



When **Reality**
Meets the **Facts**

Tamrur Politography

Collection of Articles 2023-2026



**Tamrur
Politography**
Israeli-Palestinian Conflict
Research Group



When Reality Meets the Facts

Collection of Articles 2023–2026

July 2026

When Reality Meets the Facts

A Collection of Articles

2023–2026

All rights reserved to Tamrur Politography ©

0509000430

Email: tamrur2023@gmail.com

All material contained in this publication
may be used, subject to standard citation
practices.

Article collection: Yana Blokopit

Printing: Be'eri

Printed in Israel 2026

To Restore Truth to the Center of the Discourse

Acknowledgments

This volume, which brings together articles written by the researchers and research assistants of the Tamrur–Politography research group, has been made possible through the generosity of our valued donors and the dedication and hard work of many individuals whom we wish to thank from the bottom of our hearts.

Special thanks go to Yana Blokopit, who devoted great care and effort to collecting the many articles, compiling them, and organizing them into a complete and coherent volume.

We would also like to express our gratitude to the team at Haaretz: to Alon Idan, editor of the Opinion section, and his successor, Carolina Landsmann, for providing our writers with such a professional and generous platform; and to Orit Kahana, for her exceptionally meticulous, sensitive, and professional editing. Our thanks also go to Ronit Tzah, editor of the blogs section at The Times of Israel (Zman Israel); to Yonatan Korpel, owner of the JOKOPOST blog platform; and to Ynet's Opinion section, for their willingness to publish and amplify these voices and enable our research to reach wider audiences.

Our heartfelt thanks go to Gili Dekel, the group's Research Coordinator and Data Manager, for her editing, guidance, and dedicated work behind the scenes.

Finally, we thank Havatzelet Halfon for the beautiful and meticulous design, and dear Nir, whose work helped transform this volume from an idea into a finished publication and bring it to print.

Each and every one of you has played an important part in creating this volume, and we deeply appreciate your contribution, your partnership, and the journey we have shared.

Shaul

Introduction

This month marks the fourth anniversary of the establishment of the Tamrur Politography Research Group. Four years of sustained, intensive, and collaborative work during one of the most complex and turbulent periods in the history of the State of Israel, against the backdrop of profound changes in the region and around the world. The wars involving Iran, Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in the Gaza Strip, the Houthis in Yemen, and jihadist militias in Syria have once again demonstrated the extent to which the Israeli-Palestinian conflict does not exist in a vacuum, but is intertwined with a broader, evolving, and highly consequential regional and international system.

Within this challenging reality, we succeeded in establishing and consolidating Tamrur's dashboard systems, providing the public, researchers, and decision-makers with the most comprehensive database on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The system comprises approximately 18,000 indicators across seven fields of research: economics, spatial affairs, security, society, law, politics, and policy. Over the past two years, we have continued to expand and enhance the system through the development of an indicator catalog, a unique survey dashboard, a graphs dashboard, a system for monitoring use of the database, and a dedicated dashboard chat interface, which is currently under development.

This collection of articles is, first and foremost, the product of the dedicated work of Tamrur's researchers and their research assistants. It brings together articles written between January 2023 and mid-2026, based on the quarterly reports prepared by the researchers throughout this period. Each article draws on the data, findings, and insights presented in those reports and remains faithful to them in both its description and analysis of reality. Alongside these are traditional opinion pieces reflecting the individual views and interpretations of their authors.

Beyond being a collection of research-based articles, this volume embodies the spirit at the heart of Tamrur's work: a belief in the power of reliable data, systematic research, and clear-eyed analysis to contribute to serious and responsible public discourse. We hope that these articles will help promote a factual, broad, and long-term discussion of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, its regional implications, and its place within the international system, while providing readers with better tools for understanding the complex reality in which we live and operate.

Shaul

About Tamrur Politography

The Tamrur Politography research group is an independent, multidisciplinary research organization established in July 2022 with the aim of deepening knowledge of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and providing the public and decision-makers with a broad, systematic, and up-to-date factual foundation. Its work extends beyond Israeli-Palestinian relations, examining the regional and international contexts in which the conflict unfolds, as well as the impact of political, security, economic, and social developments.

Tamrur's distinctive strength lies in the integration of multidisciplinary research with advanced technology. The group's researchers work across a wide range of fields, including geography and demography, society and politics, security, law, economics, social media, and the Palestinian, Arab, Iranian, Turkish, European, and international arenas. The group is led and managed by Col. (res.) Dr. Shaul Arieli, together with Prof. Gilad Hirschberger, Prof. Sivan Hirsch-Hoefler, and Gili Dekel, who oversees research coordination and data management, alongside a broad team of researchers and experts in complementary fields.

Tamrur's impact is evident in its ability to bring research-based knowledge from its database and dashboards into the public sphere. Its research is published in the form of articles, maps, graphs, surveys, and analyses in Israeli and international media, providing political and media discourse with an evidence-based foundation that goes beyond slogans, impressions, and unsupported claims. The group's website features a wide range of publications and media coverage in Israel and abroad.

The group's practical importance is also reflected in feedback from recipients of its reports. Elected officials, members of the security establishment, government officials, and diplomats report that they read and circulate the research, draw on it in their parliamentary and diplomatic work, and use it to better understand developments in the Palestinian territories and the wider region. Several have particularly emphasized the reliability of the data, the unique nature of the information, and the contribution of the reports to shaping their thinking and informing decision-making.

In doing so, Tamrur plays an important role in restoring facts to the center of the discussion on one of the most sensitive and complex issues facing Israeli society.

Visit the group's website:

<https://www.politography.org.il>

About the Authors

Col. (Ret.) Dr. Shaul Arieli

Arieli is a researcher of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict who has been closely involved with the peace process in all its aspects and is one of Israel's leading experts on border demarcation and the separation barrier. Previously, he served in various command positions in the Paratroopers Brigade, as commander of the Northern Brigade in Gaza, as Deputy Military Secretary to the Minister of Defense and Prime Minister, and as head of the negotiation administration with the Palestinians during the terms of four prime ministers: Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres, Benjamin Netanyahu, and Ehud Barak. Currently, he serves as the CEO of Tamrur Politography Research Group. Arieli holds a bachelor's degree in political science from Tel Aviv University, a master's degree from the Recanati School of Business Administration at Tel Aviv University, and a doctorate from the University of Haifa in Geography and Environmental Sciences. His research focused on the development of Israel's borders. Arieli has published eight books about the conflict in several languages, three atlases, and hundreds of articles in journals and Israeli newspapers. He conducts lectures and tours throughout the country and frequently appears in media interviews discussing the peace process and security situation.

Prof. Gilad Hirschberger

Hirschberger is a social and political psychologist at the Baruch Ivcher School of Psychology at Reichman University, and co-director of the Tamrur Politography Project. His research focuses on collective existential threats, collective trauma, and public opinion in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. His work focuses on how threat perceptions shape political attitudes. This work is guided by a multi-dimensional model of existential threats that he recently developed. In his research, he focuses on threats that emanate from the past that cast a long shadow on the present, such as the memory of collective trauma, and on ideological differences in the perception of physical threats and symbolic-identity threats. He has published about 100 academic articles and book chapters, as well as opinion pieces in the Hebrew and English press.

Prof. Sivan Hirsch-Hoefler

Hirsch-Hoefler is Associate Professor at the Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy, Reichman University (IDC Herzliya), and co-director of the Tamrur Politography project. Her work focuses on the processes underpinning right-wing extremism and political violence, with a particular emphasis on religious nationalism and the settler movement in Israel. She has published numerous papers on extremism, and her recent book (with Cas Mudde), "The Israeli Settler Movement" published by Cambridge University Press, analyzes the settler movement in the West Bank and its past, present, and future impact on Israeli politics and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. She has also published op-ed pieces in the Israeli and international press on these issues.

Dr. Raz Zimmt

Zimmt is a Senior Researcher and co-editor of the institute's journal, Strategic Assessment. He holds a master's degree and a Ph.D. in Middle Eastern history from Tel Aviv University. His Ph.D. dissertation focused on Iranian policy towards Nasserism and Arab radicalism between 1954 and 1967. He is also a research fellow at the Alliance Center for Iranian Studies at Tel-Aviv University. He is the author of the book "Iran From Within: State and Society in the Islamic Republic" published (in Hebrew) in 2022. He is also a veteran Iran watcher in the Israeli Defense Forces. His main research interests are politics, foreign relations, and society in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Dr. Ronit Marzan

Marzan holds a PhD in Middle Eastern history. She taught at the School of Political Science at Haifa University (2012-2024) and currently teaches at the Jaffa-Tel Aviv Academic College and is a researcher in Tamrur Politography Project. Her research focuses on Palestinian society and politics; Young uprisings in the "Arab Spring"; and Qatar's foreign policy with an emphasis on its involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. She published two books: Yasser Arafat - Rhetoric of a lone leader, Resling press (2016); The father, the son and the spirit of the revolution - the young people in the Arab Spring, Pardes press and the University of Haifa (2021). She also published opinion articles in the Israeli and international press, at the Forum for Regional Thinking and the Chaikin Chair for Geo-Strategy at Haifa University.

Dr. Maoz Rosenthal

Rosenthal is a senior lecturer in the Department of Politics and Communication at Hadassah College. Dr. Rosenthal was a faculty member at the Lauder School of Government at Reichman University, a visiting lecturer in the Israel Fellows program at the Department of Political Science at SUNY Binghamton, a visiting researcher at Yale University, and was a postdoctoral fellow at the Department of Sociology, Political Science and Communication at the Open University. Dr. Rosenthal studied all his degrees in the Political Science Department at Tel Aviv University. Dr. Rosenthal's research deals with how political elites strive to design and implement the public policy they are interested in. His research mainly emphasizes manipulative rhetoric (heresthetics), which he investigates using quantitative research methods alongside analytical narratives. His research has been published in several leading journals such as Political Studies, Journal of Law and Courts, Ethnicities, etc. His book on the crisis of governance in Israel was published by Rowman & Littlefield in 2017. In addition to his academic work, Dr. Rosenthal was a research fellow at several policy institutes, such as the Center for Citizen's Empowerment in Israel and the Tachlit Institute.

Colonel (Res.) Dr. Liron Libman

Libman is a lawyer, mediator, and adjunct lecturer at Sapir College and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where he teaches courses in international law. His doctoral dissertation at the Hebrew University was titled "Deterrence and the Use of Force in International Law" (2021). During his work at the Israel Democracy Institute (2017 – 2022), he authored, among other publications, policy papers on security measures and collective punishment (2019) and on the challenges in the laws of the use of force in international law related to Israel's northern border (2023). He also writes opinion pieces for the press and contributes to legal journals and blogs, both in Israel and abroad. Dr. Libman is a certified mediator and has been included in the of the Israeli courts general roster of mediators since 2021. He served as the head of the International Law Department in the IDF (2009 – 2011) and as the Chief Military Prosecutor (2005 – 2008).

Dr. Moran Zaga

Zaga is a Political Geographer and a historian of the Gulf States, with a special focus on the United Arab Emirates. She is a teaching fellow at the University of Haifa and the Hebrew University. Her main research interests are Israel-Gulf-Palestinian relations, the geopolitics of the Gulf countries and territorial borders in the Gulf.

Brigadier – General (ret.) Dr. Amnon Sofrin

Sofrin is a Brigadier – General (ret.), an expert on National Security, Homeland Security and Intelligence. BG (ret.) Sofrin served with the IDF for more than 30 years, as an intelligence officer at maneuvering units and at the Military HQ, among them he served as the intelligence officer of the Central Territorial Command (1993-1996), the Head of the Tasking Division at the Military Intelligence HQ. On his last assignment with the IDF BG (ret.) Sofrin established the Combat Intelligence Corps and commanded the corps for about 3.5 years. After he retired from the army, BG (ret.) Sofrin served with Israel's Intelligence Community on senior assignments. His last assignment was as the Head of the Intelligence Directorate at Israel's Secret Intelligence Service ("Mossad") from which he retired in 2008.

Dr. Thair Abu Ras

Abu Ras is the director of the Center for Shared Nationalism at the Van Leer Institute in Jerusalem. An expert on political identities in the Middle East, Thair completed his doctorate in the Department of Political Science and Israel Studies at the University of Maryland in the United States. His research focused on the political and identity changes that Arab parties underwent during the 2019-2022 Israeli political crisis. He serves on the board of directors of the B'Tselem organization and the Friends of Neve Shalom - Wahat al-Salam association in the United States.

Colonel (res.) Ron Shatzberg

Shatzberg is co-Executive Director of the Economic Cooperation Foundation (ECF). In his current capacity he deals with regional security, border regime, Jerusalem, and cross-border cooperation strategies, as well as with Jordanian-Israeli relations. Ron holds a B.A. in Journalism and Political Science, and an M.A. in Conflict Resolution, both from The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. For 11 years Ron was an adviser for the International Community of the Red Cross (ICRC) on International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and Laws of Armed Conflict (LoAC) with respect to their relations with the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Ron is an IDF Colonel (res.), in his last position he served as Chief of Staff of an Infantry Brigade.

Mr. Alon Pinkas

Pinkas is an Israeli diplomat and political consultant. Alon graduated with a bachelor's degree in political science with high honors at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and then completed a master's degree in government and politics at Georgetown University in Washington. Pinkas served as the Chief of Staff of the Minister of Foreign Affairs during the tenure of Shlomo Ben Ami and David Levy as Ministers of Foreign Affairs. After that he was a foreign policy advisor to Ehud Barak and a political advisor to Shimon Peres. In the years 2000-2004 he served as the Consul General of Israel in New York. Today he is one of the prominent writers for the men's magazine "Blazer" and is a columnist on the United States on YNET. He serves as a foreign news commentator for the American "Fox News" channel and sometimes appears on the main news channels and radio stations in Israel as a commentator on discussions about the United States.

Dr. Maya Sion-Tzidkiyahu

Sion-Tzidkiyahu is the Director of Europe - Israel Relations Program at Mitvim Institute. She holds a PhD in European Studies and Political Science (Comparative Politics) from the Hebrew University, where she teaches about the European Union in the European Studies Program at the European Forum at the Hebrew University. She also teaches in the European Union Studies Program at Tel Aviv University. Her expertise concerns the European Union - its history, institutions, decision-making processes, policy areas, as well as EU-Israel relations. Dr. Sion-Tzidkiyahu has been a Board member of the Israeli Association for the Study of European Integration since 2005, and was the Co-President of the Association from 2016-2021. Her areas of expertise include ,among others, the European Union, European integration, EU-Israel relations, EU foreign policy and differentiated integration.

Dr. Hay Eytan Cohen Yanarocak

Cohen Yanarocak is a Turkey expert at the Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security (JISS) and the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies (MDC) at Tel Aviv University. He received his Ph.D. from Tel Aviv University's School of History and is a lecturer there, as well as at Ben-Gurion

University of the Negev and Ariel University. Dr. Cohen Yanarocak is the editor of *Turkeyscope: Insights on Turkish Affairs*. In May 2015, he was awarded the Dan David Prize Scholarship in the category of “Past: Retrieving the Past, Historians and Their Sources.” He is the author of *The Evolution of the Turkish School Textbooks from Atatürk to Erdoğan*, published by Lexington Books, Rowman & Littlefield, in September 2022.

Dr. Ofir Winter

Winter is a Senior Researcher at the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) and a lecturer in the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies at Tel Aviv University. He holds a PhD from the Department of Middle Eastern and African History at Tel Aviv University and was named the Alice and Paul Baker Senior Fellow at INSS. His doctoral dissertation examined Egypt’s and Jordan’s efforts to legitimize the peace agreements they signed with Israel between 1973 and 2001. From 2006 to 2009, he headed the Syrian Press Desk at the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI). In 2024, his book *In the Name of Allah: The Islamic Debate over Peace with Israel* was published. It is an updated and expanded version of *Peace in the Name of Allah: Islamic Discourses on Treaties with Israel*, published by De Gruyter in 2022. He is also the co-author, with Uriya Shavit, of *My Enemy, My Mentor: Zionism and Israel in the Thought of Arab Islamists and Liberals*, and has published numerous articles on contemporary Egypt, the Arab-Israeli conflict, religion-state relations in the Arab world, and modern Islamic jurisprudence.

Mrs. Sigalit Maor-Hirsh

Maor-Hirsh is a senior researcher and expert in intelligence, security, and terrorism, with a focus on the Palestinian arena and ISIS, currently specializing in the study of glocal protest movements. With extensive experience managing cyber and intelligence units, she has led strategic research and analysis projects across various fields related to digital processes and their societal impact. Sigalit has developed unique research methodologies that integrate the analysis of contentious political phenomena—such as terrorism, collective action, protest movements, social media consumption, and surveillance capitalism—into studies of social media behavior. She has been lecturing at Reichman University for seven years, specializing in understanding political influence trends within the digital environment.

Mr. Dr. Dmitry Rotstein

Rotstein is a graduate of the Technion (Israel Institute of Technology), having two Bachelors degrees in Computer Sciences (Cum Laude) and Physics (Summa Cum Laude), as well as some graduate studies in Astrophysics. Social entrepreneur in the area of governance and democracy, member of several non-partisan political organizations, founder of the “Objective Vote” electoral app. His area of research includes developing formal mathematical models of socio-political systems.

Dr. Carmit Valensi

Valensi is a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) and Head of the Institute's Syria Department. Dr. Valensi specializes in the contemporary Middle East, strategic studies, military concepts, and terrorism. She holds a PhD from the Department of Political Science at Tel Aviv University. Her thesis topic is Hamas, Hezbollah, and the FARC as "hybrid actors." She holds a BA in Middle Eastern history and political science and a MA in diplomatic studies from Tel Aviv University. Between 2010 and 2011, Dr. Valensi was a research fellow in the Fox Fellowship program for international and regional studies at Yale University, New Haven. Between 2008 and 2010, she worked as an analyst at the "Dado Center for Interdisciplinary Military Thinking" and currently provides consulting and research services to security and research organizations.

Mrs. Keren Tamir

Tamir is a communications researcher and expert specializing in civil society organizations and their social media presence. Holds two master's degrees – an MBA and an MA in Communications – combining deep business acumen with expertise in communications and new media. Her research focuses on how civil society organizations utilize social networks to advance their goals and build communities.

Mr. Hamzi Saed

Saed holds a Master of Science in Government with a specialization in Public Policy and Political Marketing from Reichman University. He is a graduate of the InsAlights OSINT program in collaboration with the Google School of High Technology and Reichman University. As part of his thesis, he examined the institutional and political conditions that affect the ability of minority groups to translate descriptive representation and parliamentary presence into substantive representation and real influence on public policy. His research interests include Israeli politics, political discourse in the Arab world, digital narratives, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Said serves as a research assistant in Tamrur Politography Research Group research group, and in this role he collects, cross-references, and analyzes information from open sources in the Arabic language and on social media.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments

Introduction

About T-Politography

About the Authors

2023: Pages 18-56

Timeline of Events

Articles:

1. A Growing Gulf: Israel Tests the Patience of Its New Abraham Accords Allies — Moran Zaga, Haaretz, 02/04/2023
2. As Israel Woos the Saudis, It Must Not Neglect Ties With Abu Dhabi — Moran Zaga, Haaretz, 01/06/2023
3. Courting the Young Palestinians of Jenin — Ronit Marzan, Haaretz, 18/07/2023
4. Palestinian Piece of Saudi-Israel Deal Is Israel's Last Chance to Prevent Bi-National State — Col. (res.) Dr. Shaul Arieli, Jerusalem Post, 27/09/2023
5. The Failure is the Result of Netanyahu's False Reality — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz / Shaul Arieli website, 20/10/2023
6. Qatar Has Israeli Blood on Its Hands. It's No Honest Broker for the Hostages — Ronit Marzan, Haaretz, 30/10/2023
7. Why Qatar Needs to Be a Safe Haven for Hamas — Ronit Marzan, Haaretz, 22/11/2023

2024: Pages 57-128

Timeline of Events

Articles:

1. A Dose of Depressive Realism for the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict — Prof. Gilad Hirschberger, Prof. Sivan Hirsch-Hoefler & Dr. Shaul Arieli, Times of Israel, 08/02/2024
2. Until October 7 We Ignored the Palestinian Problem. Now We're Paying the Price — Shaul Arieli, Sivan Hirsch-Hoefler and Gilad Hirschberger, Haaretz / Shaul Arieli website, 14/02/2024
3. Israeli Women Must Pursue Hamas' Military Chief All the Way to The Hague — Ronit Marzan, Haaretz, 20/02/2024

4. The Israel-Hamas War Is Another Stage in Sinwar's Struggle With Rival Masculinities — Ronit Marzan, Haaretz, 13/03/2024
5. Israel's Secular and Religious-Messianic Publics See October 7 Very Differently. Is Civil War Looming? — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz, 28/03/2024
6. Area C Will Never Be Part of Israel — Shaul Arieli, Gilad Hirschberger, Sivan Hirsch-Hoefler, Jerusalem Post / Shaul Arieli website, 16/05/2024
7. What Hamas Chief Sinwar's Secret Communications Show About His Thinking — Ronit Marzan, Haaretz, 17/06/2024
8. The Settlements: Israel's Failed Real Estate Project — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz / Shaul Arieli website, 18/07/2024
9. Why Israel Should Embrace the US-Saudi Deal and Pursue a Two-State Solution — Shaul Arieli, Jerusalem Post, 28/07/2024
10. A Decision Support Tool Integrating Data and Advanced Modeling — S. Arieli, R. Ben-Jacob, G. Hirschberger, S. Hirsch-Hoefler, A. Kenett, R. Kenett, Preprints.org, 24/09/2024
11. Qatar Is Preparing a 'Ring of Fire' Around Israel to Supplant Iran's — Ronit Marzan, Haaretz, 15/10/2024
12. The Unbearable Price Israel Would Pay for Annexation — Dr. Col. (ret.) Shaul Arieli, Times of Israel Blog, 17/11/2024
13. The Messianic Vision for the West Bank Is Untethered to Reality — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz, 06/12/2024

2025: Pages 129-308

Timeline of Events

Articles:

1. Netanyahu Should Have Resigned 455 Days Ago, Way Before Former Defense Minister Gallant — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 03/01/2025
2. The World in 2025, According to Trump: Hellscape at Home, Hellscape Abroad — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 07/01/2025
3. Could Trump's Sharing of a Scathing Video Offer a Glimpse Into His Relationship With Netanyahu? — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 10/01/2025
4. The Gaza Cease-fire and Hostage Deal Is the Same One From Eight Months Ago. Why Did Netanyahu Accept It Now? — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 14/01/2025

5. It Took Biden, Trump and Qatar to Do What One Israeli Prime Minister Should Have Done — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 17/01/2025
6. Trump Believes He Has a Mandate to Upend America, Not Reform It — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 20/01/2025
7. Is Israel's Strategic and Geopolitical Situation Really Better Now Than It Was Before the War? — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 24/01/2025
8. Is There Less to Trump Than Meets the Eye? — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 28/01/2025
9. Is the Two-State Solution Still Valid? Yes, But a Preparation Period is Needed — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz / Shaul Arieli website, 30/01/2025
10. What Could Happen When Unpredictable Trump Meets Arch Manipulator Netanyahu? — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 03/02/2025
11. Impractical, Incomprehensible, Illegal: Trump Traps Netanyahu and Sows Chaos With U.S. Takeover Plan for Gaza — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 05/02/2025
12. Trump's Intimidation of U.S. Allies Is Creating a Dangerous, Unstable World — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 09/02/2025
13. The Path to Peace Will Require Accepting Painful Notions That We Are All Here to Stay — Gilad Hirschberger, Jerusalem Post, 11/02/2025
14. Trump's Gaza Mirage Gave Israel and Hamas the Perfect Excuse to Abandon the Cease-fire — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 12/02/2025
15. "The Solution is a Land of Israel Without Arabs": A Chronicle of 100 Years of Support for Transfer — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz / Shaul Arieli website, 12/02/2025
16. Netanyahu Plans to Attack Iran and Is Plotting to Lure Trump Into the War — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 14/02/2025
17. Trump's Self-inflicted Ukraine Dilemma: Dismantle the European Alliance, or Break With Putin — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 18/02/2025
18. What Does Netanyahu Mean When He Vows to 'Resume the War' in Gaza? — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 21/02/2025
19. The Great Geopolitical Awakening: Europe's Trump Conundrum — and Its Way Out — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 24/02/2025
20. What Do Ukraine and Taiwan Have in Common? A U.S. They Can't Depend On — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 28/02/2025
21. Ambushed: How Ukraine Was Sacrificed for the Latest Disgraceful Episode of Trump's Reality Show — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 01/03/2025

22. Netanyahu's Dirty War Against the IDF and Shin Bet Would Shock Even George Orwell — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 05/03/2025
23. Raging, Petulant, Contradictory: How to Interpret Trump's Middle East March Madness — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 12/03/2025
24. Netanyahu vs. the Shin Bet: An Unprecedented War to End All Wars — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 14/03/2025
25. Netanyahu's Firing of Shin Bet Head Is Israel's 'Weimar Moment' — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 17/03/2025
26. Israel's Democratic Guardrails Come Crashing Down as Netanyahu Imitates Trump — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 21/03/2025
27. An Authoritarian Solar System Is Orbiting Around Trumpism. We Can't Take Democracy for Granted — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 25/03/2025
28. Can American Jews Recognize the Israel of Today? Only if They Keep Looking Away — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 28/03/2025
29. The Status Quo Illusion Is a Recipe for Another Disaster — Shaul Arieli and Maoz Rosenthal, Haaretz / Shaul Arieli website, 02/04/2025
30. Victories on the Battlefield, Crushing Defeats in the Arena of Perception — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz / Shaul Arieli website, 20/05/2025
31. Israel at a Critical Crossroads: Most of the World Is Fed Up With It — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz, 05/06/2025
32. The Next Elections Will Be Decisive in the Battle Between the Zionist and Messianic Camps — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz / Shaul Arieli website, 12/06/2025
33. Smotrich Spoke of Regulating 50 Settlements. Reality Tells a Story of Decline — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz / Shaul Arieli website, 02/07/2025
34. Between Gaza and Iran, Israel's Hidden War in the West Bank Is Flaring Up — Tom O'Connor, Newsweek, 03/07/2025
35. Israel's Next Election Will Decide the Battle Between the Zionist and Messianic Camps — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz, 10/07/2025
36. Hamas' Own Data Contradicts Genocide Allegations Against Israel — Ariel Kahana, Israel Hayom, 10/08/2025
37. Look at History and Understand: Israel Is a Step Away From Civil War — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz / Shaul Arieli website, 04/09/2025

38. Over Half of West Bank Palestinians in Favor of Two-state Solution, Survey Shows — Yonah Jeremy Bob, Jerusalem Post, 30/09/2025

39. Naftali Bennett Strengthened Hamas and Paved the Way for Smotrich and Ben Gvir - He Is Not the “Savior” — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz / Shaul Arieli website, 09/10/2025

40. In Trump’s World There Is No Morality, No Limits, and No Shared Responsibility. This Is Bad for Israel — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz / Shaul Arieli website, 13/11/2025

2026: Pages 309-364

Timeline of Events

Articles:

1. Any Future Discussion of the Territories Must Include the Question: Who Will Bear the Costs? — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz / Shaul Arieli website, 25/01/2026

2. When Israel Tries to Manage the Palestinians, It Only Brings the Next Cycle of Violence Closer — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz / Shaul Arieli website, 05/02/2026

3. The Collapse of the Two-State Solution Is a Political Decision, Not a Geographic or Economic One — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz / Shaul Arieli website, 26/02/2026

4. Iran vs. Gulf: The Battle Over Muslim Sovereignty and Western Dependence — Ronit Marzan, Haaretz, 06/03/2026

5. The System of Restraints in the West Bank Is Eroding, and Israel Is Endangering Its Security and Democratic Character — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz / Shaul Arieli website, 18/03/2026

6. Israel Digs Up the West Bank — and Reignites a Battle Over History — —, Jerusalem Post, 24/03/2026

7. Government Declarations of Total Victory Create a Violent Vicious Cycle. We Must Not Believe Them — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz / Shaul Arieli website, 09/04/2026

8. The Security Establishment Has Learned Nothing and the Mistakes of the Separation Barrier Will Be Repeated in the Jordan Valley — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz / Shaul Arieli website, 23/04/2026

9. Arab Society Is Changing. Listen to Them — Shaul Arieli and Thaar Abu Ras, Haaretz / Shaul Arieli website, 14/05/2026

10. The Selective Use of History by the Right Carries a Heavy Public and Diplomatic Price — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz, 04/06/2026

11. The Danger Is Not Civil War, but That the State Will Cease to Be a Shared Home —
Shaul Arieli, Haaretz, 25/06/2026

12. The decisive question is whether the State of Israel will remain a Jewish democracy, or
turn into a messianic ethnocracy — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz, 10/07/2026

2023

Significant Events

01.01.2023 - In the United States - President Joe Biden.

01.01.2023 - Ben Gvir ascends the Temple Mount and draws condemnation from Arab countries, including friendly Gulf states.

01.01.2023 - Speaker of the 25th Knesset - Amir Ohana.

01.01.2023 - Police Commissioner - Kobi Shabtai.

01.01.2023 - President of the State - Yitzhak Herzog.

01.01.2023 - President of the Supreme Court - Esther Hayut (from October 2017 until her retirement in October 2023) and since then Uzi Fogelman.

01.01.2023 - Chief of the General Staff - Aviv Kochavi.

01.01.2023 - 37th Prime Minister of Israel - Benjamin Netanyahu.

01.01.2023 - Ben Gvir ascends the Temple Mount, drawing condemnations from Arab countries, including friendly Gulf states.

01.01.2023 - Israel demolishes 39 Palestinian homes, buildings and businesses in East Jerusalem, displacing more than 50 people

04.01.2023 - Justice Minister Yariv Levin presents the judicial reform.

07.01.2023 - Beginning of protests against the judicial reform.

11.01.2023 - The new Turkish Ambassador Shakir Torunlar presented his credentials to President Herzog.

16.01.2023 - Lt. Gen. Herzl Halevi entered office as the 23rd Chief of the General Staff of the IDF, replacing Lt. Gen. Aviv Kochavi.

24.01.2023 - Palestinian Prime Minister Shtayyeh's visit to Brussels with Borrell, Foreign Ministers of Spain and France

25.01.2023 - Senior lawyers in the defense establishment warned Netanyahu against transferring powers to the Civil Administration To Smotrich

26.01.2023 - President Herzog's visit to Brussels (Belgium, PA and NATO). Meeting with Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, among others, and at the European Parliament in Strasbourg on the occasion of International Holocaust Remembrance Day

29.01.2023 - After East Jerusalem Shooting Attack, National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir Calls for Immediate Demolition of Dozens of Palestinian Homes Built Without Permits

01.02.2023 - First meeting of the Supreme Planning Council - approval of the promotion of 7,327 housing units (5,235 for deposit and 2,092 for validation)

02.02.2023 - Netanyahu's visit to Paris

06.02.2023 - Following an earthquake in southeastern Turkey, Israel sent rescue forces to Turkey.

12.02.2023 - The government approves the establishment of 9 new settlements in order to legalize 10 outposts (Avitar, Givat Assaf, Sde Ephraim, Aduriyim, Nahal Haletz and more)

12.02.2023 - The political-security cabinet decided to establish 9 new settlements in the territories (the establishment of 10 illegal outposts)

14.02.2023 - Foreign Minister Eli Cohen visited Turkey.

14.02.2023 - Visit of the Iranian President to China ahead of the agreement with Saudi Arabia (until the 16th of the month).

23.02.2023 - Agreement was signed between Gallant and Smotrich on the division of powers in the Ministry of Defense

23.02.2023 - Establishment of the "Settlement Administration" in the Ministry of Defense headed by Finance Minister Smotrich - an arrangement for dividing powers between the Minister of Defense and the Additional Minister at the Ministry of Defense

23.02.2023 - Establishment of the Settlement Administration led by Bezalel Smotrich - transfer of powers from the Civil Administration to the Civil Administration

23.02.2023 - Israel – Structural change: Signing of “Document of Understanding” between the Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister in the Ministry of Defense Smotrich – Granting civil/settlement powers in Judea and Samaria within the framework of the Ministry of Defense.

23.02.2023 - Most of the powers of the Civil Administration were transferred to Smotrich, including the central supervision unit for enforcing construction

26.02.2023 - Aqaba summit to ease tensions in the Gaza Strip ahead of Ramadan. Israel's commitment not to advance settlement in the coming months (Israel, PA, Egypt, Jordan, under the auspices and leadership of the US)

01.03.2023 - Begins the separation of the Settlement Administration from the Civil Administration - transition to civilian control

10.03.2023 - China announces agreement to restore relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

10.03.2023 - China's announcement of the agreement to restore relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

18.03.2023 - Visit of the Turkish Foreign Minister to Cairo symbolizing the process of rapprochement between Turkey and Egypt.

19.03.2023 - Sharm Summit to reduce tensions in the Gaza Strip (Israel, PA, Egypt, Jordan, US)

21.03.2023 - Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and Foreign Minister James Calverley signed the "Roadmap 2030" agreement in London

24.03.2023 - Netanyahu's visit to London (against the backdrop of protests against legal protest)

26.03.2023 - Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu fired Defense Minister Yoav Gallant after he demanded to stop the judicial reform legislation, which triggered mass protests across the country.

03.04.2023 - More than 350 Arrests After Clashes at Al-Aqsa as Israeli Police Raid Mosque Prayer Hall

01.05.2023 - Arab countries renew their relations with Syria (except Qatar).

07.05.2023 - IDF's "Shield and Arrow" operation in Gaza, which included a wave of assassinations in the ranks of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad in the Gaza Strip, collapsing the organization's command structure within the Strip.

07.05.2023 - Syria's normalization in the Arab League - President Assad's participation in the Arab League meeting in Riyadh.

09.05.2023 - The IDF launched Operation "Shield and Arrow" in the Gaza Strip against Palestinian Islamic Jihad; the operation ended with a ceasefire on May 13.

09.05.2023 - The IDF launches Operation Shield and Arrow in the Gaza Strip, which ended on May 13 with a ceasefire with Islamic Jihad.

14.05.2023 - Presidential and parliamentary elections in Turkey – first round – partial victory for Erdogan.

19.05.2023 - The Arab Summit Conference was held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, with Syria for the first time.

27.05.2023 - "Return Conference" in Malmö, Sweden as part of a broader framework called the "Palestinian Conference in Europe."

28.05.2023 - Presidential and parliamentary elections in Turkey – second round – victory for Erdogan.

01.06.2023 - The government approved a decision according to which Minister Smotrich alone will be the one to approve the promotion of the housing units, without the need for the Prime Minister's consent

01.06.2023 - Third meeting of the Supreme Planning Council - approval of the promotion of 5,525 housing units (4,567 for deposit and 916 for validation)

18.06.2023 - Cancellation of Decision 150 and significant easing of construction procedures in the area. This decision was intended to regulate the processes planning and construction in Judea and Samaria and to prevent unregulated construction. It established two levels of approval: for a comprehensive settlement policy - a government decision is required, and for land allocation and planning - the approval of the Minister of Defense is required. The significance of the cancellation: significant easing of construction procedures in Judea and Samaria, reducing bureaucracy and the need for multiple permits, expediting planning processes and the establishment of new housing units. This is part of the legal change that enabled the rapid expansion of Jewish construction: the cancellation of Resolution 150 was one of the significant changes that enabled the accelerated promotion of settlement under the sixth Netanyahu government, and contributed to the dramatic increase in the promotion of housing units and the establishment of new settlements in Judea and Samaria in 2023.

18.06.2023 - Israel – Structural change (government decision): Transfer of responsibility for planning procedures in settlements from the Minister of Defense to Minister in the Ministry of Defense Smotrich (change in planning procedures).

18.06.2023 - The government abolishes the obligation for the political echelon to approve each stage of settlement planning - transferring full authority to Minister Smotrich

30.06.2023 - Mass protests in France following the killing of a teenager by police

01.07.2023 - Israel – Structural change: Establishment of the "Settlement Administration" under Smotrich to manage civilian aspects of settlements/Area C.

02.07.2023 - It was announced that the pace of enforcement operations against illegal construction by settlers has decreased significantly since the government was sworn in

03.07.2023 - Turkey exposed "a cell of the Israeli Mossad" – 7 agents were arrested.

13.07.2023 - Record approval in the first half of 2023 - 12,855 housing units (9,805 for deposit + 3,050 for effect) - higher than in any full year since 2012

26.07.2023 - Trilateral summit between Erdogan, Abu Mazen, and Ismail Haniyeh in Ankara.

10.08.2023 - Agreement for release of American hostages from Iran mediated by Qatar

10.08.2023 - Agreement for the release of American hostages from Iran with Qatar's mediation.

10.08.2023 - UN Security Council Resolution 2712 – Demand for humanitarian pauses and opening of humanitarian aid lines in Gaza. Passed with a majority of 12 in favor, 0 against and 3 abstentions (Russia, UK and US). IDF enters Al-Shifa Hospital in northern Gaza

22.08.2023 - Four countries from the Middle East join BRICS: Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

20.09.2023 - Erdogan-Netanyahu summit on the sidelines of the UN Assembly in New York.

01.10.2023 - It was reported that Smotrich is excluding the Military Prosecutor's Office from sensitive discussions on construction in the West Bank

07.10.2023 - October 7 massacre - Outbreak of Swords of Iron War.

07.10.2023 - Since the outbreak of the Iron Swords War - dramatic increase in settler violence: 1,189 incidents per year (a record since the beginning of documentation in 2006)

07.10.2023 - with Hamas' attack on Israel, a widespread wave of protests began across the US, including pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian demonstrations involving millions of participants. This was the beginning of the largest protest wave since Vietnam.

08.10.2023 - Start of Israeli military operation in Gaza - extensive airstrikes and complete closure

12.10.2023 - Protests for the release of hostages and peace took place in Chicago

12.10.2023 - a bilateral protest took place in Chicago, Illinois, with approximately 500 participants. The protest called for the release of hostages taken by Hamas and for peace for both Israelis and Palestinians

15.10.2023 - Pro-Palestinian protests in Europe - clashes with police forces

16.10.2023 - Supreme Court President Esther Hayut retired, and Justice Uzi Vogelman began serving as Acting President of the Supreme Court.

