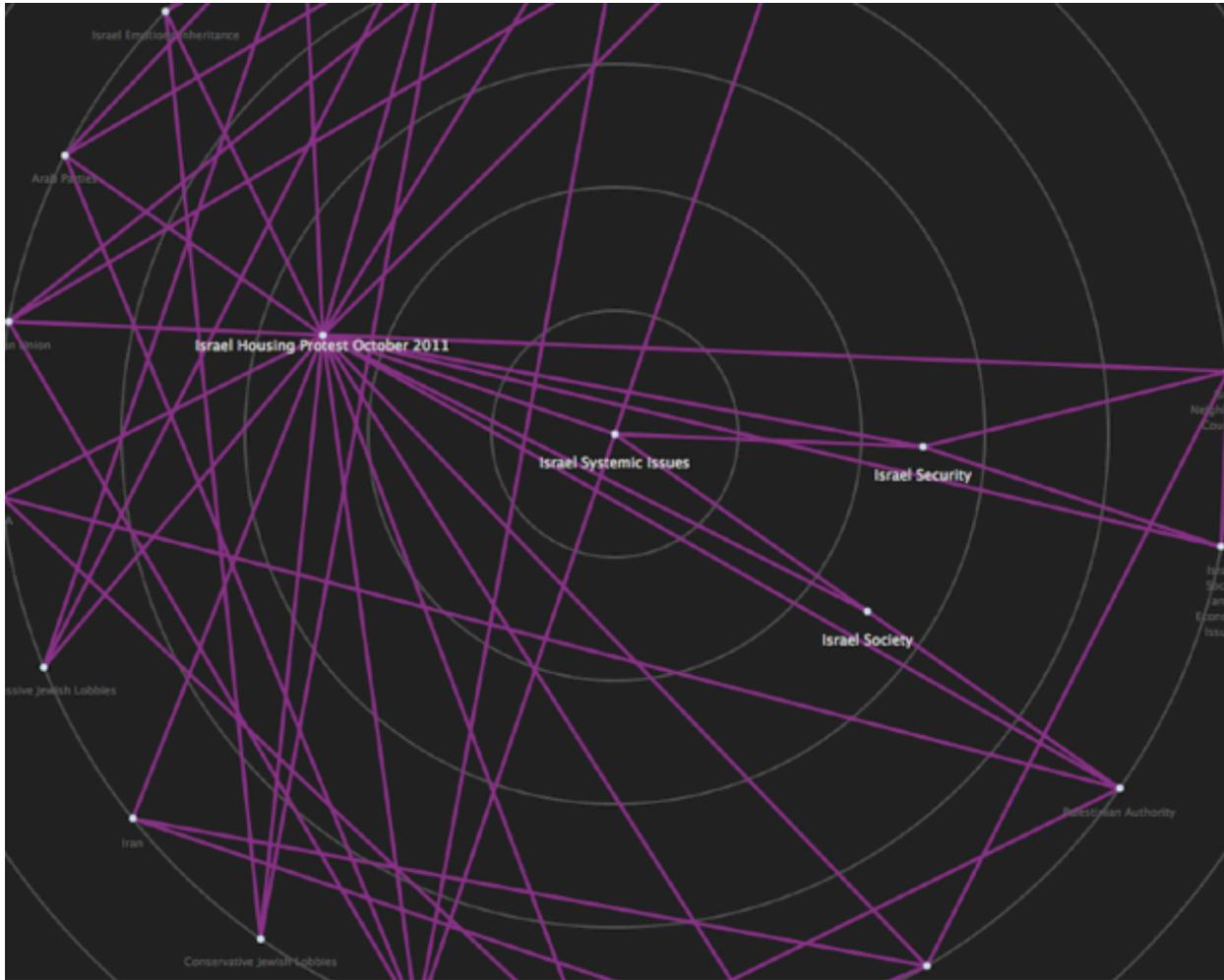
The domino theory noticed by Marc Finaud is also a reality from the Globe Expert’s standpoint. It expresses it by displaying the interactions at the heart of the situation, and they are as clear as irrevocable, drawing a **single relation between the Israeli housing protest and Arab countries**. The Eastern wind of change has indeed reached Israel on July 14, 2011, but we could also say that the Israeli social movement is a part of the series of public protests ongoing from Madrid to San Francisco, all movements whose the common root is probably a requirement for dignity. Furthermore, according to the landscapes and local conditions, the winds have not the same impacts everywhere. In the Israeli case, within a country characterized by a hyper democracy, the matter is not that of a rebellion and claim for freedom. Much of it is about changing a social order and economic system founded on the last embodiment of the socio-economic Zionist system, mixed with a neoliberal policy and the consequences of over sixty years of conflict. In fact, the question of neoliberalism is just a matter of contingency, whereas the drifts of the socio-economist Zionist system and conflict

may be seen as structural, insofar as war marked the very beginning of the State.

