

## The last “Mapainik” and the “Iron Wall”: Benjamin Netanyahu and the Palestinian issue 2009-21

Kobi Michael & Ori Wertman

To cite this article: Kobi Michael & Ori Wertman (03 Nov 2023): The last “Mapainik” and the “Iron Wall”: Benjamin Netanyahu and the Palestinian issue 2009-21, Israel Affairs, DOI: [10.1080/13537121.2023.2270247](https://doi.org/10.1080/13537121.2023.2270247)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537121.2023.2270247>



© 2023 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.



Published online: 03 Nov 2023.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 183



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

## The last “Mapainik” and the “Iron Wall”: Benjamin Netanyahu and the Palestinian issue 2009-21

Kobi Michael<sup>a,b</sup> and Ori Wertman<sup>b,c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Institute for National Security Studies, Tel Aviv University, Israel; <sup>b</sup>International Center for Policing and Security Studies, University of South Wales, UK; <sup>c</sup>Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security, Israel

### ABSTRACT

The strategy led by Prime Minister Netanyahu during his 12-year rule (2009–21) was not just a military-security strategy but a grand-strategy of national security. Effectively adopting Mapai’s ‘practical Zionism’ strategy rather than Jabotinsky’s ‘political Zionism’, Netanyahu effectively became the last of the ‘Mapainiks’ who knew how to establish and develop a state, and fortify its power and position, by virtue of action and by strengthening the ‘Iron Wall’.

**KEYWORDS** Benjamin Netanyahu; Israel; Palestinian-Israeli conflict; Abraham Accords; Hamas; Palestinian Authority; Israel-US relations; Iron Wall; Mapai; PLO

More than any other Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu was involved in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict within the framework of the Oslo process. His first term in office (1996–99) – initially characterised by an attempt to slow down the process and to ignore Yasser Arafat, PLO Chairman and Palestinian Authority (PA) President – continued with the Hebron Agreement (1997) and ended with the Wye River Agreement (1998) and the transfer of additional territories to the PA. Having returned to the prime minister’s office in 2009 for a 12-year stint, Netanyahu conducted three rounds of fighting against Hamas, two attempts to advance the peace process with Mahmoud Abbas’s PA under the auspices of the Obama administration (2009–14), and another attempt during the Trump administration that culminated in the ‘Deal of the Century’ (2020).

Like Yitzhak Rabin, for whom the Oslo Accords were a security move to create a political separation between Israel and the Palestinians in order to curb the threat of the binational state,<sup>1</sup> Netanyahu saw the security aspect as a central component of any settlement with the Palestinians. In this context, he insisted that in any future arrangement the security responsibility would

**CONTACT** Ori Wertman  [ori.wertman@southwales.ac.uk](mailto:ori.wertman@southwales.ac.uk)  International Centre for Policing and Security, University of South Wales, Pontypridd CF37 1DL, UK

© 2023 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.  
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

remain in the hands of Israel to prevent the transformation of of Judea and Samaria into an ineradicable terrorist entity a la the Gaza Strip.<sup>2</sup>

By way of achieving this goal, Netanyahu had a clear strategic vision and managed the strategy for its realisation with determination. Mistakes were certainly made, as were deviations and delays ensuing from the obstacles Netanyahu faced in the political field, domestically or externally. Hence they should be understood as manoeuvres, distractions or attempts to soften criticism, and even tolerable compromises from his point of view – in the same fashion used by leaders of historic Mapai (Labour) party in their determined striving for a clear strategic horizon. Netanyahu's adherence to Ze'ev Jabotinsky's 'Iron Wall' concept (1923), which he updated by adding another layer, involves his insistence on reversing the paradigm regarding the handling of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the way to its resolution, effectively makes him the last of the 'Mapainiks'.

### **Netanyahu, Obama, and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict**

The 2009 elections, which ended with the victory of the right-wing bloc, resulted in the formation of a government headed by Netanyahu. The new government found the Palestinian situation at a very auspicious juncture at both the strategic and political levels. The Islamist Hamas terror organisation, which had ruled the Gaza Strip since 2007, was beaten and weakened after Operation Cast Lead (December 2008–January 2009),<sup>3</sup> while Mahmoud Abbas, whose PA ruled the West Bank Palestinians, was opposed to terrorism as the bitter memories of the 'al-Aqsa Intifada' (September 2000–late 2005) were deeply etched in his mind.<sup>4</sup> Like Ariel Sharon in 2001, Netanyahu faced a Palestinian leadership that was seen by the Israeli public and part of the international community as recalcitrant, having rejected PM Olmert's Annapolis summit (November 2007) proposal for the establishment of a Palestinian state in the Gaza Strip and virtually the entire West Bank (after territory exchanges), with East Jerusalem as its capital.<sup>5</sup>

Abbas's dismissal of far more generous concessions than those rejected by Arafat at the Camp David and Taba summits (July 2000 & January 2001)<sup>6</sup> convinced many that it was impossible to reach a permanent solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The recalcitrance of Abbas, who is widely considered a proponent of the political process with Israel, was seen by Netanyahu as conclusive proof of the Palestinian rejection of any settlement and reinforced his conviction about the lack of a Palestinian peace partner. Unlike Barak and Olmert, who argued that a permanent agreement with the Palestinians must be based on the 1967 line and the establishment of a Palestinian state in virtually the entire West Bank and Gaza, while dividing Jerusalem and surrendering the Jordan Valley to Palestinian control, Netanyahu had his own vision for

ending the conflict with the Palestinians. This was very similar to that of Rabin, who envisaged 'an entity short of a state that will independently run the lives of the Palestinians under its control' within narrower boundaries than the pre-1967 lines. The Jordan Valley area, 'in the broadest sense of the word', was to constitute Israel's security border, and united Jerusalem 'comprising Maale Adumim and Givat Ze'ev' was to remain under Israel's sovereignty.<sup>7</sup>