17.10.2023 - Turkish proposal for a guarantee framework on the Israel-Palestine issue.

21.10.2023 - Egypt hosts the Cairo Peace Summit with participants from around the world, including representatives from Arab countries, Turkey, Russia, the US, the European Union, China, Japan, and South Africa.

24.10.2023 - Violent clashes occurred in Chicago, Illinois, involving dozens of participants. Two men were arrested after one fired shots in the air and the other pepper-sprayed pro-Palestinian protesters at a pro-Israel event.

25.10.2023 - A pro-Palestinian protest took place in Los Angeles, California, with approximately 1,000 participants. Congress member Rashida Tlaib participated in the protest and called for a ceasefire.

27.10.2023 - Start of Israeli ground invasion of Gaza with over 100,000 soldiers

28.10.2023 - Israeli attack on Jabaliya refugee camp - 50 dead

03.11.2023 - Attack on ambulance convoy near Al-Shifa Hospital

12.11.2023 - Saudi Arabia hosts an all-Arab-Muslim summit on the war in Gaza.

15.11.2023 - IDF forces enter Al-Shifa Hospital - the largest hospital in Gaza

15.11.2023 - Resolution 2712 approved by the UN Security Council, led by the United Arab Emirates.

15.11.2023 - UN Security Council Resolution 2712 – Demand for humanitarian pauses and opening of humanitarian aid lines in Gaza. Passed with a majority of 12 in favor, 0 against and 3 abstentions (Russia, UK and US). IDF enters Al-Shifa Hospital in northern Gaza

21.11.2023 - Start of first 7-day ceasefire - release of approximately 105 hostages.

24.11.2023 - A seven-day pause between Israel and Hamas began, during which 105 hostages were released in exchange for Palestinian prisoners and expanded humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip.

24.11.2023 - Beginning of hostage releases as part of the Qatari-Egyptian mediation deal (calling for humanitarian pauses and humanitarian corridors in the Gaza Strip).

24.11.2023 - Israel-Hamas hostage release deal.

25.11.2023 - A Black Friday protest against violence in Gaza took place in Chicago

29.11.2023 - A coordinated national day of action took place in many US cities with tens of thousands of participants. A coordinated day of pro-Palestinian protests called "Shut It Down for Palestine" across the US.

30.11.2023 - Opening of the COP28 international conference in the United Arab Emirates (Dubai) and President Herzog's visit with President Mohammed bin Zayed during the conference.

01.12.2023 - Resumption of fighting - start of major ground offensive in southern Gaza

04.12.2023 - Significant Israeli attack on the city of Khan Yunis in southern Gaza

13.12.2023 - Elimination of Hamas commander Raed Saad in western Gaza City

22.12.2023 - Moab Resolution 2720 – Calls for increased humanitarian aid and opening of all crossings to Gaza. Adopted by a majority of 13 in favor, 0 against, 2 abstentions (Russia and USA).

23.12.2023 - A blocking protest took place in Chicago, Illinois, with approximately 100 participants. A vehicle convoy of a pro-Palestinian group blocked the I-90 highway near O'Hare Airport.

29.12.2023 - South Africa submits request to the International Court of Justice to initiate proceedings to apply the Convention on the Prevention of Genocide in the Gaza Strip

31.12.2023 - 2023 Summary: 15 outposts received government approval for legalization process during the year

31.12.2023 - 2023 Summary: 26 new outposts established - the highest number since 1991

31.12.2023 - New Year's protests took place in Chicago, Illinois, with hundreds of pro-Palestinian protesters participating. The protesters blocked the I-90 and I-94 highways on New Year's Eve.

31.12.2023 - Summary of 2023: 30,682 housing units approved (18,333 in East Jerusalem + 12,349 in the West Bank) - the highest since the Oslo Accords

1. A Growing Gulf: Israel Tests the Patience of Its New Abraham Accords Allies — Moran Zaga, Haaretz, 02/04/2023

There are very few countries that have a hold on Israeli decision-makers and public opinion as Israel's new Gulf allies do. Most Israelis view the UAE and Bahrain as not only attractive, lucrative economic partners, and one of the only tourist destinations in the Arab world open for them to explore, but essential strategic assets. That is also true for Saudi Arabia, which many Israelis regard as the aspirational jewel in the crown for Israel's integration in the region.

That's why at a time Israelis are having trouble agreeing on just about anything, most do agree on the importance of preserving a strong relationship with them, the prize of the much-touted Abraham Accords. That's why any significant deterioration in relations with them will be criticized inside Israel.

And perhaps more importantly, such deterioration can have a devastating effect on future attempts of Israel to expand its relations in the Middle East, and it will make it difficult for the minority within the Arab world that does support ties with Israel.

The current government in Israel is seen in the Gulf as "far-right", "ultranationalist, and ultra-Orthodox government — the most right-wing in Israeli history". But that view alone is not enough to damage the relations, as the Emirati leaders always mention that, for them, normalization is with the state of Israel rather than a specific government or prime minister.

In such a frenzied and eventful period in Israel, its foreign relations are shaking. The Arab world, including the UAE and Bahrain, are more concerned about the deadly escalation in the West Bank. Speaking at the UN Security Council meeting on the Palestinian question last March, the UAE representative noted in his statement that "last year was the most violent year in nearly two decades, and unfortunately the beginning of this year indicates that the worst is yet to come."

For the Arab countries, the escalation is much more than blood, manifested in legislative steps and provocative rhetoric made by the Israeli government which undermine the two-state solution. Arab countries that have normalized relations with Israel have to work harder than other Arab countries to highlight their pro-Palestinian position. Their relations with Israel are largely perceived as abandonment of the Palestinians, while in fact they promote the Palestinian interests much more than other "neutral" Arab states.

The intensity and magnitude of the events in Israel and Palestine are driving the UAE and Bahrain to be more vocal and active on the Palestinian issue than before. The criticism of the

UAE and Bahrain toward Israel since the current Israeli government took office has never been so severe. The UAE condemned Israel four times in March alone, in addition to condemnations in UAE's broader platforms such as the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Arab League, and several UAE statements at the UN Security Council.

These condemnations refer to building of West Bank settlements, inciteful rhetoric such as Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich's denial of the Palestinian people, activities of the Israeli army in the West Bank cities of Jenin and Nablus, and the visit by the National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir to the Temple Mount, which they referred to as "storming of Al-Aqsa Mosque courtyard by an Israeli minister". Bahrain is also speaking out harshly against Israeli ministers, saying that "moral and human values and principles, spread hate speech and violence and undermine international peace efforts." Notably, the UAE and Bahrain also condemn terror attacks against Israeli citizens.

Beyond statements, there has also been some action. For example, UAE President Mohammed bin Zayed, known as MBZ, decided to donate \$3 million to support rebuilding efforts in the West Bank village of Hawara in a direct and swift response to the rampage of Jewish settlers there in late February. MBZ's step sends a clear message both to Israel and the Palestinians that the UAE does not favor one side over another and denounces extremism by all means.

The UAE has clearly declared what would be its two red lines, which the current government is starting to challenge but has not yet crossed: annexation of the West Bank and changing the status quo in the Temple Mount. So while there is palpable tension, the Gulf countries are leaving some room for Israel to maneuver and moderate its tone. We see that in what is not happening diplomatically. There have been no recalling ambassadors or formally announcing the downgrading of the relations. It is also demonstrated in the language they use that somewhat isolates Ben-Gvir and Smotrich from the rest of the government.

Despite the simmering tensions, the current relations between Israel and its Gulf allies are mostly business as usual. To be more specific, it is mostly business more than any other sector. In the peak of escalation, during March, the UAE Minister of Economy promoted a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, CEPA, that includes Israel, the Emirati ambassador to Israel signed a customs agreement between the countries in the presence of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and the two countries have agreed to increase the number of flights to meet the high demand for passenger traffic between the two countries.

On the diplomatic level, the working teams of the Negev Forum and I2U2 are maintaining dialogues, but at low and medium official level. We haven't witnessed, for example, an official meeting between ministers, not to mention an official visit of a head of state between either the UAE or Bahrain and Israel.

The patience of the Gulf allies stems largely from the fact that Israel is a key part of a larger strategic calculation to achieve stability and deterrence in the region, especially now in the increasing absence of a significant superpower. They know that U.S. attention has been increasingly diverted to the Far East, leaving a vacuum in the region which regional players are trying to fill by creating regional alliances, like theirs with Israel.

Under these conditions, Israel has, until now at least, filled a meaningful role as a country which can provide security, stability and open more doors in Washington. But now, the latter two elements are at risk, with Israel's domestic instability and its tenuous relations lately with the U.S. Israel's very status and position in the Middle East is under threat.

The coalition agreements of the Israeli government include an article that binds the parties to maintain the Abraham Accords. Israeli coalition members know quite well how essential it is to safeguard these ties. Another article in these coalition agreements conveys the intention to expand the normalization process with other countries, alluding to Saudi Arabia. Netanyahu's election campaign even mentioned potential normalization with Saudi Arabia as a main goal. But this goal has become more elusive in the three months Netanyahu has been in power.

We know Netanyahu is motivated to present achievements in the Gulf. Does this mean the UAE and Bahrain could pressure Israel to treat the Palestinians better? Netanyahu, using the specter of disgruntled Gulf countries, could put pressure on the more extreme factions in his government, but while the fragile Abrahamic spirit may take some effort to stabilize, no one will be able to fix crossing of the Gulf's red lines.

2. As Israel Woos the Saudis, It Must Not Neglect Ties With Abu Dhabi — Moran Zaga, Haaretz, 01/06/2023

The Saudis' hosting of the Arab League summit, attended by Syrian President Bashar Assad, seemingly made a statement about who's in charge. In official summit photographs, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman is front and center.

The representative of the United Arab Emirates, Vice President Mansour bin Zayed, was stuck in the back as if he were just a marginal player in this event welcoming Syria back into the fold. This was quite deliberate.

In 2018, the UAE was the first to form official and public ties with the Assad regime after seven years of ostracism from the Arab world. In December of that year, the UAE reopened its embassy in Damascus, and publicly nurtured this relationship, which was seen as an outlier in the Arab world.

In the first half of 2021, trade between the UAE and Syria was estimated at \$272 million, and less than a year after, Assad arrived in Abu Dhabi for a highly publicized visit that marked the start of his series of photo ops with a string of Arab leaders.

Although it took the UAE five years to convince other countries in the region to follow suit, by renewing ties with Syria, it clearly spurred the gradual normalization of Assad in the region. This pioneering move was the first in a series of moves it made, including normalization of ties with Iran, Israel, Turkey and Qatar.

Some believe these developments were actually led by Saudi Arabia, but I believe the UAE to be the brains behind and the executor of these initiatives. Often, the Emiratis prefer to let Saudi Arabia be the one to cut the ribbon in order to balance out the regional leadership competition. An example of this was the pictures from the recent Arab League summit.

The opening point of the UAE's efforts to reshape the regional power balances, alliances and fault lines may be dated to 2017, when Abu Dhabi decided to take things up a notch in its conflict with Qatar and mobilize the neighboring countries for an embargo of Qatar.

As with Syria, here, too, the UAE preferred to have Riyadh be the public face of the effort. Saudi Arabia's and others' participation in this initiative came naturally in light of the UAE's participation in the Saudi coalition in Yemen; however, from this stage on, a chasm began to open up between the two countries' interests as well as in the international response. While the UAE was embraced by the international community, Saudi Arabia was unofficially

ostracized due to its leading of the war in Yemen and its involvement in the murder of Jamal Khashoggi.

From that point on, starting in 2018, the UAE became much more dominant in managing regional affairs, and about a year before the Abraham Accords, it surprised the region with a dramatic shift in direction: It went from deep involvement in the war in Yemen and violent clashes with Iran and its proxies to suddenly declaring that it was withdrawing from Yemen and reestablishing ties with Iran.

Last year, it announced it was restoring its ambassador to Tehran after a six-year absence. During this period, the UAE attempted to mediate between Iran and Saudi Arabia and succeeded for a limited time. Ultimately, China got the credit for the agreement on the renewal of ties that was officially announced on March 10, 2023, and the UAE, which had worked on this issue for three years, was not even mentioned.

Obviously, Saudi Arabia was in on the secret of the Abraham Accords, if only because these agreements included the complete opening of Saudi airspace to flights between Israel and the UAE and Bahrain. As on the Syrian issue, Saudi Arabia did not see fit to be the pioneer in this area. The Emiratis identified the right moment to dictate a new game in the neighborhood. They planned it well, chose the most suitable players, and even built a narrative of tolerance and peace and a shared Abrahamic heritage. To date, Saudi foreign policy has not demonstrated such capabilities.

At the Herzliya Conference last month, Dr. Ebtesam al-Ketbi, president of a prominent Emirati policy institute, said that given the composition of the current Israeli government, more countries are not expected to join the Abraham Accords. “It won’t kill the Abraham Accords, the partner countries won’t withdraw from the agreement,” she said, “but there won’t be additional partners... Your latest government is pushing everyone away.”

Al-Ketbi’s candid remarks gave expression to the difficulties experienced by a country that took the initiative in trying to achieve legitimacy for its moves. Her remarks also gave an indication of the UAE’s ability to prompt other players in the system to make moves — for better or worse. In the past, it mediated between Bahrain and Sudan.

We ought to recognize the new balances of power in the Persian Gulf. The UAE’s extensive and deep influence in the wider Middle East, from Sudan to Yemen and beyond, obligates both scholars and decision-makers to adopt a more up-to-date approach regarding the centers of power in the Middle East. Since the Arab Spring and the fall of the traditional power centers,

the approach has been that the heart of Arab politics beats in Riyadh. Which is why Saudi Arabia is perceived as the crown jewel for Israel. However, if we would grasp that for a number of years now, this center has been situated in Abu Dhabi, we could keep our focus there.

In a rational world, the right path would be to operate simultaneously on both channels, vis-à-vis Saudi Arabia and vis-à-vis the UAE, but the current Israeli government's attention span for foreign affairs in general and the Middle East in particular is extremely limited, and what little energy it is ready to expend is mainly directed at Riyadh.

Foreign Ministry Director-General Ronen Levy also made note of this, saying, "In the context of this effort, we must not neglect channels in other countries where the potential may be realized ahead of Saudi Arabia, and there are no less important." Permit me to assume that he was referring to the UAE. Israel's efforts to imitate the Abraham Accords with Saudi Arabia at a time when Israel's relations with the UAE are being significantly challenged could ultimately cause it to lose out on both ends.

3. Courting the Young Palestinians of Jenin — Ronit Marzan, Haaretz, 18/07/2023

This month's major army operation in Jenin, which Israel codenamed House and Garden and which the Palestinians call Jenin Heroism, revealed what many Israelis and Palestinians had already known. The Palestinian Authority is having difficulty governing the refugee camps in Jenin and Nablus, which have long ago become extraterritorial. Armed militias from Islamic Jihad, Hamas and Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades operate there.

Young people in the refugee camps, particularly those affiliated with Fatah, may not have experienced the second intifada, but they were raised on the battle legacy of its "martyrs." They refuse to be the stepchildren of hedonistic "Mother Ramallah" and the children of a Palestinian father who is alienated and disengaged and who has abandoned them to their fate — and who doesn't protect them or look after their livelihood but instead is busy with indulgences and luxuries.

These young people are furious with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, and they've decided to take up arms not only against Israeli soldiers and civilians but also against Palestinian symbols of governance. They cooperate with Islamic Jihad's Jenin Battalion and with their colleagues in the joint operations room that opened in Jenin shortly after six Palestinian prisoners escaped from Gilboa Prison in 2021. Operation House and Garden, which caused major damage in the Jenin refugee camp, increased the young Palestinians' anger.

After being cut off for 11 years, Abbas decided to meet them face-to-face in the Jenin camp, but even en route to the camp, it was apparent that Abbas' Fatah party had not realized the magnitude of the hour that they still had to grapple with. The rivalry in the Palestinian leadership among Jibril Rajoub, Hussein al-Sheikh, Majed Faraj and Mahmoud al-Aloul was very apparent from where each of them stood in relation to Abbas during the visit. Al-Sheikh gave a bearhug to Faraj and Abbas. When Rajoub tried to approach Abbas, a gentle shoving match erupted and Rajoub was left behind. Aloul also had to stand behind Abbas rather than next to him.

Beyond the personal competition, there's also territorial competition among Ramallah, Nablus and Jenin for the heroic title of icon in the national struggle for liberation. Abbas chose to confer the title on Jenin to bring home the sons of the Fatah movement who had begun to frequent the pastures of its political rivals: Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah and Iran. Hamas and Islamic Jihad flags were removed from the entrance to the refugee camp. A message was disseminated that anyone who dared harm national unity would find their hand severed.

Even though Jenin won the coveted title, those in Nablus have refused to forgive it for the disgraceful expulsion of Aloul, Abbas' deputy, who was born in Nablus. Aloul had been shamefully expelled from the Jenin refugee camp during the funeral for 12 activists who were killed in Operation House and Garden. Young people yelled "out, out" and "shame, shame" at a man who in the view of many Palestinians is considered a patriot. This caused great anger among Fatah's followers in Nablus.

In the Palestinian media, the view was also that this is not the way to treat someone who had been involved in the kidnapping of eight Israeli soldiers from the Nahal Brigade and who had brought about the exchange of 6,000 Palestinian prisoners in 1982. He was also the right-hand man to Palestinian leader Khalil al-Wazir in the first intifada and lost a son in the second intifada. Aloul supported an end to Palestinian divisions and was a labor minister in the Hamas cabinet in 2009.

The reactions weren't long in coming. A video clip that was made public shows armed men threatening a store owner identified with Hamas in Nablus, ordering him to close his shop or else. And Tawfiq Tirawi, the former head of general intelligence, who did his master's degree studies at An-Najah University in Nablus, is also seen dressing down Fatah activists for not cutting out the tongue of the person who spoke ill of Fatah and expelled Aloul.

Some people in the Jenin refugee camp got the message and were quick to make peace with Aloul, who is a potential successor to Abbas. His return to the refugee camp in the role of "rebuilder" sent a message to Jenin residents — Nablus is your sister in arms, Jenin needs it, and it doesn't pay to quarrel with a city that may produce the next president of Palestine.

Many Palestinians view the fighting heritage of the Jenin refugee camp as a legacy of heroism and standing firm. This legacy includes the battle of Yabad between British forces and armed Palestinians led by Sheikh Izz ad-Din al-Qassam in 1935, the resistance during Israel's Operation Defensive Shield in 2002 and now, Operation House and Garden.

The struggle between Jenin and Nablus isn't taking place solely in the political arena. It is also present in the conversation among mothers of "martyrs." A few of the latter were even willing to risk a rift in the family by putting Jenin above Nablus.

For instance, when the mother of Ibrahim al-Nabulsi — one of the leaders of the Lion's Den militia in Nablus, who was killed by Israeli forces last year — was asked by Al Jazeera to say a few words of farewell to her son, she said, "Oh Ibrahim, you're from the seed of Jenin ... a hero

and the son of heroes ... who grew up in a fighting, sacrificing family ... and there are another 100,000 Ibrahims who will see your path to the end through jihad.”

In other words, this mother, who is from the Al-Jarrar family in Jenin, preferred to affiliate her son with her own family rather than his father’s family, which is from Nablus. His father serves in the Palestinian security services, which cooperate with Israel.

The only person who appeared to get the message sent by young Fatah members in the Jenin and Nablus refugee camps was Aloul. He is the one who roused the people sitting in Ramallah from their slumber.

It’s important to remember that the Fatah movement chose the route of diplomacy after decades of armed struggle. To prevent its younger members from returning to armed struggle, Israel and the Palestinian Authority must restore their personal and national honor and implement the two-state solution.

4. Palestinian Piece of Saudi-Israel Deal Is Israel's Last Chance to Prevent Bi-National State — Col. (res.) Dr. Shaul Arieli, Jerusalem Post, 27/09/2023

The stagnation Netanyahu has imposed on the political process with the Palestinians and the change in Israel's policy from the two-state solution to one unequal state have removed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from the Israeli public's agenda. The three-fold increase in the percentage of Israelis who support the status quo and the dramatic increase in the rate of Palestinians who support the one-state solution are a testimony to the bafflement, despair, and lack of mutual trust in the ability of the two peoples to settle the conflict by themselves. The negotiations between the United States, Saudi Arabia and Israel, which include a significant “package” for the Palestinians, contravene this reality and open a golden opportunity for change in the regional and bilateral arena.

In order to take advantage of this opportunity, those involved must conduct themselves according to several key assumptions. One, the agreement with Saudi Arabia should not be viewed as a continuation of the Abraham Accords, which, in practice, did not change almost anything regarding the Palestinians. The Israeli promise to the Emirates not to annex the territories died at birth, as Israel continued the creeping annexation policy and even advanced to de jure annexation through structural and organizational changes in the occupation mechanism. The package should transform the Israeli rationale that sees the Abraham Accords as a channel for ignoring the Palestinians and freezing the political process into a mediating tool and a part in settling the conflict according to international decisions.

Two, it would be a mistake to treat the package as a necessity imposed on Israel in exchange for normalizing relations with Saudi Arabia. Instead, this package should be viewed as a platform for renewing the consensual framework for resolving the conflict.

Three, the weight of the positive statements accompanying the agreement is insignificant compared to the need to take irreversible steps that will change the daily reality of Palestinians and Israelis.

Four, one should not be satisfied with a package that helps preserve the territorial feasibility of a permanent settlement by stopping Israeli moves of creeping annexation — expanding settlements, legitimizing outposts, building infrastructure, demolishing houses and the like — but by gradually creating a reality of separation and establishment of a Palestinian state.

Five, Hamas in Gaza should be one of the primary beneficiaries of the package. Ignoring it will push it into the hands of Iran, which will encourage it and Palestinian Islamic Jihad to sabotage the implementation of any agreement.

Six, Jordan and Egypt should be included as beneficiaries in the agreement, especially economically, in exchange for their involvement and influence on Hamas and the Palestinian Authority.

Seven, the Palestinian side must form one legitimate address representing the Palestinian people through elections to the Palestinian Authority and the PLO. Ending the division in the Palestinian leadership and territories, which Netanyahu has long worked to preserve, by establishing a joint government for Fatah and Hamas, will allow both the successful implementation of the package and the renewal of the negotiations later.

Lastly, the package should be seen as the last step in the implementation of the interim agreement, and, therefore, it will not include the issues of the permanent agreement — Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, borders and security — which should be left for the renewed negotiations.

The package will include elements from different fields and at different levels, such as a statement regarding the commitment to settle the conflict according to Resolution 242 or maintaining the status quo on the Temple Mount.

However, its essence will be the territorial measures, the most important of which is the transfer of 25% of the West Bank area in Area C to the responsibility of the Palestinian Authority, without evacuating even one settlement, outpost or base, and maintaining the access roads for all of them on the shortest route to the Green Line. This way, control over the mountain ridge, important for maintaining continuity and the fabric of Palestinian life, will be transferred to the Palestinian Authority. This move could be considered as the implementation of the third additional preparation according to the Oslo Accords. In addition, under the condition of holding elections in the Palestinian Authority and the formation of a unity government, it will be possible to renew the connection between the West Bank and Gaza by building two short railway sections that will connect the Erez Crossing, in which a goods terminal will be built, to the Tarkumiya Crossing. Later, it will be possible to build a seaport in Gaza to export and import goods transported by train from the West Bank.

The American administration under President Biden is the only one that has the responsibility and ability to lead the negotiations under these principles. For the Saudis, despite their desire

to demonstrate commitment to the Palestinian people and maintain their political initiative as a basis for resolving the conflict, it will be relatively easy to give up some of these principles as long as they get what they want from the United States in two areas: strengthening deterrence against Iran and restoring their regional and international status that has waned in recent years. Without the support of former President Trump in the agreement, the administration needs Israel in order to approve the agreement in the Senate. Still, it does have the tools to motivate Israel to agree to the required package.

Achieving the agreement according to these principles will lead to a regional balance of power that is better for Israel, Saudi Arabia and the United States and pave the way for an agreement with the Palestinians and then with the rest of the Arab world. The American administration and Israel must consider the security, political and economic consequences if this agreement is signed without the Palestinian package or not signed at all. Israel will have to face an increase in Iranian influence in the region and its deterioration into one state, leading it to a civil war and a transformation into a state with a regime and nature that are extremely different from the vision of its founding fathers.

5. The Failure is the Result of Netanyahu's False Reality — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz / Shaul Arieli website, 20/10/2023

Each of the different groups that comprise Israeli society has its own distinct perception of reality. In contrast to the past, it is not just a matter of different interpretations of an agreed reality, but rather disagreement about the facts themselves and the presentation of alternative “facts” that create a fake and false reality. Benjamin Netanyahu and his associates have created a fake reality in the minds of half the Israeli public in order to justify their policies and vision, which have led, among other outcomes, to the failure of October 7 in the Gaza Envelope.

Throughout most of modern Zionist history, the three groups within the Jewish people — secular Zionists, religious messianics, and Haredim — have agreed in principle about the facts. Their disagreements revolved around the different interpretation of these facts by each group, in keeping with its vision. Secular Zionists regarded the Balfour Declaration, the Partition Resolution, the establishment of Israel, the 1948 War of Independence and the 1967 Six-Day War as milestones in the success of the national movement of the Jewish people in securing international recognition for its right to self-determination in its homeland and for the aspiration to become a nation like any other and part and parcel of the international community.

Religious messianics saw these same events as evidence of the revealed “End Times” and the beginning of redemption, ultimately leading to the establishment of the Kingdom of David and a return to Temple days. Conversely, Haredim regarded the events as violations of the “Three Oaths” that prohibit organized migration by Jews to the Land of Israel and hence a desecration of the messianic ideal.

In the next stage, the gulf between these three groups widened, resulting in each moving in almost-parallel realities. This process was due in part to the failure of the peace process between Israel and the PLO, which had sought to secure a permanent agreement, and to Netanyahu's policy of refusing to resume negotiations toward such an agreement, which was supposed to ensure a separation between Israelis and Palestinians. This policy eroded the feasibility of the secular-Zionist vision: maintaining a democratic state with Jewish national characteristics as a member of the family of nations. The path was now ostensibly clear for the religious messianics and their new allies — the Hardal, or Haredi-nationalist, stream — to realize the dream of “inheriting the land” in keeping with the doctrine of conquest and settlement presented in the Book of Joshua. But in actual reality — which was ignored by

Netanyahu and his government — the Palestinians, the international community, and a majority of the Israeli public refused to cooperate with this goal.

In order to adjust reality to his policy, Netanyahu began to act through various channels — the conventional and social media, the education system, government ministers, and coalition Members of Knesset — to inculcate a fake reality in the minds of the Israeli public consistent with his policies and his personal and political aspirations. In other words, instead of basing his policy on a professional and responsible examination of the reality in terms of the feasibility of the messianic-nationalist vision, he chose to inculcate among the public a sense of fake reality based on a collection of lies in order to justify his irresponsible and opportunistic policy.

Lies and incitement laid the foundation for this fake reality: the leftists have forgotten what it means to be Jews; the protestors against his government are anarchists and traitors; the Arabs are flooding to the polling stations; the Supreme Court is endangering state security; Abu Mazen supports terror; Hamas serves our interests, and so forth.

In the diplomatic and security sphere, Netanyahu aimed to frighten the public and convinced Israelis that they will always be left to stand alone. And so Iran becomes the “Nazi dictatorship” and ISIS and Hezbollah are proof that in every generation people seek to annihilate us, as the Passover song goes. According to his approach, the peace initiative of the Arab League from 2002 is impractical, Mahmoud Abbas adheres to the “phased plan” for the destruction of Israel, while Hamas should be nurtured and strengthened. It is vital for him to maintain the division among the Palestinians, which undermines Abbas’s legitimacy and authority as the only possible partner for ending the conflict. Similarly, he nurtured the illusion that this division removes the Palestinians in Gaza from the demographic equation, thereby facilitating the annexation of the West Bank.

This ghetto policy sparked and fueled processes in the domestic and social sphere. Netanyahu demanded that even his opponents display “unity” and support the nation’s political leaders. He demanded total support from the judiciary for his antidemocratic laws and for actions that violate international law. And he expected that the media would always be supportive, and that the public would readily pay with its life when violence erupted.

By nurturing this fake reality, Netanyahu sought to ensure that opposition to his rule would disappear, in the absence of any possibility of changing the government. He chose his ministers carefully to this end, sending them off to erode the stability of the pillars of democracy. Ayelet Shaked, Amir Ohana, and Yariv Levin undermined the status of the Supreme

Court; Naftali Bennett and Yoav Kish targeted the field of education; Miri Regev focused on culture and sport; Yuli Edelstein worked in the Knesset; Bezael Smotrich in the fields of finance and defense; Itamar Ben-Gvir in public security, and so forth.

When the reality on the ground refused to cooperate, the strategy shifted to one of meaningless platitudes: from “economic peace” to “conflict management” or “conflict reduction” — anything to maintain the fake consciousness that brought Netanyahu back to the prime minister’s office again and again over 14 years, while the leaders of the messianic-nationalist and Haredi parties served as his viziers. His behavior toward the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and his decisions during the various military operations against Hamas in Gaza, and during the processes leading to these confrontations, exposed his simple political goal: to return as quickly as possible to his comfort zone — a situation he mistakenly calls the “status quo” that allowed him to remain in power.

The fake “status quo” that has formed the foundation for Netanyahu’s policies over the past few years does not reflect a reality of security and diplomatic balance and stability. On the contrary: it manifests the prime minister’s profound fear of any diplomatic initiative that might end the recurring rounds of escalation under his rule, including the terrible price we are being required to pay now. Netanyahu’s “status quo” is a euphemism for conceptual stalemate on the Israeli side, preserving the conditions that allowed Hamas to spark a series of confrontations culminating in the horrors and war crimes of October 7.

Thus the status quo protected Netanyahu’s position as prime minister while enabling the messianic nationalists to implement his policy and theirs: the expansion of the settlements, construction of illegal outposts, Jewish terror, expanding the Jewish presence in East Jerusalem, opposing true negotiations with Mahmoud Abbas, nurturing the division between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority, and maintaining the siege of Gaza. All this came at the price of eroding Israel’s democracy, its image, and its international standing; damaging social cohesion and solidarity; and enabling the strengthening of Hamas and the weakening of the Palestinian Authority.

Even after October 7, Netanyahu and his government had refused to wake up and abandon their fake reality. Voices can be heard in messianic-nationalist circles that adhere to the teaching of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, the spiritual father of Gush Emunim, who claimed that the Holocaust was caused by the Jews’ refusal to recognize the signs of the “revealed End of Days.” Kook thundered: “God’s people adhered so much to the impurity of the land of the nations, that

it had to be cut and torn away from exile through the bloodshed that comes with the End.” An article by Prof. Yoel Elitzur argues that the massacre perpetrated by Hamas is part of the divine plan for the Israelis who “bring disasters upon the Jewish people and thwart the divine plan.” He associated the massacre with secularism and the failure to advance the idea of a “Greater Israel.”

Netanyahu personally ignored numerous warnings from senior figures in the defense establishment, denied that he had received alerts, and continued to push his judicial reform, weakening Israel’s resilience. Detachment from reality is the only way to explain the transfer of most of the forces in the Gaza Envelope to the West Bank just before Simchat Torah; the dismantling of the rapid response squads in the Gaza Envelope; and conversely, the allocation of forces to protect illegal outposts and a sukkah in the Palestinian town of Hawara; the allocation of billions of shekels to Haredi students at the expense of the purchase of equipment for reservists; the declaration by Ben-Gvir of “Operation Guardian of the Walls 2” in the heart of an Arab town struck by Hamas; and attempts to place the blame for the current failure on chiefs of staff who retired a decade ago and on newsreaders and the leaders of the protest movement.

Even more seriously, the detachment from reality in the Netanyahu government and the appointment of unqualified ministers for alien motives contrary to proper governance explain the government’s inability to manage the campaign and to define a diplomatic purpose behind a military operation that will wreak a heavy cost from Israeli society.

In his book *The Bar Kokhba Syndrome: Risk and Realism in International Relations*, Yehoshafat Harkabi draws on an analysis of the failure of the Bar Kokhba Revolt in the first century CE in order to understand the detachment from reality that characterizes Netanyahu and his government: “The risk of a national error was inherent in our nature as a land of vision, since a vision demands the changing of reality. However, the greatness of a vision and the condition for its realization lie in its realism, rooted in a recognition that while the vision seeks to soar above reality, its feet are also grounded in this reality. This is the difference between a vision and a fantasy that floats on the wings of illusion.” In other words, a vision based on a fake reality will ultimately fail to change the existing reality and will crash to the ground, taking its faithful with it, and leading society and state to disaster.

It has now become clear that Netanyahu’s policy allowed Hamas to undermine the imaginary status quo and to lead to the collapse of all Netanyahu’s false strategies. With this in mind, and

given the current events, which make a mockery of the incitement against advocates of democracy and of the canonical secular-Zionist vision, will the Israeli public find the maturity to reject the fake reality? Will it finally have had enough of a man whose entire philosophy is confined to survival, and who allowed extremists to lead Israel? Will it demand that Netanyahu resign and choose a new leader in the next elections — one who will prioritize the national interest by resolving the conflict with the Palestinians and the Arab world, while defending Israel's security and its international standing?

6. Qatar Has Israeli Blood on Its Hands. It's No Honest Broker for the Hostages — Ronit Marzan, Haaretz, 30/10/2023

“We want you to be quiet,” whispered Mohammed Al Emadi, the Qatari envoy in Gaza, into the ear of Hamas' Khalil al-Hayya. This sentence has been the essence of Qatar’s anesthetizing rhetoric for more than two decades.

Qatar is a wealthy country but faces demographic and geographic challenges and lacks the deep historical, religious and cultural heritage of countries like Egypt and Saudi Arabia. To position itself as a leading country in the Middle East and worldwide, Qatar's emirs adopted a strategy of anesthetizing their rivals. They provided financial assistance to Arab regimes while subverting them at the same time.

Qatar has funded extremist Islamic movements, including Hamas, and exploited the feelings of fear, shame and anger among Arab young people, including Palestinians, to incite rebellions benefiting political blocs linked to the Muslim Brotherhood. Key events such as the Arab Spring in 2011, Israel's May 2021 fighting with Gaza and Arab-Jewish violence, and the October 7 attack on Israel that the Arab world calls Operation Al-Aqsa Flood, demonstrate Qatar’s methods of operation.

The Western world and Israel were anesthetized, making them blind to Qatar. Instead of viewing Qatar as a country that incites terror, they saw it as an ally that restrains terror. They preferred to pursue Iran, which uses tough military power, and to coddle the emir, who used soft power, including financial help.

Qatar aspires to establish an Arab union to release the Arabs from dependence on Saudi financial aid and reliance on Western culture and assistance. It wants to take from Egypt the first rights to the pan-Arab ideology of President Gamal Abdel Nasser, who ruled Egypt from 1956 to 1970.

The poem read by Tamim Al-Barghouti at the end of the 2022 World Cup in Doha, the Qatari capital, was a hint of what’s happening in the emir's court. Barghouti is a social media influencer who operates under the sponsorship of Qatar's media. He coined the slogans “the liberation of all of Palestine is possible in this generation” and “the liberation of all of Palestine has begun.”

Qatar also operates a network of research institutes and universities, and has links with radical academics like Azmi Bishara, a former Knesset member who fled Israel amid suspicions he

spied for Hezbollah. These institutions educate young Arabs, including Palestinians, some of whom later take part in political subversion in their homelands.

As described by the Egyptian activist Abdul Aziz Abdullah, “Dr. Azmi guided us and was our compass in his appearances on Al Jazeera. We considered his opinions sharp, definitive and influential. We thought about escalation all the time, and we were in need of opinions. With great thirst we drank in the words of Azmi Bishara, who became our guide. ... Dr. Azmi and his commentaries on the situation greatly influenced the young people. The next encounter will be at the Clock Tower in Jaffa, Bride of the Sea.”

Muna Kurd, an activist who lives in East Jerusalem, took part in an Al Jazeera program in Doha in 2018. The protest she organized in Jerusalem's Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood and the confrontation that erupted at the Al-Aqsa Mosque between young Palestinians and Israeli police officers sparked calls for help from East Jerusalem to Mohammed Deif, Hamas' military chief. The result was a military escalation against Israel in May 2021.

Birzeit University in the West Bank, where Kurd studied, receives support from Qatar. Its Israel studies program includes criticism such as a view of Israel as a settlement-colonialist and apartheid state while supporting the elimination of the Zionist enterprise. The program is funded by Qatar.

Qatar adopts Muslim and Christian clerics. Among them is Youssef al-Qaradawi, who provided religious legitimization to young Arabs to rebel against their rulers during the Arab Spring. Another is Manuel Musallam of Birzeit, who favors an armed struggle against Israel and was visited by Emadi, the Qatari envoy in charge of transferring Qatari money to Gaza. There is also Ahmed Raissouni, who labeled the Hamas attack on Israel this month “the purest and most honorable jihad.”

The Israeli government made a mistake when it assumed that the Qatari money sent to Gaza would restrain Hamas. This perception pushed Yahya Sinwar, the Hamas leader in Gaza, into the arms of Qatar and the radical Hamas leaders who live there.

Sinwar was labeled a collaborator who sold Palestine for money, and someone who, with the other Hamas leaders in Gaza, diverted tax money to military purposes instead of the people's welfare. Sinwar's failures to lift the blockade, rebuild Gaza and get Palestinian prisoners released harmed his image and played into the hands of his rival, Qatar-based Khaled Meshal.

Meshal aims to be the head of the Palestine Liberation Organization who leads the struggle for liberation while turning the Palestinian Authority and the Hamas government in Gaza into

municipal authorities in charge of everyday life. During Hamas' attack on October 7, the external Hamas leadership left Qatar for Turkey, maybe to lift suspicions of the emir's involvement, but Meshal admitted in an interview with Al Jazeera: "The attack was planned, calculated and creative."

