Israeli President Rivlin Gives Government Mandate to the Knesset

Israel remains in a political deadlock as rivals Benjamin Netanyahu and Benny Gantz negotiate a power-sharing agreement. Israeli President Reuven Rivlin had initially set a deadline for the government to be formed by Monday at midnight, but Netanyahu and Gantz jointly requested an extension until Wednesday at midnight as a deal was seemingly close. However, the deadline passed with both sides at an impasse, and President Rivlin will now give the Knesset a mandate to form the government. A prime minister and cabinet ministers will need to be selected with a simple majority. Israel's parliament will have three weeks to nominate the government, and if there is no solution, then Israelis will head to the polls for an unprecedented fourth election in just over a year.

Israel has endured three elections in a year as a clear winner failed to present itself. Finally, Benny Gantz reneged on a long-held promise to not serve in a government led by Netanyahu due to the ongoing criminal cases against the incumbent prime minister. Gantz said the outbreak of the coronavirus demanded extraordinary measures, and sought to form a unity government with Netanyahu. Any deal between Gantz and Netanyahu is expected to include a mandate for each to serve as prime minister for an 18-month term, with Netanyahu continuing in his current role at first before handing power to Gantz. Negotiations have been complicated by the breakup of Gantz's centrist Blue and White Party, as many lawmakers deserted the party and accused Gantz of betraying their trust.