Netanyahu also saw security as the most important element that Israel must maintain in any future arrangement, especially control of the Jordan Valley and security responsibility for the borders. He stated that economic talks should precede peace negotiations with the aim of improving the lives of the Palestinians, something that would create a corridor to future peace. In any event, reaching an agreement with the Palestinians was not at the top of Netanyahu's political-security agenda when he took office in 2009, but rather the Iranian nuclear issue.<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile in Washington, after eight years of George W. Bush's pro-Israel administration, as of January 2009 the new president, Barack Obama, saw the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in a different way and aspired to restore America's international standing, which he believed to have been damaged by his predecessor.<sup>9</sup> Obama believed that it was impossible for the US to continue to protect Israel, seen as a state that violates the rights of the Palestinians, while acting decisively against powers such as China or Iran in human rights issues. In addition, Obama believed that the continuation of the Israeli 'occupation' caused unrest in the Arab world and fed anti-American sentiments in the Muslim world. Hence, he declared that the absence of Palestinian-Israeli agreement damaged the security of the United States.<sup>10</sup>

In order to renew Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, the Obama administration believed that since Israel was the strong party it had to come towards the Palestinians. In his first meeting with Netanyahu on 14 May 2009, Obama demanded that Israel immediately freeze all construction activities in Jewish West Bank communities, as well as in East Jerusalem. For Netanyahu, who hoped to extract a presidential promise to build freely within the 'settlement blocs' in exchange for a freeze outside them, this was an impossible demand since pressuring Israel for concessions without the Palestinians being asked to do anything would only drive them to harden their positions.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, the approach of the Obama administration turned these construction activities into a major obstacle to the progress of the peace process. While during the Olmert years such activities did not prevent Abbas from conducting intensive negotiations with Israel, after Obama's demand for a complete freeze he could remain steadfast in his refusal to renew negotiations until Israel froze all construction in the West Bank Jewish communities.<sup>12</sup>

Convinced that the new president was trying to appease the Arabs at Israel's expense, Netanyahu concluded that in order to prod Obama to act against the Iranian nuclear threat he needed to show that he was acting on the Palestinian issue.<sup>13</sup> On 14 June 2009, Netanyahu delivered the famous Bar-Ilan speech in which he expressed for the first time explicit support for the two-state solution provided the new Palestinian state was demilitarised; recognised Israel as a Jewish state; eschewed the 'right of return' – the Arab euphemism for Israel's destruction via demographic subversion; and Jerusalem remained united under Israeli sovereignty.<sup>14</sup> Yet neither did the speech reduce the Obama administration's pressure for a construction freeze, nor did it produce a Palestinian quid pro quo with Abbas reiterating his longtime refusal to recognise Israel as a Jewish state.<sup>15</sup>

Eventually, on 25 November 2009 Netanyahu announced a 10-month freeze of West Bank construction activities with the stipulation that construction in Jerusalem would continue as usual.<sup>16</sup> Yet, while the administration welcomed the move, Abbas conditioned the resumption of negotiations on a complete freeze.<sup>17</sup> The stalemate in the peace process continued until August 2010, when Abbas agreed to resume negotiations with Israel after combined pressure from Washington, Egyptian President Mubarak, and Jordanian King Abdullah II. Talks between Israel and the Palestinians resumed in September 2010, when less than a month remained to the end of the 10-month freeze.<sup>18</sup>

Netanyahu and Abbas met (in Jerusalem and Ramallah respectively) with US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, but were unable to reach an agreement. Netanyahu, arguing that Abbas wasted precious time by avoiding negotiations during the 10-month freeze, offered to continue talks but the PA president refused to do so as long as construction activities were not totally frozen. Netanyahu, for his part, claimed that he had no ability to pass this in the cabinet without announcing construction in East Jerusalem, and the negotiations were not renewed. This failed to impress Obama, who viewed Netanyahu as the culprit for the crisis due to his refusal to extend the construction freeze.<sup>19</sup>

After the negotiations' failure, the US administration decided to change tack and simultaneously discuss the core issues with both sides separately. However, the tidal wave of protests that erupted in the Arab world at the end of 2010 (the so-called 'Arab Spring') took over the administration's agenda and its attention to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict decreased. Fearing that the protests would spread to the PA-controlled territories and endanger his rule, Abbas decided to act within the UN framework to realise his political goals, which culminated in the UN's November 2012 recognition of 'Palestine' as an observer state that is not a member of the organisation.<sup>20</sup> In Israel, as expected, the decision was criticised, with Netanyahu stressing that a Palestinian

state should not be established without an arrangement that guaranteed Israel's security, and that the path to peace passed through direct negotiations without preconditions and not through unilateral decisions at the United Nations.<sup>21</sup> Still, the UN vote was a major political achievement for the PA – not only in the struggle against Israel but also as a tool to arrest its declining prestige in Palestinian public opinion and to contain the rise of Hamas following yet another military confrontation with Israel.<sup>22</sup>

### **Differentiation and deterrence: operation pillar of cloud**

Operation Pillar of Cloud (November 2012) was part of Netanyahu's strategy towards Hamas, which sought to keep the organisation as a functioning governmental entity responsible for what was happening in the Gaza Strip, but militarily weakened and deterred. This formula preserved the principle of separating between Hamas and the PA that began during the Olmert government. Olmert's goal was to bring about the collapse of Hamas rule by exerting pressure on the organisation by the local population in light of the sharp decline of its standard of living compared to the economic prosperity in the West Bank, so as to enable the return of the PA to the Strip. Unlike Olmert, however, Netanyahu strove to keep Hamas weakened and deterred but sovereign in the Strip. This led to the deepening of schisms between the two Palestinian entities with the two rival regimes vying for representation of the Palestinian people, something that weakened Abbas and the PA's negotiating position vis-à-vis Israel.<sup>23</sup>

As part of Netanyahu's strategy against Hamas, the terror group suffered another painful blow when Ahmad Jabari, its military wing's second in command, was killed in the opening strike of Operation Pillar of Cloud. During the operation, Hamas fired some 1,400 rockets and missiles at Israel, with a significant portion of them launched from dense population concentrations in violation of international law. Unlike previous encounters, when the towns of southern Israel took the brunt of Hamas's attacks, this time the organisation was able to fire rockets/missiles at the country's centre.<sup>24</sup> Yet despite Hamas's improved military capabilities, Israel intercepted about 90% of its rockets/missiles thanks to the Iron Dome anti-missile system, which became operational in 2011 and dramatically changed the balance of terror between Israel and the terror group.<sup>25</sup>

Unlike Operation Cast Lead at the end of the Olmert government's tenure, this time Israel conducted the ceasefire negotiations through Egypt, rather than the PA. This underscored which party Israel viewed as Gaza's ruler and deepened the schism between the PA and the Strip. In practice, Israel did not act to overthrow the rule of Hamas, whose position was greatly

strengthened by receiving de facto Israeli recognition as the Gaza's sole ruler while confining the PA to Ramallah without any influence on what was happening in the Strip.<sup>26</sup>