In May, Meshal demanded that Muslim clerics call for a jihad against Israel and declared that the Palestinians and Arabs in general must seek "a new Abdullah Azzam," a Palestinian scholar and jihadist who was killed in Pakistan in 1989. When Meshal announced this, all the intelligence agencies should have become alarmed and published warnings about Qatar, which sponsors people who dream of a new Osama bin Laden.

Via satellite channels, social media influencers, anti-American and anti-Israeli academics, clerics and the Hamas leadership in Doha, Qatar's leaders have adopted the cultural norm of honor and disgrace that worked so well during the Arab Spring. They depict themselves as intermediaries while actually they embarrass the Western world, Arab leaders and the PA for collaborating with Israel.

They are also manipulating the Hamas leaders in order to humiliate Israel and portray it as a paper tiger, while also scorning Hezbollah for adopting a strategy of harassing Israel instead of taking on more serious tasks.

The leaders of the free world must demand that Qatar choose. Will it behave like a responsible peace-seeking country or remain a part of the axis of evil, creating chaos and terror?

When it comes to releasing the hostages, it's wrong to toady to the country that has the blood of murdered people on its hands. Instead, we should ensure that the United States, which maintains the largest military base in the Middle East in Qatar, makes clear to the Qataris what they're about to lose.

7. Why Qatar Needs to Be a Safe Haven for Hamas — Ronit Marzan, Haaretz, 22/11/2023

How can a country play host to both the largest U.S. military base in the Middle East and a U.S. and U.K. proscribed terrorist organization?

This is the question being asked of the tiny Gulf nation Qatar. Since 2012, Hamas's political leadership has kept an official office in Doha. And since October 7, when it launched the deadliest civilian attack on Israel in its history, committing the largest massacre of Jews since the Holocaust, keeping such company became news, as did the country's efforts to be a critical bridge for mediation; a go-between for the West and the terrorist group when a crisis demands de-escalation.

Indeed, without the clout that comes with hosting the group, Qatar would not have had the legitimacy to have negotiated, first the release of four Hamas-held hostages and now, together with the U.S., a cease-fire that would temporarily halt the Israel-Hamas war. According to the deal, approved by Israel Wednesday, as part of the cease-fire, fifty hostages, of the 236, will be released from captivity in Gaza in exchange for 150 Palestinians in Israeli prisons.

Despite this significant achievement after six weeks of a catastrophic war, for some the scale and barbarity of the Hamas October assault would demand a line be drawn against Qatar hosting Hamas.

U.S. Senator Ted Cruz has said, "Qatar is harboring mass murderers who just orchestrated a terrorist attack," and that America should ensure Qatar turns over the Hamas leadership.

Chris Bryant, a U.K. shadow minister, pushed British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to have "tough words with Qatar in particular about why it has hosted so many people from Hamas over recent years."

Such thinking reflects a binary view of the world: you are either with us or against us. It was the core of the Bush Doctrine. But especially after this Qatari-brokered deal, it's incumbent upon Western policy makers to decide whether that outlook made the world a safer or more dangerous place.

Whether an ally can host one's enemy, even a terrorist organization, was never a "black-or-white" consideration for policy makers of the past. Since 1971, Britain had hosted an office of the PLO, despite it being classified as a terrorist group.

Similarly, the U.S. was seemingly permissive towards groups that raised money for the IRA — an organization whose stated aim was the violent overthrow of the British in Northern Ireland.

Playing host to a friend's enemies gave governments leverage over their guests. In turn, that could prove useful to one's ally.

For example, in 1979 the PLO agreed to negotiate the release of 66 Americans taken hostage in the U.S. embassy in Tehran, despite President Jimmy Carter refusing to talk to the group directly. The PLO had the pre-existing connections and influence with the new Iranian revolutionary government. Their efforts would yield the release of 13 U.S. hostages, before negotiations soured.

At the time, the PLO and its militant wings were launching a series of terror attacks in Israel, Europe and the wider world. In 1972, 11 Israeli athletes were taken hostage and murdered at the Munich Olympics. In 1973, American diplomats were even murdered at the hands of Palestinian terrorists in an attack on the Saudi embassy in Khartoum. The hijacking of international commercial airliners became commonplace. Throughout the terror, the office in London remained — and to America's eventual benefit.

That funding was sent from America to the IRA, and was known and traced by the U.S. government, gave the U.S. leverage over it. For years, it went unexploited. But when U.S. President Bill Clinton negotiated the Good Friday Agreement, which ended the conflict, it proved critical.

Neither country considered its ally complicit in terrorism. Nor did it damage their strong bonds. More than now, great powers accepted they must have a line of communication to their enemies. Having an ally host an enemy may have been uncomfortable, but necessary when the day came that one needed to speak to them. After all, diplomacy was necessarily messy. If too finely drawn, a government may close paths to de-escalation, even peace.

The acceptance of ambiguity is increasingly giving way to with-or-against-us thinking. Perhaps it was easier then: peculiar accommodations with the enemy were not common knowledge or easy to find out. Even today, few know of the PLO office in London in the 70s.

Today's surfeit of information arguably makes diplomacy more difficult. Paradoxically, in those simpler times, more nuance was allowed. There was greater space for consideration and time-biding. While the public has always demanded clear positions on what is common knowledge, in the past that wasn't based on a 24-hour news cycle; nor was the greatest bank of information available at everyone's fingertips. Now, the opportunity to swim in gray areas, where the most critical diplomacy takes place, has shrunk. Being caught in those waters risks looking indecisive, or worse, complicit.

Instead, it's politically safer to opt for stronger positions that favor optics over outcomes: speaking to the enemy is surrender. A side must be taken.

The implication is that there's one right side. Anything less is wrong. Failure to distinguish the mutual exclusion is also the wrong side.

But will this binary framework help bring peace to the current conflict in the Middle East? Will it make the releasing of hostages easier? How can Qatar be on the side of Israeli hostages and be publicly thanked by the Israeli national security advisor, yet host Hamas?

Diplomacy, rather than outright victory, is by definition a meeting somewhere in the middle. Allies need not subscribe to the same worldview; they need only to further one another's foreign policy objectives. Given the critical position the hostages will play in what could become a regional conflagration, a trusted mediator to the abductors takes on instrumental importance. Casting them out for insufficient side-ness would be self-defeating — and fatal.

In 2010, America began casting around for a Gulf ally to host an office for the Taliban, eager for peace talks to commence between the terror group and the Afghanistan government. America could then withdraw its troops from the long, costly war.

Qatar would become the Taliban's host. But it was little known at the time this came at America's instigation, or that the UAE also lobbied for the privilege. Despite peace talks collapsing, the office in Doha would still prove useful. In the 2021 U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, holding sway with the Taliban, 40% of evacuees were moved from the country via Qatar through its support.

Earlier, in 2012, after Hamas backed the uprising against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, they were forced to leave Damascus. The U.S. turned to Qatar. It did not do this for the preservation of Hamas. Instead, it recognized the group was a political reality that was not going to cease existing anytime soon.

The choice for Hamas was between Doha and Tehran, which had funded them and provided logistical support. Better they dwell in plain sight in Qatar, rather than in U.S. adversary Iran.

The communication link to Hamas through Doha has proved de-escalatory in the past. This time, it may or may not. But its existence at least gives mediation and the release of hostages a chance, rather than defaulting to all-out war.

Although the opening of both offices was not secret at the time, the circumstances that led to them were not well known. David Petraeus, the former U.S. general and CIA director, had to

remind partners during the height of the Saudi and UAE-led blockade of Qatar that Doha hosted both Hamas and the Taliban at U.S. request.

The sensitive plays of diplomacy bear most chance of success when out of view. In the febrile information environment of today, binary outlooks, or public pressure based on them, put at risk the lines of communication with enemies and terrorists that are critical for global security.

If their utility is not easily distinguishable, such links become provocative: when peace seems distant, but a group is given safe haven in an ally; or when large-scale terror attacks occur. Hawks can easily paint a picture of consorting with the enemy, or capitulation.

Despite Mossad director David Barnea meeting Qatari officials in Doha earlier this month to discuss the hostage negotiations, Western public pressure had been building on Qatar's Hamas office. But what does success for the hawks look like? Qatar's chiding by Western allies? Hamas' removal from the country?

Both would have ramifications for the future of conflict mediation. Gulf states, nor any other countries, will put themselves forward, knowing later they will be sold out by Western allies once facing public censure. Neither would a line of communication be open for the release of future hostages.

The oft-forgotten crux of mediation is that peace is made with enemies, not allies. Two adversaries must come together in agreement, something unfathomable in a binary framework. The alternative is to strive for obliteration of the other. Western foreign policy since 9/11 is testament to the failure of the latter. In the world of realpolitik, the less than ideal may well prove to be the closest to optimal.

2024

Significant Events

01.01.2024 - In the United States - President Joe Biden.

01.01.2024 - Speaker of the 25th Knesset - Amir Ohana.

01.01.2024 - Police Commissioner - Kobi Shabtai until July 17, since then Chief of Police Danny Levy.

01.01.2024 - President of the Supreme Court - Uzi Fogelman until October 6, since then Yitzhak Amit.

01.01.2024 - President of the State - Yitzhak Herzog.

01.01.2024 - Chief of the General Staff - Herzi Halevi.

01.01.2024 - 37th Prime Minister of Israel - Benjamin Netanyahu.

01.01.2024 - Norwegian Refugee Council Reports 543 Demolitions in West Bank, Up 21% on 2023

01.01.2024 - Residents of Al-Bustan in Silwan Begin Finding Demolition Orders Sticked to Doors of Their Homes

05.01.2024 - A pro-Palestinian protest took place in Chicago, Illinois, with dozens of participants. The protesters demonstrated at Union Station and demanded a ceasefire.

09.01.2024 - Moab Resolution 2720 – Calls for increased humanitarian aid and opening of all crossings to Gaza. Adopted by a majority of 13 in favor, 0 against, 2 abstentions (Russia and USA).

09.01.2024 - South Africa submits request to the International Court of Justice to initiate proceedings to apply the Convention on the Prevention of Genocide in the Gaza Strip

09.01.2024 - The American Jewish Committee (AJC) issued a statement following the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling in South Africa's case against Israel. The organization strongly rejected the accusations of genocide, arguing that "the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, indigenous to Jews and Arabs alike, cannot be the exclusive domain of one people, but must be shared."

09.01.2024 - The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) reported a 360% increase in anti-Semitic incidents in the United States after October 7, with more than 3,000 incidents in the first three months of the war. Jonathan Greenblatt, ADL CEO, said: "The American Jewish community is facing a level of threat that is unprecedented in modern history." The organization has come

under internal criticism from employees for being “anti-Palestinian” and for focusing too much on pro-Palestinian activism. A survey conducted between February 23 and March 11, 2024 by the Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA) found that 79% of American Jews feel close to Israel, but 72% of them expressed pride in Israel in general, while almost two-thirds have difficulty supporting the actions of the Israeli government. Eric Fingerhut, president and CEO of JFNA, said, “Americans understand that Israel’s war on terror is also our war.”

21.01.2024 - A government decision was published on the transfer of planning and construction authorities from the Ministry of Finance to the Ministry of the Interior - the government decision confirms Transfer of powers between the Ministers of Finance, Interior, and Construction and Housing and transfer of operational areas between ministries accordingly. The resolution approves bringing the transfer of powers to the Knesset for approval and notifying the Speaker of the Knesset of the transfer of operational areas, as required by law.

22.01.2024 - Turkey removes Israel from its list of export destinations.

26.01.2024 - Decision of the International Court of Justice in The Hague ordering Israel to prevent acts of genocide

26.01.2024 - International – ICJ: Interim order in the case of South Africa v. Israel (Genocide) – Provisions for prevention of prohibited acts, humanitarian assistance and reporting to the Court.

26.01.2024 - The International Court of Justice issues an interim order (provisional measures) ordering Israel to take all measures to prevent genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza

26.01.2024 - The International Court of Justice issues interim measures ordering Israel to take all measures to prevent genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza

12.02.2024 - Netherlands – Court of Appeals in The Hague: Order to stop export of F-35 parts to Israel due to “clear risk” of use in serious violations of the laws of war.

18.02.2024 - Benjamin Netanyahu addressed the Conference of Presidents of Major American Organizations in Jerusalem. He said: “We must finish the job” and stressed that “the Israeli military is making unprecedented efforts to protect civilians.” Netanyahu attacked South Africa and the Brazilian president for the genocide accusations, arguing that “complete victory” means “the release of the hostages.”

18.02.2024 - The International Court of Justice issues interim measures ordering Israel to take all measures to prevent genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza

22.02.2024 - Foreign Minister Israel Katz addressed the Conference of Presidents, calling for a “new public diplomacy front” against the “axis of evil” led by Iran. Katz said, “If we do not win the war against anti-Semitism, it will endanger Jewish communities around the world and could even affect Israel’s ability to act in self-defense.” He added, “ Hamas is the new Nazis.”

22.02.2024 - Moab Resolution 2728 – Demands an immediate ceasefire as part of Ramadan, the unconditional release of all hostages, and increased humanitarian aid. Adopted by a majority of 14 in favor, 0 against, 1 abstention (USA).

23.02.2024 - International Court of Justice issues interim order in South Africa case requiring entry of essential aid to Gaza amid reports of dangerous famine

23.02.2024 - The Conference of Presidents organized the “Stand Together” march in Washington. The statement said, “Organized in the wake of the deadliest attack on Israel since the Holocaust, this march is designed to unite American voices in support of Israel and to take a firm stand against terrorism.”

28.02.2024 - Declaration of 12,000 dunams in the Jordan Valley as "state lands" - the largest area since Oslo

01.03.2024 - AIPAC held its annual conference in Washington, D.C., amid heightened security measures in the wake of threats of protests. The organization issued lobbying documents calling for unconditional support for Israel and a \$14 billion military aid package. AIPAC argued that “concerns about the conduct of the war against Hamas are best conveyed privately” and that “public statements that show disagreement are unhelpful and could strengthen Hamas and Iran.”

01.03.2024 - Government transfers powers from the Military Civil Administration to civilian entities under Minister Smotrich - Appointment of "civil deputy" (settler) as commander of the Civil Administration

01.03.2024 - ICC issues arrest warrants for Netanyahu, Legault and three Hamas leaders

01.03.2024 - The American Jewish Committee unanimously adopted “Ten Principles on the Israel-Hamas War and the Path to Peace.” The document stressed that "Israel stands with Israel in its just war to eliminate the Hamas threat" but also expressed "deep regret at the heavy toll the war is taking on Palestinian civilians." The organization called for the creation of an

"autonomous, demilitarized, and meaningfully continuous political entity" for the Palestinians. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) released a report on a 360% increase in anti-Semitic incidents in the United States after October 7, with more than 3,000 incidents in the first three months of the war. Jonathan Greenblatt, ADL's executive director, said: "The American Jewish community is facing a level of threat that is unprecedented in modern history." The organization has faced internal criticism from employees for being "anti-Palestinian" and for focusing too much on pro-Palestinian activism.

01.03.2024 - UN Security Council Resolution 2735 – adopted a three-phase plan: full ceasefire, release of hostages, Israeli withdrawal, multi-year reconstruction and sovereignty of Gaza under the Palestinian Authority. Adopted by a majority of 14 in favor, 0 against, 12 abstentions (Russia).

06.03.2024 - Approval of the development of approximately 3,000 housing units in Ma'ale Adumim, Efrat and Kidder - 2,052 units in Ma'ale Adumim, 694 in Efrat and 330 in Kidder

09.03.2024 - Erdogan's declaration: Turkey will not label Hamas as a terrorist organization. Turkey will continue to stand firmly behind Hamas.

18.03.2024 - Resumption of negotiations for the first time since December 2023 between Israel and Hamas

25.03.2024 - Moab Resolution 2728 – Demands an immediate ceasefire as part of Ramadan, the unconditional release of all hostages, and increased humanitarian aid. Adopted by a majority of 14 in favor, 0 against, 1 abstention (USA).

28.03.2024 - Abu Mazen approves the appointment of a new Palestinian Prime Minister - Mohammed Mustafa.

28.03.2024 - International Court of Justice issues interim order in South Africa case requiring entry of essential aid to Gaza amid reports of dangerous famine

28.03.2024 - International – ICJ: Modification/expansion of interim measures in the case of South Africa v. Israel (order of 28/03/2024).

28.03.2024 - The International Court of Justice, as part of the South African lawsuit, issues an interim order requiring the entry of essential aid into the Strip against the backdrop of a report of a dangerous famine

01.04.2024 - AIPAC supported a bipartisan congressional resolution that demonstrated “that America stands with Israel unquestionably as it confronts aggression from Iran and its terrorist

proxies.” The organization also supported the “Illegitimate Court Counteraction Act,” which sanctioned the International Criminal Court for its “morally and legally baseless attack on Israel.”

01.04.2024 - International Court of Justice rules that Israel's settlement policy violates the Israeli Security Council (suit that began in 2022)

01.04.2024 - Issuance of arrest warrants by the International Criminal Court against Netanyahu and Galant

01.04.2024 - On May 24, 2024, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ordered Israel to “immediately cease its military offensive and any other action in the Rafah district that would impose on the Palestinian population in Gaza conditions of life likely to result in its physical destruction in whole or in part.” The ruling was passed by a vote of 13 to 2. The court also ordered Israel to open the Rafah Crossing to humanitarian aid and allow international investigators to enter Gaza.

01.04.2024 - Shelling of the Iranian Consulate building in Damascus and the death of Mohammad Reza Zahedi, a senior commander in the Quds Force of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards.

09.04.2024 - Turkey imposes partial economic sanctions on 54 products including cement and steel.

13.04.2024 - Iranian attack on Israel on the night between April 13-14, 2024, which included 110-130 ballistic missiles, 36 cruise missiles, and approximately 185 UAVs.

15.04.2024 - Joint meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the GCC and Central Asian countries.

18.04.2024 - The largest wave of student protests began at Columbia University, New York, with mass arrests of over 100 students at a pro-Palestinian encampment.

19.04.2024 - Election of Joseph Awan as President of Lebanon

19.04.2024 - First Israeli attack on Iran.

19.04.2024 - Student protests expanded with arrests at Columbia University

25.04.2024 - A pro-Palestinian protest took place in Indianapolis, Indiana, with approximately 30 participants. 14 protesters were arrested outside Governor Holcomb's residence after blocking Meridian Street.

30.04.2024 - International – ICJ: Rejection of request for interim orders in the case of Nicaragua v. Germany (concerning claims of arms/aid exports) – but proceedings continue.

30.04.2024 - Violent clashes occurred at UCLA, Los Angeles, California, involving hundreds of students. The clashes took place at night between protesters and counter-protesters at the student encampment.

01.05.2024 - Establishment of a new legal unit in the Ministry of Defense under Minister Smotrich - taking powers that were previously held by the Civil Military Administration

01.05.2024 - Several major mainstream and liberal Jewish organizations in America have expressed opposition to the reestablishment of Israeli settlements in Gaza. Carol Nouriel, ADL's Israel office director, said: "We are deeply troubled by statements by Israeli government ministers and activists who support the immigration or 'depopulation' of Palestinians in Gaza. These views reflect an inhumane approach."

01.05.2024 - The Israeli government announces a new humanitarian aid package for Gaza worth 120 million euros

01.05.2024 - The student protest movement reached its peak with pro-Palestinian student encampments at 138 universities across the US, involving thousands of students.

02.05.2024 - Turkey imposes full economic sanctions on imports and exports to Israel.

05.05.2024 - Hamas accepts 3-stage ceasefire proposal (rejected by Israel)

06.05.2024 - IDF forces enter Rafah.

07.05.2024 - Israeli attack on Rafah begins - ground forces take control of Rafah crossing

10.05.2024 - ICC issues arrest warrants for Netanyahu, Legault and three Hamas leaders

10.05.2024 - The Palestinian Authority receives official status as a full member of the UN (in the General Assembly and not in the Security Council).

10.05.2024 - The UN General Assembly expanded Palestine's participation rights and determined that Palestine is qualified for full membership, but Palestine was not admitted as a full member because the move was blocked in the Security Council.

16.05.2024 - The 33rd Summit of the Arab League in Bahrain.

17.05.2024 - Opening of the maritime aid corridor to the Gaza Strip (a pier built by the US aimed at delivering humanitarian aid from Cyprus directly to the Strip).

19.05.2024 - Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi was killed after his helicopter crashed near the Iran-Azerbaijan border.

19.05.2024 - The crash of the Iranian President's helicopter and the deaths of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian.

20.05.2024 - Issuance of arrest warrants by the International Criminal Court for Netanyahu, Leglanc and three Hamas leaders

20.05.2024 - The Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court requested arrest warrants for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, and three senior Hamas leaders.

21.05.2024 - Request by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court in The Hague (ICC) to issue arrest warrants against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

24.05.2024 - International – ICJ: Additional Order in the Case of South Africa v. Israel (ZIP in Rafah) – New Provisions Alongside Reaffirmation of Previous Orders.

24.05.2024 - The American Jewish Committee (AJC) issued a statement following the International Court of Justice's opinion on the Israeli and Palestinian territories. The organization argued that "the ICJ's opinion is not only factually and legally problematic; It endangers the chances of peace and could remove the basis for the existence of the Palestinian Authority."

25.05.2024 - Knesset legislation banning UNRWA operations in Israel comes into effect

25.05.2024 - The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) issued a statement condemning the ICJ ruling demanding an end to Israeli military action in Rafah. The organization argued that the ruling "ignores Israel's right to defend itself" and "empowers terrorist organizations." The ADL emphasized that Israel is working to prevent harm to civilians and is making unprecedented efforts to protect civilians.

27.05.2024 - Arab-European Summit in Brussels, with the participation of ministers from the Arab Conference and the EU Foreign Relations Council.

28.05.2024 - Recognition by Norway, Spain, and Ireland of a sovereign Palestinian state.

28.05.2024 - Spain, Ireland, Norway recognize Palestinian state

29.05.2024 - Israel gaining control of the Philadelphia Corridor.

29.05.2024 - Israel – Structural Change: Published IDF Order Transfers Areas of Legal/Regulatory Authority in the Civil Administration to Civilian Officials Reporting to Smotrich at the Defense Ministry.

29.05.2024 - The government approves a huge expansion: 22 new settlements, including in areas from which Israel withdrew in 2005 - "a de facto annexation move"

01.06.2024 - Comprehensive research data from the Crowd Counting Consortium was published showing 3,700+ days of pro-Palestinian protest activity at 500+ schools in the US since October 7, involving hundreds of thousands of participants.

01.06.2024 - In June 2024, after extensive discussion, the editors of the English Wikipedia voted that the ADL was "generally unreliable" on issues related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The resolution noted that there was "significant evidence that the ADL operates as a pro-Israel lobby group and has repeatedly published false and misleading statements as fact without correction." More than 40 Jewish organizations, including the ADL itself, wrote a scathing letter of protest to the Wikimedia Foundation.

01.06.2024 - In June 2024, numerous cases of Jewish staff members being fired from Jewish institutions in the United States for anti-Zionist or pro-Palestinian positions were revealed. For example, teacher Adam Gottlieb was fired from a Reform synagogue in Highland Park, Illinois, 27 hours after showing a video of a Palestinian comedian to his students. Many employees in the Jewish community reported being afraid to express critical views of Israel.

01.06.2024 - Publication of a World Bank report, the Israeli government: Gaza damage and reconstruction estimated at approximately \$53.2 billion

01.06.2024 - Talks on the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip by the 7G between the Israeli government and Egypt, including support for UNRWA

01.06.2024 - The government approves the application of Israeli sovereignty to parts of Area B - issuing demolition orders in territories under the control of the Palestinian Authority in violation of the Oslo Accords

04.06.2024 - Slovenia recognizes Palestinian state

06.06.2024 - European Parliament elections held from June 6 to 9, 2024

07.06.2024 - Protests against the arms industry took place in Fort Worth, Texas, with dozens of participants. The campaign called for stopping the shipment of F-35 wings to Israel through Lockheed Martin.

09.06.2024 - Meeting of the GCC Foreign Ministers in Doha, Qatar.

10.06.2024 - The UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2735, endorsing a three-phase framework for a ceasefire, the release of the hostages, and the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip; 14 states voted in favor and Russia abstained.

10.06.2024 - UN Security Council Resolution 2735 – adopted a three-phase plan: full ceasefire, release of hostages, Israeli withdrawal, multi-year reconstruction and sovereignty of Gaza under the Palestinian Authority. Adopted by a majority of 14 in favor, 0 against, 12 abstentions (Russia).

11.06.2024 - Special international conference in Jordan titled "Call to Action: Urgent Humanitarian Response to Gaza" with the participation of leaders from Arab countries, UN organizations and other countries.

18.06.2024 - Exposing a bypass mechanism: 70 illegal outposts were recognized as eligible for funding and infrastructure without formal legalization - Minister Smotrich's order

23.06.2024 - Netanyahu announces end of intensive fighting against Hamas

27.06.2024 - The cabinet decides on the establishment of 5 new settlements: Eviatar, Givat Assaf, Sde Ephraim, Aduriyim and Nahal Haletz

30.06.2024 - Snap elections for the French parliament – no bloc has a majority to form a government

04.07.2024 - General elections in the UK – Labour victory

07.07.2024 - Second round of the French parliamentary elections

10.07.2024 - Bill supporting the revocation of citizenship for Israeli-Turkish dual citizens passed first reading in the Turkish Parliament.

13.07.2024 - Assassination attempt on Donald Trump in Pennsylvania.

13.07.2024 - General elections in Germany. The CDU party led by Meretz wins the most votes

19.07.2024 - International Court of Justice rules that Israel's settlement policy violates the Israeli Security Council (suit that began in 2022)

19.07.2024 - International Court of Justice rules that Israel's settlement policy is contrary to the Israeli Security Council (suit that began in 2022)

19.07.2024 - International – ICJ: Advisory Opinion on the Legal Implications of Israel's Policies and Practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (including Settlements) – Call for an End to Violations/Occupation and Implications for Other States.

19.07.2024 - Prime Minister Starmer announces a cut in foreign aid and an increase in the defense budget to up to 2.5% of GDP

19.07.2024 - The American Jewish Committee (AJC) issued a statement following the International Court of Justice's opinion on the Israeli and Palestinian territories. The organization argued that "the ICJ's opinion is not only factually and legally problematic; it jeopardizes the prospects for peace and could remove the basis for the existence of the Palestinian Authority."

31.07.2024 - Ismail Haniyeh, head of Hamas' Political Bureau, was killed in an attack attributed to Israel in Tehran, the capital of Iran.

01.08.2024 - Following the assassination of Haniyeh, Turkey declared a day of national mourning.

02.08.2024 - A senior Turkish delegation took part in Ismail Haniyeh's funeral in Qatar.

07.08.2024 - Summit meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Saudi Arabia, on the topic of "The ongoing crimes of Israel, the illegal occupying power, against the Palestinian people and its violation of the sovereignty of the Islamic Republic of Iran."

07.08.2024 - Turkey joined South Africa's lawsuit against Israel at the ICJ in The Hague.

19.08.2024 - On the first day of the Democratic Convention in Chicago, Illinois, protests took place outside the convention with thousands of pro-Palestinian protesters from a coalition of over 200 groups. A partial breach of the security fence occurred.

20.08.2024 - Clashes occurred near the Israeli consulate in Chicago with 55 arrests

20.08.2024 - Violent clashes occurred near the Israeli consulate in Chicago, Illinois, involving dozens of protesters. 55 protesters were arrested after violent confrontations with police during the Democratic Convention.

21.08.2024 - A central protest took place at Union Park in Chicago with over 2,000 participants

21.08.2024 - New Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi takes office.

22.08.2024 - The last night of Democratic Convention protests took place in Chicago

25.08.2024 - Launch of Israel's preemptive attack against Hezbollah (air attack).

25.08.2024 - Maj. Gen. Danny Levy was appointed the 20th Commissioner of the Israel Police.

27.08.2024 - Israeli Bulldozers Demolish Silwan Home of Younis Odeh and Another on Same Day

28.08.2024 - Opening of "Summer Camps" operation in refugee camps in the West Bank.

31.08.2024 - Discovery of six hostages' bodies: Hersh Goldberg-Polin, Eden Yerushalmi, Uri Danino, Alex Lobanov, Almog Sarusi, and Carmel Gat, in a tunnel in Rafah.

01.09.2024 - Locating the six bodies of Israeli hostages in Gaza.

10.09.2024 - Meeting of the Arab League Foreign Ministers in Cairo.

13.09.2024 - The head of the Turkish intelligence organization met with members of Hamas's Political Bureau in Ankara.

15.09.2024 - New Jordanian Prime Minister Jafar Hassan takes office.

17.09.2024 - "Operation Beepers" - The explosion of thousands of pagers in the hands of Hezbollah operatives throughout Lebanon and Syria.

19.09.2024 - Start of Operation Northern Arrows.

24.09.2024 - The 79th session of the UN General Assembly in New York (until the 30th of the same month).

26.09.2024 - Joint meeting of Arab League countries and the UN on the sidelines of the Assembly.

27.09.2024 - Assassination of Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah.

30.09.2024 - Beginning of ground maneuver in Lebanon.

01.10.2024 - The Iranian attack (second) on Israel.

04.10.2024 - The Iranian Foreign Minister met with the Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament.

05.10.2024 - IDF forces launch operation in northern Gaza - Jabaliya refugee camp and Beit Hanoun

05.10.2024 - The Iranian Foreign Minister met with senior Syrian government officials.

07.10.2024 - After Justice Uzi Vogelman's retirement, Justice Yitzhak Amit began serving as Acting President of the Supreme Court.

07.10.2024 - On the anniversary of Hamas' attack, protests took place on campuses across the US

08.10.2024 - The Turkish Parliament held a secret session on the topic of "The Israeli Threat to Turkey."

10.10.2024 - The Iranian Foreign Minister met with the Saudi Crown Prince.

13.10.2024 - The Iranian Foreign Minister met with senior European Union officials.

14.10.2024 - The Iranian Foreign Minister met with the Omani Foreign Minister.

14.10.2024 - a protest took place at the New York Stock Exchange with 500 protesters from Jewish Voice for Peace

16.10.2024 - Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar killed in Rafah

16.10.2024 - The Iranian Foreign Minister met with the King of Jordan.

17.10.2024 - The Iranian Foreign Minister met with the President of Egypt.

18.10.2024 - The Iranian Foreign Minister met with the President of Turkey.

18.10.2024 - The Turkish Foreign Minister hosted members of the Hamas Shura Council.

21.10.2024 - National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir attended a gathering of far-right activists near the Gaza border that called for the establishment of a new Jewish settlement in the Gaza Strip. The event demonstrated the Israeli right's ongoing push for settlement restoration in Gaza.

21.10.2024 - The Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) held its annual gala in New York. Morton Klein, president of ZOA, expressed full support for Jewish settlement in Gaza, saying: "We really support Jews who want to return to their homes in Gaza or live in Gaza. If two million Arabs can live in Israel, why can't Jews live in Gaza?"

22.10.2024 - The Iranian Foreign Minister met with Hamas representatives in Istanbul.

29.10.2024 - The Iranian Foreign Minister delivered a speech at a meeting with ambassadors and heads of missions in Tehran.

01.11.2024 - Costa, the President of the European Council meets with Mahmoud Abbas In Cairo

01.11.2024 - The American Jewish Committee (AJC) issued a statement after Amnesty International declared that Israel was committing genocide in the Gaza Strip. The organization

argued that genocide is not occurring in Gaza and that Amnesty's report is "an anti-Semitic attempt to isolate and legitimize the State of Israel." The AJC reiterated its support for "a Jewish and democratic state living in peace and security with its neighbors."

05.11.2024 - Demolition of the house of Fakhri Abu Diab, the leader of the Silwan community who led the fight against house demolitions for 20 years

05.11.2024 - Former US President Donald Trump won a second term in the US presidential election.

06.11.2024 - Chancellor Schulz announces the fall of his government

09.11.2024 - The Iranian Foreign Minister delivered a speech at a conference commemorating Hassan Nasrallah.

11.11.2024 - The Arab-Islamic Summit in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

13.11.2024 - The Turkish Defense Minister labeled Israel as a potential enemy state that might attack Turkey.

17.11.2024 - Declaration of approximately 10 dunams near Yitzhar as "state lands" - the seventh declaration of the year

17.11.2024 - The Palestinian Authority condemns Hamas' refusal to extend Phase 1 of the ceasefire agreement and Israel's decision to block the entry of humanitarian aid

17.11.2024 - The Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) held its annual gala in New York. Morton Klein, president of ZOA, expressed full support for Jewish settlement in Gaza, saying: "We really support Jews who want to return to their homes in Gaza or live in Gaza. If two million Arabs can live in Israel, why can't Jews live in Gaza?"

19.11.2024 - The Iranian Foreign Minister met with the Syrian Foreign Minister.

21.11.2024 - ICC issues arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Galant

21.11.2024 - International – ICC (Pre-Trial Chamber I): Arrest Warrants Issued Against Benjamin Netanyahu, Yoav Galant, and Muhammad Deif (in connection with the Gaza War; War Crimes/Crimes Against Humanity Alleged).

21.11.2024 - Issuance of arrest warrants by the Hague Court against the Prime Minister and former Defense Minister.

21.11.2024 - Issuance of arrest warrants by the International Criminal Court against Netanyahu and Galant

25.11.2024 - The Iranian Foreign Minister delivered a speech at a virtual conference of Foreign Ministers on the Palestinian issue.

27.11.2024 - A ceasefire agreement was signed between Lebanon and Israel.

01.12.2024 - AIPAC expressed support for a bipartisan congressional resolution that demonstrated “that America stands with Israel unquestionably as it confronts Aggression from Iran and its terrorist proxies.” The organization also supported the “Illegitimate Court Counteraction Act,” which imposed sanctions on the International Criminal Court for “the morally and legally baseless attack against Israel.”

01.12.2024 - An emergency Arab summit in Cairo - presentation of the Arab reconstruction plan for Gaza, including a proposal to establish a technocratic government

04.12.2024 - Fall of the Barnier government, France, in a vote of no confidence

05.12.2024 - AIPAC issued a scathing statement following Amnesty International’s report on genocide in Gaza. The organization said, “Once again, Amnesty International has issued a defamatory attack on Israel that amounts to a blood libel against the Jewish state.” AIPAC rejected the genocide claims and claimed that Israel was taking unprecedented measures to protect civilians.

05.12.2024 - Approval of the plan to expand Givat Hamatos (Hebron Road Strip) - completion The Southern Ring of Settlements Around East Jerusalem

05.12.2024 - Kaia Kallas visits the PA and Israel

06.12.2024 - Minister Smotrich Announces Completion of the Declaration of 24,258 Dunams as "State Lands" During 2024 - About Half of All Lands Declared Since the Oslo Accords

08.12.2024 - Fall of the al-Assad regime in Syria: The end of 54 years of Assad family rule in Syria.

16.12.2024 - Chancellor Schulz loses a vote of no confidence

19.12.2024 - The Iranian President addressed the situation in Gaza and Lebanon during the D8 Summit in Cairo.

31.12.2024 - 2024 Budget Summary: 7 Billion NIS Allocated for Settlement Roads (5-Year Plan)

31.12.2024 - 2024 Budget Summary: 75 Million NIS Transferred to Illegal Outposts (39 Million to Herding Farms)

31.12.2024 - Budget Summary 2024: NIS 409 Million for Unique Projects in Settlements (Antiquities Preservation, Sebastia, Old City Basin, Elad in Silwan)

31.12.2024 - Summary of 2024: 1,065 Palestinian structures demolished due to lack of permits - a historic record (compared to 870 in 2016)

31.12.2024 - Summary of 2024: 1,399 New Tenders Published for Housing Units in the West Bank (Excluding East Jerusalem)

31.12.2024 - Summary of 2024: 452 additional structures demolished as part of military operations

31.12.2024 - Summary of 2024: 47 Palestinian communities forcibly displaced since October 2023 (approximately 300 families, 1,762 people)

31.12.2024 - Summary of 2024: 59 New Outposts Established - Most of Them Agricultural "Herder Farms" Involved in Land Seizure and Expulsion of Palestinians (Absolute Record)

31.12.2024 - Summary of 2024: 9,884 Housing Units Approved in West Bank Settlements

31.12.2024 - Summary of 2024: Beginning of legalization of 5 additional outposts as "neighborhoods" of existing settlements (Achiya, Beit Eliyahu, Bnei Adam, Mahane Gadi, Givat Hanan)

31.12.2024 - Summary of 2024: Construction of 114 km of unauthorized roads by settlers

31.12.2024 - Summary of 2024: Settler violence: 1,420 incidents - 356 Palestinians injured and 3 killed

31.12.2024 - Summary of 2024: Zero permits Construction Approved for Palestinians in Area C - Out of 138 Appeals, 137 Rejected

1. A Dose of Depressive Realism for the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict — Prof. Gilad Hirschberger, Prof. Sivan Hirsch-Hoefler & Dr. Shaul Arieli, Times of Israel, 08/02/2024

The reaction of the American public to the events of October 7th and the ensuing war on Gaza seem to mirror the growing polarization in American society. Supporters of Israel focus almost exclusively on the atrocities of October 7th, whereas supporters of the Palestinians focus on the death toll of the war on Gaza while denying or ignoring the events that preceded it. The rhetoric on both sides leaves little room for nuance, ambivalence, or for the consideration of the other side's position. It seems that young Americans between the ages of 18–24 are particularly afflicted by the notion that from the river to the sea only one side should be free. We combine psychodynamic theory and data from surveys on representative samples of voting-age Americans to shed light on the dilemmas facing young Americans who tend to gravitate towards simplistic solutions that are psychologically satisfying but practically dangerous.

Melanie Klein, a pioneer in applying psychoanalytic theory to child development, offers some insight into how the changing mental perspectives of children can help understand why adults often vacillate between simplistic and more erudite and intricate explanations of phenomena that are inherently complex, such as war and trauma. Klein suggested that over the course of child development, a shift occurs from a paranoid-schizoid position to a depressive position. The paranoid-schizoid position is characterized by splitting the self and other into dichotomous good and evil with little ability to integrate the two or to recognize the relativity of these terms. In adulthood, events such as war and trauma may induce a regression to this earlier primitive stage, and then the dehumanization and demonization of the other, the inability to tolerate difference or ambiguity, the romanticization of the past, and idealization of the future dominate the discussion and reinforce an immature self-righteous stance that feels good and is not easily abandoned.