This is the second strong interaction that Globe Expert shows by **also displaying a map where the housing protest is directly linked with the Israeli systemic issues**, which appear as bipolar and disconnected, with one pole representing the Israeli society and one the security question, both being separated from each other, as opposed. Such a configuration clearly indicates that **even if the Palestinian State question was never directly raised throughout the protests, it is underlying**. Thus, looking at the convergences of the concepts or the relations of interactions, Globe Expert consistently points out the same fabric: which State, which society, which security? In other words, it could also be said that politics is reflected in the social field precisely because **the security issue, if not a taboo, is at least a blocking element of the political expression and even more**, as demonstrated by the following analyses and maps.



The interactions at the heart of the issue: Globe Expert shows a single relation between the Israeli housing protest and Arab countries. © Globe Expert



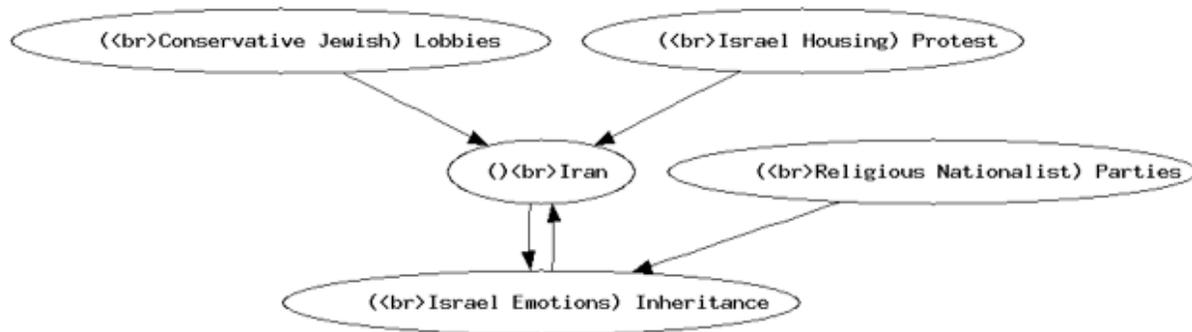
The Israeli housing protest is linked with the Israeli systemic issues, which include a bipolar question: society and security. © Globe Expert

GORDIAN KNOT

Globe Expert also detects the factors of imbalance of the system, that is to say the triggering factors of dynamics within the system. In the present case, **an external player to the social movement as such appears: Iran**. As shown by the chart below, Iran triggers a dynamics involving the social movement, emotions inherited from the Jewish memory, religious and nationalist parties, and conservative Jewish lobbies, which attempt to be influential on the US or European countries' foreign policy for instance, regardless the nature of Israeli decisions.

This configuration illustrates **the very complexity of Israel**. On the one hand, a social movement whose underlying reality ultimately lies in the question of a Palestinian State (as

part of the two-State solution) and may therefore be a vehicle of peace, because it is both a catalyst of this reality and a vector of a political expression mostly paralysed on security issues. On the other hand, this social movement and all that it involves face threats to Israel, whether real, irrational because emotional, exploited, or all three at once. In between, there is a Gordian knot, which should be solved without resorting to a dramatic action.



Iran triggers dynamics and mainly impacts inherited emotions, religious and nationalist parties, conservative Jewish lobbies, facing the housing protest. © Globe Expert