### **The Kerry initiative and its failure, 2013–14**

At the beginning of Obama's second term, his new Secretary of State, John Kerry, led another attempt to renew the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations. Unlike Obama, Kerry was impressed that Netanyahu, who won the elections in early 2013 and formed a new centre-right government, was willing to take risks and move towards a Palestinian-Israeli peace agreement. Netanyahu, for his part, made it clear to Kerry that he would be ready to make painful concessions as part of an agreement with the Palestinians, including the gradual evacuation of a large part of the West Bank in favour of establishing a Palestinian state. However, in light of the gap between the parties, Netanyahu was sceptical about the ability to reach an agreement and made it clear to Kerry that the security issue was the key and that in any future arrangement Israel must be able to defend itself on its own. Reminding the secretary of state that Israel's withdrawal from the Strip had resulted in years of rocket/missile attacks, Netanyahu insisted that under no circumstances should the West Bank become a second the Gaza, a prerequisite that was supported by the Obama administration. On the other hand, Kerry wanted to get Abbas, who was sceptical about Netanyahu's seriousness, to return to the negotiating table. The PA president believed that he could not afford the embarrassment of yet another failed negotiations, and therefore demanded that Israel give him something in exchange for renewing the talks.<sup>27</sup>

By way of facilitating renewal of the talks, Netanyahu agreed to release Palestinian terrorists incarcerated before the Oslo Accords in four stages. In return, he demanded that the Obama administration not oppose the announcement of Israeli construction in the West Bank's Jewish communities and that the Palestinians stop their attempts to join international organisations.<sup>28</sup> In these circumstances, Abbas had no choice but to return to the negotiating table for fear of being seen as recalcitrant in the eyes of the international community, and on 19 July 2013, Kerry announced the renewal of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations for a period of nine months. On July 28, the Israeli cabinet approved the release of the 104 Palestinian terrorists, and the next day the negotiating teams met for the first time in Washington. Parallel to the negotiations, Israel released 78 terrorists in three stages in July-December 2013.<sup>29</sup>

The main idea in the negotiations was to end the conflict and all mutual claims. Israel, supported by the US, insisted that there be mutual recognition between the two nation-states, but the Palestinians opposed such recognition. There was more or less agreement on the security issue, with the main

Israeli demand being that the prospective Palestinian state be demilitarised and that Israel retains a long-term presence in the Jordan Valley. Abbas sought to limit the Israeli presence in time and suggested that it withdraws from the territory after five years with US forces replacing the IDF. But Netanyahu, who envisaged Israeli presence in the Jordan Valley for decades, rejected this proposal on the grounds that experience showed that in matters of national security, Israel could only rely on itself. With regard to the refugees, Israel demanded that the 'right of return' be restricted to the Palestinian state and that an agreed compensation mechanism be also established for the Jews who had been expelled from the Arab states as a result of the conflict. The issue of Jerusalem remained in dispute: the Palestinians demanded Israeli recognition that the Palestinian capital be in East Jerusalem while Israel opposed the city's partition and insisted that the issue be resolved only when a comprehensive agreement could be reached. The Obama administration supported the Palestinian position with the aim of achieving a balance between the Palestinian demand of a capital in East Jerusalem and the Israeli demand of Palestinian recognition of Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people.<sup>30</sup>

Yet while Netanyahu accepted the American outline for a permanent agreement with reservations, Abbas rejected the paper presented to him by Obama at the White House meeting on 17 March 2014, which stipulated *inter alia* that the future Israeli-Palestinian border be based on the 1967 line with some territorial swaps and that the Palestinian capital be in East Jerusalem. Though asked to respond to Obama's proposal within a week, Abbas has failed to do so to this very day, just as he failed to respond to Olmert's far-reaching offer. In April, accusing Israel of violating its pledge to release incarcerated terrorists as part of the fourth round, Abbas signed application documents for admission to additional 15 UN institutions, contrary to his commitment before the start of the negotiations. However, the fatal blow to the peace process was delivered by Abbas on April 23, when he signed a reconciliation agreement with Hamas, a move that led to an Israeli decision to suspend the talks.<sup>31</sup>

In tandem with the failure of the negotiations with the PA, Netanyahu continued his policy of differentiation and deterrence vis-à-vis Hamas, with another war with the terror organisation ensuing in the summer of 2014 following the abduction and murder of three Israeli teenagers in the West Bank on June 12. After a short escalation process in which rockets were fired at Israel from the Gaza Strip, on July 8 Israel launched Operation Protective Edge, which lasted for 51 days, with the aim of restoring deterrence vis-à-vis Hamas. And while there were voices in the government that called for an end to Hamas rule, notably Economy Minister Naftali Bennett,<sup>32</sup> Netanyahu, who understood that this meant resumption of Israel's responsibility for the wellbeing of the Gaza population, eschewed this goal. On August 26,



Hamas agreed, with Egyptian mediation, to a ceasefire and the war ended. During the conflict, 4,564 rockets and missiles were fired at Israel with the Iron Dome intercepting 86% of them, and 32 Hamas terror tunnels were destroyed.<sup>33</sup>

The conduct of the operation and its duration clearly indicated the lack of strategic intent to defeat Hamas, militarily or politically. In Netanyahu's view, the strategic logic remained one of containment and deterrence, and the operation's purpose was to severely damage Hamas's military capabilities, restore and strengthen deterrence, and at the same time preserve Hamas as Gaza's effective ruler, responsible for managing the lives of the local population.