The warm and fuzzy feeling of always being right, however, is often maladaptive. Just as a child eventually recognizes, albeit reluctantly, that there are other people in the world and that these people also have rights and needs that must be acknowledged and reckoned with, so are adults in the context of war and trauma required to accept the complex and contingent nature of terms such as truth and justice. Klein called this the depressive position. It is depressive in the sense that the child develops a more realistic perspective of the world, no longer seeing him- or herself as the omnipotent center of being. The depressive position requires consideration of the other and an understanding that compromise is essential. The depressive

position enables empathy and moral emotions such as guilt that are necessary for mature social functioning and for peaceful relations with other groups. The depressive position in the context of intractable intergroup conflict is the recognition that both sides, Israelis and Palestinians, will still be on the same land when the blood dries and the dust settles; it is the understanding that painful compromise, not dreams about vanquishing the other, is the practical way forward.

Opinion polls that we conducted on representative samples of the American public before and after October 7th underscore the tension between paranoid-schizoid processes and depressive ones; between attraction to absolutist attitudes to acquiescence with pragmatic solutions and compromises. Knowledge is the enemy of the paranoid-schizoid position, and after October 7th we see that strong convictions are met with little knowledge to back them. Young Americans, 18–24, in September professed little knowledge of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with only 21% considering themselves knowledgeable. Only two months later that figure soared to 33%. This dramatic increase could be attributed to a parallel increase in claiming to stay updated on the topic, up from 28% in September to 42% in November, but when asked some basic factual questions, such as “Who is the Prime Minister of Israel?” and “Who is President of the Palestinian Authority?”, the 18–24 age group showed the lowest levels of knowledge compared to other age groups.

This combination of high perceived knowledge with low actual knowledge is associated with opinions that often differ from those of other Americans. Whereas older Americans believe that more pressure must be exerted by the United States on the Palestinians and not on Israel, younger Americans show the opposite trend and increased their support for more pressure on Israel post-October 7. Young Americans’ sense of empathy towards both sides intensified after October 7th. They felt more empathy towards the Palestinians than towards Israel even before October 7th, with 31% supporting the Palestinians and only 18% supporting the Israelis, but after October 7th only 10% felt empathy towards Israel and 51% felt empathy with the Palestinians. Other age groups show more empathy towards both sides after October 7th or show increased empathy only towards Israel. Moreover, young Americans are the only age group that sees the current conflict as Israel’s fault, 46%, more than it is the Palestinians’ fault, 36%. More than any other age group, they view the war on Gaza as genocide, 42%, and less than any other age group view the October 7th attacks on Israel as attempted genocide, 52%. Young Americans, more than any other age group, believe that the conflict will be resolved when Jews go back to where they came from, 24% support.

Although this pattern of findings may suggest a paranoid-schizoid position wherein dichotomization characterizes thinking, other findings reflect a more depressive position that recognizes complexity and the need for compromise. For instance, after October 7th, young Americans' support for a two-state solution increased from 34% to 42%, and 60% believe that negotiated compromise is the way to resolve the conflict over other options. The shift from the paranoid-schizoid position to the depressive position is a two-way street. There are fluctuations between the need to organize reality into simple categories of good and bad, and the mature, alas depressing, realization that negotiated compromise is the realistic option.

American public opinion that oscillates between the paranoid-schizoid belief that only one side is right to the depressive recognition that conciliation is needed is also reflected in the actual history of the conflict. Early Zionist fantasies of “a land without people for a people without a land” and Arab rejectionism indicated in the “three nos” of the 1967 Khartoum resolution are but a few examples of paranoid-schizoid thinking. The 1937 Peel Commission proposal, the 1947 UN Partition Plan, the 1993 Oslo Accords are points in time when it became clear that the depressive position of giving up unrealistic dreams, dividing cherished land, and sharing resources is the only realistic antidote to endless war and bloodshed.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has reached an apex point that place both people on the brink of unprecedented catastrophe. Israeli novelist Amos Oz suggested that this tragedy can end either as a Shakespearean tragedy with the stage strewn with bodies, or as a Chekhovian tragedy with everyone bitter, disillusioned, disappointed, but alive. This analogy mirrors Klein's developmental analysis and suggests not only that the paranoid-schizoid position of public opinion fans the flames of the conflict, but that the alternative is not utopian peace, but a “clenched-teeth” compromise, a depressive reckoning that will be dissatisfying to all, but that may enable both sides to embark on a new phase in their bloody relationship that will be characterized by depressive realism — the reluctant realization that the other is here to stay.

2. Until October 7 We Ignored the Palestinian Problem. Now We're Paying the Price — Shaul Arieli, Sivan Hirsch-Hoeftler and Gilad Hirschberger, Haaretz / Shaul Arieli website, 14/02/2024

The Hamas attack on October 7 shattered the wall of denial and placed the Palestinian problem back on the center stage of Israeli, regional, and global discourse. After years of relegating the Palestinian question to the sidelines; after false claims by the prime minister about the “most peaceful” decade for Israel's security; after the Israeli public has become enamored with the deceptive status quo; after falling for the illusion that Israel would be able to establish relations with Arab countries while bypassing the Palestinian problem — the conflict has raised its ugly head and is forcing us to confront the painful reality.

Over the past year and a half our research group, Tamrur-Politography, has undertaken a multidisciplinary and broad-based endeavor to create a comprehensive database to trace developments in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict over time and identify trajectories of change. Our analysis reveals that many in Israel and abroad disregarded the Palestinian problem prior to October 7th, and only few warned that ignoring the elephant in the room and failing to prepare a diplomatic plan to address it would eventually come back to hurt us.

Our project presents a social anatomy of the multisystemic failure that can help explain the current conflagration in the long-standing Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Dr. Maoz Rosenthal found that the decisions of the 35th, 36th, and 37th Israeli governments, 2020–2023, and the discussions of the committees in the 23rd, 24th, and 25th Knessets on the conflict were few in number and focused exclusively on steps to promote annexation. An analysis of leadership discourse in social media showed a similar trend. Specifically, over 70,000 tweets posted by the heads of all the political parties between December 2018 and May 2023 indicate a low level of attention to the Israeli-Palestinian issue. Most of the tweets on the issue came from the heads of the religious right-wing and secular left-wing parties, both of whom focused mainly on the annexation option, whether they supported or opposed this policy. The leaders of the center parties preferred not to address the issue at all. The Palestinian problem was demoted to the corner of political discourse, rendering it almost entirely absent.

As for the Palestinian leadership, Dr. Ronit Marzen analyzed 33 speeches by Mahmoud Abbas and 15 by Ismail Haniyeh over the period 2021–2022. Both leaders sought to change attitudes and bring the Palestinian cause back to center stage by amplifying the Palestinian national

narrative. Abbas in his speeches called to end the occupation and reach a permanent agreement through a concerted diplomatic campaign directed at the international community and moderate Arab leaders, and through partnership in the war on terror in the Middle East. Haniyeh attempted to persuade the international community and Arab leaders to recognize the legitimacy of "armed resistance." The word "peace" appeared dozens of times in Abbas's discourse, but only once in Haniyeh's, and only in reference to a "false peace."

We sought to examine whether the Israeli press had also evaded discussion of the conflict and possible diplomatic solutions. Dr. Rosenthal studied the attitude of the Israeli press through an analysis of 38,774 headlines that appeared on the front pages of Haaretz, Yediot Aharonot, and Israel Hayom from the beginning of 2018 to the end of May 2023. Haaretz covered the conflict more frequently than the other newspapers and focused on the issue of annexation; the other two newspapers focused on security incidents. All three newspapers refrained from presenting possible solutions to the conflict. The Israeli press effectively reflected the political atmosphere in Israel, ignoring discourse on territorial solutions.

Along with our analyses of the political elite and the press, we also examined whether public discourse and public opinion among Israelis and Palestinians are consistent with those of the political leadership. Prof. Moran Yarchi analyzed Israeli public discourse on the conflict between February 2021 and February 2023, based on a sample of 14,972 Facebook posts and 24,410 tweets. She found that public involvement, likes, replies, and shares, to posts discussing various policy alternatives attracted a low level of attention relative to online political discourse in general. Those who did show some involvement with policy alternatives tended to support solutions that are based on territorial compromise, such as a bilateral agreement or unilateral separation, and to oppose solutions based on continued occupation, such as annexation of territories or the status quo.

Prof. Gilad Hirschberger and Prof. Sivan Hirsch-Hoefler conducted 14 surveys among Jewish Israelis and three among Arab citizens of Israel between 2018 and 2023. In addition, surveys of settlers in the West Bank were conducted in 2016, 2018, and 2023. The findings show a trend of increasing extremism among Jewish Israelis regarding the conflict and the preferred territorial solutions. Prior to October 7, the surveys showed a gradual decline in support for the two-state solution among the Jewish public and an increased preference for the status quo, which effectively means a process of creeping annexation.

October 7 changed these trends to some degree. While support for a two-state solution dropped to an all-time low, there was a significant upturn in support for unilateral separation, along with a drop in support for the status quo. Thus, Israelis after October 7th still want to separate from the Palestinians, but do not believe it will be possible to reach a bilateral agreement with them.

A trend toward extremism can also be seen among the settlers, who comprise around five percent of the Israeli public. In 2016, a significant proportion of settlers were willing to consider evacuating settlements as part of a peace agreement, or to even consider immediate evacuation for monetary compensation. Since then, however, the level of willingness to accept such scenarios has fallen sharply, not only among ideological settlers, but also among “quality-of-life settlers.” Arab citizens of Israel are the only group that, for the most part, still supports the two-state solution, although they do not believe that this solution is acceptable to Israeli Jews or to Palestinians. It should also be noted that Arab citizens have intensified their identification with Israel since October 7.

Dr. Marzen examined the discourse of 25 online social influencers from the Palestinian Diaspora, Israel, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, over the period 2021–2023. These social influencers focused mainly on promoting justice for the Palestinian cause, presenting the suffering of Palestinians to the outside world, and securing empathy from Israeli, Arab, and Western audiences for Palestinian national rights. They paid less attention to the question of two states or one. Opinion polls conducted among Palestinians support this analysis and show that for some time the Palestinian public has shifted support away from diplomatic solutions to support for armed confrontation as a means of achieving their goals.

On the regional level, we examined the positions of several Arab countries: Egypt, Jordan, the UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar. Dr. Moran Zaga analyzed 538 documents from 2018 through mid-2023, including speeches, statements, decisions, media reports, and interviews that included references to the Israeli-Palestinian arena. The study showed that Qatar is the country that exerts the strongest economic influence on the conflict. However, the countries closest to the Israeli-Palestinian arena geographically — Egypt and Jordan — are the most active in advocating and promoting a diplomatic solution.

The UAE is the country that made the most references to annexation plans. All of the countries examined support the establishment of a Palestinian state based on a two-state solution within the May 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. It appears that the Abraham

Accords did not change the position of the Arab countries concerning the principles for a diplomatic solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Dr. Nimrod Novik examined the international system as reflected in the protocols of parliamentary discussions, EU, France, UK, Germany, and the US Congress, as well as statements by international presidents and foreign ministries. His study, covering the period from the beginning of 2020 through the end of September 2023, found an ongoing trend toward a loss of focus on the Israeli-Palestinian issue. Indeed, the only figure who consistently made comments concerning the two-state solution was US President Joe Biden. Conversely, the US Congress and State Department increasingly made statements that seemed to reflect reduced commitment to the two-state solution.

The second half of 2023 saw the beginning of a reversal of this trend in the US Administration and its associated institutions. The effort by the US to normalize relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia and the use of this process by the Saudis, through the US, to raise demands for changes to Israel's policy in the Territories, particularly the blocking of annexation moves, again highlighted the need for the Administration to focus on the conflict.

This renewed interest in the two-state solution reached a peak in October 2023 following the outbreak of the war in the Gaza Strip. The US Administration reinstated its commitment to a two-state agreement, from what had previously come to seem like lip service, into a key component of its policy for the "day after" the war.

The reduced interest of US officials in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict before October 7th is also reflected in American public opinion. Polls conducted by Hirschberger and Hirsch-Hoefler toward the end of 2023 found that most of the public in the US is not interested in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. A majority of US citizens regard Israel as the national home of the Jewish people, and not as a settler-colonialist state, and a majority sees Jerusalem as Israel's capital and supports US aid for Israel. However, the US public is divided regarding the extent of sympathy the Administration should show for Israel. While most US citizens still support a two-state solution, there is a clear sign of change among the younger generation, which does not show sympathy for Israel.

This extensive review shows that the policy of avoiding discussion of permanent solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict adopted by recent Israeli governments headed by Benjamin Netanyahu and Naftali Bennett was also shared by the leadership, the media, and Israeli society, as well as by the US Administration, with the exception of President Biden, US society,

and the UN. The Palestinians and the Arab world, with the exception of Hamas, discussed the need to resolve the conflict by means of a two-state solution.

The prevarication and lack of will to formulate clear policy on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict created a vacuum that was filled by Hamas in its horrific attack on October 7. If it seemed before that Israel could live with the conflict and behave as if it did not exist, it is clear now that this is Israel's fundamental problem. If we imagined that the world had lost interest in the conflict, the Palestinian cause is now proclaimed from the halls of college campuses across the US to the International Court in The Hague. If we dreamt of Middle East peace while bypassing the Palestinian problem, it is now obvious that there will not be calm in the region until a stable solution is found to this bloody conflict.

The events of October 7 provided some notable achievements for Hamas, including the return of the Palestinian issue to center stage. The achievement is manifested not only in the rekindling of global discourse but also in the tone of this discourse, which questions Israel's right to exist and rejects pragmatic solutions.

In the face of this extremist approach, Israel must bring forward brave and responsible leaders who can ensure a Jewish and democratic future for the State of Israel by aspiring to a solution based on painful compromises with the Palestinians while maintaining Israel's security interests.

3. Israeli Women Must Pursue Hamas' Military Chief All the Way to The Hague — Ronit Marzan, Haaretz, 20/02/2024

On the day Hamas invaded Israel, Mohammed Deif, the head of Hamas' military wing, ordered his own people, as well as Arab residents of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Israel, to grab rifles, axes or Molotov cocktails and set out in a truck, bulldozer or car on a campaign of murder, destruction and arson. These orders render his instruction "not to kill children and the elderly" ridiculous.

Moreover, Deif left Israeli women out of his ban on killing. He thereby allowed Hamas' men, who have been educated on the principles of machismo and heroic bravery, to take out their anger on these women and thereby take revenge on the hegemonic Israeli male, who, in their view, humiliates them and is responsible for their failure to obey two of Islam's fundamental commandments — protecting their families and providing for them.

Feminist movements and human rights organizations not only didn't bother to listen to what Deif said, but also refused to look directly at the difficult images documenting the degradation and violence perpetrated against Israeli women by members of Hamas' military wing.

These organizations were joined by activist Muna Hawwa, who was born to a Palestinian family from Safed and now lives in Vancouver, where she works as a producer for Al Jazeera television. In December 2023, she posted a video in which she completely denied Israel's claim that Hamas members raped Israeli women.

She claimed Israel was making up these claims so it can continue what she called its genocide of the Palestinians in general and Palestinian women in particular. She stigmatized the women who testified about the sexual violence as being affiliated with "notorious" organizations that lack credibility, and accused the first responders from Zaka, the organization that retrieves body parts after terror attacks, as having themselves committed sex crimes against women and children.

She accused Dr. Cochav Elkayam-Levy, an expert on international law, gender and human rights leading the civic commission which is collecting testimonies from victims of the October 7 assault, of passing off pictures of female Kurdish fighters as if they were Israeli rape victims. She described the blood on the pants of one female hostage as having come from an injured hand, or alternatively, from a wounded soldier who was near her. And she rejected one surrendered Hamas fighter's admission to the Shin Bet security service that rape was weaponized on October 7 by claiming his confession was obtained under torture.

At the end of the video, Hawwa asserted that nothing is worse than rape and there can be no forgiveness for it. That's precisely why she rushed to Hamas' defense to erase the stain of rape accusations, which tarnishes Palestinians and Muslims. Her behavior brings to mind the words of Palestinian historian Hisham Sharabi, who said that women in patriarchal societies sometimes become agents of oppression in their own right.

Consequently, we women have a duty not to allow Deif and Hamas' external leadership to erase these acts of rape by framing October 7 in the historic context of "the Nakba, the occupation and the apartheid regime" and the international context of "non-implementation of international decisions relating to the Israeli occupation."

We must strive to ensure that Deif — who thought that through the "great revolution" of October 7, he would follow in the footsteps of Sheikh Izz ad-Din al-Qassam, one of the organizers of the Great Arab Revolt of 1936–39, and the man for whom Hamas' military wing is named, and of Yasser Arafat, father of the "armed Palestinian revolution" — is branded with the mark of Cain. We must ensure that he stands trial in the International Criminal Court in The Hague and that his fate ends up being identical to that of Hajj Amin al-Husseini, who cooperated with the Nazis and has since been forgotten by the Palestinians.

We women must tell the "free people" around the world, whom Deif addressed in his speech, about Hamas' cruelty to its own people. We must tell them about the fact that human rights are a marginal issue for Deif, used only to throw sand in the eyes of the international community in an effort to convince it that Hamas is a legitimate national liberation movement and not a terrorist organization. We must disseminate videos of the Palestinian activists who criticize Hamas, like Mohammed al-Taluli, and force the world to listen to them.

Al-Taluli addressed Hamas several years ago, and his quote is still highly relevant today: "Feel for us, think of us as your children. We don't want the homeland, forget about the homeland. We don't want to return to it. But regain your humanity, treat us like human beings. Bring back the love that has died in us. Bring back the day when we held hands together. Feel for the mother sitting in her destroyed home, feel for the brother whose sibling has died, feel for the father whose children have died ... Isn't it enough that your Palestinian identity is dead, without your humanity also being dead?"

We must convince the Palestinians that Deif doesn't intend to give them a state — something he mentioned only once in the speech that was supposed to launch that revolutionary national event. He even pushed the martyrs and the wounded, who sacrificed themselves for liberation

and the establishment of a state, to the sidelines, not to mention the female prisoners, whom he mentioned only once.

The regular influx of billions of dollars in cash from Qatar blinded Deif's eyes and the eyes of those around him and turned them into corrupt hedonists. In wartime, they flee underground, to the tunnels they built for their own protection beneath the Gaza Strip. And in times of calm, they and their families live the good life above ground, either in Gaza or abroad.

In this war, Deif and Hamas' military wing betrayed their own people in a particularly painful fashion. They didn't arrange protection, electricity, water, food, medical care or even dignified burials for Gaza's residents. One senior Hamas official, Moussa Abu Marzouk, wasn't even embarrassed to say that the tunnels are meant to protect Hamas fighters only, and Gaza's residents should seek help from Israel and the United Nations.

The Palestinians must copy the revolutionary discourse of their Arab brethren during the Arab Spring revolutions of 2011. Instead of shouting "Takbir" — God is great — and praising the rulers who oppress them, they must shout "get out" and replace all those who are busy moving money from the national coffers to their private accounts rather than ensuring a future for the people under their rule.

And as for us, the Israelis, we must insist that Deif and everyone else responsible for the massacre and rapes on October 7 not be part of any future arrangement.

4. The Israel-Hamas War Is Another Stage in Sinwar's Struggle With Rival Masculinities — Ronit Marzan, Haaretz, 13/03/2024

Yahya Sinwar, head of the Hamas political bureau in Gaza who sought Egypt's help to reconcile with Fatah; who reconciled with Mohammed Dahlan, whose people were tossed from roofs by Hamas members in 2007; who arranged security coordination with Egypt and agreed to close the tunnels between Egypt and Gaza, to cameras in Rafah, and to the arrest of jihadists suspected by Egypt; who said he would be willing to subordinate the weaponry of the Al Qassam Brigades to the PLO, which signed the Oslo Accords; who established a joint operations room to rein in Islamic Jihad and the rebellious factions; who left Islamic Jihad on its own in the battle in two previous military rounds — launched the massive attack on Israel in part to repair his reputation.

When Qatar noted Sinwar's bet on Egypt-UAE-Dahlan, it understood that he was endangering its plans and the plans of the Hamas external leadership to turn the governmental entities in Ramallah and Gaza into municipal entities, to restore authority to the PLO — once it subsumed Hamas and Islamic Jihad — on matters of war and peace, and eventually to install Khaled Meshal as its leader.

The new Hamas political document, 2017, which was designed to make it a legitimate political player, was apparently part of this plan. At the time, Sinwar, the man from the military wing who was elected head of the political bureau three months earlier, was still adjusting to "wearing the politician's coat."

Rather than challenge the Hamas leadership over the content of the document, Benjamin Netanyahu tossed it into the dustbin and said simply that Hamas is a terror organization and that the document is a fraud.

A year later, with Qatar's cooperation, the suitcases of cash began to be sent to Hamas. Israeli officials were convinced that Sinwar would become addicted to the money and agree to an economic peace, and Qatar was banking on Sinwar's silence and Israel's being lulled in order to realize its plans.

The funds tagged Sinwar as a collaborator with Israel, a man who wasn't able on his own to protect and support the Palestinian family, and who sold out Palestine for a mess of Qatari pottage.

Sinwar, who eliminated collaborators with Israel, could not abide having any doubt cast upon his heroism, masculinity and patriotism, and that someone even had the gall to attribute this to his life having been saved by an Israeli doctor.

Shortly after receiving the Qatari suitcases of money, he made a speech while waving a handgun taken from an Israeli commando during a secret raid in Gaza that was exposed. In March 2021, he almost lost out in the Hamas institutional elections to Khaled Meshal's candidate, and was only reelected thanks to the Al Qassam Brigades.

In August 2022, after he declined to join Islamic Jihad in its military clash with Israel, a cartoon appeared in the Qatari-financed Al-Araby Al-Jadeed depicting Sinwar as a collaborator with Mahmoud Abbas and Israel against Islamic Jihad.

All this happened while he was contending with a wide array of rival masculinities: the hegemonic Israeli masculinity, which sought to isolate him from the Palestinian communities; the feeble masculinity of the Palestinian Authority, which worked to weaken his governance and stir an uprising against him; the nonviolent masculinity of the civil society organizations, which preferred life over death; the subversive masculinity of Hamas' Salah al-Arouri, who was trying to set the West Bank alight and, in August 2023, conveyed a message to Sinwar and Mohammed Deif that if they did not put the planned military attack into action, he would become the Hamas chief of general staff and South Lebanon would become an alternative arena; the violent masculinity of Islamic Jihad, which demanded fealty to the Islamist ideology and dragged him into military conflicts with Israel; the hedonistic masculinity of Meshal, who is off living the good life far from the battlefield and called for a jihad against Israel and for a new Abdullah Azzam, who laid the foundations for Al Qaeda.

In a patriarchal society rife with cultural norms and codes about heroism and masculinity, Sinwar and Deif preferred to be perceived as "heroic martyrs" who did not betray their people, and who managed to humiliate the Israeli army and free all the Palestinian prisoners.

But they failed to account for the real strength of the IDF and the resilience of Israeli society, and rather than be considered the heirs to Salah ad-Din and Omar ibn al-Khattab, as they dreamed, they will become the new edition of Hajj Amin al-Husseini, whose name is tied to the Nakba and lives in infamy, if at all, in the Palestinian collective memory.

Israel will have to make sure that whoever succeeds Sinwar is not another ISIS-style jihadist, and the date October 7 does not become attached to a Palestinian state — which would be a prize for Qatar and Hamas, the parties responsible for the atrocities of that day — but rather to

normalization with Saudi Arabia and the igniting of a regional peace process that would include a fight against radicalization, and a political accord with the Palestinians.

5. Israel's Secular and Religious-Messianic Publics See October 7 Very Differently. Is Civil War Looming? — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz, 28/03/2024

Since the Six-Day War of 1967, Israel has been caught up in an internal struggle: between those who see the territories conquered as a temporary deposit for a resolution of the conflict with the Arab world, and the messianic nationalists who see Israel's victory as a step on the road to redemption. The manifestations of the struggle became more acute over time, when Israel returned territories as part of peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan, and above all in the wake of the Oslo Accords it signed with the Palestine Liberation Organization. The future of the government's plan to overhaul the judiciary and the consequences of the events of October 7 will determine whether Israel will take the last step and plunge into a violent civil war.

To understand the reasons for this predicament, we must understand how each side perceives these events from the perspective of their core beliefs about Israel's establishment, its essence and mode of existence. The messianic myth — propagated by the followers of the Gush Emunim movement in its various incarnations, and spawned by Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hachohen Kook and his son, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Hachohen Kook — is unique. It does not stem, as many wrongly think, from the depths of distress and despair that give rise to the yearning for a better future with the advent of the Messiah. In fact, it derives from the opposite perception.

Indeed, the myth does not originate in a sense of failure but rather comes from a feeling of success and fulfillment in anticipation of redemption. According to this approach, there are times when the seeds of redemption sprout before our eyes, as part of what's known as "signs of the end of exile." For example, the Balfour Declaration, the United Nations partition resolution on Palestine, the victories in the War of Independence and in the Six-Day War — all can be seen as signs that God has decided to redeem the Jewish people and fulfill the promise of redemption.

When the late chief rabbi of Israel, Shlomo Goren, was asked almost 60 years ago how he saw the State of Israel integrating with the Jewish people's vision of messianic redemption, he replied, "Halakha [religious law] rules out the possibility of an interim time in the historical process. It recognizes only three historical periods. One is from the conquest of the land by Joshua until the destruction of the Temple; the second is the period of exile; the third is the messianic period. I believe we are now at the beginning of that period... I believe with complete faith that we will be privileged to see the building of the Temple."

The ability to identify the divine plan and the "signs of the end of exile" is granted only to the members of this messianic group, as reflected in Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook's explanation for the UN partition vote in 1947: "Those who were present at the UN session when they decided on the establishment of the State of Israel, and had true vision, would have seen that the real chairman in that session was not Trygve Lie, the Swedish representative who sat there with the gavel, but the Lord blessed be he [who] sat there and decided: Argentina — yes; Bolivia — no; Brazil — abstention. And at the end of the vote count — yes."

It follows that the appearance of "signs of the end of exile" is comprised of stages that attest to success — meaning the consummation of the messianic vision of redemption — as long as those signs continue to appear. This is a success that must not be stopped. Why? Because, as Maimonides explains, it is solely historical achievements in and of themselves that lead to absolute success, that are the clearest touchstones of each stage of manifesting the truth of the messianic process. Talmudic scholar Rabbi Shem Tov ibn Gaon wrote in the 14th century: "It shall not be clarified, other than by success, as Maimonides wrote."

What is meant by success? In the words of the late settler leader Hanan Porat, "The ingathering of the exiles, the establishment of the state and its security are only initial layers... Ahead of us await additional, enormous objectives that are an integral part of Zionism, chief among them: the establishment of 'a kingdom of priests and a holy nation,' the restoration of the shekhina [divine presence] to Zion, establishment of the kingdom of the House of David and the building of the Temple — as a keystone of tikkun olam [repair of the world] in the kingdom of Shaddai [God]."

Against the backdrop of this conception, it's possible to understand the so-called judicial reforms and other legislative efforts of the present Netanyahu government, which is led by Religious Zionism-Otzma Yehudit ministers Bezalel Smotrich, Itamar Ben-Gvir and their colleagues in the coalition parties. These processes are intended to remove all earthly obstacles on the road to Jewish sovereignty over Greater Israel: emasculation of the judicial branch, especially the High Court of Justice, so that it cannot take action against government decisions, even if they conflict with the principles of the Declaration of Independence, the Basic Laws and international law; elimination of the conditions that enable opposition parties to replace the coalition in an election; the silencing of the independent, critical media and wresting control over it until it is fully mobilized; suppression of critics of the government's policies; and so on.

This messianic community's interpretation of the events of October 7 is in line with their interpretation of the Holocaust. Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook explains that the Holocaust is actually part of the divine plan — an opposite approach to that presented by Rabbi Joel Teitelbaum, founder of the Satmar Hasidic sect. Teitelbaum viewed modern Zionism as the cause of the Holocaust, because the movement violated the oaths God demanded of the Jewish people when they went into exile, of which the first was "not to climb the wall" — namely, not to actively force the advent of the end of exile, but to wait quietly for the coming of the Messiah.

For his part, Kook's interpretation of the Holocaust references the Gemara, which cites another oath: "Do not distance the end times." Which is to say, avoid doing deeds that will cause redemption to be moved further away. As such, the Holocaust occurred because at the time that divine providence opened the gates and showed that God wanted the Jews to go up to the Land of Israel, they did not do so, and thus violated the oath and were punished. "The Jewish people were taken, amputated from the depths of exile, to the State of Israel. The blood that was shed by the six million is a true gash in the national body. The whole people undergoes divine surgery by the destroyers, may their name be expunged."

However, there is recompense for the punished in the form of a return to the path of redemption — the essence of the very purpose of the Jewish people — as Kook goes on to explain: "From the cruel amputation... the core of our life is revealed, of the revival of the nation and the revival of the land." Based on this approach, it becomes "clear" that if the Jewish people should stumble again and not take advantage of the opportunities presented to them, for example, when God led them to victory in the Six-Day War and to conquest of the land, and if they should forsake settlement and conferral of Jewish sovereignty over the whole land — they will again be subjected to unbearable punishment.

It is in this spirit that the massacre of residents of the western Negev on October 7 is seen by the messianic adherents of religious Zionism. A week after that accursed day, Prof. Yoel Elitzur, a scholar of Hebrew and the Bible, published an article on Srugim, the leading website of the religious Zionist public, stating that the Hamas massacre was part of God's plan for Israelis who are "bringing calamities upon the Jewish people and foiling the divine plan." The author saw a connection between the massacre and secularism and the failure to advance the idea of "Greater Israel." In other words, God has used Hamas, as with the Nazis, to inflict misfortune on those who refuse to cooperate with his scheme.

Elitzur's comments were echoed in an interview on November 1 by Finance Minister Smotrich, on the Kan Channel 11 News: "Maybe we needed to absorb this terrible and painful blow so as to remember for one second who we are and what we are." In other words, the massacre took place in order to remind the Jewish people what its purpose is within the messianic process. Here too there is a "reward" for the heavy price paid: God's use of Hamas in its attack on Israel is what will enable Israel to correct the "mistake" of the disengagement from the Gaza Strip in 2005 — which disrupted the divine plan — and to reconquer and resettle that territory.

To complete the tikkun, or correction, as many who espouse messianism have been saying lately, Gaza's current residents must be expelled, Jewish settlement in Gaza must be renewed and the Strip must be formally annexed to Israel. According to this perception, this will be an achievement of historic proportions, which will also justify the large number of Israel Defense Forces casualties. As National Missions Minister Orit Strock put it, "A return to the Gaza district will entail many sacrifices, but at the end of the day it is part of the Land of Israel, it will happen when the Jewish people are ripe for it [and], very regrettably it will take a toll in blood."

From the messianic viewpoint, the war in Gaza is also an opportunity to ratchet up Jewish terrorism against the Palestinians in the West Bank in order to bring about an all-out confrontation that will culminate in the removal of the Palestinian Authority. The Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza will then have three remaining options, as set forth in Smotrich's "Decisive Plan" of 2017: "Those who wish to flee — let them flee; those who wish to accept [Israeli rule] — let them accept; those who wish to make war — let them make war."

Hence, the return of the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt, the transfer of Area A and Area B in the West Bank to the PA, Area B is administered jointly with Israel, the disengagement plan and the evacuation of illegal settler outposts — all are signs contrary to "the revealed end times" scenario. All attest that the outcome of such policies does not spell success when it comes to "inheriting the land." Which is why Strock also said that the return of the settlers to Homesh, a West Bank settlement that was also evacuated in 2005, is the Archimedean point from which will stem correction of the sin of the disengagement and of all other acts of withdrawal.

"The State of Israel is embarking again on the high road of moving ahead, instead of the road of retreats that existed before," the minister declared, in that same interview. To Strock and her supporters, apparently, the war in Gaza can be seen as the continuation of a corrective process that the government is spearheading, despite its costs — the events of October 7 and their aftermath are proof of re-embarkment on the divine path.

In contrast, the secular Jewish public sees such events as the Balfour Declaration as cornerstones in the establishment and preservation of a state for the Jewish people in its homeland, based on firm political, historical, legal and moral justifications, even if some of them differ from those behind creation of other nation-states after World War I. This public sees Israel as a "safe haven for the Jewish people," which exists in light of the values enshrined in Israel's Declaration of Independence — notably democracy, equality and membership in the family of nations.

This vision, which originated with the state's founding fathers, will be snuffed out if the judicial overhaul succeeds. It will only be able to endure if there is separation from the Palestinians, within a two-state, political framework. Accordingly, October 7 and its aftermath are perceived as a price that did not necessarily have to be paid, as the bitter fruit of the misguided policies pursued by the government of Benjamin Netanyahu bolstered by the messianic dreams of his cabinet ministers. Although polls show a decline in support for the two-state solution within Jewish Israeli society, those who support separation from the Palestinians remain the majority.

That approach also enjoys sweeping support among the international community. In the wake of the steep and unnecessary price that October 7 and the ensuing war in Gaza have exacted from Israel, the ongoing, horrific devastation of the Strip and the mass casualties, and in light of the regional escalation of hostilities and other developments — the international community is coming to terms with the fact that it must take a more proactive role in implementing the two-state solution. As the European Union's foreign policy chief, Joseph Borrell, stated on January 19: "We believe that a two-state solution must be imposed from outside to bring peace."

The ideological division between the secular and religious-messianic publics shows that the terms "right" and "left" are now less relevant than ever with respect to Israel's political arena and society. They can exist only as two poles along a continuum, based on a shared vision — but these two entities do not possess a shared vision.

Menachem Begin, who was on the political right, aspired to implement the vision of Greater Israel, but in 1972 committed himself to the vision of the founding fathers, saying, "Zionism... these are its foundations in the Land of Israel, to which we have an inalienable right; there will be a Jewish majority, an Arab minority, and equal rights for all. We have not and will not depart from this doctrine, in which the justice of our cause is encapsulated." In late December 1977, after his election earlier that year, Begin said of the messianists in the country: "I remarked

once in an argument with those from Gush Emunim... 'You have one weakness — you have developed among you a messianic complex.'"

Today, each of the two groups in question espouses a different vision, which renders ridiculous the birth of the so-called center parties and the Israeli voter's fondness for a center that does not exist in reality. Because without choosing one of the two visions, the leaders of the imaginary center are operating in a conceptual void that cannot be translated into action, and thus their whole purpose in recent governments is to serve as "the messiah's donkey," to do the dirty work of bringing about the advent of the Messiah.

If Israel entrenches itself along with its government in that approach, which already seems to be evident and is in accordance with the "day after" plan presented by Netanyahu, if it persists with the judicial coup and perceives October 7 and the ensuing war as events that ensure its eternal control over the territories and over the Palestinian people that inhabit them — it will be dragged into extremely violent confrontations between the police and both supporters and opponents of the coup. At the same time, the country will be swept up — at a time of economic, security, social and moral fragility — into various confrontations with the Palestinian people, the Arab world and the international community, first and foremost with the United States.

But all that does not perturb the proponents of messianism. As Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook also wrote after the 1967 war, "Someone said this evening on the radio that the State of Israel is dependent on America and that we must take them into consideration. That is nothing less than heresy vis-a-vis God's acts. We are not dependent on America, we are dependent upon the Holy One blessed be He."

If Israel returns to the political and diplomatic path of resolving the conflict with the Palestinians according to UN decisions — after freeing itself of Netanyahu, whose sole interest is his political survival — it will discover that the slogan "Together we shall win" is of absolutely no importance to the messianic community. If a sobered-up Israel does not succeed in deploying itself socially, morally and in terms of its security needs, in advance of moves aimed at reaching a political resolution of the conflict, it is liable to find itself grappling with the threat Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook described to his followers, who are now literally arming themselves thanks to Ben-Gvir: "I said and wrote that for Judea and Samaria, Jericho and the Golan Heights there will be a war, and no concessions are conceivable... It is not for us to betray, but rather to add validity and courage of sanctifying God's name."

It is incumbent on another, alternative government of Israel to adopt the words of Yitzhak Rabin, who wrote in "The Rabin Memoirs" in 1979: "Against their basic approach, which conflicts with Israel's democratic foundation, it was vital to mount a conceptual struggle that would expose the true significance of Gush Emunim, their positions and modes of operation, and to spearhead a process of attaining a permanent settlement with the Palestinians."

Only in this way will the Israeli public understand what should be understood by everyone: that this is a case of a false messiah, who is leading Israel to perdition.

6. Area C Will Never Be Part of Israel — Shaul Arieli, Gilad Hirschberger, Sivan Hirsch-Hoefler, Jerusalem Post / Shaul Arieli website, 16/05/2024

The year 2023 will be remembered as the year that witnessed the collapse of two closely related pillars of Israel's West Bank policy. Together, these policies constitute grave misconceptions that nevertheless have been proudly championed by Israel's ultra-nationalist right-wing government. The first policy pillar is the “divide and rule” strategy, whereby the Gaza Strip and the West Bank were intentionally separated to prevent the establishment of a future Palestinian state and to facilitate the sequestering of the West Bank and its ultimate annexation to Israel. This pillar crumbled to wrack and ruin on October 7th, when it became abundantly clear that allowing Hamas to grow at the expense of the Palestinian Authority has grave consequences. The second pillar, the “battle over Area C,” sought to create spatial and demographic conditions permitting the annexation of an area that accounts for 60 percent of the West Bank. This pillar has been disintegrating gradually over several years.