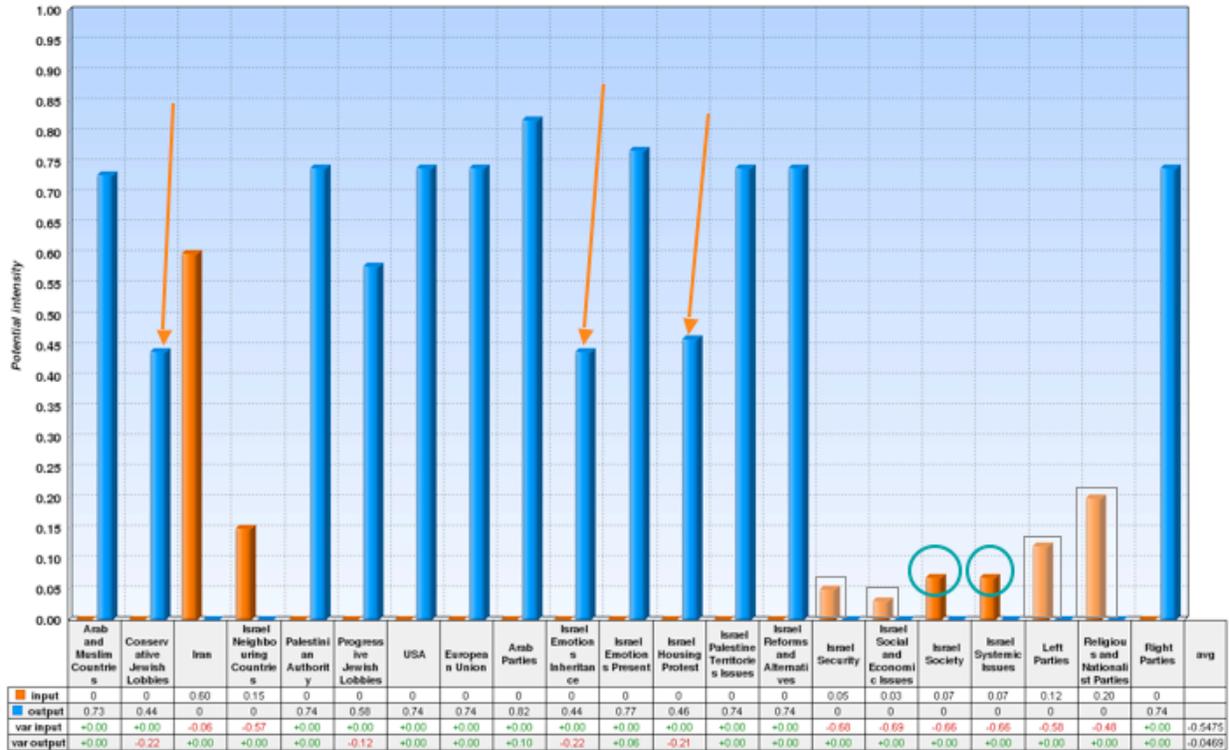
PROSPECTIVE: IRAN AND SEEDS OF PEACE

On a constant basis, all things being equal, the prospective carried out by an artificial intelligence tool such as **Globe Expert** reveals the **deep trends of a situation**. In the present case, it confirms what was already shown and analysed through the Gordian knot: a “face-to-face” between the security issues and those raised by the social movement.

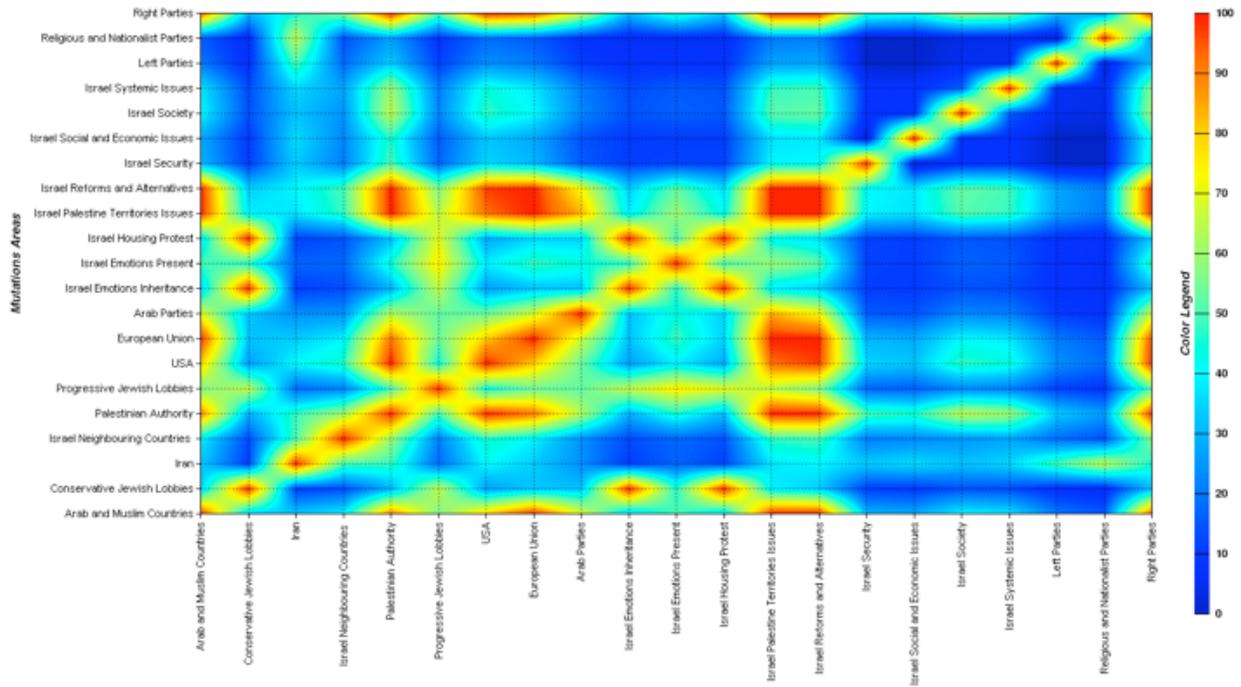
In terms of relations of influence, the security issue obviously prevails. Indeed, **the Iranian question is by far the most predominant**, involving in its dynamics Israel’s neighbouring countries, a consequence of the Iranian play of influence in the region. This predominant position is fuelled by the parts played by the conservative Jewish lobbies and emotions inherited from the Jewish past. It is so powerful, within the relations of influence, that it concentrates in, and absorbs the whole discourse on security as well as the one of the religious and nationalist parties, while making the left-wing parties’ voices barely inaudible. Of course, the housing protest suffers from this situation focused on threats and security as much as the systemic and societal issues experience difficulties in remaining influential. Nevertheless, the questions related to Israeli alternatives and reforms are not impacted. That way, it can be argued that, **even if Iran severely disturbs the peaceful potential of the social movement, it does not cancel it out.**