### **Stagnation alongside a regional move**

After Netanyahu's victory in the March 2015 elections and the formation of his new government, which was mainly based on right wing parties, renewal of the peace process did not seem to be in the offing. The wave of Palestinian terrorism that began in September 2015 underscored the PA's problematic behaviour and reinforced the prevailing view in Jerusalem that there was no Palestinian partner for a peace settlement. On the one hand, the PA incited against Israel and glorified the terrorists, on the other – it strengthened security cooperation with Israel to prevent further terrorist attacks.<sup>34</sup>

In his last year in office, the only option left to Obama in light of the ongoing stalemate was to promote a regional settlement in which the Palestinian-Israeli conflict would also be resolved. Netanyahu was willing to follow this path, and even proposed that Israel freeze all construction outside the 'settlement blocs' in exchange for American recognition of the blocs, similar to the Bush administration's April 2004 recognition letter. Netanyahu was also ready to allow the Palestinians to build massively in Area C, but asked for an American commitment to curb Palestinian anti-Israeli attempts in UN institutions.<sup>35</sup>

In February 2016, Kerry and Netanyahu met with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Sisi and Jordanian King Abdullah in Aqaba in an attempt to initiate the move. In addition to the points presented to both sides (an agreement based on the 1967 line with territories exchange; Jerusalem as capital of both states; and Palestinian recognition of Israel as a Jewish state), Kerry presented his security outline according to which Israel, Egypt and Jordan would formulate a comprehensive security strategy in the context of the two-state solution. He also claimed that Saudi Arabia and other Arab states expressed readiness to normalise relations with Israel if the Palestinian-Israeli conflict was resolved. However, Netanyahu opposed the security part of the outline, which led to the postponement of the entire move.<sup>36</sup>

Reluctant to give up, at the end of July 2016 Kerry made yet another attempt to convince Netanyahu to adopt the proposed outline, only to be told that the prime minister was interested in promoting the regional initiative based on the ideas he presented at the Aqaba meeting. In September 2016, against the backdrop of the desire to kick-start the regional movement, Netanyahu even negotiated the formation of a unity government with Labour leader Isaac Herzog, in which Netanyahu committed to solving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on the basis of the two-state solution. The plan was that Netanyahu and Herzog would hold a joint press conference with Sisi and King Abdullah and read a joint statement that would form the basis for launching a regional peace initiative led by Egypt and Jordan with the cooperation of Arab states, then announce the formation of a unity government.<sup>37</sup>

Yet, towards the end of 2016, Netanyahu stepped away from the move and the Kerry initiative, along with the idea of forming a unity government, passed away.<sup>38</sup> It seems that Netanyahu hoped to wait until the US elections in the hope that the new administration would be more favourable to Israel and would prefer an Arab-Israeli regional settlement over a Palestinian-Israeli one that would force Israel to make painful concessions. Indeed, in November 2016 the Republican candidate Donald Trump won the presidential elections.

In Netanyahu's view, Trump's entry into the White House was a great boon for Israel. The expectation was that the days of the pro-Palestinian Obama administration passed from the world and that a new era had dawned in Washington. During his first meeting with Trump in February 2017, Netanyahu raised the regional peace initiative, based on the claim that the fear of Iran constituted a historic opportunity for the establishment of a US-led Middle Eastern security alliance that would include, among others, Israel, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and could later evolve into peace agreements. Netanyahu even suggested that Trump hold a regional conference, but the president preferred to focus on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, viewing Abbas as a partner for peace with Israel. Yet having realised how the PA president incited against Israel, Trump changed tack and saw him as an obstacle to peace. The American impression was that Abbas did not strive at all to advance the peace process but was rather interested in preserving the status quo – an impression that was reinforced in meetings with Arab leaders.<sup>39</sup>

The straw that broke the camel's back for the Trump administration was the PA's failure to condemn the spate of Palestinian terrorist attacks in July 2017 that murdered five Israelis. Following the attacks, Trump accepted the principle that Abbas, who for his part defiantly declared at the UN that he would continue to pay allowances to imprisoned terrorists and families of 'martyrs' (i.e. killed terrorists), was not a partner for peace and that

Washington must work for normalisation between Israel and the Arab world even without Palestinian consent.<sup>40</sup> The Trump administration also made dramatic pro-Israel steps, including recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital and the transfer of the US embassy to Jerusalem. Outraged by these measures, the PA decided not to cooperate with the US administration in the hope that the Palestinian boycott would lead it to abandon its peace plan. In response, Trump decided to isolate the Palestinians and move forward with his peace plan, known as the 'Deal of the Century', without the PA.<sup>41</sup>

### **The road to peace does not go through Ramallah**

Throughout 2018, the Trump administration continued its pro-Israel policy when in May it abandoned the 2015 nuclear agreement with Iran (JCPOA), in August announced the end of support for UNRWA, and in September announced the closing of the PLO office in Washington.<sup>42</sup> Simultaneously, the administration continued its efforts to advance a Palestinian-Israeli peace plan. Yet having heard from Arab leaders about their disappointment with the Palestinian leadership and their will to normalise relations with Israel, it decided that the attainment of peace required reversal of the sequence of operations: no longer solving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and then moving towards normalisation between Israel and the Arab world but the other way around. This way the administration hoped to force Abbas to decide between two options: to either accept the US peace plan (that entailed a massive financial investment in the PA), or to oppose it – thus vindicating the claim that it was time to focus on Arab-Israeli normalisation. Yet while the administration believed that the Palestinians would reject the 'Deal of the Century', it decided to allow them a future option to influence its various components should they return to the negotiating table.<sup>43</sup>

Israel welcomed administration's peace plan. Convinced that the PA would reject the plan, Netanyahu's strategy was to work with the administration in a way that would allow a breakthrough with Arab states. He seemed to hope that the 'Deal of the Century' would have parameters that were amenable to both Israel and the Arab states, and then, when rejected by the Palestinians, Israel would be able to move towards normalisation with the Arab states while bypassing the Palestinian veto on Arab-Israeli normalisation before the attainment of a Palestinian-Israeli agreement. Netanyahu also believed that the Trump plan, unlike previous peace plans that in his view endangered Israel's security, could form the basis for a future settlement with the Palestinians. As far as Gaza was concerned, he insisted that in any permanent Palestinian-Israeli settlement the Strip would be demilitarised and that Hamas would hand over its rule to a Palestinian government committed to peace.<sup>44</sup>

The Trump administration strove to present his peace plan immediately after the April 2019 Israeli elections. Yet while the elections ended in a clear victory for the right wing bloc and the expectation was that Netanyahu would form a government, he failed to do so and the Knesset decided to go for another electoral round in September 2019. Netanyahu, who feared that announcing the plan would hurt him electorally, asked the Americans, who agreed, not to do so until after the forthcoming elections.<sup>45</sup> A week before the elections, Netanyahu stated that if he were to win he would unilaterally annexe the Jordan Valley,<sup>46</sup> alluding to the future contours of the administration's peace plan and hoping that such a statement would help him win. However, at the end of the vote counting it became clear that Israel was on its way to a third electoral round, scheduled for March 2020.