The roots of these failed policies can be found in Israel's abdication of its legal commitments that were ratified in the Oslo Accords. In the Declaration of Principles, the State of Israel accepted the notion of unity of the West Bank and Gaza Strip: “The two sides view the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as a single territorial unit, whose integrity will be preserved during the interim period.” With regard to Area C, the agreement stated: “The Parties agree that the area of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, except for the issues that will be negotiated in the permanent status negotiations, Jerusalem, settlements, and military sites, will be gradually transferred to Palestinian jurisdiction, to be completed within 18 months from the inauguration of the Council.” It also stated that: “‘Area C’ means areas of the West Bank outside Areas A and B, which, except for the issues that will be negotiated in the permanent status negotiations, will be gradually transferred to Palestinian jurisdiction in accordance with this Agreement.” In simple terms, all the agreements signed by the State of Israel define the Gaza Strip and the West Bank as a single territorial unit. This principle has guided all negotiations conducted by the two sides. Area C, therefore, has been under an extremely extended temporary status pending its eventual transfer to Palestinian jurisdiction.

Regarding the first failure — the collapse of the “divide and rule” policy — the Palestinians are united in their insistence on a joint future for the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Similarly, there is overwhelming consensus in the international community on the two-state solution as the only viable solution to the conflict. Israel has also accepted this principle in all negotiations with the Palestinians, and it is only the stalemate in diplomacy during the Netanyahu years that gave

rise to the catastrophic divide and rule strategy. Because the territorial integrity issue is clear and undisputed, we focus on the second failure — the battle over Area C. Our research, conducted as part of the T-Politography project, a project dedicated to empirically monitoring changing levels of Israeli and Palestinian control in the territories in several different domains, examined the period from 2010 through the end of 2023. During these Netanyahu years, with a one-year Bennett-Lapid government, we found clear evidence that Israel is squandering its resources on a lost cause.

Motivated by the idea that it is possible to annex most of the West Bank without its Palestinian population, Israel devoted its full force and all the means at its disposal to shape the political future of Area C. This process included unprecedented budgetary allocations for the expansion of settlements; the establishment of additional government ministries as channels for the indirect transfer of funds; the encouragement and retroactive whitewashing of illegal outposts by the government; the construction of roads such as the Hawara and El-Arub bypasses, each of which cost over 200 million US Dollars; attempting to legislate the Regularization Bill — a bill that would allow the seizure of private Palestinian land; attempting to abolish the grounds of reasonableness clause, both legislation initiatives were canceled by the Israeli Supreme Court; and the absence of an immediate and forceful response to settler violence against the Palestinians. The process reached its peak in 2023 with the transfer of responsibility for the Civil Administration of the West Bank to ultra-nationalist Bezalel Smotrich as an additional minister in the Defense Ministry, which effectively turned him into the de facto governor of the West Bank.

The Palestinian side did not remain impassive in the face of this Israeli campaign. The Palestinian struggle for Area C was implemented through the Fayyad Plan, a two-year plan formulated by former PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad in 2009. The plan offered a roadmap for building Palestinian infrastructure and institutions to establish a de facto Palestinian state throughout the West Bank. The plan enjoyed international support and a budget of over half a billion euros from the EU.

Because both Israelis and Palestinians have been attempting to increase their control over Area C, in our study we empirically examined the degree of Israeli control and Palestinian control over Area C in four domains — demographic, spatial-geographic, economic, and social, public opinion. In the demographic domain, data from the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, CBS, indicates that the number of Israelis living in the West Bank, all Israeli settlers reside in Area C, rose from 311,300 in 2010 to 491,548 in 2023, an increase of 58%. Despite the

current right-wing government, the nominal population increase in 2023 was only 13,345 — 4% below the average annual growth over the entire examined period. The number of Palestinians living in Area C rose from 70,220 in 2010 to 354,000 — an increase of 504 percent. This figure explains the dramatic drop in the proportion of Israelis out of the total population in the area. In 2010, Jews accounted for 81.6% of the population in Area C but have fallen steadily to only 58.1%. The decline of Israeli demographic control over Area C is the result of several factors: an ongoing drop in the annual growth rate of Israelis living beyond the Green Line, from 5% at the beginning of the period to 2.7% by its end; a drop in the total migration balance in Area C, from 4,160 in 2010 to just a few hundred over the past four years. Indeed, in 2020 the migration balance was negative, more Israelis left the West Bank than moved to the area. After rising steadily, the birth rate has also remained static over recent years at 12,500. On the Palestinian side, a reverse process has been documented, with significant migration and expansion of built-up areas from Areas A and B to Area C.

In the spatial-geographic domain, 34 illegal outposts, illegal by the criteria of the Israeli judicial system, were whitewashed, that is, turned legal, during the period of our study; a minority were declared independent settlements, but the majority were incorporated as new neighborhoods in existing settlements. By the end of 2023 the number of settlements was 127 and the number of illegal outposts was 121. On the Palestinian side, there were 12,522 clusters of houses in 2010, each cluster ranging from a single home to dozens of homes. By 2023 this figure had more than doubled to almost 28,000 clusters, despite the demolition of some 8,000 homes by Israel over this period. The total Israeli built-up area, including settlements, outposts, industrial zones, and military bases reached 8,000 hectares this year, 2.4% of Area C, while the Palestinian built-up area in Area C rose dramatically from 6,780 hectares in 2010 to 14,800 hectares today, 4.44% of Area C.

In the economic sphere, two opposing trends can be seen. The ongoing growth of the Haredi, ultra-Orthodox, community within the settler population, Haredim now account for 39% of the Jewish population in the West Bank, over three times their weight in the entire State of Israel, has increased the proportion of the poor in the overall settler population. The proportion of settlers classified in socioeconomic cluster 1, the lowest cluster, has grown and is now almost half the total Jewish population of the West Bank. However, counterintuitively, the average socioeconomic ranking of all the Jewish settlements in the West Bank has risen in recent years thanks to unprecedented government support in the form of various grants, and now stands at 4.3 on the socioeconomic scale, still a low score. West Bank settlers are therefore an

essentially impoverished population that are kept on government life support for ideological reasons. The annual growth of the Israeli population in the West Bank in recent years has been based almost entirely on natural growth, 43% of which was contributed by the Haredi population. Accordingly, economic decline can be expected to continue in spite of substantial government support. This will likely increase polarization between the Haredi community and the national-religious and secular sectors that are more affluent.

The Palestinian population is weaker in economic terms than the settlers, but the intrusion of Palestinian construction into Area C is due, among other factors, to private construction on most of the land suitable for this purpose. Financial support for this construction from the EU and Arab countries is a critical factor. If this trend continues, Palestinian economic growth in Area C is likely to continue.

Israel's policy regarding Area C has been a failure not only on the ground, but also in terms of the attempt to "settle in the hearts" of the Israeli public and to normalize life in the West Bank as if it were an integral part of the State of Israel. Over a hundred cultural, touristic, and religious attractions have been developed in the area: the Judea and Samaria College has been transformed into Ariel University in the heart of the West Bank; the Green Line has been obscured on official maps and in school textbooks; and the Israeli political elite overwhelmingly supports the settlement enterprise. Yet the Israeli public remains unconvinced. Even after the October 7th attack, a majority of Israeli Jews, 55%, prefer separation from the Palestinians, in either a bilateral agreement or an Israel-initiated partial retreat, over annexation or continuation of the current creeping annexation policy. Secondly, Israelis disapprove of the benefits given to the settlements that are not provided to other Israeli citizens. When we noted the per capita budgeting of local authorities in the West Bank in 2023, about \$1000, compared to that inside Israel, about \$600, only one-fourth of Israeli Jews supported the budgetary prioritization of local authorities beyond the Green Line. The level of support fell even further when Israeli Jews were presented with the fact that the budgetary prioritization of the settlements over peripheral areas inside Israel has increased over the years. Recent Israeli governments have attempted not only to outmaneuver the Palestinians, but also to circumvent the broad opposition among the Jewish public to the prioritization of the settlements and unilateral efforts to seize control of the West Bank.

The shockwaves created by the horrific events of October 7 have opened an opportunity to reexamine Israel's policies toward the Palestinians. At present, the government is opting for more of the same old failed recipes, as reflected in its decision, while the war still rages, to

promote the construction of 3,000 new housing units in the West Bank, a decision that has enraged the Biden Administration and has led to a reinstatement of the settlements as illegal. It is time to learn from the errors of the past. Instead of fighting a messianic war for an area of land inhabited by Palestinians that will never be part of Israel, if Israel wishes to continue to define itself as both Jewish and democratic, and instead of squandering the nation's limited resources on the most unsuccessful real estate project in its history, Israel must change course. The new direction should be based on a broader definition of security that views the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a core component of its security that may ensure fundamental survival and thriving needs. To do so, Israel must honor the undertakings it assumed when it signed the Interim Agreement and regard Area C as a temporary deposit that will eventually become part of a future Palestinian state. If it adopts this approach, Israel will be able to reestablish its currently shaky standing in the international community, strengthen both its security and democracy, and stop wasting its efforts on an objective that is doomed to fail.

7. What Hamas Chief Sinwar's Secret Communications Show About His Thinking — Ronit Marzan, Haaretz, 17/06/2024

Yahya Sinwar's secret correspondence with Hamas' external leadership, which The Wall Street Journal revealed last week, provides a window into his thinking.

"Things went out of control. People got caught up in this, and that should not have happened," he wrote. He understood that Hamas' operational achievements on October 7 were overcome by the cruelty of the Gazan masses and the fighters of Hamas and the other factions, and by Israel's ground operation, which he did not expect.

For years, Sinwar became used to Israelis rejecting a ground operation in Gaza because of the cost in soldiers' lives and in governing the two million Palestinians living there. He thought that an attack on IDF bases and killing and abducting soldiers would result in a military round and pressure Israel to move forward on a deal for the release of prisoners in exchange for the hostages. He was wrong.

Israel decided on a ground campaign in Gaza on October 28, and to preserve the operational achievements and prevent Israel from destroying the tunnels and military infrastructure, Sinwar quickly offered a deal at the start of the campaign: release all hostages in exchange for the release of all Palestinian prisoners.

The Sinwar brothers, who in their childhood hid in pits their father dug to protect them in the 1967 war, struggled to forego their life's work. In November, in order to improve their position in global opinion and bring about a quick end to the war and protect Hamas' military power, as well as making it clear to the organization's external leadership, which had begun to distance itself from him, that its control center was in Gaza, not Doha, he agreed to release 105 hostages for 210 Palestinian prisoners.

Sinwar understood that he could not defeat Israel on the battlefield, but could on the civilian field. He booby-trapped population centers, concealed his fighters among Gaza's residents, and took care for civilians to hold the Israeli hostages in order to draw Israel into killing civilians, which would increase international anger and sanctions on Israel, causing it to withdraw from Gaza. In one message, Sinwar cited civilian losses in national liberation conflicts in places such as Algeria, where hundreds of thousands of people died fighting for independence from France. "These are necessary sacrifices," he said.

Sinwar realizes that without popular support, he and the Hamas leadership in Gaza cannot be part of post-war arrangements, and he could lose his life like Gadhafi or Mubarak in the Arab

Spring. He therefore linked the Palestinian victims to the Algerians, whom the Palestinians learn about, and the concept of martyrdom bringing glory to the Arab nation.

"As long as fighters are still standing, and we have not lost the war," he wrote in anger, after learning about contacts by the Hamas external leadership with Fatah officials, "such contacts should be immediately terminated. We have the capabilities to continue fighting for months."

There is bad blood between Sinwar and Khaled Meshal, who is responsible for Hamas' foreign policy. In the internal elections for Hamas institutions in 2021, Meshal tried to remove Sinwar from the head of the political bureau in Gaza and replace him with Nizar Awadallah, but the attempt failed when the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades intervened. At the end of Operation Breaking Dawn in 2022, in which Sinwar did not join the Islamic Jihad in the campaign against Israel, Al-Araby Al-Jadeed reported that the Qatari media, founded by Meshal adviser Azmi Bishara, printed a humiliating caricature depicting Sinwar as a collaborator with Israel. Sinwar's activism angered Meshal, and he made sure to belittle him at every opportunity and make it clear that Hamas decisions are taken by the leadership institutions and not by any one man.

"We have to move forward on the same path we started, or let it be a new Karbala," Sinwar wrote. He realizes that the Iranians will not shed blood to save Sunnis, hence his reference to the battle of Karbala — an important battle in the development of Shia Islam, in which the Prophet Mohammed's grandson, Husayn, was defeated by the Umayyad Caliph, Yazid I. This was his message to Iran: A Hamas defeat would mean an Iranian defeat.

It is possible that Sinwar remembered Yasser Arafat's use of the battle of Karbala and wanted to send a message to the Arab leaders that any attempt to build a Palestinian governing entity without Hamas in Gaza would result in civil war. Arafat needed Karbala to glorify the Palestinians' fight against the Jordanian army in 1970–1971 and against the Israeli army in besieged Beirut in 1982.

Arafat also wanted to warn King Hussein, a relative of Husayn, the prophet's grandson, not to follow the path of the Umayyad Caliphate and widen the schism in the Muslim world, obtain support of the Lebanese Shias and hasten the descent into civil war. It seems that only when Sinwar realizes that no one is courting him and there is a governing alternative to him, will he move forward on a deal.

8. The Settlements: Israel's Failed Real Estate Project — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz / Shaul Arieli website, 18/07/2024

Statistics published by Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) at the end of May concerning the Israeli demographics in the West Bank (excluding East Jerusalem) confirm the ongoing failure of the country's settlement enterprise. As the war in Gaza rages on, long-term demographic trends and the security escalation in the West Bank thwart the effort of the Netanyahu-Smotrich government to subdue the Palestinians in the area with the help of unprecedented budgetary allocations to the settlements. The whitewashing of "outposts" (illegal under Israeli law), the dramatic organizational changes in the Civil Administration and the Ministry of Defense, settler violence against Palestinians and the failure of the IDF to respond to it all fail to change the overall picture of failure.

From January 2023 through May 2024 (17 months), 615 more people moved from Israel to the West Bank than returned in the other direction. In the same period, over one-third of the settlements (47) reported negative net migration (in other words, more people left them than arrived, whether from Israel or abroad). The largest net losses were recorded in Modi'in Illit (-1,076), Maale Adumim (-582), Efrat (-199), and Hashmonaim (-149). The only phenomenon that helped soften the negative trend a little was the arrival of 965 new Jewish immigrants from abroad directly to the settlements. Thus more overseas residents than Israelis moved to the settlements in this period.

The Israeli population in the West Bank has continued to grow at a steady rate over the past decade, reaching 497,589 in May 2024. The settlers live in 134 settlements and 120 illegal outposts. However, population growth among Israelis in the West Bank is driven almost entirely (92%) by the high natural growth rate (births minus deaths), which totaled 17,814 in this period. A cursory glance shows that 46% of the natural growth was provided by the two large Haredi cities in the area – Modi'in Illit and Betar Illit; together with Givat Ze'ev, which is increasingly acquiring a Haredi character (52.1% Haredim), this figure rises to over half the natural growth. All these three settlements are situated close to the Green Line, within an area that is expected to be annexed to Israel as part of the land swaps that will accompany a permanent agreement.

Our Tamrur-Politography research group is undertaking long-term monitoring based on the data from the Central Bureau of Statistics. Our work paints a fascinating and surprising picture.

Let's begin with the four Jewish cities that are home to almost half (43%) of Israelis who live in the West Bank. The smallest of these is Ariel, which is a secular city whose population has stagnated around 20,000 – 21,000 over the past six years. The population of Ariel is becoming older and the proportion of residents under the age of 19 has fallen below one-fourth. Around half the electors in the city vote for the Likud; very few choose the extreme-right or Haredi parties (the proportion of Haredim in the city is negligible – 1.3%). Ariel is ranked in socioeconomic cluster 6, above the average for the West Bank settlements (4.2).

Maale Adumim, which is also secular and ranked in socioeconomic cluster 6, has faced a worsening negative migration balance since 2013. The population of Maale Adumim is stagnant at around 38,000 and is not growing. Here, too, the population is ageing, and the proportion of residents under the age of 19 has fallen to approximately one-third. Approximately half the electors in the city vote for the Likud (the proportion has fallen over the past decade), while around 30% vote for the extreme-right parties. Approximately 20% vote for Haredi parties, even though the Haredi population of the city is no more than 3%. The trends in the secular cities explain the fall in the proportion of secular Jews among the settler population, from 35% in 2010 to 26% in May 2024.

Betar Illit has an overwhelmingly Haredi population (93.1%). After two years of negative net migration, the trend has now been reversed and the city's population has risen to 68,363, mainly due to natural growth. In electoral terms, 60% of electors choose United Torah Judaism and 30% Shas. The city is ranked in socioeconomic cluster 1, the lowest cluster. Modi'in Illit is the largest city in the West Bank; 95.8% of residents are Haredim. This city is also ranked in the lowest socioeconomic cluster – 1. Over the past decade, the city has suffered from a negative net migration balance, though this is obscured by the high natural growth rate; in May 2024, the population was 86,816. In electoral terms, 80% of electors vote for United Torah Judaism and the remainder for Shas. Thanks to the high natural growth rate in these Haredi cities, the proportion of Haredim among the Israeli settlers rose from 32% in 2010 to 37% in May 2024. It is expected that the three largest cities, accounting for 90% of the urban population, will be annexed to Israel in a permanent agreement.

Secondly, our monitoring also reveals interesting findings regarding the 14 Jewish local councils in the West Bank, which account for around one-fifth (22.2%) of the Israeli population of the area. In Givat Ze'ev, the largest local council, the proportion of Haredim has crossed the 50% mark. This local council is growing at a particularly rapid rate, and this year reached 22,503

(surpassing Ariel). The Haredi local council of Emanuel is experiencing a rapid annual growth rate, and the population has reached 5,142.

In the secular local councils, population growth has fallen and stabilized, with total populations of 9,397 in Oranit, 8,000 in Alfei Menashe, 5,603 in Beit Arye, and 4,140 in Har Adar. Ma'ale Efraim, the smallest of the local councils, experienced decline from 2005 through 2013, but the population has begun to increase again and now stands at 1,419, though this is still below the number two decades ago

Mixed trends can be seen in the national-religious local councils. Some have grown, such as Efrat, which now has 11,940 residents; Karnei Shomron (to which Ma'ale Shomron was annexed), with 10,179 residents; the new local council of Sha'ar Shomron, created by the unification of Sha'arei Tikva and Etz Efraim, at 9,027; Kiryat Arba at 7,601; and Elkana at 4,453. Some are stable, such as Beit El at 6,469 and Kedumim at 4,600. Again, most of the local councils (nine out of 14) are likely to be annexed to Israel as part of a land swap in a permanent agreement.

The growth trends in the six regional councils, which jointly account for over one-third (35%) of the Israeli population in the West Bank, are also mixed. The national-religious regional councils, which enjoy most of the government resources, are continuing to grow. For example, Mate Binyamin, the regional council with the largest population, now has 78,089 residents. The population of Shomron Regional Council, which occupies a larger area, has grown to 46,152. Gush Etzion now has 27,812 residents and Har Hevron 11,842. By contrast, the secular regional council Arvot Hayarden has 6,767 residents and Megillot – Dead Sea, also secular and the smallest of all the regional councils, just 2,254. Combining these last two figures shows that in the entire Jordan Valley and Dead Sea area, which accounts for over one-third of the area of the West Bank, the number of Israelis remains very low – fewer than 10,000.

These trends over the past decade have several significant ramifications. Firstly, as noted, the proportion of Haredim out of the total Jewish population has risen to 37%. The Haredi population, together with other settlements, means that over 40% of settlers live in settlements in socioeconomic cluster 1 – almost 10 times the proportion inside Israel.

As time passes, the Jewish population in the West Bank is becoming poorer and more dependent on government subsidies. Government contributions to local authority bodies, through various grants, accounted for an average of 63% of regular budgets in 2022 and for 60% of special budgets in the 24 Israeli local authorities in the West Bank. The parallel figures inside

Israel are 42% and 39%, respectively. No less importantly, around one-third of government support in the West Bank is allocated for welfare. Although the Israelis in the area account for 5% of the population in Israel, they receive 7.22% (over 2.3 billion shekels) of government grants for ordinary budgets and 8.1% (almost 741 million shekels) of grants for special budgets. Funding provided by Israeli taxpayers is allocated in a manner that is contrary to the recommendations of various committees. The result is that, while the average per capita income in the ordinary budget inside Israel is NIS 8,832, the parallel figure for an Israeli resident of the West Bank is NIS 10,300. On average, therefore, the settlers enjoy far better services than the population inside Israel in the fields of welfare, education, and culture.

This generous allocation of resources is reflected in attitudes among the settlers. We conducted three special surveys over the period 2016–2023 among large and representative samples of the adult Jewish population (age 18 and above) in the West Bank in order to examine public attitudes concerning various diplomatic solutions on the territorial issue. The surveys show that, over time, the “quality of life” settlers are becoming more ideological, while the ideological settlers mention quality of life as a key reason for their decision to live in the West Bank.

In 2016, for example, only 19% of the ideological public stated quality of life as a motive for their settlement in the West Bank, while in 2023 38% did so. The ideological component continued to be the main motivation, but in 2023 it was emphasized by 49% of settlers, compared to 62% in 2016.

The third ramification of these sociodemographic changes is that despite the nominal growth in the number of Israelis in the West Bank, they account for just 14% of the total population of the area. In other words, there is a solid Arab majority in the West Bank. The annexation of the area will therefore completely destabilize Israel’s demographic balance, or alternatively its democratic system, if the Palestinians are not granted equal rights (in keeping with Betzael Smotrich’s suggestion).

The fourth ramification is that the consistent rise in the Palestinian population in Area C, which now numbers 392,000 residents, means that even the annexation of Area C alone is unrealistic in demographic, security, and economic terms. The proportion of Israelis out of the total population in Area C has plummeted from 82% in 2010 to 55% at the end of 2023. Minister Orit Strock recently called for accelerated settlement efforts in the southern Hebron Hills: “I told him, Betzael (Smotrich) – I ask for the Hebron Hills first, and he accepted this.” In light of the

above figures, however, this declaration is meaningless in terms of control on the ground. South of Gush Etzion, in the Hebron District, some 18,000 Israelis live alongside a Palestinian population of 822,000, so that they account for just 2.1% of the population.

The fifth ramification is that over half (59%) of the Israelis beyond the Green Line live close to this borderline (up to five kilometers) and will be annexed to Israel as part of a land swap. Even most of those who live at between five and 10 kilometers from the Green Line – such as Maale Adumim, Givat Ze'ev, and Efrat – will also be annexed to Israel in a permanent agreement. Although the number of isolated settlements situated over 10 kilometers from the Green Line is around half the total number of settlements in the West Bank (46% - 62 settlements), their combined population is relatively small (123,000 residents, or 24% of the Israelis in the West Bank). Most of these settlements belong to the messianic-nationalist stream that chose to settle these areas in order to prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state. Here, too, our surveys show that it is important to distinguish between ideological and “quality of life” settlers. On the issue of the possible unilateral annexation of these areas, for example, two-thirds (66%) of the ideological settlers supported this option in 2023, while only one-third (35%) of “quality of life” settlers did so.

It must be recalled that land swaps of less than four percent as part of a diplomatic agreement will allow 80% of Israelis living over the Green Line to live under Israeli sovereignty. Most of the settlers who will be evicted will come from the ideological messianic right-wing. The survey findings on this aspect show increasingly extreme positions among the settlers regarding their possible eviction. In 2016, only one-fifth (19%) of quality-of-life settlers and under half (44%) the ideological settlers stated that they would refuse to leave their settlement under any conditions if Israel reached an agreement with the Palestinians. In 2023, by contrast, 35% of quality-of-life settlers and 56% of ideological settlers stated that they will refuse to leave as part of an agreement.

If all the settlers are offered immediate compensation for their homes and property as part of an evacuation and compensation package, agreement to evacuation among quality-of-life settlers has fallen from 66% in 2016 to 55% in 2023, and among ideological settlers from 45% in 2016 to 35% in 2023. These trends show that the ideological settler has become more bourgeois and the bourgeois settler more ideological. This blurring of identifies is the direct result of the normalization of the occupation in Israeli society.

It must be emphasized that all the above facts are concealed from the Israeli public, or presented only in nominal terms without examining such important aspects as natural growth, migration rate, and demographic growth among the Palestinians. These findings show that reality is diametrically opposed to the fevered imagination of the Minister for Settlement and National Tasks, who speaks of a “period of miracle” – a feeling that is very probably confined solely to herself and her supporters during this difficult time in Israel. The facts and figures highlight the absurd nature of the policies adopted by the government of Benjamin Netanyahu, which is seeking to prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state at any cost. “Netanyahu is with us all the way,” Betzael Smotrich declared last month (June 7) at a conference in one of the settlements in Samaria.

Over the past decade, the Israeli governments under Netanyahu and Naftali Bennett have transferred billions of shekels to the settlers in the West Bank (excluding East Jerusalem) through various government grants. They have subsidized the growing Haredi society in the area, ensuring that it remains dependent on excessive grants, and as part of political deals they have invested billions of shekels in the construction of roads to the isolated settlements. They have supported the illegal outposts with taxpayers’ money, through the regional councils, grossly undermining proper governance. They have closed their eyes to settler violence. In all these ways they have sought to revive Israel’s most failed real estate project.

Even in wartime, the current government is continuing to sacrifice Israeli democracy, intensifying the dramatic regime change in the Territories in the interests of the settlement enterprise. Over the past few weeks, Smotrich has effectively completed the regime change in the West Bank. Almost all powers, except for those concerning security, have been transferred from the army to a civilian mechanism he heads. This has been achieved by appointing one of his loyal supporters as Deputy Head of the Civil Administration for Civilian Affairs.

This step deprives the head of the Civil Administration of his powers and is essentially tantamount to the annexation of the West Bank. It enables Smotrich to exercise de facto control over the management of land in the West Bank and over planning and building, the inspection and enforcement of building law, the inspection and management of local authorities, the licensing of professions, trade and economy, and the management of nature reserves and antiquity sites. This process allows Smotrich to approve and finance the establishment of new neighborhoods and shepherding farms, while demolishing homes built by Palestinians without permits.

The big question is – will the Haredi and secular population ultimately cooperate with the initiatives of the small messianic-nationalist bloc? Given the generous economic benefits offered to those who move to the West Bank, will Haredi and secular Israelis move there in their thousands, reversing the negative demographic trends and eliminating the currently feasible option of a two-state solution? Will the wasting of public resources in order to realize a messianic vision that lacks any political viability continue, thereby damaging the status, image, economy, and – above all – security of the State of Israel?

9. Why Israel Should Embrace the US-Saudi Deal and Pursue a Two-State Solution — Shaul Arieli, Jerusalem Post, 28/07/2024

The events of October 7 in the “Gaza encirclement,” alongside the American-Saudi desire to establish a closer military and economic alliance in cooperation with Israel, give rise to the opportunity for a significant change in reality through a multi-stage, multi-disciplinary and multi-year political process that must begin now. A process that will establish a permanent settlement between Israel and the Palestinians and will provide stability to the region by neutralizing the influence of Iran and its proxies.

That’s exactly why Israel needs such a deal — especially a viable path to a two-state model — in order to secure its own security, economy, and international standing.

The vision of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, former Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, and Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich is one of a Jewish ethnocracy that seeks to entrench Jewish supremacy throughout the whole Land of Israel under the ideology of “a nation dwelling alone.” Bennett promises that “the world will get used to it.” They sought to implement this nationalist and messianic vision through the “Calming Plan” launched by Bennett in 2012, which called for the annexation of Area C, which is under Israeli military and civilian control; former president Donald Trump’s ridiculous “peace initiative” in 2020, which was concocted by Netanyahu; and, above all, Smotrich’s “Decisive Plan,” published in 2017.

In just a decade, this vision has led Israel toward the status of a global pariah, severely damaging the capability and standing of the IDF, destroying the Israel Police, gravely damaging the judicial system, and fostering social polarization that has led the country on a slippery slope toward civil war.

The vision has damaged Israel’s relations with the US, jeopardized its peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan, impaired the economy, inspired stronger populations to leave the country, and brought soaring institutionalized corruption. Around the world, it has led to a rise in antisemitic and anti-Israeli sentiments and alienated world Jewry from Israel; at home, it has led to the abandonment of the values of solidarity that once characterized Israeli society.

Accordingly, Israel must now readopt and accept the Zionist vision of the founding fathers — a vision of a democracy with a Jewish majority living in security as a member of the family of nations. To this end, a new leadership is needed that embraces this vision loudly and clearly and does everything possible to implement it.

Reforms are needed in many areas, but the events of October 7 appear to have reaffirmed the central importance of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This conflict has raged for over a century, and its resolution can create a better and more comfortable reality in which Israel will be able to address its problems in the fields of law, education, health, welfare, and the environment. Despite the volatile mood in Israeli and Palestinian society following the October 7 massacre and the devastation of the Gaza Strip, it is vital to present a plan to implement an egalitarian Zionist vision.

US President Joe Biden's plan for the Middle East comprises three key and interrelated components. The first is a regional alignment to confront Iran and its proxies, including a broad security treaty with Saudi Arabia. This move serves Israel's security interests. In return, Israel will be required to agree to move forward toward a Palestinian state, a move that is expected to remove the foundation for Iranian and other interference in the region.

The second is normalization between Saudi Arabia and Israel, thereby opening the Arab world to the Israeli economy. The third includes preparatory and complementary steps for this plan: ending the fighting in Gaza and in the north of Israel and freeing the hostages, as part of a stable ceasefire.

Israel must integrate itself into this deal as soon as possible, and to this end early elections must be held, in the hope that the results will usher in a new leadership. The US-Saudi agreement — which Israel and the Palestinians will later be able to join — should include an Israeli-Palestinian “package” based on a genuine and practical commitment to resolving the conflict within the foreseeable future based on the two-state model.

The Israeli-Palestinian package I'm proposing would help overcome this impasse through two stages. The first is a binding declaration. Israel must announce its commitment to the two-state solution. The declaration by a new government must include a sentence included in the agreements Netanyahu signed, the Hebron Protocol and the Wye Memorandum, mentioning UN Resolutions 242 and 338, and should add that the plan will meet the parameters agreed to during the preceding rounds of negotiations.

Meanwhile, the Palestinians must ensure that they can present a single, legitimate, and binding leadership for the Palestinian people. This requires the agreement of Fatah and Hamas to hold elections to the Palestinian parliament, the presidency, and the PLO Palestinian National Council, as well as the dismantling of the armed wing of Hamas — “one authority, one

weapon,” as Jibril Rajoub declared. All candidates in the election should recognize Israel and the agreements signed with it.

The second step, conditional on the success of the first, includes confidence- and state-building actions. Israel must present and implement a realistic plan for Palestinian contiguity along the central mountain ridge, as formulated by former prime ministers Ariel Sharon and Ehud Olmert in the expanded Disengagement Plan in 2004 and the Realignment Plan in 2006. This formula is based on the evacuation of isolated settlements along Route 60, which connects the main Palestinian cities in the West Bank and creates territorial contiguity.

Israel will revive the Safe Passage mechanism, preferably by means of a railroad line, as planned prior to the disengagement from Gaza in 2005. This line will connect Gaza to Tarqumiya based on the Ashkelon-Kiryat Gat line. These steps will ensure that later, during the negotiations for a permanent agreement, the Palestinians will enjoy territorial contiguity.

The Palestinians will undertake to deploy police stations to enforce law and order and to demonstrate governance in all the areas under their responsibility. In addition, and as required, the PA will deploy its forces in the Gaza Strip, accompanied by a pan-Arab force during the initial stage, and will resume security coordination with Israel in Gaza, as elsewhere.

In the economic sphere, Israel must commit to the regular and unconditional transfer of the tax revenue it collected for the Palestinian Authority. Israel and the Palestinian Authority will update the Paris Protocol, including the development of an independent clearing system for the PA.

After implementing this “package,” Israel will continue to hold security authority in the West Bank. It will benefit from coordination with the Palestinian police both in the West Bank and in Gaza, and it will hold the Jordan Valley. It will be able to rebuild its relations with Jordan and Egypt, as well as with the international community — and the US, in particular. The Palestinians will enjoy territorial contiguity, enabling them to implement development plans and enforce law and order.

The PA will become a legitimate body for pursuing negotiations with Israel and the international community, and Palestinians will benefit from an improved economy and enhanced security control between the West Bank and Gaza. This reality will provide stability and allow both sides to move on to the next stage.

Alongside implementation of the package, America, Saudi Arabia, and Israel will take initial steps toward normalization and the formation of a regional alliance to confront all those liable to spoil the process, above all Iran and its proxies.

This two-stage Israeli-Palestinian package will implement the goals of the US. Washington must not agree to a narrower package, since this will only perpetuate the current bloody reality and reward the messianic and fundamentalist forces on both sides, thereby damaging its own interests in the Middle East.

In the next stage, the parties should move toward the gradual resolution of the conflict through permanent agreements. Subject to the successful implementation of the package, three negotiation channels will be opened to discuss permanent arrangements. The first, between Israel and Palestine under American and Arab mediation, will focus on the four core issues: borders, security, Jerusalem, and the refugees, based on the parameters adopted at Annapolis in 2008.

The second, between Israel and the Arab world, will be based on the Arab League's Peace Initiative and will focus mainly on steps toward normalization and an expanded regional alliance to counter Iran and its proxies.

The third, between Israel, Palestine, and the international community, will discuss economic and security arrangements, the mechanism for the refugee issue, military aid, and other issues. For each of these channels, a timescale will be determined for parallel implementation, whereby each channel will be dependent on the others.

After signing all the agreements in all three channels, parallel and conditional implementation will begin along a common timeline.

The formulation and implementation of this plan could take several years. However, the parties must recognize that this is the only way to prevent a grave escalation and to offer renewed hope to both peoples. The current opportunity for peace has come at the price of the loss of tens of thousands of Palestinian lives, many hundreds of Israeli lives, the destruction of the Gaza Strip, and the evacuation of Israeli communities in the Western Negev and the North.

Accordingly, it is an opportunity that both sides should seize. The great challenge facing both Israeli and Palestinian society is to choose leadership worthy of leading the two peoples to a future that will be different from the reality they have experienced for the past one hundred years.

10. A Decision Support Tool Integrating Data and Advanced Modeling — S. Arieli, R. Ben-Jacob, G. Hirschberger, S. Hirsch-Hoefler, A. Kenett, R. Kenett, Preprints.org, 24/09/2024

Abstract: “Politography” refers to the study or portrayal of political events, figures, and systems. It is used to analyze political trends, visualize data, and create a data-driven narrative. Decision support tools (DST) for policy makers tend to be narrowly defined in terms of specific domain applications. In this work, we describe the design and construction of a DST related to intergroup conflict management and resolution, focused on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It provides a case study that can be generalized to other applications.

The DST, labeled T-Politography, integrates over 9,000 indicators pertaining to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in a hierarchical structure that begins with the specific geographical areas influenced by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These include Areas A, B, and C in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The designated areas have distinct legal status specified in the 1993 Oslo Accords between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. The second level of the DST hierarchy consists of three domains that characterize Israeli and Palestinian levels of control in each one of the geographic areas: security, geo-spatial, and economic. In addition, the T-Politography DST contains contextual data relevant to Israeli and Palestinian control, such as political, diplomatic, social, and legal domains.

Each domain is designated as influencing either Israeli or Palestinian Authority control and is further subdivided into categories. For example, the geo-spatial domain is one of the categories covering Israeli demographics in Area C. Each category is represented by a set of specific indicators, such as Israeli birth rates in Area C. Section 1 provides background, Section 2 identifies the DST user groups, Section 3 covers methodological components, Section 4 presents the DST example covered in this paper, and Section 5 presents a scenario analysis using Bayesian networks. The paper concludes with a discussion section.

The origins of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be traced back to the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which pledged to establish a national home for the Jewish people in a land with an Arab majority. The national aspirations of both sides, coupled with demographic shifts, the Holocaust, and the aftermath of World War II, culminated in the UN Partition Plan of 1947, proposing the creation of two states — one Jewish and one Arab. Several military conflicts followed the UN declaration, with an apparent impasse to a peaceful resolution. The situation in 2024 is characterized by a lack of tools for the Israeli political system to effectively describe, analyze, and evaluate Israel’s trajectory toward various political, foreign, and domestic

scenarios. A data-driven approach is needed in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for identifying and formulating appropriate responses.

“Politography” refers to the study or portrayal of political events, figures, and systems. It is used to analyze political trends, visualize data, and create a data-driven narrative. Decision support tools for policy makers tend to be narrowly defined in terms of specific domain applications.

In this work, we describe the design and construction of a DST related to intergroup conflict management and resolution, focused on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It provides a case study that can be generalized to other applications. The DST, labeled T-Politography, integrates over 9,000 indicators pertaining to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in a hierarchical structure that begins with the specific geographical areas influenced by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These include Areas A, B, and C in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The designated areas have distinct legal status specified in the 1993 Oslo Accords between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. The second level of the DST hierarchy consists of three domains that characterize Israeli and Palestinian levels of control in each one of the geographic areas: security, geo-spatial, and economic. In addition, the T-Politography DST contains contextual data relevant to Israeli and Palestinian control, such as political, diplomatic, social, and legal domains. Each domain is designated as influencing either Israeli or Palestinian Authority control and is further subdivided into categories. For example, the geo-spatial domain is one of the categories covering Israeli demographics in Area C. Each category is represented by a set of specific indicators, such as Israeli birth rates in Area C.

To provide decision makers and researchers with an effective DST, we apply various data analytic methods including data standardization methods, construction of composite indicators, dimension reduction with principal components, random forest models, and measures of variable importance.

DSTs are used in a wide range of application domains such as web traffic analysis, mobility across different transportation options, public movement in shopping centers, and agricultural domains. They provide the equivalent of a digital twin of social and political systems. A general structure for designing a DST was proposed in Harel et al. Here we consider a DST based on data that consists of official statistics and survey-based indicators. For methodologies analyzing and displaying indicators in social and economic applications, see Kenett and Maggino and Kenett.

To track trends of conditions in various geographical areas, we compile a range of indicators covering security, demographic, economic data, employment, population size, security events, and media enticements to violence. In the T-Politography DST there are over 9,000 indicators curated by specialized teams. The data is derived either from official sources, such as the Bank of Israel and the Central Bureau of Statistics, dedicated surveys, GIS analyses of aerial photographs, and media-based textual analyses of statements and declarations made by officials or leading figures in the region and in major countries, international institutions, and NGOs. In general, the data covers ten years of historical data and is updated on a yearly or quarterly basis, depending on how frequently changes occur.