The prospective map of convergences confirms this point of view. Indeed, when comparing

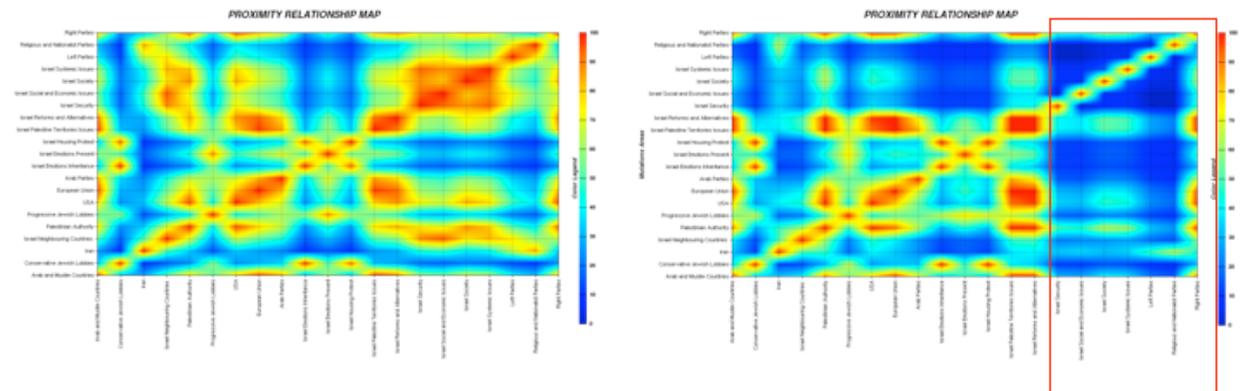
the current and future convergences, it can be seen that the upcoming main convergences will combine the Israeli reforms, territorial issues, Palestinian Authority, USA, Europe and right parties. As a result of this observation, one can imagine and hope that, despite the threats, crises and other saber-rattling, the seeds of peace of the social movement, even still underlying and silent, will ultimately give fruits, with the support of USA and Europe.



The red bars represent the most influential topics. The blue bars represent the questions impacted by the action of the most influential ones. The shaded bars represent the questions, which will completely disappear when the system has completed all its loops. The questions, which will remain after this process, are circled in green. Iran is clearly predominant and impacts the conservative Jewish lobbies, inherited emotions and housing protest. © Globe Expert



Map of convergences after 43 loops. © Globe Expert



On the left, the current situation. On the right, the situation after 43 loops. The blue area, outlined in red, means a relatively stable situation, in terms of new dynamics, in respect of left, religious and nationalist parties, economic and social issues, systemic issues, society and security. © Globe Expert