The Trump administration, which had already begun to prepare for the US 2020 elections, realised that it could not wait until the political crisis in Israel was resolved. It thus decided to present its peace plan in early 2020 while ensuring the support of the heads of the two rival blocs in Israel: Netanyahu and Benny Gantz, leader of the centre-left bloc. Indeed, the American understanding with the two leaders, both of whom expressed support for the 'Deal of the Century', was that Israel would be able to annexe certain territories while imposing a four-year construction freeze in the territories earmarked for the prospective Palestinian state.<sup>47</sup>

Netanyahu, for his part, was willing to take the political risk involved in accepting a plan that envisaged the establishment of a Palestinian state in exchange for American recognition of Israel's sovereignty in the Jordan Valley and the 'settlement blocs' that made up about 30% of the West Bank. Gantz, by contrast, opposed unilateral annexation but chose at this stage not to confront the administration. In an attempt to give the Palestinians another chance to join the peace waggon, Trump asked Abbas to underscore the plan's problematic points with a view to meeting and reaching agreements, only to be turned down by the latter. This further strengthened the argument for Arab-Israeli normalisation while bypassing the Palestinian veto.<sup>48</sup>

## **From annexation to normalisation**

On 28 January 2020, Trump launched the 'Peace for Prosperity' plan to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.<sup>49</sup> While the Israeli government welcomed the plan, the PA rejected it outright on the grounds that it cancelled the 'right of return', deriding it as part of the long string of conspiracies against the Palestinian people dating back to the Balfour Declaration.<sup>50</sup> Yet it quickly became clear to the Americans that there was no consensus on the Israeli side as far as the application of sovereignty was concerned. While Netanyahu sought immediate application of sovereignty to the West Bank

territories allocated to Israel, Gantz opposed the idea and demanded an agreement of the pro-American Arab states and the international community for such a move. Furthermore, in his meeting with Trump a day before the plan's announcement, Gantz asked not to allow Netanyahu to apply sovereignty over these territories before the Israeli elections in March 2020.<sup>51</sup>

Netanyahu, who at the announcement ceremony thanked Trump for being the first world leader to recognise Israel's sovereignty in Judea and Samaria, was convinced that he had received a green light from Washington for immediate annexation. But the administration, which expected him to make a conciliatory message towards the Palestinians rather than present the US as backing a unilateral Israeli annexation of parts of the West Bank, announced its opposition to immediate application of sovereignty. As a result, Netanyahu decided to postpone the move to a more opportune time.<sup>52</sup>

The March 2020 elections ended in a similar stalemate, and Israel seemed to be headed towards yet another electoral round. But the global emergency situation attending the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic drove Gantz to break the anti-Netanyahu boycott that had prevented the latter from translating past electoral wins into a working government and agreed to join a Likud-led ruling coalition. While the coalition agreement stipulated that all government decisions would be reached by agreement between Likud and Blue & White except for the application of sovereignty, where it was agreed that Netanyahu would be able to move forward without the need for Gantz's support, the latter did his utmost to thwart the move.<sup>53</sup> Netanyahu, for his part, was determined to apply sovereignty in the Jordan Valley and the Israeli West Bank communities as 'this is a historic opportunity that has not existed since 1948'.<sup>54</sup>

The administration tried to bridge the gaps between Netanyahu and Gantz, but the latter made it clear that he was against the move, both for fear that it would endanger the peace agreements with Jordan and Egypt, and because of domestic political constraints and his distrust of Netanyahu. By way of convincing Gantz to accept the move, Netanyahu proposed to apply sovereignty only to the 'settlement blocs' at this stage and not to the Jordan Valley, only to be told by Gantz that he would agree only to a minor annexation of the Maale Adumim and Gush Etzion localities, while providing benefits to the Palestinians in parallel.<sup>55</sup>

Determined to move forward with the process, in early June 2020 Netanyahu handed over to the Americans a map illustrating his envisaged final border between Israel and the Palestinians. Viewing the step as significant to resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, towards the end of the month Trump agreed to support the application of Israeli sovereignty over the Jordan Valley and the West Bank's Jewish communities provided Netanyahu made concessions to the Palestinians by accepting a Palestinian

state on the remaining part of the West Bank. This, in the administration's view, would lay the infrastructure that would allow the Arab states to follow the path of normalisation with Israel. Netanyahu responded by reiterating his proposal to only annexe the 'settlements blocs' (comprising about 13% of the West Bank) at this stage, yet the administration disapproved of such a unilateral move and expected Israel to transfer 5–6% of the West Bank to the Palestinians, an offer that Netanyahu refused. Realising that it would not be possible to reach an agreement, the Americans brought to Netanyahu the UAE's proposal for normalisation in exchange for cancelling the application of sovereignty. Netanyahu concurred, which removed the sovereignty idea from the agenda and paved the road to the 'Abraham Accords'. For Netanyahu, the accords were the winning proof that normalisation with the Arab world did not depend on an agreement with the Palestinians.<sup>56</sup>

### **Operation Guardian of the Walls (May 2021)**

Operation Guardian of the Walls, which began on 10 May 2021 in response to massive rocket fire towards Jerusalem and later to the Tel Aviv metropolitan area and other parts of Israel, also reflected Netanyahu's overall strategy against Hamas. Similar to previous rounds between Israel and Hamas, he continued to adhere to the logic of containment and the strategy of differentiation and deterrence of Hamas. During the operation, Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) launched more than 4360 rockets at Israel, which caused the death of 11 Israeli civilians. Israel destroyed more than 1,500 terrorist targets, severely damaging the strategic and tactical capabilities of Hamas and the PIJ, including a network of underground tunnels and other military targets, killing more than 270 Hamas and PIJ terrorists.<sup>57</sup>

### **Conclusions**

Netanyahu's conduct as prime minister in 2009–21 shows strategic clarity and determination with regard to the management of the conflict with the Palestinians. That is: the creation of a paradigmatic reversal that would lead to a new regional architecture into which Israel would be integrated through US-backed normalisation agreements that would pressure the Palestinians and reduce their demands and room for manoeuvre so as to pave the road to a settlement that ensured Israel's security requirements.