In designing and implementing the DST, we considered two main target groups of users and stakeholders.

The general challenge in DST Politography is to provide a data-driven analysis of conflicts characterized by geo-spatial boundaries and conflict domains. The analytic tool needs to provide both high-level perspectives and drill-down capabilities, with an ability to examine alternative scenarios.

The T-Politography DST was designed with two main target user groups. The first group consists of decision makers who need an up-to-date assessment of the situation and an ability to evaluate hypothetical change scenarios. The second target group consists of conflict analysis scholars who use the DST to access and analyze data that is relevant to testing theoretical models of conflict and conflict resolution.

The first target group is provided, by the T-Politography DST, with easy access to several pre-designed analysis panels. The second target group can access a versatile platform for investigating a range of possibilities with miscellaneous tools, both internal and external to the platform. An example of the application of such tools in the COVID pandemic is provided in Kenett et al. In the COVID DST, hospital data from ministries of health and individual mobility data from Google Mobility were integrated using Bayesian networks and structural equation models. The next section provides a description of the methodology we developed and applied in designing and implementing the T-Politography DST.

In developing a Politography DST, the main methodological challenges include integrating data from different sources and in different update timings and units; defining composite indicators that provide unified views; tracking and modeling trends at various levels of the system hierarchy; and analyzing alternative scenarios for supporting decision makers.

The methodology applied in designing and implementing the T-Politography DST involved four parts: Map, Construct, Identify, and Analyze (MCIA).

In the first phase, control factors are mapped into economic, security, and geo-spatial, or demographic, domains. Experts determine indicators reflecting domains of control by geographical area: economic, security, and geo-spatial. A methodology for supporting this part is the Goals-Question-Metrics approach presented in Van Solingen et al. The GQM steps are: generate a set of goals; derive a set of questions relating to the goals; and develop a set of metrics needed to answer the questions. Data can be viewed using dynamic graphs with an ability that allows zooming in on any individual indicator by navigating its relevant data hierarchy.

In the second phase, an integrated database is constructed by combining indicators from different domains, by year or by quarter. Research teams load data into a database and compute indices relative to a common annual baseline. The T-Politography DST updates a configuration file with indicator names and identifies missing values and outliers. We determine data subsets for use in integration, by year or quarter, and conduct linkage analysis to obtain integrated data.

In the third phase, trends are identified in individual indicators and composite indicators, and relative control level is computed by year and by entity, Israel or the PA, over one of the predetermined territories listed above. For trend analysis, we compute composite indicators by domain using the median. We present bar charts and trend charts and conduct variable cluster analysis to identify the most representative cluster indicator. In addition, we combine all domains to compute an overall trend with a composite indicator. The method applied to define composite indicators is based on computing individual indicators relative to a base year and then using the yearly median across indicators. In the 2024 T-Politography DST, we apply this approach with 2022 as the baseline and label the yearly composite indicator MEDIAN.

To compute the overall level of Israeli and Palestinian control, we derive and present combined composite indicators. A feature-selection preprocessing step in the T-Politography DST applies random forest to select subset indicators based on 80 percent of their accumulated variable importance to the respective trend. To derive the combined composite indicators for each indicator, $Y_i(x)$, we define a desirability function $d_i(Y_i)$, which assigns numbers between 0 and 1 to the possible values of Y_i . The value $d_i(Y_i)=0$ represents an undesirable value of Y_i , and

$d_i(Y_i)=1$ represents a desirable or ideal value. The individual desirabilities are then combined into an overall desirability index using the geometric mean of the individual desirabilities:

$$\text{Overall Desirability Function} = [(d_1(Y_1) \times d_2(Y_2) \times \dots \times d_k(Y_k))]^{1/k}$$

where k denotes the number of indicators. Notice that if any response Y_i is completely undesirable, $d_i(Y_i)=0$, then the overall desirability is zero. To account for this “zero control,” we apply an additional step that mitigates such cases, and the desirability function is used as a composite indicator based on individual indicators. The final composite indicators, representing Israeli and PA control, are graphed on a 0 to 1, Y by X graph, within one of four triangular quadrants. Each triangle represents a different combination of Israeli and PA control level.

In the fourth phase, scenarios are analyzed by determining the list and contribution of indicators affecting target indicators. Target indicators and affecting indicators are mapped, followed by a PCA analysis of target indicators. Principal components that determine most of the variability are used. On the dimension Prin1, a random forest is applied to determine indicators representing 80 percent of the accumulated variable importance. Decision-tree rules of Prin1 are then determined based on the subset of top 80 percent affecting indicators.

The validation of the T-Politography DST was based on feedback sessions with domain experts and triangulation of information from different sources. The descriptive components provide visual rendering that can be checked by comparisons to other reports. The analytic components were internally validated.

The T-Politography DST elements consist of various data sources, a configuration file, and organized files used in the data analysis. The front end of the Politography DST provides bilingual options, Hebrew and English, and access to several analytic tools.

The first level of data presentation is descriptive. The data is organized by geographical area, such as Area C; by domain, such as geo-spatial; by group, such as Palestinian demographics; and then by a specific indicator, such as density of Palestinian residents in built-up areas.

At the next level, we apply a control composite indicator that aggregates data from the three domains of control: geo-spatial, economic, and security. This composite index enables decision makers to trace change in both Palestinian and Israeli control in the four regions of interest. “Control” is calculated in reference to the base year, 2022.

To better understand a change in control, users can examine change in each specific domain of control. For instance, one can ask: what accounts for the increase in Israeli control over Area C in the past two decades? Changes in security do not seem to account for the increase in Israeli control. It is primarily the geo-spatial and economic domains that are driving the observed change.

The map of indicator trends provides a general picture of the sources of control. To get more accurate information on the specific indicators that contribute to levels of control, and the relative contribution of each indicator, we created a Scenario Maintenance screen. This screen enables users to run a random forest analysis predictive model and determine from it the specific indicators that contribute to overall control in a designated area. It also permits analysis of sources of control in specific domains: geo-spatial, economic, and security.

The scenario function also enables users to examine contextual influences on control. An example of which indicators in the Palestinian social domain, that is, Palestinian influencers on social media, exert the most influence on Palestinian control in Area C shows indicators explaining up to 85 percent of the variance in descending order. In this example, we see that influencers discussing political, popular, and media activism contribute more to PA control than discussions of military activism.

The Scenario Maintenance screen has an additional use: answering user-specific questions and queries. Users may want to know who is gaining more control in a specific area of the West Bank, Israelis or Palestinians. They might have other questions pertaining to the issue of control, such as predicting Palestinian and/or Jewish settlers' violence in the West Bank. This enables us to generate user-tailored responses to specific queries.

Ultimately, users may want to not only understand which factors contribute to control, but to determine the current state of the balance of control between the conflicting parties and how that balance changes over time. Using a desirability function, we compute the ratio of Israeli and Palestinian control and map it on a two-dimensional space, with the X-axis representing Israeli control and the Y-axis representing Palestinian control. The two diagonals traversing this space create four quadrants of control that indicate who is the dominant party and whether they have high or low levels of control: Palestinian control, high; Israeli control, high; Israeli control, low; and Palestinian control, low.

As a next step conducted offline, we apply Bayesian network analysis in order to understand links between indicators from the same or different domains, and how changes in the level of

one indicator influence the other indicators. Bayesian networks consist of a graph structure called a directed acyclic graph (DAG) and an estimation step. This provides the ability to run what-if scenarios to assist policymakers in making informed decisions that account for consequences of policy decisions.

To present an application of a Bayesian network and preserve confidentiality, we demonstrate an application to a subset of 18 indicators over 12 years, 2010–2021. The data analyzed is calibrated to the year 2022 as a baseline. The median of the row is used as a composite indicator representing the specific year.

To analyze this data with a discrete Bayesian network, one needs first to discretize the data. In this example, the indicator data was classified into three groups of equal width. From this data, we can derive a directed acyclic graph.

The model-driven estimates provide probabilistic statements about changes over time or about conditioning the Bayesian network on any of its variables. This Bayesian network analysis provides the DST with an ability to consider future-looking alternative scenarios.

A DST is designed to provide a data-driven wide-angle view. Decision makers can use it to manage planned and unplanned events, such as Taleb's black swans.

The T-Politography DST described in this paper is a decision support tool instrumental in analyzing and understanding complex conflicts such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This general DST structure may prove valuable for scholars of conflicts who have access to a comprehensive database, and for decision makers who want to make data-driven decisions. The Bayesian network analysis highlights consequences of decisions by enabling conditioning of indicator values. This type of DST is organized in a hierarchical manner such that users can examine the data systematically at a descriptive level. Then, they can examine more complex questions such as the impact of changes in the level of control, questions about the sources of control, specific scenarios pertaining to control, the ratio of control between conflicting parties, and how all this changes over time. Finally, they may examine what-if scenarios in a network of control indicators. The general methodology for designing and implementing the DST presented here consists of Map, Construct, Identify, and Analyze.

A Politography DST contributes to the field of conflict resolution studies in several important ways. Most of the literature on intergroup conflict resolution is domain-specific. Some studies focus on geographical or demographic aspects of the conflict, whereas others focus on public opinion or on elite or leader opinion. The T-Politography DST integrates the data of different

domains and presents an integrative approach to intergroup conflict resolution. Conflict resolution is also often conceptualized in unidimensional terms, such as one-state solution or two-state solution. The T-Politography DST conceptualizes intergroup conflict as an array of control ratios between parties, in different geographical regions and in different domains.

This multidimensional understanding of intergroup conflict provides a unique perspective on the nuances and specific features of conflict that are often overlooked. It offers new policy opportunities that may ultimately advance conflict resolution. For example, increasing Palestinian economic control in the West Bank and Gaza would facilitate independence in the long run. Most importantly, the T-Politography DST identifies the indicators influencing control and predicts the consequences of change in such indicators. These advanced capabilities reduce reliance on beliefs, biases, and feelings, and increase the possibility for stakeholders to make informed decisions based on state-of-the-art analytic tools. Using this type of DST does not imply a guarantee of success in conflict resolution. The T-Politography DST's assistance in decision-making processes significantly supports informed decisions and increases the chances of finding the right path to peace. In general, the structure of a DST described in the paper can be used in general conflict resolution initiatives. It can be considered a social digital twin mirroring a conflict with data-driven indicators covering an array of conflict-specific domains.

11. Qatar Is Preparing a 'Ring of Fire' Around Israel to Supplant Iran's — Ronit Marzan, Haaretz, 15/10/2024

On October 7, 2023, the *idée fixe* that Hamas was deterred was shattered. But Israel is still mired in another *idée fixe* — that Qatar is a friendly country that helps resolve conflicts.

Israel is ignoring the hearts-and-minds campaign Qatar is waging against it and against the entire Western world by arguing that liberating all of Palestine will liberate the Middle East from colonialism, liberate the world from the unipolar order of American hegemony and liberate the human psyche from Western culture.

The hashtags "Spain," "Andalusia," "Palestine" and "history and culture," which Qatar's online influencers regularly use, are not understood by either Israel or Spain.

These hashtags are part of a historical, cultural and psychological campaign that links two central narratives.

It seeks to convince Muslims worldwide that the medieval Islamic empire in Andalusia fell as a result of jealousy and rivalry among Muslim kings. Additionally, historical Palestine isn't being liberated because of the rivalry among Arab countries and their cooperation with the Israeli enemy against Palestinian resistance organizations.

Tweets posted online by Qatari influencers such as "Haifa is beautiful, but it will be more beautiful when it burns down," "Don't dream about a happy world as long as Israel exists" and "Liberating all of Palestine is possible, and it has begun" have also not been met with any effective response by Israel's official public diplomacy network.

And Qatar's threats that it is considering deporting Hamas leaders from the country should not be taken seriously so long as senior Hamas leader Khaled Meshal, who lives there, keeps telling Muslims around the world that the Al-Aqsa Mosque is "the explosive that sets off intifadas"; inciting residents of the West Bank and "the 1948 Arabs," that is, Israeli Arabs, to resume suicide bombings; urging the Arab nation to embark on both a jihad of the soul and an armed jihad against the Zionist enemy, which isn't a natural part of the region; encouraging the Arab masses to take to the streets and pressure their leaders to sever ties with Israel; and urging student leaders worldwide to renew street protests to put an end to Zionist and American hegemony.

It's not only Israel that has fallen asleep while on guard duty. European and American leaders also don't understand that Qatar is working via its agents of change to bring about a clash

between the global north and the global south by exploiting the distress of failed states and the woke movement in the West. They are failing to recognize that it is undermining the Western model of the modern nation-state whose borders were drawn in the past.

Its goal is to replace this Western model with that of a traditional Arab state, meaning one where the regime's legitimacy would come from its willingness to put the interests of the Arab-Islamic nation above those of its own country, first and foremost in the battle against Israel.

Tawakkol Karman, an Islamic activist from Yemen, received aid from Qatar to promote a revolutionary discourse in her country during the Arab Spring and was awarded a Nobel Peace Prize for it.

Now, she is helping Qatar incite a revolt against Western governments among young people and indigenous peoples. At the One Young World Summit in Canada, she argued that democracy, human rights and the rule of law are in retreat in the United States, Canada, Britain and France and urged action against powerful companies and governments that had stolen the resources of indigenous peoples.

In an edited Al Jazeera video of a speech by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres at an Arab League summit, the following chyrons were prominently displayed: "Guterres urged the Arab states to unite and not let outside parties manipulate them," "Guterres highlighted the golden age of Islamic culture and praised the Arab contribution over the course of hundreds of years, from the Andalusian renaissance in the Iberian peninsula to Baghdad, which was a global center of culture and civilization," "The secretary-general blamed the Arab states' backwardness on colonialism and the war of liberation that the Arab nation had to wage."

All of the above show that Guterres, like many former UN employees who are today employed at Azmi Bishara's research institute in Doha, don't represent the values in whose name the United Nations was established. Instead, they have become Qatar's water carriers.

Israel and the United States erred when they let Qatar send aid to the Gaza Strip. And they are erring now by allowing it to send aid to Lebanon. Now that Gaza has been devastated, and the chances of Hamas returning to power are low, Qatar is racing ahead towards Lebanon.

It is part of the five-member committee that was established to help resolve Lebanon's political crisis, along with Egypt, Saudi Arabia, America and France.

Qatar is embracing veteran Druze politician Walid Jumblatt, the former head of Lebanon's Progressive Socialist Party, in the hopes that the Druze community will provide help in the future to topple Bashar Assad's regime in Syria.

It is giving millions of dollars to the Lebanese army to help pay soldiers' salaries, \$100 a month per soldier. And it is cooperating more closely with Lebanese government ministries — for instance, the internal security ministry, which is responsible for training police officers — while moving forward on agreements in the field of solar energy.

Israel's ground operation in Lebanon is giving Qatar an opportunity to settle itself in the hearts of the Lebanese people. After Israel dismantles Shi'ite Hezbollah for it, along with the ring of fire Iran has for years nurtured in the region, Qatar will appear in the role of the "savior" and repeat what it did with Sunni Hamas in Gaza.

But this time, it will do so with the Sunni Muslim Brotherhood in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Jordan. And Iran's Shi'ite ring of fire will be replaced with Qatar's Sunni ring, which will be no less dangerous, and might well lead Israel to new versions of the October 7 attacks, just as Meshal has been promising.

Saladin liberated Palestine, Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa after securing geographic and demographic depth for himself in Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Egypt and Jordan. That's what Meshal and Mohamed El-Shinqiti, a faculty member at Qatar University, have been saying, and presumably not by chance.

Lolwah Al-Khater, the country's minister for international cooperation, landed in Beirut a few days ago with a generous supply of aid and promises of "plans for the medium and long term."

We should believe what she says, because Qatar is a long-distance runner, and patience is a key value in the Muslim Brotherhood's ideology.

12. The Unbearable Price Israel Would Pay for Annexation — Dr. Col. (ret.) Shaul Arieli, Times of Israel Blog, 17/11/2024

Upon learning of the US election results indicating Donald Trump would return to the White House, Bezalel Smotrich declared that 2025 would be the year of applying sovereignty to the West Bank. Smotrich's jubilant forecast echoed a declaration by Naftali Bennett the last time Trump entered office, when the then-education minister and head of the Jewish Home Party spoke of "the dream... that Judea and Samaria will be part of sovereign Israel," and called for immediate action to "dedicate ourselves completely to this."

Indeed, since the launch of the Trump peace plan in January 2020, the settlement enterprise has reached new heights. Bennett's tenure as prime minister and Smotrich's role as finance minister and in the Defense Ministry have seen an unparalleled acceleration in the legitimization of illegal outposts. No fewer than 22 outposts were legalized between 2020 and 2024, while a staggering 79 new outposts were established, more than half of these during the war. One of these outposts, established in 2021, was subsequently authorized in 2024.

This systematic expansion of settlements, masked behind bureaucratic jargon, represents nothing less than a calculated transformation of the West Bank's landscape. The numbers tell a story of opportunistic land grabbing, particularly intensified during a period of crisis when public attention was diverted elsewhere.

A comprehensive study conducted by Commanders for Israel's Security, comprising dozens of retired senior military officers, presents a disturbing picture of the potential consequences of annexing territories in the West Bank. This year-long study warns that even partial annexation could trigger a devastating chain reaction that would threaten Israel's future as a Jewish and democratic state.

Proponents of annexation believe they can gradually incorporate territories while minimizing negative consequences. However, the study reveals this to be a dangerous illusion. Annexing Area C, or even parts of it, would likely lead to the collapse of the Palestinian Authority, the termination of security coordination, and the IDF's takeover of the entire West Bank. In such a scenario, Israel would be forced to establish military rule and assume responsibility for 2.6 million Palestinians.

The economic costs alone are staggering: \$14.5 billion annually, including healthcare, education, and social security for Palestinian residents. Moreover, Israel's economy would

suffer significantly from decreased foreign investment, international sanctions, and GDP damage. This represents an unprecedented burden on Israel's resources and taxpayers.

From a security perspective, the IDF would need to double its presence in the territory, severely compromising its readiness for war on other fronts. The vital security cooperation with Jordan and Egypt would be severely damaged, potentially destabilizing the Hashemite Kingdom, a cornerstone of regional stability.

In the international arena, Israel would face a severe diplomatic crisis. Even if the Trump administration supports such a move, European nations and Arab states would likely respond harshly with economic and diplomatic sanctions. Israel's international legitimacy would be severely compromised, potentially reducing it to pariah state status, reminiscent of apartheid-era South Africa.

The central concern is that annexation would lead to a point of no return where Israel must choose between two impossible options: a binational state where it loses its Jewish majority or an apartheid regime where millions of Palestinians live under military rule without full civil rights.

This isn't merely about territory; it's about Israel's soul and future. The dream of a democratic Jewish state, as envisioned by its founders, would be seriously compromised. The study recommends avoiding any annexation steps, whether creeping or legislative, and instead promoting a policy of separation from the Palestinians while maintaining IDF security control until a diplomatic solution is reached.

Rather than succumbing to illusions of a "historic opportunity," decision-makers must seriously consider the heavy price Israel might pay for such a move. The current political discourse in Israel increasingly normalizes annexation ideas, making it crucial for the Israeli public to understand their destructive implications.

The study's findings challenge the prevalent right-wing narrative that annexation can be managed with minimal consequences. Instead, it suggests that any form of annexation would trigger a domino effect leading to outcomes that would fundamentally alter Israel's character and international standing.

As American Jews and supporters of Israel grapple with these issues, it's crucial to understand that opposing annexation isn't about being "anti-Israel" — quite the contrary. It's about preserving Israel's character as a Jewish and democratic state, ensuring its security, and maintaining its standing in the international community.

The time has come for honest dialogue about these challenges. While the status quo in the West Bank is problematic, unilateral annexation would be catastrophic. Israel's friends, particularly in the United States, must help it avoid this self-destructive path and instead work toward a solution that ensures both Israel's security and its democratic character.

The illusion that territories can be annexed without a heavy price is dangerous, and the cost of such a mistake could be irreversible. As Israel stands at this crossroads, the choice it makes will determine not just its future, but the nature of Jewish sovereignty in our time.

13. The Messianic Vision for the West Bank Is Untethered to Reality — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz, 06/12/2024

Last week, dozens of right-wing activists, public figures and local government heads met at the Ramada Hotel in Jerusalem for an unusual conference organized by the Yesha Council of settlements and chaired by Likud MK Avichay Buaron. The conference was motivated by the desire to prepare practical plans for the coming years ahead of the upcoming inauguration of the Trump administration. The declared goal was "to create the conditions to make Judea, Samaria and the Jordan Valley an integral part of the State of Israel."

The plans reflect an understanding that the current trends in the West Bank settlement enterprise do not provide a basis to change the reality in the area. As Buaron explained clearly, "We have a window of opportunity here, and we can be dumb or smart in how we use it. ... If we are dumb about it, we will have 700,000 residents and however many extra homes in four years' time." Actually, according to the current trends, in four years' time the number of Israelis in the West Bank will not be more than 570,000.

Based on data from the Tamrur-Politography group, I will seek here to examine in detail the feasibility and ramifications of the grandiose plan revealed at the conference. The main points of the plan are: the establishment of four new cities in the West Bank, including one for the ultra-Orthodox and one for Druze; transforming strategic settlements into cities; extending the area of jurisdiction of the regional councils to include the areas between the settlements; imposing Israeli sovereignty on unbuilt areas; and establishing Arab municipal authorities to replace the Palestinian Authority.

Regarding the first item, four new cities: it is safe to assume that Haredim can be found for a new city in the West Bank, despite the fact that the two existing Haredi cities in the area — Betar Ilit and Modi'in Ilit — have recorded negative migration balances over the past five years. The most important factor will be the location of the city, given the unsuccessful experience with the settlement of Immanuel. Immanuel was established 40 years ago in the heart of Samaria, but currently has a population of just 5,500. Unless the new Haredi city is established on the Green Line and to the west of the separation barrier, its chances of success will be minimal. As for the other two planned cities, it is important to bear in mind that secular Jews are leaving the West Bank: They accounted for 36 percent of all settlers in 2010, but this figure has since fallen to 26 percent. As for a Druze city — how likely is this unless Israel amends the Nation-State Law?

The second goal proposes turning Ma'aleh Efraim, Efrat, Eli, Nahliel and Kiryat Arba into cities. Ma'aleh Efraim was established almost 50 years ago and currently has a population of just 1,692. The settlement was supposed to provide services for settlers in the Jordan Valley, but this population itself numbers no more than 7,500. Ma'aleh Efraim has no industry, agriculture or tourism. Although it is ranked in the relatively high socioeconomic cluster 6, the government covers 75 percent of its current budget.

The population of Efrat has grown to 12,392, although over the past three years it has recorded a negative migration balance. Its built-up area is just 350 acres. Efrat is relatively prosperous and ranks in socioeconomic cluster 7, but again the government covers 70 percent of its current budget. It is very close to Jerusalem and Betar Ilit, and accordingly is unlikely to attract Haredi or secular residents, despite its good connection to the national road network, Route 60. Eli is situated in the heart of Samaria and is part of Mateh Binyamin Regional Council. The settlement is remote from Jerusalem and Tel Aviv; it has a population of less than 5,000 and its built-up area is smaller than that of the Old City of Jerusalem. The settlement relies on its proximity to Route 60, but has no industry.

Nahliel in western Binyamin is a small settlement at a considerable distance from the main traffic arteries, such as Route 443. It has a population of 744 in a small area of less than 50 acres. Kiryat Arba has a population of 7,600 and has had a negative migration balance for almost a decade. It is extremely weak in socioeconomic terms, cluster 2, and is situated in the heart of a Palestinian population of almost 850,000.

The third goal is to impose Israeli sovereignty on all of Area C. This would increase the area of the Jewish local authorities by a factor of 10. For example, Samaria Regional Council would expand from 72 square kilometers to 680 square kilometers. The proposed move would ensure Israeli control of all the archaeological sites, which total around 2,000 in Area C, and dozens of tourism sites in open areas. Based on the experience in East Jerusalem, imposing sovereignty and establishing municipal authorities for the 400,000 Palestinians who live in Area C will require a current budget of 15 billion shekels, \$4.2 billion, a year. Tens of billions more will be needed for infrastructure and institutions mandated by Israeli law.

After annexing Area C, Israel's border with the Palestinian territories will expand from 311 kilometers, the length of the Green Line, to 1,800 kilometers — three times the total length of all Israel's other borders. If Israel decides to establish a separation barrier along this course, the additional cost will be 60 billion shekels. It will also be necessary to mobilize reserve forces

on a permanent basis to protect the new border. Moreover, over half of the land in Area C is owned privately by Palestinians who live in Areas A and B. How will the planners allow these landowners to reach their land — or is the idea simply to expropriate it?

The plan to turn the Jordan Valley into Israel's solar energy center will have to address the need to conduct electricity from the lowest place in the world west through the central mountain ridge, which reaches elevations of 800 meters above sea level.

The conclusion is glaringly obvious: The plan is completely unfeasible, and Israel will not be able to cope with its financial, security and diplomatic ramifications. In 1982, Yehoshafat Harkabi succinctly explained the difference between a vision and a fantasy: "The risk of a national disaster was inherent in our existence as a land of vision, since a vision wishes to change reality. However, the magnitude of this vision, which determines its successful realization, depends on its connection to reality, so that even if the vision wishes to override reality, it is always embedded in this reality. That's the difference between a vision and 'a fantasy floating on an illusion.'"

2025

Significant Events

01.01.2025 - In the United States - President Joe Biden

01.01.2025 - Speaker of the 25th Knesset - Amir Ohana.

01.01.2025 - Police Commissioner - Danny Levy.

01.01.2025 - President of the Supreme Court - Yitzhak Amit.

01.01.2025 - President of the State - Yitzhak Herzog.

01.01.2025 - Chief of the General Staff - Lieutenant General Herzi Halevi and starting in March, Lieutenant General Eyal Zamir.

01.01.2025 - 37th Prime Minister of Israel - Benjamin Netanyahu.

01.01.2025 - Beginning of implementation of 116 Palestinian master plans in Area C for 128 communities (132,000 residents) - "Development as resistance" - regulated planning of houses, schools and clinics despite the lack of Israeli permits

01.01.2025 - Support march for Palestine against the massacre done by murderous Israel: Hundreds of thousands of people gathered at the Galata Bridge in Istanbul.

03.01.2025 - Hamas delegation arrives for meeting with Egyptian General Intelligence officials to advance negotiations to end fighting and return hostages

04.01.2025 - Foreign Minister Abdel-Ati's call with his French counterpart to strengthen coordination and advance ceasefire and transfer humanitarian aid to Gaza

05.01.2025 - Foreign Minister Abdel-Ati's phone call with Secretary of State Blinken

07.01.2025 - Palestinian Authority security forces shoot and wound 3 fighters from the Tulkarm battalion in Attil - a clash between the PA and armed militias in Area A

08.01.2025 - Trilateral summit of Egypt, Greece and Cyprus in Cairo chaired by the three heads of state

09.01.2025 - Election of Joseph Awan as President of Lebanon

09.01.2025 - President Erdogan met with the Imam of Al-Aqsa Mosque.

12.01.2025 - Arab Summit Conference in Riyadh.

12.01.2025 - PA forces again attack a militia vehicle in Tulkarm - an escalation in the internal Palestinian conflict in the Jenin, Tulkarm, Nablus and Bethlehem districts

13.01.2025 - Critical meeting between MIT (National Intelligence Organization of Turkey) head Kalin and Hamas.

14.01.2025 - Foreign Minister Abdel-Ati's meeting with UN Humanitarian Coordinator Sigrid Kaah in Cairo

14.01.2025 - President Biden's phone call to his Egyptian counterpart, Abdel-Ati, to promote ceasefire

15.01.2025 - Agreement reached for temporary ceasefire in fighting in Gaza and return of hostages to Israel, including 3 stages

15.01.2025 - Ceasefire agreement reached between Israel and Hamas

15.01.2025 - El-Sisi - bin Zayed meeting in Abu Dhabi, the two congratulate the ceasefire

16.01.2025 - Foreign Minister Abdel-Ati's phone call with Secretary of State Blinken, who congratulated Egypt's contribution to achieving the ceasefire

16.01.2025 - The Israeli government announces a new humanitarian aid package for Gaza worth 120 million euros

17.01.2025 - Iranian President's visit to Putin in Moscow and signing of a strategic partnership agreement

18.01.2025 - Egypt begins preparations to host an international conference for the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip and announces the establishment of a monitoring center for the implementation of the ceasefire agreement

19.01.2025 - Ceasefire goes into effect at 11:15 - first phase of 42 days

19.01.2025 - From this date until 3/18/2025, a broad ceasefire between Israel and Hamas took effect with a prisoner exchange agreement and a prolonged ceasefire after heavy fighting in the Gaza Strip.

19.01.2025 - Publication of news about the US administration's intention to transfer Gaza residents to other countries

19.01.2025 - Start of the second hostage release deal, including increased humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip and a temporary ceasefire

20.01.2025 - Donald Trump was sworn in as the 47th President of the United States and began his second term in the White House.

20.01.2025 - Mass demonstrations in Paris over the conviction of Marine Le Pen for financial crimes by the far-right and counter-demonstrations

20.01.2025 - Trump signed a national security order against foreign nationals who participated in protests

20.01.2025 - Visiting the heads of the Mossad and Shin Bet in Cairo in favor of implementing the agreement

20.01.2025 - With the start of the hostage agreement between Israel and Hamas, many American Jewish organizations expressed cautious support. AJC issued a statement titled "Israeli hostage agreement is a moment of relief, but not celebration." AIPAC called for "sustained pressure on Hamas to release all hostages." The organizations emphasized that this was only a first step and that the release of all 251 hostages must be ensured.

21.01.2025 - IDF launches Operation "Iron Wall" - a major military operation in the Jenin refugee camp and the city of Jenin (Area A) with the participation of armor, drones and infantry forces

21.01.2025 - Launching of Operation Iron Wall to eradicate terrorism in northern Samaria

21.01.2025 - The United States lifted all sanctions imposed on Israeli settlers accused of violence against Palestinians in Judea and Samaria.

21.01.2025 - The United States withdrew from the Paris Climate Accords.

22.01.2025 - Events to mark Police Day in Egypt

22.01.2025 - The National Security Council meeting in Turkey ended: The Red Book has been updated.

23.01.2025 - The first phone call between Foreign Minister Abdel-Atti and his American counterpart, incoming Secretary of State Rubio, to discuss a range of regional issues, chief among them the ceasefire agreement.

26.01.2025 - Hamas and Islamic Jihad delegations to Cairo for discussions on accepting released prisoners

26.01.2025 - IDF reports the explosion and destruction of an explosives laboratory in Jenin as part of Operation Iron Wall

27.01.2025 - Operation "Iron Wall" expands to Tulkarm district - airstrikes and ground operations in Nur a-Shams camp and the city of Tulkarm (Area A)

28.01.2025 - President Trump's remarks on a phone call with President al-Sisi during which he asked for his help in absorbing Palestinians from Gaza in Egypt. The conversation was denied in the Egyptian media

29.01.2025 - An anti-antisemitism order targeting pro-Palestinian protesters was issued

29.01.2025 - Foreign Minister Abdel-Atti's conversation with his American counterpart Rubio.

29.01.2025 - Foreign Minister Abdel-Atti's meeting with PA Chairman Hussein al-Sheikh's advisor in Cairo

29.01.2025 - President Erdogan received the Hamas delegation: Turkey will continue to tell the truth about Gaza.

29.01.2025 - Supreme Planning Council Discusses Advancement of 682 Housing Units in 3 Settlements (Halamish 531, Masada, Feduel) - Weekly Record

30.01.2025 - Outstretched hand from Turkey to Gaza: A 24-ton aid plane took off for Gaza.

30.01.2025 - Plans to deport foreign students who participated in protests were announced

30.01.2025 - Public campaign in Egypt against forced migration of Gazans, including mention of negative impact on peace treaty with Israel

31.01.2025 - Knesset legislation banning UNRWA operations in Israel comes into effect

02.02.2025 - Foreign Minister Abdel-Ati's meeting with UN Humanitarian Coordinator Kaah in Cairo to discuss reconstruction plan for Gaza

02.02.2025 - Turkish Foreign Minister Fidan met with senior Hamas officials in Qatar.

03.02.2025 - A Justice Department task force was established to root out antisemitism in schools

03.02.2025 - Foreign Minister Abdel-Ati's conversation with US Special Envoy for the Middle East Witkopf to discuss implementation of ceasefire

03.02.2025 - Foreign Minister Abdel-Ati's conversation with his colleague, EU Commissioner for External Relations Kallas

04.02.2025 - Foreign Minister Abdel-Ati's meetings with President Erdogan and his Turkish counterpart Fidan in Ankara

04.02.2025 - Jerusalem Municipality advances construction plan for a Jewish neighborhood in Sheikh Jarrah with 316 housing units and public buildings

04.02.2025 - King Abdullah's conversation with President al-Sisi on implementation of ceasefire and reconstruction of Gaza

04.02.2025 - Macron announces that France may soon recognize a Palestinian state, sets four additional conditions

04.02.2025 - Macron visits Egypt. Tours the aid warehouses in El-Arish and meets with wounded people from Gaza.

04.02.2025 - Trump-Netanyahu press conference at the White House and announcement of initiative to reconstruct Gaza and evacuate approximately 2 million of its residents

04.02.2025 - Turkey opens its doors to Palestinian prisoners released by Israel as part of the Gaza agreement. These are prisoners whom Israel considered a threat. Ankara provides significant support for the Gaza ceasefire process.

05.02.2025 - Foreign Minister Abdel-Ati's meeting with Palestinian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mustafa and Secretary of the Fatah Central Committee Rajoub, to discuss With Egypt's support and the PA reform plans

05.02.2025 - President Macron's phone call to his Egyptian counterpart to strengthen coordination on the two-state solution and the issue of rebuilding the Gaza Strip

06.02.2025 - First high-level diplomatic dialogue between the UAE and the PA

07.02.2025 - A round of phone calls by the Egyptian Foreign Minister to his Arab counterparts to formulate a unified position against Trump's plan for the forced migration of Gazans from the Gaza Strip

08.02.2025 - Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan spoke with his Iranian counterpart about the Palestinian issue.

09.02.2025 - A disruption occurred at the Super Bowl show in New Orleans by a protester with a Palestinian flag

10.02.2025 - EU formulates aid plan worth €1.6 billion by 2027 for the Palestinians

10.02.2025 - Foreign Minister Abdel-Atti's visit to Washington for meetings with his counterpart, the National Security Advisor and Special Envoy, as well as with senior senators,

during which he stressed the need for a just peace in the Middle East and the establishment of a Palestinian state.

12.02.2025 - King Abdullah's phone call to President al-Sisi to continue updating and coordinating between the countries on the Palestinian issue

12.02.2025 - The US House of Representatives Foreign Affairs and National Security Committee decides to use the term "Judea and Samaria" instead of "West Bank"

13.02.2025 - Foreign Minister Abdel-Ati's meetings with President Macron and his French counterpart in Paris to stabilize the ceasefire and coordinate positions regarding the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip

13.02.2025 - Justice Yitzhak Amit was sworn in as President of the Supreme Court at a ceremony held at the President's Residence.

13.02.2025 - Turkish report: Officials in the Turkish Defense Ministry are interested in purchasing Meteor missiles.

14.02.2025 - Foreign Minister Fidan spoke with his American counterpart Rubio about Gaza and Syria.

15.02.2025 - Talks on the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip by the 7G between the Israeli government and Egypt, including support for UNRWA

16.02.2025 - WJC President Ron Lauder's visit to Egypt and his meeting with President al-Sisi and Foreign Minister Abdel-Ati's meeting with a congressional delegation in Cairo

19.02.2025 - Publication of a World Bank report, the Israeli government: Gaza damage and reconstruction estimated at approximately \$53.2 billion

20.02.2025 - Emergency summit of Arab leaders in Riyadh in response to the Trump plan

21.02.2025 - Britain and the PA sign a memorandum of understanding.

21.02.2025 - Foreign Minister Abdel-Ati's participation in the G20 Foreign Ministers' meeting in Johannesburg, during which he raised the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip

23.02.2025 - Egypt sends invitations to the heads of state of the Arab League for the Arab summit to be held in March in Cairo

23.02.2025 - Foreign Minister Abdel-Ati's conversation with his French counterpart, which also included an update on what is happening in the Gaza Strip

23.02.2025 - General elections in Germany. The CDU party led by Meretz wins the most votes

24.02.2025 - Foreign Minister Abdel-Ati at the Human Rights Council conference in Geneva on the situation of the Palestinian people

26.02.2025 - Prime Minister Starmer announces a cut in foreign aid and an increase in the defense budget to up to 2.5% of GDP

27.02.2025 - Foreign Minister Abdel-Ati's conversation with his Russian counterpart, during which they also discussed the situation in the Gaza Strip and ahead of the Arab summit

28.02.2025 - Italian Prime Minister Meloni's telephone call to President al-Sisi, during which they discussed the Palestinian issue

01.03.2025 - Egyptian Foreign Minister's meeting with Palestinian Prime Minister Mustafa in Cairo to coordinate ahead of the Arab emergency summit

01.03.2025 - Foreign Minister Abdel-Ati's meeting with Palestinian Prime Minister Mustafa in Cairo Coordination for the Arab Emergency Summit

02.03.2025 - The Palestinian Authority condemns Hamas' refusal to extend Phase 1 of the ceasefire agreement and Israel's decision to block the entry of humanitarian aid

03.03.2025 - Costa, the President of the European Council meets with Mahmoud Abbas In Cairo

04.03.2025 - An Arab League Palestine summit in Cairo Al-Sisi during which Arab countries present a unified position on the Palestinian issue: President Al-Sisi presents the Egyptian plan for aid and reconstruction of the Gaza Strip. Warns against the continuation of the situation in the West Bank and against harming the status quo in Al-Aqsa.

04.03.2025 - An emergency Arab League conference in Cairo approved an Egyptian plan calling for \$53 billion over five years for construction in the Gaza area, under the management of a Palestinian committee.