Netanyahu's strategic vision derives from the concept of the 'Iron Wall', which he developed and perfected as a third edition of the original Jabotinsky vision that was in turn updated by David Ben-Gurion. Netanyahu's Iron Wall concept comprises a combination of three types of power – military power, economic-technological power, and political power – that will secure

Israel's position as a prominent regional actor and end the century-long violent Palestinian rejection of the idea of Jewish statehood.

Netanyahu has been clear about the territories Israel must retain, and what concessions it cannot make for the sake of a Palestinian-Israeli agreement. Yet he has also been convinced that the Palestinian narrative does not allow any Palestinian leadership, under the existing conditions, to produce the necessary flexibility for an agreement that does not jeopardise Israel's strategic interests, and hence the Palestinian issue has become an obstacle to the realisation of his strategic vision. This in turn means that the Palestinian problem must be removed from the agenda at this stage, or at the very least be ameliorated, until it can be addressed in more favourable circumstances for Israel.

Netanyahu is keenly aware that a sharp escalation in the West Bank and Gaza could disrupt the realisation of his strategic vision. Hence the attempts to ameliorate his containment strategy there by such means as economic peace, acquiescence in the administration's attempts to revive the peace process (notably through the Bar-Ilan speech endorsing the two-state solution), or domestic political moves such as attempting to form a unity government with the Labour party. Along with these measures, Netanyahu strove to preserve the PA's weakness by deepening its schism with Hamas and maintaining the latter as the sovereign responsible for managing the lives of the Gaza Strip's civilian population, albeit in a militarily deterred and weakened position. As such, Netanyahu never intended to topple the rule of Hamas, and in each of the three military encounters during his years in power he favoured the logic of containment and regulation over that of defeating Hamas.

As in the domestic sphere, Netanyahu views the international arena, with an emphasis on the US administration, as a political minefield in which he has to manoeuvre, and at times to compromise, in order to deflect pressures on Israel and allow the necessary build-up of the Iron Wall's political aspects. For while economic-technological power and military strength largely depend on Israel and its deepening cooperation with the US, the building of political power depends on Israel's regional position and its acceptance by the regional actors, not by default but as an essential component of an alternative regional architecture. The condition for the design of a new regional architecture is an accelerated and expanded normalisation process with Arab states, most importantly with Saudi Arabia (since Israel already has a longstanding peace agreement with Egypt).

In Netanyahu's eyes, the new architecture serves two strategic purposes: the building of Israel's political power as the third component of the Iron Wall; and the inversion of the traditional paradigm viewing Israel's integration in the region as a corollary of the resolution of its conflict with the Palestinians. The paradigmatic reversal is of utmost importance to

Netanyahu. This is because the traditional paradigm, which gave the Palestinians veto power over the progress of normalisation processes, was an assured recipe for impasse by precluding any possibility of Palestinian compromise on the conflict's core issues, be it sovereignty in East Jerusalem, the 'right of return', or the territory assigned to the prospective Palestinian state. This strategic impasse makes Israel more vulnerable and weaker and attracts international and regional pressure. Thus, the Palestinians became a strategic obstacle, which Netanyahu sought to remove or ameliorate.

This strategic outlook was reflected in a series of multifaceted efforts to rally the important partners in Netanyahu's eyes, especially the Trump administration, behind his vision. For Netanyahu, Trump's 'Deal of the Century' was a shortcut to realising his desired strategic goal vis-à-vis the Palestinians, which he thought to attain at a later stage after the reconfiguration of the regional architecture, which would establish and strengthen Israel's political strength. Except that Netanyahu encountered political minefields at home and abroad that forced him to manoeuvre, retreat and out-flank – with the attendant failure to realise the plan, or part of it, notably the annexation of 30% of Area C, including the Jordan Valley.

While withdrawal from the idea of annexation, in Netanyahu's view, is yet another delay to the realisation of his overarching vision, this by no means blurs its strategic clarity or undermines the strategic determination for its attainment. Hence Netanyahu's effort to normalise relations with Riyadh as a path blazing move that, in his understanding, will remove barriers to the expansion of the normalisation process with Arab and Muslim states in the region and beyond. This way, with strategic leaps and bounds, Netanyahu succeeds in getting closer to his goal with the advent of a new regional architecture that builds and reinforces Israel's political power by virtue of its integration into the region, while the Palestinians remain entrenched in their division and weakness.

In order to ensure continued progress along the strategic path he outlined, Netanyahu must ensure a controlled security situation in the Palestinian arena, deflect international pressures, and neutralise domestic political minefields. Along with his confident conduct and ability to block moves that are undesirable in his eyes, or those that have the potential to undermine the status quo and lead to escalation, at times Netanyahu's manoeuvres have failed to produce the desired achievement. In this context, it is important to see the broad picture and to understand that there are no coincidences or chaos here, though signs of chaos are at times evident in the Israeli political arena. In Netanyahu's eyes, the Iron Wall is growing, expanding and strengthening, the strategic horizon is bright and Israel should strive to get there; and while the Palestinian arena, to his mind, is an obstacle that can be overcome, this should not be done through direct assault but by bypassing the rejectionist Palestinian leadership and bringing about its collapse.



Netanyahu's approach represents a broad strategic national concept based on Realpolitik that seeks to ensure Israel's existence and prosperity through regional recognition of its national strength; and the erection of a formidable Iron Wall is a prerequisite not only for the acquiescence of Israel's enemies in its existence but also in its right to exist. As such, Netanyahu's strategy is not only a military-security strategy but a grand strategy of national security. Having no illusions about the hostile nature of the region, this strategy is deeply rooted in understanding the importance of interests, power and strength through striving for action and influence while exploiting Israel's relative advantages as a small state devoid of natural resources, population and territory but rich in human capital resources, army, economy, technology and now also political power.

In this sense, Netanyahu can be seen as Ben-Gurion's successor in strengthening Israel's position and as someone who acts with determination in light of a clear strategic vision. Netanyahu has effectively adopted the strategy of action, 'practical Zionism', associated with the historic Labour movement rather than that of 'political Zionism', associated with Jabotinsky's Revisionist movement – the forbear of today's Likud party. As such, Netanyahu, in his own way, became the last of the 'Mapainiks' who knew how to establish a state, develop it, and fortify its power and position by virtue of facts on the ground and by strengthening the Iron Wall.

## Notes

1. Wertman, "The Securitization of the Bi-National State."
2. Netanyahu, *Bibi*, 423–4.
3. Baconi, *Hamas Contained*, 154–61.
4. MEMRI, October 4, 2004, <https://www.memri.org/reports/abu-mazen-whole-intifada-was-mistake>.
5. Olmert, *In Person*, 783–4; and Podeh, *Chances for Peace*, 340–58.
6. Ross, *The Missing Peace*, 591–779.
7. The 376th Session of the 13th Knesset's, October 5, 1995 (Hebrew).
8. Netanyahu, *Bibi*, 419, 423–4; and Ahren, "Netanyahu."
9. Ross, *Doomed to Succeed*, 344–5.
10. Obama, *A Promised Land*, 627–8.
11. Obama, *A Promised Land*, 631–2; and Netanyahu, *Bibi*, 420–1.
12. Shalom, *Israel*, 9–17.
13. Netanyahu, *Bibi*, 427–8.
14. PM Netanyahu's speech at Bar-Ilan University, June 14, 2009, <https://www.gov.il/en/departments/news/address-by-pm-netanyahu-at-bar-ilan-university-14-jun-2009>.
15. MEMRI, "Palestinian Reactions to Netanyahu's Speech."
16. *Haaretz*, November 25, 2009, <https://www.haaretz.com/2009-11-25/ty-article/netanyahu-declares-10-month-settlement-freeze-to-restart-peace-talks/0000017f-e1ff-d7b2-a77f-e3ff98e90000>.

17. MEMRI, December 24, 2009, <https://www.memri.org/reports/palestinian-authority-president-mahmoud-abbas-no-violence-terrorism-gunfire-or-military>; Obama, *A Promised Land*, 633; and Clinton, *Hard Choices*, 317–9.
18. Clinton, *Hard Choices*, 322–3; and Obama, *A Promised Land*, 635.
19. Clinton, *Hard Choices*, 324–9; Ross, *Doomed to Succeed*, 376–7; and Obama, *A Promised Land*, 636.
20. Ross, *Doomed to Succeed*, 378–9; Rumley and Tibon, *The Last Palestinian*, 170–4; and United Nations, “General Assembly Votes Overwhelmingly to Accord Palestine ‘Non-Member Observer State’ Status.
21. *Times of Israel*, November 29, 2012, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/un-recognition-only-pushes-away-the-prospect-of-a-palestinian-state-netanyahu-says/>.
22. “Palestinian Public Opinion Poll No. 46.”
23. Michael, Regev and Kimchi, “Containment over Decision”; and Dekel, “Israeli Policy toward the Gaza Strip.”
24. Baconi, *Hamas Contained*, 193–5; and Elran, “The Civilian Front.”
25. Katz and Hendel, *Israel vs Iran*, 79–87.
26. Baconi, *Hamas Contained*, 193–7.
27. Kerry, *Every Day is Extra*, 440–56; and Rumley and Tibon, *The Last Palestinian*, 183.
28. Kerry, *Every Day is Extra*, 458–9; Netanyahu, *Bibi*, 503–5; Rumley and Tibon, *The Last Palestinian*, 186; and Herzog “Inside the Black Box.”
29. Rumley and Tibon, *The Last Palestinian*, 184; *Times of Israel*, July 19, 2013, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/kerry-announces-renewal-of-direct-peace-negotiations/>; and *Haaretz*, July 28, 2013, <https://www.haaretz.com/2013-07-28/ty-article/.premium/cabinet-approves-release-of-palestinian-prisoners/0000017f-e81b-da9b-a1ff-ec7f446a0000>.
30. Herzog, “Inside the Black Box”; Kerry, *Every Day is Extra*, 460–7; and Netanyahu, *Bibi*, 505–7.
31. Herzog, “Inside the Black Box”; Kerry, *Every Day is Extra*, 467–71; Rumley and Tibon, *The Last Palestinian*, 188–93; Netanyahu, *Bibi*, 507–8; and *Reuters*, April 23, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-palestinian-israel-idUKBREA3M0FT20140423>.
32. *Time Magazine*, July 30, 2014, <https://time.com/3055834/israel-targets-gaza-infrastructure/>.
33. Kerry, *Every Day is Extra*, 471–4; Rumley and Tibon, *The Last Palestinian*, 195; Netanyahu, *Bibi*, 513–22; and Baconi, *Hamas Contained*, 212–22.
34. Rumley and Tibon, *The Last Palestinian*, 211–4; and MEMRI, “PA President Mahmoud ‘Abbas’s Unprecedented Remarks Against Knifings Spark Controversy Among Palestinians”, April 7, 2016, <https://www.memri.org/reports/pa-president-mahmoud-abbas-unprecedented-remarks-against-knifings-spark-controversy-among>.
35. *Haaretz*, February 20, 2017, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2017-02-20/ty-article/.premium/at-secret-summit-pm-offered-construction-freeze-outside-settlement-blocs/0000017f-e8a1-d62c-a1ff-fc7b18110000>.
36. Kerry, *Every Day is Extra*, 477–478; and *Haaretz*, February 19, 2017, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2017-02-19/ty-article/.premium/kerry-offered-netanyahu-peace-plan-in-secret-2016-summit-with-al-sissi-abdullah/0000017f-e950-d62c-a1ff-fd7be2b60000>.