04.03.2025 - An emergency Arab summit in Cairo - presentation of the Arab reconstruction plan for Gaza, including a proposal to establish a technocratic government

04.03.2025 - An emergency summit of the Arab League in Cairo where Egypt proposed a plan for aid and reconstruction of the Gaza Strip

04.03.2025 - Foreign Minister Lammy announces that the UK will recognize a Palestinian state at a time when it will have the greatest impact

05.03.2025 - Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir entered office as the 24th Chief of the General Staff of the IDF, replacing Lt. Gen. Herzi Halevi.

05.03.2025 - Turkey's support for the Gaza plan approved by the Arab League.

06.03.2025 - GCC Foreign Ministers' Meeting Gulf Cooperation Council

06.03.2025 - Talks between Envoy Witkopf and Hamas, Egyptian and Qatari Representatives on Gaza Management

07.03.2025 - Foreign Minister Abdel-Ati's Talk with Witkopf on Gaza Reconstruction Plan

07.03.2025 - Saudi Arabia Hosts Ukrainian Delegation to Mediate on War with Russia and Diplomatic Crisis with President Trump

08.03.2025 - Foreign Minister Abdel-Ati's Meeting with His Iranian Counterpart on the Sidelines of the Islamic Summit Ahead of an International Conference on Gaza Reconstruction

10.03.2025 - Israeli cabinet approves Operation Gideon's Chariots (to begin on May 18) and the GHF operation to distribute humanitarian aid in Gaza

12.03.2025 - Arab Foreign Ministers' Meeting with Envoy Witkopf in Doha

13.03.2025 - A new coalition government has been formed in Germany, led by Friedrich Merz, between the Christian Democrats (CDU) and the Social Democrats (SPD)

14.03.2025 - After more than a decade of legal battles, an Israeli court ruled that settlers can take over Saleh Diab's house in Sheikh Jarrah

15.03.2025 - US-led Operation Rough Rider begins against Houthi targets in Yemen

18.03.2025 - End of ceasefire as part of January hostage agreement and launch of Operation "Strength and Sword"

18.03.2025 - German Foreign Minister Weddepohl visits Israel

18.03.2025 - Israel begins Operation Gideon's Chariots

18.03.2025 - Israel renews extensive airstrikes in Gaza - ceasefire violated in practice

18.03.2025 - Israel's decision to end ceasefire in light of Hamas' refusal to release hostages

22.03.2025 - Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan met with a Hamas delegation.

22.03.2025 - Visit of UAE President to Cairo

23.03.2025 - Kaia Kallas visits the PA and Israel

23.03.2025 - Opening of emergency Arab-Islamic summit in cooperation with the European Union at ministerial level in Cairo to discuss the situation in Gaza

23.03.2025 - Visit of the European Union Commissioner for External Relations to Cairo also to discuss the need to reach the second phase of the ceasefire agreement

24.03.2025 - Israel announces the establishment of a special directorate for the migration of Palestinians from Gaza

28.03.2025 - Foreign Minister Abdel-Atti's announcement on the identity of the members of the committee that will manage Gaza

29.03.2025 - President Erdogan's conversation with his Egyptian counterpart

31.03.2025 - 2025 Summary: 14,400+ Housing Units Approved in Q1 2025 - Government on Track to Approve 50,000+ Units by End of 2025

31.03.2025 - Public campaign planned in Egypt to express support for the president and the Palestinian people and opposition to forced migration

01.04.2025 - Foreign Ministers' Council decision to order an investigation into the violation of Article 2 of the Israel-Israel Association Agreement ¹ by the European Foreign Service

02.04.2025 - Israeli Air Force Bombs Military Bases in Syria Prepared for Turkish Military Use

03.04.2025 - Turkish Foreign Ministry Declares State of Israel as Biggest Threat to Turkey and All Countries in the Region

04.04.2025 - Anihilation of Yasser Abu Shabab, head of the Popular Forces militia in the Gaza Strip.

04.04.2025 - Trump presents the plan to evacuate the population from Gaza and restore the Strip to the "Riviera of the Middle East"

04.04.2025 - Yasser Abu Shabab, head of the "Popular Forces" militia in the Gaza Strip, killed.

05.04.2025 - Mass demonstrations in Paris over the conviction of Marine Le Pen for financial crimes by the far-right and counter-demonstrations

07.04.2025 - British government's decision to suspend talks with Israel on the new trade agreement, expanding sanctions against extremist settlers and their organizations

07.04.2025 - Macron visits Egypt. Tours the aid warehouses in El-Arish and meets with wounded people from Gaza.

09.04.2025 - Macron announces that France may soon recognize a Palestinian state, sets four additional conditions

10.04.2025 - Israel and Turkey Hold Direct Talks in Azerbaijan to Open Direct Communication Channel between the Two Armies

10.04.2025 - OIC-Arab League Summit in Antalya, Turkey

13.04.2025 - Huge Pro-Gaza Demonstration in Istanbul

14.04.2025 - EU formulates aid plan worth €1.6 billion by 2027 for the Palestinians

14.04.2025 - First high-level diplomatic dialogue between the UAE and the PA

18.04.2025 - Appointment of Christophe Bigot as Special Envoy for the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process (traditional title for the position since the 1990s)

19.04.2025 - First round of Iran-US nuclear talks in Oman.

19.04.2025 - Head of Turkish Intelligence Organization MIT Ibrahim Kalin Meets with Hamas Leaders

20.04.2025 - Another Summit Between Foreign Minister Fidan and Hamas Leaders in Ankara

20.04.2025 - Turkish Parliament Speaker Hosts Summit of Speakers of Parliaments in Solidarity with Palestine

26.04.2025 - Second round of Iran-US nuclear talks in Rome.

27.04.2025 - Third round of Iran-US nuclear talks in Oman.

28.04.2025 - Britain and the PA sign a memorandum of understanding.

28.04.2025 - Foreign Minister Lammy announces that the UK will recognize a Palestinian state at a time when it will have the greatest impact

28.04.2025 - GHF begins distributing humanitarian aid in Gaza

29.04.2025 - Six Released in Kidnap Deal Arrive in Turkey

30.04.2025 - Preparation of a forced eviction plan in Silwan (Batan al-Hawa) - 87 families (700 people) are candidates for eviction

01.05.2025 - Approval of the renewal of the official land settlement by the State of Israel in Judea and Samaria

01.05.2025 - List of new settlements: Adi Ad, Achiya, Nofei Prat, Atarot Adar, Inbar, Beit Horon North, Kedem Arava, Mahane Gadi, Ir Tamrim, Givonit, Tivat, Mitzpe Ziv, El Nave, Havat Yair, Maoz Zvi, Ma'alot Halhul, Afeka, Yondav, Rehavam, Har Ibal, Homesh and Sha-Nur

02.05.2025 - PA forces shoot and kill an Islamic Jihad operative in Tulkarm - part of the PA's fight against Tulkarm and Nur a-Shams Brigades Militias

03.05.2025 - 14 people (three families) were evicted from their homes in Silwan that they had owned for over 50 years

04.05.2025 - Israeli cabinet approves Operation Gideon's Chariots (to begin on May 18) and the GHF operation to distribute humanitarian aid in Gaza

05.05.2025 - Israel and Turkey held direct talks in Azerbaijan to open a direct communication channel between the two militaries (Summit No. 2)

05.05.2025 - Turkish Airlines and Pegasus Relinquish Slots (Preferred Takeoff Locations) at Ben Gurion Airport

06.05.2025 - A new coalition government has been formed in Germany, led by Friedrich Merz, between the Christian Democrats (CDU) and the Social Democrats (SPD)

09.05.2025 - Shooting at the Israeli Consulate in Istanbul

10.05.2025 - German Foreign Minister Weddepohl visits Israel

11.05.2025 - Fourth round of Iran-US nuclear talks in Oman.

13.05.2025 - Macron announces that the French-Saudi conference on the two-state solution will take place between June 17-20 in New York

13.05.2025 - President Trump begins 4-day visit to Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates.

14.05.2025 - Mohammed Sinwar's elimination

16.05.2025 - Gideon Sa'ar arrives to visit Germany

16.05.2025 - Israel begins Operation Gideon's Chariots

16.05.2025 - Operation Gideon's Chariots

20.05.2025 - Appointment of Christophe Bigot as Special Envoy for the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process (traditional title for the position since the 1990s)

20.05.2025 - British government's decision to suspend talks with Israel on the new trade agreement, expanding sanctions against extremist settlers and their organizations

20.05.2025 - Foreign Ministers' Council decision to order an investigation into the violation of Article 2 of the Israel-Association Agreement "I" by the European Foreign Service

22.05.2025 - Humanitarian aid enters Gaza after 81 days

22.05.2025 - Turkey-Syria Defense Ministers Summit in Damascus

23.05.2025 - Macron publishes a letter he received from the President of the PA containing commitments for the "day after", including disarmament of Hamas, reforms and elections

25.05.2025 - Israel launches airstrikes in Iran - a 12-day war begins between Israel and Iran

26.05.2025 - GHF begins distributing humanitarian aid in Gaza

26.05.2025 - Historic decision: Cabinet secretly approved the establishment of 22 new settlements in Judea and Samaria - including a return to Homesh and Sha-Nur

26.05.2025 - Jerusalem Day flag march - tens of thousands of demonstrators descend into chaos as far-right Jews attack Palestinians, other Israelis and journalists. Protesters shouted "Death to Arabs" and "Your village will burn"

26.05.2025 - UN Report: 55 New Outposts in the West Bank by May 2025, of which 7 for the first time in Area B (mainly around Bethlehem - Tekoa, Nokdim, Ma'ale Amos, Asfar)

28.05.2025 - Macron announces that the French-Saudi conference on the two-state solution will take place between June 17-20 in New York

28.05.2025 - Macron announces the postponement of the French-Saudi conference (was scheduled to take place between June 17-20 in New York. It took place in July)

31.05.2025 - IHH Demonstration Against the State of Israel in Istanbul

01.06.2025 - European Foreign Service Presents a review that finds indications of a violation of Article 2 of the Association Agreement by Israel. No operational decisions

01.06.2025 - UN Secretary-General's Report: 4 New Outposts Established Between June 2024-May 2025 in Area B East/Southeast of Bethlehem - Herder's Farms Restricting Palestinian Access to Land

01.06.2025 - US joins Israel in bombing 3 nuclear reactors in Iran

04.06.2025 - European Council Summit

04.06.2025 - Gideon Sa'ar arrives to visit Germany

09.06.2025 - In Light of the Israeli Seizure of the "Madeleine" Ship by the IDF, Lines of Condemnations from Turkish Senior Officials Against the State of Israel

12.06.2025 - Israel launches airstrikes in Iran - a 12-day war begins between Israel and Iran

12.06.2025 - Macron publishes a letter he received from the President of the PA containing commitments for the "day after", including disarmament of Hamas, reforms and elections

13.06.2025 - Macron announces the postponement of the French-Saudi conference (was scheduled to take place between June 17-20 in New York. It took place in July)

13.06.2025 - Start of Operation "Am Kalavi" (Israeli strikes on Iran).

17.06.2025 - The UN High-Level International Conference on the Peaceful Settlement of the Palestinian Question and Implementation of the Two-State Solution began at UN Headquarters in New York. The conference is sponsored by France and Saudi Arabia.

17.06.2025 - Turkish Parliament Adopts Unanimous Resolution: "Condemnation Against the State of Israel Due to Its Aggression in Iran, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen"

21.06.2025 - US joins Israel in bombing 3 nuclear reactors in Iran

22.06.2025 - US destroys nuclear facility in Fordow, Iran

23.06.2025 - European Foreign Service Presents a review that finds indications of a violation of Article 2 of the Association Agreement by Israel. No operational decisions

23.06.2025 - OIC Summit in Istanbul: Condemnation Against Israel

24.06.2025 - Ceasefire between Israel and Iran

26.06.2025 - European Council Summit

01.07.2025 - In July 2025, a coalition of seven leading American Jewish organizations—ADL, AJC, AIPAC, B'nai B'rith International, the Conference of Presidents, UJA-Federation of New York, and the World Jewish Congress—rejected an invitation to meet with French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrow. The organizations expressed “deep concern that France’s approach undermines the prospects for an agreed-upon future for Israelis and Palestinians” and argued that recognizing a Palestinian state “honors the victims of October 7.”

01.07.2025 - The Palestinian Authority submits updates and additions to the ICC case on settlement and land policy in Area C - continuation of the International Criminal Court proceedings

07.07.2025 - Third meeting between Netanyahu and Trump at the White House since the beginning of Trump's second term, as part of Washington's intensifying efforts to end the war in Gaza and release hostages.

10.07.2025 - EU Foreign Minister Kaia Kallas announces "common understanding" between the EU and Israel for the introduction of humanitarian aid to Gaza. Progress in implementing these understandings will be reviewed every two weeks. In the coming weeks, the Foreign Service estimates that there is progress, but Israel is partially complying with these understandings.

14.07.2025 - UN reports increased house demolitions and attacks in the West Bank including East Jerusalem - 1,288 structures demolished in January-September

15.07.2025 - Emergency Conference of the "Hague Group" in Colombia - Summary of Actions Against Israel

15.07.2025 - The EU Foreign Ministers' Council discussed, but did not make a decision on sanctions against Israel. It was decided to monitor the implementation of the "common understandings" with Israel every two weeks.

17.07.2025 - Slovenia announced that it would ban Ben Gvir and Smotrich from entering its territory

23.07.2025 - Brazil Joins South Africa in claiming "Genocide" Against Israel

23.07.2025 - Knesset votes in favor of declaration calling for sovereignty to be applied to Judea and Samaria and the Jordan Valley.

23.07.2025 - The Knesset voted on a declaration to apply sovereignty to the West Bank (Judea, Samaria, and the Jordan Valley). 71 MKs voted in favor, 13 against.

24.07.2025 - After raising the possibility in April, President Macron announced that he would recognize a Palestinian state at the UN General Assembly

25.07.2025 - Colombian President Orders Interception of Coal Ships on Their Way to Israel

26.07.2025 - Launch of the "Global Alliance for Palestine" in London

26.07.2025 - Launch of the "Global Alliance for Palestine" in London.

26.07.2025 - Stopping the Pro-Palestinian Flotilla "Hanzal" to Gaza and Deporting the Activists

26.07.2025 - Stopping the pro-Palestinian "Hanzal" flotilla to Gaza and expelling the activists to their countries.

26.07.2025 - Stopping the pro-Palestinian "Hanzala" flotilla to Gaza and expelling activists

28.07.2025 - An international UN conference on the two-state solution, led by Saudi Arabia and France, to promote a Palestinian state.

28.07.2025 - On July 28, 2025, the Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem published a 79-page report titled "Our Genocide" concluding that "Israel is committing genocide against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip." It is the first prominent Israeli organization to use the term "genocide." The report documents Israeli activity in Gaza over a 22-month period of attacks.

28.07.2025 - Opening of the International Conference on the Two-State Solution in New York

28.07.2025 - Opening of the international conference on the two-state solution in New York.

28.07.2025 - The Commission proposed suspending Israel from the EIC (European Innovation Council) part of the Horizon Europe agreement. This part deals with startup accelerators, and has the potential for dual-use aspects in the fields of AI, cyber and drones (and therefore closer to an arms embargo) due to the violation of Article 2 of the Israel-UAE Association Agreement

28.07.2025 - UN International Conference in New York on Implementing the Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

29.07.2025 - British Prime Minister Starmer announced that he would recognize a Palestinian state if Israel does not act immediately to change the situation in Gaza and end the war

29.07.2025 - France and Saudi Arabia convene the international conference to promote the implementation of the two-state solution in New York, which was postponed from June 17, and publish a detailed plan for promoting the above

29.07.2025 - New York Declaration (Saudi-French Initiative)

29.07.2025 - New York Declaration (Saudi-French initiative).

29.07.2025 - The Netherlands announced that it would ban Ben Gvir and Smotrich from entering its territory, and summoned the Israeli ambassador

31.07.2025 - First anniversary of Ismail Haniyeh's assassination in Tehran

31.07.2025 - First anniversary of Ismail Haniyeh's assassination in Tehran.

31.07.2025 - Slovenia announces a ban on imports from settlements. The government has instructed ministers to consider a ban on exports to settlements.

31.07.2025 - Slovenia imposes a full arms embargo on Israel (export, import and transit) – a first of its kind in the EU. (In practice, almost meaningless. A symbolic step, as there was no arms purchase/sale between Israel and Slovenia)

05.08.2025 - Lebanese government decides to disband all armed militias, including Hezbollah, by the end of the year.

05.08.2025 - Lebanese government's decision to disband all armed militias, including Hezbollah, by the end of the year

08.08.2025 - Chancellor Meretz announces that Germany will not export equipment and weapons to Israel that could be used in the Gaza Strip

11.08.2025 - Australia Announces Recognition of the State of Palestine

11.08.2025 - Australia announces that it will recognize the state of Palestine.

12.08.2025 - Israel publishes new restrictive registration requirements for international aid organizations for the Gaza Strip and the Gaza Strip

13.08.2025 - Visit of Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, Ali Larijani, to Lebanon.

13.08.2025 - Visit of the Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council of Iran, Ali Larijani, to Lebanon

14.08.2025 - Smotrich announces at a press conference construction in the E1 area, which includes 3,400 housing units that will interrupt the territorial continuity of a future Palestinian state

14.08.2025 - Start of Operation "Gideon's Chariots II" to conquer Gaza.

16.08.2025 - The United States stops issuing visas to residents of the Gaza Strip.

16.08.2025 - United States Stops Issuing Visas to Residents of the Gaza Strip

17.08.2025 - Netanyahu sends President Macron a letter criticizing him for his decision to recognize a Palestinian state encouraging anti-Semitism and rewarding Hamas terrorism

19.08.2025 - Prime Minister's letter to Macron accusing him of fueling anti-Semitism.

20.08.2025 - Final Government Approval of Plan E1 - "Deadly Blow to Idea of Palestinian State"
- Cutting Off East Jerusalem from Ramallah

20.08.2025 - UN condemns approval of the final E1 plan - illegal annexation of East Jerusalem
- cutting off Jerusalem from Ramallah

21.08.2025 - British Foreign Secretary summons Israeli Ambassador Hotovely following approval of E1 plan

22.08.2025 - Official confirmation of famine in Gaza by IPC, with warnings of spread to other districts. Israel strongly rejects the report's claims.

24.08.2025 - OIC Foreign Ministers' Summit in Jeddah

24.08.2025 - Summit of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Jeddah.

27.08.2025 - Macron publishes a sharp letter of response to Netanyahu, indicating his fight against anti-Semitism

28.08.2025 - Israeli Air Force attacks a meeting of senior Houthi government officials in Sanaa

29.08.2025 - Visas Denied to the President of the Palestinian Authority and 80 Senior Officials to Attend the UN Conference

31.08.2025 - Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit

02.09.2025 - Belgium announces 12 sanctions against Israel, and will recognize a Palestinian state at the UN General Assembly

03.09.2025 - The "Al-Thamud" global flotilla leaves for Gaza

03.09.2025 - The Global "Al-Thamud" Flotilla Set Off for Gaza

04.09.2025 - US Government Sanctions Three Palestinian Human Rights Organizations Over ICC Activities

08.09.2025 - Shooting attack at Ramot interchange in Jerusalem - 6 killed, 10 wounded; 2 Palestinians carried out the attack

09.09.2025 - All political figures in Europe condemn Israel for the airstrike in Doha, Qatar, in an attempt to eliminate the Hamas leadership, which failed.

09.09.2025 - French Prime Minister Bayero has resigned. Macron has appointed Sebastien Le Corbusier, from his Renaissance party, to form a new government in his place

09.09.2025 - Israeli attack on Hamas leadership in Qatar

09.09.2025 - Israeli attack on Hamas leadership in Qatar.

09.09.2025 - Operation "Fire Summit" to Eliminate Hamas Leaders in Doha

09.09.2025 - Operation "Fire Summit" to eliminate Hamas leaders in Doha.

10.09.2025 - In her annual State of the Union (STOEU) address, Commission President von der Leyen announced that she would advance sanctions on Israel, including a budget suspension from cooperation between the UAE and Israel (Twinning, Taix and more)

11.09.2025 - Israel attacks Houthi headquarters in Sanaa, Yemen

12.09.2025 - Ratification of the New York Declaration by UN General Assembly

12.09.2025 - Ratification of the New York Declaration by the UN General Assembly

12.09.2025 - The UN General Assembly approves the New York Declaration to promote the two-state solution (142 in favor, 10 against).

15.09.2025 - Emergency summit of Arab and Islamic countries in Qatar

15.09.2025 - Emergency summit of Arab and Islamic countries in Qatar.

16.09.2025 - A report by a UN international commission of inquiry states that Israel committed genocide in Gaza.

17.09.2025 - The College of Commissioners approves the Commission's proposal to suspend the trade agreement with Israel (suspension of the Free Trade Agreement) and a series of additional measures (however, for the suspension to enter into force, a decision by the Council of Foreign Ministers is required, which was not adopted)

17.09.2025 - The Commission announces that it will establish the International Donors Group for Palestine

18.09.2025 - UN Security Council Fails to Pass Resolution Calling for Ceasefire in Gaza

21.09.2025 - Announcement by several countries (such as Britain, Canada, Australia) of official recognition of a Palestinian state within the framework of the UN Assembly – a broad diplomatic shift against traditional Israeli policy.

21.09.2025 - British Prime Minister Starmer recognizes a Palestinian state

21.09.2025 - Launching community initiatives to protect land rights in about 50 Palestinian communities in Area C - mapping, local registration of costs, legal support to combat the declarations of "state lands"

22.09.2025 - Convening of the General Assembly to vote on recognizing a Palestinian state.

22.09.2025 - French President Macron recognizes a Palestinian state at the UN General Assembly

22.09.2025 - General Assembly convenes to vote on recognition of Palestinian state

22.09.2025 - Speech by Mahmoud Abbas at the International Conference For the recognition of a Palestinian state

22.09.2025 - Speech by Mahmoud Abbas at the International Conference on Recognition of Palestinian State

22.09.2025 - UN Human Rights Experts Condemn US Sanctions on Palestinian Human Rights Organizations

23.09.2025 - Beginning of the UN General Assembly in New York, during which several Western countries recognized the state of Palestine

23.09.2025 - Start of the UN Assembly in New York during which several Western countries recognized the state of Palestine.

24.09.2025 - Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Maloni announced during the UN General Assembly that she may vote in favor of some of the sanctions against Israel proposed by the European Commission

25.09.2025 - Mahmoud Abbas' speech at the UN General Assembly

25.09.2025 - Speech by Mahmoud Abbas at the UN General Assembly

27.09.2025 - Visit of Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Larijani to Lebanon.

27.09.2025 - Visit of the Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council of Iran, Ali Larijani, to Lebanon

29.09.2025 - Publication of Trump's 21-point plan

29.09.2025 - Trump's 21-point plan announced

29.09.2025 - Trump-Netanyahu meeting.

29.09.2025 - US President Presents Broad US Plan to End Gaza Fighting

30.09.2025 - Deportation order for the families of Rajabi Umm Nasser (18 people) and Shweki and Odeh (19 people) from Silwan (Battan al-Hawa) - deadline October 19

30.09.2025 - International report: Palestinians in Area C built dozens of community buildings (classrooms, clinics, farms) without permits as a survival policy in the face of record demolitions - "Development under coercion"

01.10.2025 - Israel seizes Turkish flotilla "Tsumud"

02.10.2025 - Demonstrations against the State of Israel throughout Turkey - Solidarity with the "Tsumud" flotilla.

03.10.2025 - Hamas agrees in principle to ceasefire and Trump plan

03.10.2025 - Hamas declares readiness to discuss ceasefire

03.10.2025 - J Street Issues Official Position Supporting US Ceasefire Initiative

03.10.2025 - Trump issues ultimatum to Hamas to release all hostages

04.10.2025 - Freezing of maneuvers in Gaza City following Hamas's response to the Trump plan.

05.10.2025 - Egypt: Egypt hosts Israeli and Palestinian delegations to discuss preparations for implementing the prisoner and hostage exchange under Trump's plan.

06.10.2025 - Egypt: President al-Sisi's speech on the anniversary of the October 1973 war, in which he referred to relations with Israel, which despite the hostility and bloodshed, President Sadat, the Israeli leadership, and American mediation paved the way for a just peace. He stressed the importance of maintaining it, but peace is not possible without the establishment of a Palestinian state. He expressed appreciation to Trump for his plan.

06.10.2025 - GCC Foreign Ministers' Meeting on the Situation in Gaza, the Houthi Threat, and the Security of Navigation in the Red Sea

06.10.2025 - Silent Cry for Gaza demonstrations in Turkey in 81 provinces against Israel

07.10.2025 - Ceremonies across Europe mark two years since October 7; pro-Palestinian protests against war in Gaza

07.10.2025 - Regional Statements to Mark Two Years of the Gaza War and International Calls for an Immediate Ceasefire

08.10.2025 - AIPAC Issues Public Statement Supporting US Initiative for Gaza Settlement

08.10.2025 - Israel and Hamas accept phase one of agreement

08.10.2025 - Israel and Hamas approve first phase of new US-brokered ceasefire plan

08.10.2025 - Israel seizes "Freedom Flotilla": Out of 16 Turks, 3 MPs among them, arrested by Israel. (Total 150 activists arrested)

08.10.2025 - Turkish Parliament unanimously condemns Israel for arresting 3 Turkish MPs in the Freedom Flotilla

09.10.2025 - A ceasefire has come into effect in Gaza. - Turkey was presented at the negotiating table by the head of the Turkish Intelligence Organization (MIT) Ibrahim Kalin

09.10.2025 - Egypt: Announcement of the entry of an Egyptian-Qatari-Turkish force to locate the bodies of kidnapped people.

09.10.2025 - Egypt: Foreign Minister Abdel-Ati's participation in an international conference In Paris to discuss the Gaza issue.

09.10.2025 - Egypt: President al-Sisi's announcement commending the decision to hold the conference in Sharm el-Sheikh at which the end of the war in Gaza and the victory of the will for peace will be declared.

09.10.2025 - Egypt: President al-Sisi's meeting with envoys Witkopf and Kushner on the joint success in reaching an agreement and al-Sisi's call to Trump to invite him to the summit to be held in Sharm El-Sheikh.

09.10.2025 - France hosts Euro-Arab ministerial meeting in Paris on “helping Palestinians after Gaza war”, on Gaza reconstruction, reform of Palestinian institutions and Euro-Arab coordination

09.10.2025 - Hamas-Israel agreement in Sharm el-Sheikh, as part of the first phase of US President Donald Trump's 21-point plan to end the Iron Sword War and exchange prisoners. The first phase included: (1) an immediate ceasefire that went into effect on October 10; (2) the return of 20 live hostages on October 13 in exchange for the release of approximately 250 Palestinian security prisoners and 1,700 Gaza residents who were arrested during the war; (3) a partial withdrawal of the IDF to agreed lines; (4) full entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza.

09.10.2025 - Israel and Hamas Sign First Phase of Ceasefire and Release of Hostages

09.10.2025 - Israeli cabinet approves ceasefire agreement overnight

09.10.2025 - Israeli cabinet approves hostage agreement with Hamas

09.10.2025 - Key Jewish Organizations in the United States Issue Cautious Statements of Support for the Agreement

09.10.2025 - US President Trump's Announcement of Israel and Hamas Reaching Negotiated Agreements, and the Signing of the Agreement between the Parties in Sharm El-Sheikh

10.10.2025 - Ceasefire between Israel and Hamas enters into force.

10.10.2025 - Ceasefire goes into effect at 12:00 noon - IDF withdraws to agreed deployment lines ("the line") "The Yellow")

10.10.2025 - Gaza ceasefire takes effect after mediation by US President Donald Trump, ending the war in Gaza after two years of fighting. The agreement includes a prisoner exchange/kidnapped between Israel and Hamas, as part of Trump's plan to end the war

10.10.2025 - IDF conducts raids in Ramallah and Nablus area (Areas A/B) - several arrests on suspicion of armed activity

10.10.2025 - Turkish Islamist NGOs Sadakataşı and MÜSİAD set up a tent city in Gaza.

12.10.2025 - US sanctions on Palestinian human rights organizations. Lasts until October 18, 2025

13.10.2025 - A major peace summit in Sharm el-Sheikh to extend the ceasefire and discuss the future of the Gaza Strip within the framework of a comprehensive agreement.

13.10.2025 - Egypt: In his speech at the summit, El-Sisi addressed the people of Israel with a proposal to turn the historic moment into the beginning of a life based on justice and peaceful coexistence. He also emphasized the right of the Palestinians to an independent state.

13.10.2025 - Hamas carries out massacre in Gaza City - 33 killed by Israeli-backed opposition clans

13.10.2025 - Peace summit in Sharm el-Sheikh to end the war in Gaza.

13.10.2025 - Sharm el-Sheikh Summit - Signing ceremony of the Gaza ceasefire agreement with the participation of Trump, European Council President Antonio Costa, German Chancellor Merz, French President Macron, Prime Minister Starmer

13.10.2025 - The last 20 hostages from the October 7 attack who remained in the Gaza Strip for two years have been returned

13.10.2025 - Trump's visit to Israel and the process of inviting Prime Minister Netanyahu to the summit in Sharm El-Sheikh that failed, including his conversation with President al-Sisi and an invitation to Abbas to the summit.

13.10.2025 - US President Trump's Visit to Israel in Honor of the Agreement with Hamas, and His Speech in the Knesset Plenum

14.10.2025 - Ceasefire violations begin - 9 Palestinians killed during home inspections; Israel reduces humanitarian aid to 300 trucks per day (down from 600)

15.10.2025 - Turkey Sends Humanitarian Aid Ship No. 17 to Gaza

15.10.2025 - Turkish Parliament Decides: Turkey Will Become a Base for UNRWA Operations – "Turkey Will Become the Center for Handling Palestinian Refugees"

16.10.2025 - The British government hosts the Wilton Park Summit for the reconstruction of Gaza, which brings together representatives of business, civil society and governments to plan and coordinate support for the PA and its reforms to ensure that it can support the reconstruction of Gaza

17.10.2025 - Turkey Establishes New Body: Authority for the Coordination of Humanitarian Aid to Palestine – Former AFAD Head Mehmet Güllüoğlu Serves as Chairman of the Organization

17.10.2025 - UN Security Council Discussion on "The Situation in the Middle East, Including the Palestinian Question," and the Adoption of Resolution 2803 Establishing a Peace Council and an International Stabilization Force in the Gaza Strip

19.10.2025 - 39th Arab League Summit in Geneva

19.10.2025 - Deadline for eviction of families in Silwan - if they do not leave voluntarily, the police will forcibly evict

20.10.2025 - The Council of Foreign Ministers of the European Union discussed further measures against Israel, decided not to adopt them, but to keep them "on the table"

21.10.2025 - A shipment of humanitarian aid from the Turkish Red Crescent entered Gaza from the Rafah crossing

22.10.2025 - Condemnation of the Turkish Foreign Ministry: The decision to annex parts of Judea and Samaria by the Israeli Knesset (Arava in first reading) is illegal, null and void. The two-state solution must be implemented.

22.10.2025 - IDF raids in Judea and Samaria, many Palestinians arrested in Hebron, Qalqilya, Nablus, Tubas, Jenin, Bireh and East Jerusalem.

23.10.2025 - Turkey and 14 other countries from the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation condemned the annexation decision by the Israeli Knesset

27.10.2025 - The delegation of the EU-Israel Inter-Parliamentary Committee arrives in Jerusalem and later in the PA

28.10.2025 - Netanyahu orders "strong" response attack in Gaza after soldier killed - 104 Palestinians killed, including 21 Hamas commanders

31.10.2025 - 21st Manama Dialogue Forum in Bahrain with the Participation of Defense Ministers and Regional Leaders

31.10.2025 - Clashes between IDF and Palestinians in Silwad near Ramallah (Area B) - Palestinian teenager killed by IDF gunfire

01.11.2025 - Jordanian Foreign Minister's Announcement of a Jordanian-Egyptian Agreement to Train a Palestinian Police Force to be Stationed in the Gaza Strip.

01.11.2025 - Opening of the second phase of the October Outline: Expansion of humanitarian aid zones, entry of international coordination teams, beginning of preparation of a joint civil-security mechanism

02.11.2025 - Entry of Turkish, Egyptian and Qatari delegations to Gaza to establish a "humanitarian coordination room"

03.11.2025 - Egypt: Egyptian Prime Minister visits Qatar to discuss coordination on the Palestinian issue.

03.11.2025 - The Gaza Summit at the level of foreign ministers convened in Istanbul (Turkey, Indonesia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar): Fidan: "A legal regime must be established that will determine the powers of the countries that will take part in the international force." (Message for obtaining full guarantee)

04.11.2025 - Wide wave of raids: IDF raids Qalqilya, Beit Furik, Hebron, Tulkarm, Nablus, Bethlehem, Dura, Qalandiya, Silwad, al-Bira, Tubas, Qabatia, Deir Jarir and Kafr Laqif - many in Area A

05.11.2025 - Major Israeli arrest operation in Nablus and the Balata refugee camp

07.11.2025 - Egypt and Qatar present draft "Gaza stabilization and rehabilitation mechanism" at the Arab League Council

07.11.2025 - Turkey has issued arrest warrants for the Prime Minister, Defense Minister, Chief of Staff, Minister of Internal Security and Navy Commander and 32 other senior Israeli officials on charges of genocide and crimes against humanity.

09.11.2025 - De facto forced eviction of 3 families (14 people) from Silwan - settlers seized the homes immediately afterwards

11.11.2025 - The Houthis announced in a letter to Hamas that they will stop attacking Israel and ships in the Red Sea, but will continue to monitor the situation in Gaza (The last missile and drone attacks on Israel were on October 5th and 7th, respectively)

11.11.2025 - Trump and Syrian President al-Shara'a meet at the White House

12.11.2025 - Clashes in Hebron and al-Aida following the entry of Israeli forces

12.11.2025 - Israeli President Herzog condemns "shocking settler violence" in the West Bank

12.11.2025 - Turkey has launched humanitarian aid ship No. 18 from the port of Mersin

13.11.2025 - House Resolution 867 Introduced in the US House of Representatives by Rashida Tlaib and Co-Sponsors, Recognizing Israeli Government Actions in Gaza as genocide and demands, among other things, a halt to arms transfers and appropriate sanctions

14.11.2025 - Egypt: Publication of the statement of support from the US, Egypt and the G8 countries for the draft resolution discussed in the Security Council regarding the comprehensive plan for the Gaza Strip.

15.11.2025 - Turkey and eight other Muslim countries expressed support for the US proposal on Gaza at the UN Security Council.

17.11.2025 - Adoption of Resolution 2803 of UN Security Council approves US President Donald Trump's 21-point plan for the Gaza Strip.

17.11.2025 - Chancellor Meretz announces the process of lifting the partial embargo on arms exports to Israel (the lifting was on 24.11.2025)

17.11.2025 - The UN General Assembly adopts resolution S/RES/2803(2025), which authorizes the establishment of an interim international stabilization force in Gaza. The resolution adopts the text of the 20-point plan on the feasibility of Palestinian statehood. Chancellor Meretz announces the process of lifting the partial embargo on arms exports to Israel (the lifting was on 24.11.2025). The European Union Foreign Ministers' Council meets. The issue of Gaza is discussed. The Palestine Donors' Group meets in Brussels, under the auspices of the European Union. The lifting of the arms export embargo to Israel from Germany comes into effect. Return to a regime of examining export licenses – each case on its own merits

17.11.2025 - The UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2803, which adopts the American plan

17.11.2025 - UN Security Council Resolution 2083 - Authorizes international stabilization force and peace agenda

17.11.2025 - UN Security Council Resolution 2803 approving a broad peace and stability plan for the Gaza Strip and opening an international framework for reconstruction.

18.11.2025 - Saudi Crown Prince visits the US.

18.11.2025 - Visit by Mohammed bin Salman, Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, to the White House

19.11.2025 - UN human rights officials sharply criticized the Security Council resolution

19.11.2025 - Wave of Israeli attacks in Gaza - 28 killed, including 9 children, after Hamas allegedly fires at IDF forces; Hamas denies

20.11.2025 - Conference of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the European Union. The issue of Gaza is discussed

20.11.2025 - Conference of the Donors Group for Palestine, with the PA, in Brussels, under the EU

22.11.2025 - Israeli attacks on Gaza - 24 dead, including 5 senior Hamas commanders

23.11.2025 - Abolition of Hezbollah Chief of Staff, Haitham Ali Tabatabaei

23.11.2025 - Ali Haitham Tabataba'i, Hezbollah Chief of Staff, is killed in Beirut.

23.11.2025 - Ali Haitham Tabataba'i, Hezbollah Chief of Staff, killed in Beirut.

23.11.2025 - Operation "Black" Friday, in which Hezbollah Chief of Staff Haitham Ali Tabatabaei was killed, and the beginning of an escalation in security tensions on the Israel-Lebanon border

24.11.2025 - Debate in the British Parliament, following a public petition – “E-petition debate relating to humanitarian obligations and Gaza” on the subject of humanitarian obligations in Gaza”. Members of Parliament demand tightening of controls on arms exports to Israel and conditioning them on the protection of civilians

24.11.2025 - Revocation of the arms export embargo to Israel from Germany comes into effect. Return to the regime of examining export licenses – each case on its own merits

25.11.2025 - Issuance of a presidential order in the US to consider outlawing the Muslim Brotherhood

25.11.2025 - Trilateral summit between Turkish, Qatari and Egyptian intelligence chiefs in Cairo: The parties discussed the transition to phase two of the agreement and discussed ways to act against Israeli violations of the ceasefire agreement

26.11.2025 - IDF launches "Five Stones" operation in the northern West Bank - Tubas, Tamun and al-Faara refugee camp (Areas A/B); raids, arrests and clashes with armed men

26.11.2025 - Operation Five Stones in the West Bank, held from November 26 2025 to December 5, 2025, with the aim of destroying Palestinian terrorist infrastructure in the Judea and Samaria arena, targeting the northern Samaria region as part of the Iron Swords War.

26.11.2025 - Report: IDF carries out extensive raids throughout Judea and Samaria – mainly in Tubas.