37. *Times of Israel*, “Full text of Netanyahu’s speech at 2016 UN General Assembly”, September 22, 2016, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahus-full-remarks-at-un-general-assembly/>.
38. *Haaretz*, March 5, 2017, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2017-03-05/ty-article-magazine/premium/netanyahus-peace-plan-which-he-abandoned-for-political-survival/0000017f-dc83-db5a-a57f-dceb34da0000>.
39. Ravid, *Trump’s Peace*, 70–84, 91–115, 121–5; Netanyahu, *Bibi*, 584–91; Kushner, *Breaking History*, 95–6, 116–23; Friedman, *Sledgehammer*, 72–6. Ravid, *Trump’s Peace*, 121–5; and Kushner, *Breaking History*, 116–23.
40. *Jerusalem Post*, July 23, 2017, <https://www.jpost.com/arab-israeli-conflict/report-stabbing-attack-in-halamish-near-ramallah-500382>; MEMRI, September 20, 2017, <https://www.memri.org/reports/abbas-ahead-ungaspeech-i-will-continue-payments-families-prisoners-and-martyrs>; and Friedman, *Sledgehammer*, 89.
41. *POLITICO*, January 14, 2018, <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/01/14/abbas-trump-palestinians-slap-340489>; and Ravid, *Trump’s Peace*, 173–89; 233–8.
42. *The Guardian*, August 31, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/31/trump-to-cut-all-us-funding-for-uns-main-palestinian-refugee-programme>; and *Times of Israel*, September 10, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/us-officially-announces-closure-of-plo-mission-in-washington/>.
43. Kushner, *Breaking History*, 233–8; and Ravid, *Trump’s Peace*, 242–4.
44. Netanyahu, *Bibi*, 617–22.
45. Kushner, *Breaking History*, 251–60.
46. Hoffman, Abu Toameh and Nahmias, “Netanyahu vows to annex all settlements, starting with Jordan Valley”, *Jerusalem Post*, September 11, 2019, <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/prime-minister-netanyahu-expected-to-announce-annexation-of-jordan-valley-601207>.
47. Friedman, *Sledgehammer*, 184–5; and Kushner, *Breaking History*, 303.
48. Netanyahu, *Bibi*, 623–5; Ravid, *Trump’s Peace*, 274–9, 285–8; and Kushner, *Breaking History*, 304–7.
49. “Peace to Prosperity.”
50. MEMRI, July 8, 2020.
51. Ravid, *Trump’s Peace*, 298–9; and Friedman, *Sledgehammer*, 192.
52. Friedman, *Sledgehammer*, 193–6; Kushner, *Breaking History*, 315–22; and Netanyahu, *Bibi*, 626.
53. Netanyahu, *Bibi*, 626–7; Friedman, *Sledgehammer*, 203–4; and Ravid, *Trump’s Peace*, 782–8.
54. *Times of Israel*, May 25, 2020, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-said-to-tell-likud-lawmakers-west-bank-annexation-on-for-july/>.
55. Ravid, *Trump’s Peace*, 795–6, 819–32; and Friedman, *Sledgehammer*, 205–9.
56. Friedman, *Sledgehammer*, 857–912; and Kushner, *Breaking History*, 389–96.
57. The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, “Escalation from the Gaza Strip- Operation Guardian of the Walls- Summary”, May 24, 2021. <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/escalation-from-the-gaza-strip-operation-guardian-of-the-walls-summary/>.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## Notes on contributors

**Kobi Michael** is a senior researcher at the Institute for National Security Studies, Tel Aviv University; a visiting professor at the International Center for Policing and Security Studies at the University of South Wales; and a senior research fellow at Neapolis University, Paphos, Cyprus.

**Ori Wertman** is research fellow at the International Center for Policing and Security, University of South Wales, and researcher at the Institute for National Security Studies, Tel Aviv University.

## Bibliography

- Baconi, T. *Hamas Contained*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018.
- Caspit, B. *Netanyahu: Biography*. Israel: Miskal, 2018. (Hebrew).
- Clinton, H. R. *Hard Choices*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2014.
- Dekel, U. "Israeli Policy toward the Gaza Strip." In *The Crisis of the Gaza Strip: A Way Out*, edited by A. Kurz, U. Dekel and B. Berti, 113–126. Israel: Institute for National Security, 2018.
- Elran, M. "The Civilian Front: Learning from Success." In *In the Aftermath of Operation Pillar of Defense*, edited by S. Brom, 33–38. Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, 2012.
- Friedman, D. *Sledgehammer: How Breaking with the Past Brought Peace to the Middle East*. Northampton: Broadside Books, 2022.
- Katz, Y., and Y. Hendel. *Israel vs Iran*. Israel: Kinneret, Zmora-Bitan and Dvir, 2011. (Hebrew).
- Kerry, J. *Every Day Is Extra*. London: Simon & Schuster, 2018.
- Kushner, J. *Breaking History: A White House Memoir*. Northampton: Broadside Books, 2022.
- MEMRI. "Palestinian Reactions to Netanyahu's Speech." July 8, 2009. <https://www.memri.org/reports/palestinian-reactions-netanyahus-speech-akin-declaration-war-netanyahu-liar-and-crook-speech>
- Michael, K., L. Regev, and D. Kimchi. "Containment over Decision: Internalizing the Limits of Political Militarization in Israel." *Strategic Assessment* 23, no. 4 (2020): 18–35.
- Netanyahu, B. *Bibi: My Story*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2022.
- Netanyahu, B. "PM Netanyahu's Speech at Bar-Ilan University." June 14, 2009. <https://www.gov.il/en/departments/news/address-by-pm-netanyahu-at-bar-ilan-university-14-jun-2009>
- Obama, B. *A Promised Land*. New York: Penguin Random House, 2020.
- Olmert, E. *In Person*. Tel Aviv: Miskal, 2018. (Hebrew).
- Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research. "Palestinian Public Opinion Poll No. 46." December 13–15, 2012.
- Podeh, E. *Chances for Peace: Missed Opportunities in the Arab-Israeli Conflict*. Austin: University Press of Texas, 2015.
- Rabin, Y. "PM Yitzhak Rabin Speech at Knesset on October 5." 1995. <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/pm-rabin-speech-to-knesset-on-ratification-of-oslo-peace-accords>
- Ravid, B. *Trump's Peace*. Tel Aviv: Miskal, 2022. (Hebrew).
- Ross, D. *The Missing Peace*. New York: FSG, 2004.

- Ross, D. *Doomed to Succeed*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015.
- Rumley, G., and A. Tibon. *The Last Palestinian*. New York: Prometheus Books, 2017.
- Shalom, Z. *Israel, the United States, and the Struggle over the Settlement Construction Freeze, 2009–2010*. Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, 2017. <https://www.inss.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/ObamaBookENG.pdf>.
- United Nations. “General Assembly Votes Overwhelmingly to Accord Palestine ‘Non-Member Observer State’ Status in United Nations.” November 29, 2012. <https://press.un.org/en/2012/ga11317.doc.htm>
- Wertman, O. “The Securitization of the Bi-National State: The Oslo Accords, 1993–1995.” *Strategic Assessment* 24, no. 4 (2021): 23–38. [https://strategicassessment.inss.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Adkan24.4Eng\\_5-pages-25-40.pdf](https://strategicassessment.inss.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Adkan24.4Eng_5-pages-25-40.pdf).
- White House. “Peace to Prosperity: A Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People.” January, 2020. <https://pic-upload.ynet.co.il/news/Peace-to-Prosperity-0120.pdf>