28.11.2025 - Chancellor Meretz announces first official visit to Israel

28.11.2025 - Commissioner Lahabib (EU) arrives at the Rafah border crossing, and is refused entry to Gaza by Israel

03.12.2025 - Germany receives first Arrow 3 system/battery (stationed at the Holzdorf/Schönwalde base south of Berlin) – handover ceremony

03.12.2025 - Knesset approves Trump's 20-point Gaza plan

04.12.2025 - The elimination of Yasser Abu Shabab, head of the "Popular Forces" militia, in the Gaza Strip in a clan conflict

06.12.2025 - A Doha forum attended by regional and international leaders that dealt with Gaza, energy and regional order

07.12.2025 - Chancellor Meretz's visit to Israel (landing in Israel after visiting Jordan, and after a phone call with PA President Mahmoud Abbas)

07.12.2025 - In Israel - reframing as an alternative to Staatsohn - "Support for the existence of the State of Israel and continued responsibility for Israel's security, but not unconditional support", including a stand on the Israeli-Palestinian Joint Task Force

07.12.2025 - Official statement "Germany stands by Israel" (Bundesregierung: „Deutschland steht an der Seite Israels“) published, as part of the 60th anniversary of the establishment of relations between Israel and Germany and Chancellor Meretz's visit to Israel

11.12.2025 - Cabinet Approves 19 New Outposts Including Two Settlements Evacuated in 2005 (Ganim and Kedim in the North Bank)

13.12.2025 - A senior commander in the Al-Qassam Brigades, Raed Saad, is killed in western Gaza City in retaliation for the wounding of 2 IDF soldiers

13.12.2025 - Anihilation of senior Hamas figure Ra'ad Sa'd in the Gaza Strip.

13.12.2025 - Attack on an American-Syrian patrol in the Palmyra area of Syria and the American response

13.12.2025 - Interior Ministry Unveils Urban Symbols for 8 Outposts - End of Legalization Process - Smotrich: "Promoting Sovereignty in Practice"

13.12.2025 - Senior Hamas official Ra'ad Sa'd killed in the Gaza Strip.

15.12.2025 - The Council of Foreign Ministers of the European Union discussed the EU's contribution to the Gaza peace plan, mainly through the expansion of the EUBAM Rafah and EUPOL COPPS missions, and their potential role in the international stabilization force, subject to Israeli approval and here through the Gaza Reconstruction Fund

17.12.2025 - Egypt: Egyptian condemnation of the Israeli government's decision to build 19 settlements in the West Bank and a demand to stop the violation of the rights of the Palestinian people.

18.12.2025 - Approval of another security deal between Germany and Israel: the expansion of the Arrow 3 contract by \$3.1 billion By the German government (total \$6.6 million) – Deepening the long-term security partnership

18.12.2025 - The European Council conclusions include a section on the Middle East, and a link to the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2803 and the need to stabilize Gaza, including the disarmament of Hamas and other armed groups

19.12.2025 - The launch of the American Hawkeye Strike against ISIS targets in Syria

21.12.2025 - Israel demolishes large building in East Jerusalem - dozens of residents evacuated

22.12.2025 - A trilateral summit in Jerusalem between the heads of state of Israel, Greece and Cyprus, on the eve of Cyprus assuming the presidency of the Council of the European Union. The summit dealt with energy, security and infrastructure cooperation in the Eastern

Mediterranean, with implications for Europe's energy security. Cyprus stated that it would promote an agenda to restore Israel-EU relations

22.12.2025 - Cabinet Approves 19 New Settlements in the West Bank

22.12.2025 - Israeli cabinet approves 19 new settlements in the West Bank

24.12.2025 - Turkey has rebuilt the Shifa Hospital in Gaza

28.12.2025 - Wave of anti-government protests in major cities in Iran

30.12.2025 - Israel announces the suspension of the activities of dozens of international aid organizations in Gaza starting from January 1, 2026. This step has implications for the entry of aid into Gaza and its distribution. A joint statement by foreign ministers, including Britain and France, expresses grave concern about the humanitarian deterioration in Gaza, and calls on Israel to remove barriers, enable effective activity by the UN and non-governmental organizations, and increase the scope of aid through The Crossings

30.12.2025 - Partial withdrawal of Emirati forces from southern Yemen following Saudi pressure

30.12.2025 - UN General Assembly Ends 2025 with 16 Resolutions Against Israel, Compared to 12 for the Rest of the World Combined

31.12.2025 - 2025 Summary: Supreme Planning Council Meets Weekly to Approve Hundreds of Units at Each Meeting - "Systematic Approach to Normalizing Settlement Planning"

31.12.2025 - EU Warns of Developments in Yemen That Could Destabilize the Gulf Region, Stresses Commitment to Yemeni Sovereignty. This is a Relevant Regional Component for European Discourse on Regional Security Post-Gaza, Including Impacts on Seaways, Trade, and Energy

1. Netanyahu Should Have Resigned 455 Days Ago, Way Before Former Defense Minister Gallant — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 03/01/2025

"It is not the critic who counts: not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes up short again and again, because there is no effort without error or shortcoming, but who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, who spends himself for a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows, in the end, the triumph of high achievement, and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who knew neither victory nor defeat."

Teddy Roosevelt, in a 1910 speech at the Sorbonne a year after his two-term presidency.

Remember when, in March 2023, at the height of the attempted constitutional coup when Benjamin Netanyahu sought to turn Israel from a democracy into a quasi-authoritarian Turkey or Hungary, he tried to fire Defense Minister Yoav Gallant for warning against the coup's repercussions on national security?

Of course you do. Hundreds of thousands took to the streets in protest. Remember when, this past November, Netanyahu actually fired Gallant for his outspoken criticism of the management of the war and Netanyahu's total capitulation to the ultra-Orthodox, who are trying to exempt their young men from military service?

Of course you do. Tens of thousands took to the streets. But do you know that this week Gallant resigned from the Knesset? You probably don't. Nobody protested.

The media's politics-as-usual treatment of Gallant's resignation is anything but normal. This isn't because his move has no political ramifications; there are potentially plenty of those. It's because of the damning evidence of the jaded Israeli zeitgeist, a reflection of how Netanyahu has managed to desensitize public opinion.

It's as if the post-traumatic stress disorder that has afflicted so many Israelis since October 7, 2023, has truly taken on a national scale. Years of Netanyahu pounding on the public consciousness have blurred the true and the false, normalized the abnormal, accepted the unacceptable, and sunk Israelis into despair about the country's direction. Anger breeds apathy, and autocrats thrive on public apathy.

Netanyahu's years in power have exacted a very high price on the Israeli psyche. He has been divisive, incessantly incited his followers, poisoned the national political discourse, fanned the flames between groups and endlessly manipulated the political system. Worse, his crude constitutional coup that declares war on Israeli democracy — the judiciary, the checks and balances and the state bureaucracy — has turned Israel into a jittery, precarious illiberal democracy on the verge of autocracy. And, on brand and imitating his soulmate Donald Trump, he wields the term "deep state."

Meanwhile, the public arena is dominated by "whataboutism," "bothsidesism," moral relativism and fake news. As far as Netanyahu is concerned, Gallant was a fifth column in his extremist governing coalition by identifying all the developments above.

Gallant's journey from almost-IDF chief of staff to tragic hero to arguably a coward who surrendered to Netanyahu is excellently described by my Haaretz colleague Amir Tibon in his piece Thursday on Gallant "fleeing the battlefield."

When we talk about Gallant's resignation — something almost forgotten by the time I typed out this column — one fundamental thing is overlooked: Netanyahu should have resigned, or announced his intention to do so, immediately after the calamity of October 7, 2023. If he had the integrity, the moral compass, the sense of responsibility and a minimal conception of accountability, he would have resigned there and then.

But that's asking too much from Netanyahu. He was the prime minister on the worst day in Israeli history; his callous arrogance and failed policies led to Hamas' barbaric attack.

But it's not just about him. Gallant, IDF Chief of Staff Herzl Halevi, Military Intelligence chief Aharon Haliva, Southern Command head Yaron Finkelman and the head of the Shin Bet security service, Ronen Bar, should all have indicated their intention to resign. Some have, but only Haliva has actually left, stating his responsibility for the intelligence failure.

Netanyahu, who is increasingly inclined toward an endless war and a perpetual military presence in Gaza, underpins his makeshift policy with a distinct logic. Yes, the conventional wisdom is that his approach has always been about political expediency, but there is more. Five, six and seven months ago, Netanyahu repeatedly resisted a cease-fire and hostage deal because this would deprive him of the "total victory" he has constantly blustered about. A cease-fire wouldn't achieve his stated "eradication and obliteration of Hamas."

Gallant, who as defense minister concluded that all attainable military goals in Gaza had been achieved and that the war was dragging on only because of Netanyahu's political and legal

interests, was then royally dismissed. The war continues, with Israel for the fourth time entering Jabalya in northern Gaza, returning to places where it thought it had wiped out Hamas. It's also considering a full occupation of Gaza City and admitting that Hamas' ability to recruit has increased.

Consider this comparison: The Allies invaded Normandy on June 6, 1944. Berlin fell on May 2, 1945. That's 11 months. Hamas attacked Israel on October 7, 2023. Israel is still lingering aimlessly in Gaza on January 3, 2025. That's 15 months. Berlin is 1,268 kilometers, or 788 miles, from Omaha Beach. Gaza is 100 meters, or 109 yards, from Israel, basically the length of a football field.

Now, emboldened by military successes against Hezbollah and Iran, and possibly also by the election of Trump, Netanyahu's logic has been solidified.

A hostage deal will inevitably include a cease-fire, even if temporary. The prime minister will then face the reality of never having engaged in crafting a postwar political framework for Gaza.

If the war ends now, Hamas hasn't surrendered but Israel effectively owns Gaza. A cease-fire, combined with the cease-fire in Lebanon, will probably entail an unofficial cease-fire with the Houthis in Yemen, because the rationale for their missile launches — the wars in Gaza and Lebanon — has been removed. Once that happens, the ostensible justification for a preemptive strike on Iran's nuclear installations diminishes, right at the most opportune time.

That doesn't mean there won't be an attack, but Israel needs to see what the Trump administration's policy on Iran is. Netanyahu's challenge will be to convince Trump that continuing the war in Gaza and later in the year striking Iran is a feasible policy that the 47th president can win credit for, with the policy also conducive to expanding the Abraham Accords to include Saudi Arabia.

Netanyahu is sure that he can easily manipulate the old-new president and that Trump couldn't care less about Gaza and will be malleable on Iran. So the war will go on with no political objectives aligned to military maneuvering. But Netanyahu won't have Gallant to kick around anymore.

2. The World in 2025, According to Trump: Hellscape at Home, Hellscape Abroad — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 07/01/2025

Neither Canada nor any one of its 10 provinces or three territories will become the 51st state of the American Union. Greenland will not be bought from Denmark, the Panama Canal will not be "returned" to the United States and Mexico will not be invaded by the U.S. military.

Putting these recent unhinged, infantile, pseudo-foreign policy remarks from Donald Trump aside, the world that awaits the U.S. president-elect is starkly different from the one he thinks he remembers from when he left the White House in January 2021.

Trump's basic instincts and guiding predispositions about the world may not have changed. But the global landscape and regional geopolitical balances of power have.

China, Russia, North Korea, Iran, Europe and NATO are not in the same place they were when he was president between 2017 and 2021. Whatever his natural proclivities, he will have to make significant adjustments as to how he interacts with the world during his second term.

The two main characteristics most commonly associated with Trump's political personality are that he is inherently unpredictable and transactional. There's a contradiction there, since if he is always transactional, he is therefore subject to predictability. In any event, both traits will come into play in his foreign policy and both may lead to surprises — negative or positive — in how he deals with the world.

Throughout his latest campaign, true to form with his patented bluster, hyperbole and false facts, Trump described America as a broken country: desolate, crime-infested, swamped by illegal immigrants, governed by an unelected "deep state" and dominated by cunning liberal elites.

During that four-year campaign, he also portrayed it as an ailing Third World economy, exploited by greedy trade partners, taken for a ride by so-called allies, exhibiting weakness in global affairs, capitulating to China. America, he said, is a laughingstock around the world.

While disparaging incumbent opponents is a common campaign strategy in modern politics, the disconnect between Trump's angry depiction of a hellscape America and the real numbers and data is staggering.

The murder rate in America is significantly down. There are no U.S. troops embroiled in foreign wars. Illegal immigration is in fact lower than it was during Trump's last year in office. The stock market has just enjoyed its best two years over the past quarter century; jobs are up; wages are

moderately rising; U.S. domestic energy production is higher than it ever was; and tens of billions of dollars were invested in derelict infrastructure.

By almost every conventional and measurable metric, Trump will inherit an America doing significantly better than the America he left Joe Biden in January 2021.

This obviously wasn't enough to convince voters, still angry at the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing inflation. They were also confounded by divisive cultural issues.

In a Gallup survey conducted a month after the election, a meager 19 percent of Americans said they were "satisfied with the direction of the country." America, split evenly between red and blue, elected Trump — who somehow but very successfully managed to frame himself as the "change candidate."

Americans did not vote on foreign policy issues in November. They never do. Trump's agenda, like almost all presidents before him, is domestic: the economy, immigration, energy, curtailing the civil service, broad deregulation, downsizing the federal government and budgets by \$2 trillion.

In general, presidents prioritize domestic issues. They run campaigns on patently domestic issues, make promises on economic and social domestic issues that "the American people care about," and press a legislative agenda that is domestic.

Yet circumstances arise and crises present themselves that compel presidents to divert attention to foreign policy. Trump already inherits lingering wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, but the global picture is far broader. The two Central European powers of France and Germany are undergoing political turmoil, as is South Korea — another staunch U.S. ally.

Trump's instinctive support for Russian President Vladimir Putin, disdain for Volodymyr Zelenskyy and criticism of U.S. military support of Ukraine will raise transatlantic tensions in NATO — an alliance he is vociferously critical of and sees no utility in to begin with.

While Trump may concede to Russian demands in a cease-fire agreement with Ukraine, the Putin he admired is now three years into a failed war and closely cooperating and expanding relations with Iran. There is nothing Trump despises more than what he calls "losers." Would he offer to lift sanctions on Russia, allowing it to export oil and natural gas freely, but impose even more sanctions on Iran? In exchange for what?

North Korea made progress in its nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities, and is now much closer to being able to mount a nuclear warhead on a ballistic missile with sufficient range to

strike the Pacific Northwest. Would Trump renew his bromance with Kim Jong Un? In exchange for what? Denuclearization? And what if North Korea rejects the idea? That would make Japan and South Korea jittery.

If Trump applies the same alliance-averse attitude he has toward NATO and undoes the Indo-Pacific alliance that Biden began to develop, America's allies in the Pacific — namely Japan, South Korea, Australia and the Philippines — will adopt a more independent posture, and the first two would likely consider developing a nuclear capability of their own.

Regardless of how real, coordinated and effective they are as a group — mostly they are not — China, Russia, Iran and North Korea are perceived in the West as some sort of new "axis of evil." They may not coordinate policies, but there are patterns of cooperation and mutual support. Trump may want to do a Nixon-Kissinger maneuver and unlink China and Russia. However, 2025 is not 1972, and not even pre-Ukraine war 2021.

While Ukraine and the Middle East — particularly Iran, but not Gaza — will top Trump's in tray, China will dominate and define his foreign policy.

Trump repeats his threats and promises to impose trade tariffs on China on an almost daily basis. But the problem with tariffs is not only the spike in "Made in China" goods for the American consumer, but China's indispensability in global supply chains. This, many warn Trump, is counterproductive. He may want to focus on the trade imbalance with China and unfair trade practices used by the Chinese for years.

But the real crisis may come if China actually tests America's resolve on Taiwan and the expanding Chinese presence in the South China Sea. In the event of China quarantining Taiwan and laying economic siege to the island — or, in the worst-case scenario, invading it — America will face a formidable challenge to its global hegemony, even if Trump tends to deride that position as needlessly expensive.

Based on Trump's past statements and aversion to alliances, the United States may not even exhibit any resolve at all. In fact, he could conceivably agree to a grand bargain with Chinese President Xi Jinping and sacrifice Taiwan and the Philippines if he believes he got a good trade deal in exchange. Xi will say: "This is not about 'world order,' only about spheres of influence. You have Panama, I have Taiwan. We can both work together on a new nuclear deal with Iran" — and Trump may agree with the logic.

The immediate concern would be Taiwan's world-leading semiconductor industry. Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company makes about 90 percent of the world's advanced

computer chips — which are critical components in the car and medical devices industries. Trump is already under pressure from U.S. manufacturers that Taiwan has an unfair advantage. However, acquiescing to China's policy may violate two U.S. commitments. First, the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act, which determines that any violent move to threaten Taiwan's economic autonomy would be a matter of "grave concern to the United States." If any Taiwanese believes Trump will invoke that provision, I have a wall in China to sell them.

Second, in 1982 China made a commitment to pursue unification with Taiwan through "peaceful measures." If any Taiwanese believes Xi Jinping is honor-bound by a 1982 commitment made by Zhao Ziyang, I also have a Hangzhou Bay Bridge to sell them.

Trump was never an "American Order" advocate. He never saw the advantages of American hegemony either. For him, that requires immense investment for little return.

This approach may be an ominous sign of how he will deal with global crises, how he will manage relations with allies — whom he does not necessarily see as allies — and how he will project and exert American power. With all that in mind, his trademark unpredictability may also yield some successes.

3. Could Trump's Sharing of a Scathing Video Offer a Glimpse Into His Relationship With Netanyahu? — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 10/01/2025

On Thursday, President-elect Donald Trump shared a video on his social media platform Truth Social featuring renowned and contentious Columbia University economist, UN adviser and public intellectual Jeffrey Sachs. The Harvard-educated academic, speaking at the Cambridge Union in England, claimed that "Netanyahu has pursued a systematic strategy since 1995 to eliminate Hamas and Hezbollah by targeting their supporting governments in Iraq, Iran and Syria."

Fair enough. He then called Benjamin Netanyahu a "deep, dark son of a bitch," something Trump probably wouldn't take issue with. It is of course possible that Trump was shown the video by someone around him who gleefully chimed, "Mr. President, you gotta hear what he says about Obama and Syria. You'll love it."

Trump has liked Sachs ever since the professor supported his policy of getting out of Syria in 2018 and opposed U.S. aid to Ukraine. Trump went on to share the video of Sachs castigating presidents Barack Obama and Joe Biden for what he long believed were their failed and dangerous policies in Syria and Ukraine. But I would be remiss to conveniently assume that Trump didn't notice Sachs' remarks about Netanyahu.

Sachs' characterization of the prime minister as "a deep, dark son of a bitch" may be the most quotable phrase, but his criticism may prove portentous when Trump and Netanyahu inevitably clash on U.S. policy in the Middle East. Sachs was essentially saying to the incoming president: Be careful, Netanyahu and Co. in Washington will try to manipulate you into a war with Iran. If you think it's warranted, fine. But if you don't, be very vigilant.

Sachs was merciless, even if a bit hyperbolic. Netanyahu has "gotten us into endless wars, and because of the power of all of this in U.S. politics, he's gotten his way," Sachs says in the video. This wasn't the first time the professor has harshly criticized Netanyahu and his purported outsized manipulation of, and influence on, U.S. foreign policy. In a podcast interview with Tucker Carlson last month, this one commended by co-President Elon Musk, Sachs said the United States goes to war "on his behalf," referring to Netanyahu.

"Israel has driven so many American wars," he continued, referring specifically to Iraq and Syria. "It was a phony war; where did it come from?" he asked, before rehashing an old trope about how Israel hijacked U.S. foreign policy: "The U.S. gave over Middle East foreign policy to

Israel a long time ago, not to U.S. interests but to Israel's interests. That is the Israel lobby and we don't hear questioning of this at all."

This argument isn't new. In a 2006 essay in *The London Review of Books* that became a deeply reasoned but equally criticized 2007 book, "The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy," Stephen Walt of Harvard and John Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago make this argument with force. They define the pro-Israel lobby as a loose coalition of organizations and individuals who actively work to steer U.S. policy in what they perceive to be a pro-Israel policy. Walt and Mearsheimer claim that the pro-Israel lobby essentially hijacked American policy and strives to control the debate in both politics and academia.

Sachs also claims that, in the end, these policies will gravely hurt Israel. In a March 2024 interview with Tzachi Yonah Halevi in Haaretz's Hebrew edition, Sachs says he is "begging Israel not to mistakenly think that the United States will continue its support. You'll end up alone." He argues that sooner or later the United States will halt military aid to Israel for a variety of reasons linked to disillusioned and changing U.S. public opinion.

Responding to a query after the video went viral, Sachs told *The Guardian* that while he wasn't advising Trump, he hoped that Trump's election signaled a shift in American foreign policy. "I do not know Trump's disposition on these issues, but I do very much hope that he frees U.S. foreign policy from the grip of the cruel, ineffective, illegal and destructive policies of Netanyahu," Sachs said.

He's both right and wrong. It's true that in 1991, when Netanyahu was deputy foreign minister, he was designated *persona non grata* at the State Department by then-Secretary of State James Baker III after he claimed that U.S. policy in the Mideast was in disarray because it was based on false assumptions. It's also true that in a September 2002 hearing at the House of Representatives, then-private citizen Netanyahu urged the Americans to invade Iraq because this would democratize the country, "reverberate" to Iran and topple the regime in Tehran.

It's also true that for over two decades Netanyahu has urged the United States to threaten Iran militarily, and he crudely meddled in U.S. politics by going behind Obama's back to lobby Congress against the Iranian nuclear deal in 2015. Trump surely remembers how Netanyahu pressured him to unilaterally withdraw from the deal in 2018, promising him that "maximum pressure" through crippling sanctions would weaken Iran and provide for a new and better deal.

That obviously didn't happen, and now Trump is inheriting an Iran that's as close as ever to developing a military nuclear capability in terms of both enriched uranium stockpiles and

enrichment capabilities. Still, this doesn't mean that Netanyahu dragged the United States into "endless wars," as Sachs claims, or that a pro-Israel lobby has taken over U.S. foreign policy at Netanyahu's behest. That's a gross exaggeration, even if you think the "Israel debate" in Washington has been skewed by these groups.

But Sachs' implicit warning that Netanyahu will probably try to manipulate Trump into attacking Iran is the issue more likely to grab the incoming president's attention and ire. That pertains not just to a U.S. attack but to the Trump administration providing Israel, based on Netanyahu's requests, with the military means to launch an independent strike.

Three Middle East issues await Trump; the first is a Gaza cease-fire and hostage deal, which he urged should be completed before he's inaugurated. That may happen, but such a cease-fire wouldn't last more than a few days, maybe less. Trump probably couldn't care less about that.

Second, Saudi Arabia. The Saudis' potential influence on Trump far exceeds that of Netanyahu by any metric that Trump values. From the "transactional" Trump's point of view, the Saudis can reciprocate and reach deals with the United States, and Israel can't.

This is the heart of Sachs' argument: Netanyahu can try to drag America into a war, but Saudi Arabia wants vast economic, AI-based cooperation with Washington, would buy \$50 billion to \$60 billion in weapons, would join the Abraham Accords if Israel engages in a political process with the Palestinians, which it won't, and would only ask for a new deal with a weakened Iran.

The third issue is Iran itself. Trump's dilemma on Iran is interwoven with Sachs' warning. The United States essentially has three options that could be sequential and not mutually exclusive: threaten Iran and impose coercive diplomacy to facilitate a new round of negotiations, green-light an Israeli preemptive strike on Iran but bear the consequences of being complicit by association, and attack Iran jointly with Israel.

Trump, if Jeffrey Sachs can help it, would choose option one, certainly given his self-proclaimed rejection of American entanglements in unnecessary wars abroad.

Sachs' criticism and indirect warning is very pertinent to Trump. On the one hand, he has appointed end-of-days evangelical Christians to key positions relating to the Middle East. Their ally is Netanyahu. On the other hand, Trump is war-averse and amenable to Saudi influence, seeing no conceivable advantage in the United States launching a war on Iran. When U.S. and Israeli policy preferences clash, Trump may go back to Sachs' advice.

4. The Gaza Cease-fire and Hostage Deal Is the Same One From Eight Months Ago. Why Did Netanyahu Accept It Now? — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 14/01/2025

If the 20th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution — ratified on January 23, 1933 — had determined that presidential inaugurations would be on January 10 and not January 20, the five Israeli soldiers who were killed in Gaza on Monday likely would have been alive, their families not destroyed, a hostage deal might have already begun and scores of Gazan lives would have been spared.

It's that simple, that appalling, that tragic and that cruel.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu may whine all he likes about how U.S. President-elect Donald Trump made him do it. He is already selling the "I had no choice, we managed to postpone this for months" message to his ultranationalist, messianic, warmongering ruling coalition partners. But the truth is very clear: he has agreed to a deal he could and should have signed many months ago. But ailing hostages rotting in oxygen-deprived tunnels for 15 months and over 120 Israeli soldiers killed since he declined a previous deal are the least of his concerns. This is who and what he is.

Does anyone actually believe that Trump's new Mideast envoy, Steve Witkoff, a savvy real estate developer and investor from New York, "made Netanyahu do it"? Well, yes, if you know Netanyahu. He wanted to be pressured just ahead of Trump's inauguration next Monday.

The deal that may — and still may not — be agreed and signed on Tuesday or Wednesday was on the table last May, again in July and practically ever since. But Mr. Netanyahu, in the name of "an existential war" that will produce a "total victory," waited for the U.S. election and then for the presidential inauguration before agreeing to a deal.

Explaining why he opposes the deal, far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir specifically recalled how he previously prevented a deal by threatening Netanyahu, validating the claim that the prime minister's entire calculus was politically motivated. He never intended to end the war even when since-dismissed Defense Minister Yoav Gallant and the Israel Defense Forces stressed that all military goals had been achieved. The "strategic importance" of the Philadelphi corridor along the Gaza-Sinai border, meanwhile, was a bogus and cynical argument he had concocted.

There are two chronological fault lines. The first was October 2023-July 2024, when Netanyahu believed that the more the war was extended, the more Gaza was decimated, then the more removed he would become from the October 7 debacle — the worst day in Israel's history.

The second was from July 2024, when Biden withdrew his candidacy for the presidency, to the November election, and from there to Trump's inauguration next Monday.

A war that has no political objectives, in which military goals are not derived from and are not aligned with clear political objectives, is a war that will inevitably end without political achievements. Military achievements, however significant, cannot in this case be converted into political gains.

A just war — and let there be no doubt that the Gaza war was justified by any criteria — does not justify diplomatic recklessness and cluelessness, unless there was an ulterior motive and political agenda underlining it.

Netanyahu first ignored, then stalled, then dismissed and finally refused to entertain any "postwar Gaza" framework that the Biden administration presented to him as far back as December 2023. The very idea of removing Hamas from power in Gaza and replacing it with an interim Arab coalition — a concept that Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority all agreed to — was derisively rejected by Netanyahu, who declared "not until total victory and the eradication of Hamas."

Notwithstanding the substantial military degrading of Hamas and decimation of most of Gaza, does this agreement signal "total victory" or the "obliteration of Hamas"? No. Was it ever attainable without a full and protracted occupation of the entire Gaza Strip? No.

Throughout the first half of 2024, Netanyahu was deliberately seeking an open confrontation with the White House. "The U.S. is trying to impose a Palestinian state on Israel," he sanctimoniously and bogusly lamented without any basis. By May 2024, he had reneged on and disowned a plan he himself had presented to Biden. During those months, the hostage and cease-fire deal that may come to fruition in the coming days was already on the table.

For eight full months, such a deal was presented time and time again by Qatar and the United States. But Netanyahu only had politics and his own survival in mind, and then the U.S. election and Trump's inauguration.

This level of callousness, cruelty, disregard for the hostages and indifference toward their traumatized families — who he even blamed for undermining him — and the sheer recklessness in prosecuting a war with no defined, tangible and attainable objectives is staggering even by Mr. Netanyahu's standards. Even his harshest critics and most vehement detractors didn't think a year ago that it would get to this.

As for the deal itself, it is a good deal given the alternative. Whatever the reservations or comments one may have, a deal is a deal and hostages will return home.

Let's assume there is a mutually agreed deal and that the text accurately corresponds to the general outline revealed on Monday evening: a 42-day phased process that begins with a cease-fire, or at least a conditional cessation of hostilities; 33 Israeli hostages to be released in exchange for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners, many of whom are convicted terrorists, within the first 16 days. Negotiations on the second phase will then begin and if this sequence is completed, Israel will begin a gradual withdrawal from Gaza but maintain a narrow security buffer. Gazans, meanwhile, will be allowed to return to the little that remains of northern Gaza. Roughly a million fled the north into the southern part of the Strip after the war began. And on Tuesday, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken is expected to lay out a postwar political framework, very similar to the one Biden presented and Netanyahu rejected from December 2023 into mid-2024.

Now come the questions. Will the cease-fire hold? Can Hamas enforce it? What constitutes a flagrant violation of the cease-fire? Does the deal continue if there is sporadic local fighting between small, isolated splinter gangs who do not answer to Hamas? What happens if Hamas raises flags and declares victory?

This is an extraordinarily tenuous agreement given what Hamas is and Netanyahu's track record. It would come as no surprise to anyone if he is telling his reluctant and sulking ministers, "Don't worry, the cease-fire won't hold." As far as he is concerned, this might protect him from both political turmoil and Donald Trump.

5. It Took Biden, Trump and Qatar to Do What One Israeli Prime Minister Should Have Done — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 17/01/2025

It took 11 months since the first draft of the cease-fire and hostage release agreement was presented in March, nine months since Joe Biden publicly described the contours of the deal, eight months since it became UN Security Council Resolution 2735, seven months since it was reintroduced in July, and six months since then-Defense Minister Yoav Gallant demanded that the deal be done.

It took two U.S. administrations and Qatar to get an Israeli prime minister to do in 2025 what he could have and should have done a long time ago: sign the deal and save the hostages.

But no, Benjamin Netanyahu has a corruption trial to think about, as well as the cohesion of his governing coalition, and these things always override statesmanship, responsibility and basic human decency. The man who never took responsibility for the calamity of October 7, 2023, had time.

He had time first to prolong the war and distance himself from the catastrophe, even when by mid-2024 the army had made it unequivocally clear that short of occupying the entire Gaza Strip, all attainable military goals had been reached. Then he waited for the U.S. elections, thinking that if Donald Trump won, he could manipulate the new president into letting the war continue.

When on Wednesday Trump wrote on his social media platform, Truth Social, about the "EPIC cease-fire agreement," it was game over for Netanyahu. It remains to be seen how epic this very precarious cease-fire will be, but one thing is clear: Once Trump called it "epic" and claimed — not without justification — credit for making it happen, Netanyahu had no opt-out option, as much as he would have wanted one.

So now Netanyahu has to approve the deal, which is what the cabinet was expected to do Friday. On-brand Netanyahu now finds himself in a familiar and self-inflicted untenable position: making contradictory promises to different people. He's placating his war-glorifying far-right coalition members, who are shamelessly "demanding" that the war continue.

He's telling them: "Stop overdramatizing this and threatening me. You know that the cease-fire won't hold and there probably won't be a second phase that includes a withdrawal." But at the same time, starting Monday he'll need to reinforce a commitment to President Trump that Israel fully intends to adhere to the cease-fire and proceed into the second phase.

The argument is valid: Trump pressured Netanyahu into agreeing to a deal he resisted since May. Trump declared three times since the November election that he wanted it all wrapped up and off his desk. It's equally valid that Netanyahu deliberately wanted to give Trump what he refused to give Biden.

Even more valid is the assessment that this was Netanyahu's plan ever since Biden withdrew from the presidential race in July: Wait until the election, and if Trump wins, wait until just a few days before Inauguration Day on January 20.

Netanyahu prolonged the war by incessantly floating slogans about "total victory" and "eradicating Hamas." In May he was pontificating about how Biden was dangerously trying to foist a Palestinian state on Israel. By July he needed a different excuse. On July 5, the deal he agreed to on Tuesday was presented again.

It took Netanyahu three weeks of typical and intentional procrastination before he came up with the ingenious argument that the Philadelphi corridor, a 14-kilometer, or 8.7-mile, road stretching along Gaza's southern border, was of critical strategic importance to Israel. He turned this road into the 1683 siege of Vienna, as if the survival of Western civilization depended on it. Or, if you're a 20th-century history buff, it was his Stalingrad.

Six months later, the Philadelphi corridor seems like just another dusty road that Israel will leave if there is a second phase to the agreement.

The Biden administration kept insisting, albeit without putting any real pressure on Israel, and Qatar kept trying to mediate, but Trump's election provided the game changer. If 2024 hadn't been an election year or if Kamala Harris had been elected, it's highly doubtful we would have a deal.

Two U.S. administrations collaborating to try to resolve an international crisis is unprecedented. Biden and Trump had their teams join efforts to get this done, each for his own interests. Biden wanted some sort of closure after more than a year of failing to affect Netanyahu's behavior and policy, while Trump undoubtedly wanted to rid his agenda of this irritant that provides the United States with zero net value.

Unlike the 1980 Iran hostage crisis, Trump didn't ask Netanyahu to delay an agreement until he was in office. He wanted it done before that. In 1980, the Carter administration was trying to resolve a hostage crisis where 53 Americans were held in Iran by radical students loyal to Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who had returned to the country a year earlier. After the November 1980 election, Ronald Reagan's transition team not only didn't help the Carter

administration, but as later reports contended, it sent indirect messages to Iran: "Wait until after January 1981."

In the last few days, Biden and Trump engaged in a predictable but ultimately insignificant battle for credit; on Thursday Haaretz provided a very good account of the dynamic of how the two worked together and then claimed credit separately.

The Americans began drafting a plan for a cease-fire and a hostage deal as early as December 2023, a month after the first hostage deal was concluded. Netanyahu, intent on prosecuting the war and destroying Hamas, ignored it.

When Washington presented the plan as part of a broader blueprint for postwar Gaza that included a government replacing Hamas, Netanyahu's resistance grew. He saw an end to the war as an abject failure and fully understood that he would be held accountable for the October 7 disaster and his policy of strengthening Hamas in order to incapacitate the Palestinian Authority so that he never had to negotiate the future of Israeli-Palestinian relations.

When asked by the Americans about the political goals of the war, all Netanyahu had to say was "total victory." When he was asked how he intended to achieve that, he conveniently never responded. By the time he dismissed Biden's May 27 proposal, which Biden was courteous enough to credit Netanyahu for crafting, the army and Defense Minister Gallant were already talking about a bloody war of attrition and a gradual sinking into a Vietnam-like quagmire.

Neither that nor the public outcry over Netanyahu's desertion of the hostages — breaching not only Israeli interests but also the value of solidarity in Jewish tradition and Israeli culture — had an impact on the prime minister. At that time he was still hoping for an escalation with Iran, which arrived in October, but not broadly enough for him.

The Biden administration was content with bland and aimless press conferences where officials expressed "concern" and hopes for a deal, while politely asking Israel to "exercise restraint." Time and time again, Netanyahu manipulated, deceived and misled Biden and his officials, so much so that in the last year it seemed they had been awarded the flattest learning curve in the history of international relations.

Enter Donald Trump. It's not that he was well-versed on the facts and details of the Gaza war or the greater Middle East, but more than he is war-averse, he has other priorities, like Ukraine and China. He sees the Gaza war as an unwelcome distraction. Netanyahu may have waited with the cease-fire for Trump, but he may soon learn that his place in Trump's world has been marginalized.

Or it's all over. When it comes to his ability to influence Trump on Iran, that's not what he expected.

6. Trump Believes He Has a Mandate to Upend America, Not Reform It — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 20/01/2025

It was "Liberation Day," President Donald Trump proclaimed with profound seriousness on Monday, referring to his election and inauguration. Just like Paris in August 1944 or East Berlin in 1989. Still, it's good he didn't use Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Thank God almighty, we are free at last," given that the inauguration coincided with MLK Day.

Split-screen America. Half of it was watching through joyous tears the inauguration of the person they believe is the last best hope of earth, a no-nonsense guy who hates everything they hate.

They watched a reality show featuring the man who speaks their mind and, just like them, has had it with liberal pontification and condescension. This is the man who will rid America of "woke culture," halve their Walmart bill, cut their taxes, punish bureaucrats, deport immigrants by the ton, return acceptable language and ethnic-sexist jokes to a 1970s level, and bring them all to the promised Greenland.

The other half was watching with tears of despair a twice-impeached, 34-counts-convicted felon; a sexual predator who instigated an insurrection after refusing to accept the 2020 election result. A man they viscerally and apoplectically hate, convinced he is on a mission to undermine American democracy; to undo everything that has been achieved since 1776 and turn America into a dystopian, authoritarian oligarchy in which experts are derided, abortions are illegal, the police can be brutal at will and the media is the enemy.

Who would have thought that after four years of record job numbers following the COVID pandemic, falling murder and other crime rates, one of the highest stock market performances ever, no U.S. troops involved in foreign wars and record energy production, "America's decline is over," as Trump declared. Why has the decline stopped? Easy — by virtue of his election.

In the end, both halves of America got exactly what they expected on Monday. Trump is Trump, and delivered a Trump speech.

The first half of America will get little from what they think he will deliver to them. The second half may have a four-year mental meltdown, but will find out in 2028 that America survived and maybe he had some valid points.

On a cold January 20, 1961, John F. Kennedy made arguably the most famous presidential inaugural address in modern American history: "And so, my fellow Americans: Ask not what

your country can do for you — ask what you can do for your country. My fellow citizens of the world: Ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man."

Trump's first inaugural address, on January 20, 2017, won rave reviews. As former President George W. Bush put it, "That was some weird shit."

There were other memorable inaugural addresses. On March 4, 1865, before the 20th Amendment in 1933, the presidential inauguration was always on that date, Abraham Lincoln uttered the famous words: "With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations." A month later, the Civil War was over.

On March 4, 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt stated: "So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself."

The shortest inaugural address was a mere 135 words, made by George Washington on March 4, 1793, during the swearing-in for his second term: "This oath I am now about to take, and in your presence: That if it shall be found during my administration of the government I have in any instance violated willingly or knowingly the injunctions thereof, I may, besides incurring constitutional punishment, be subject to the upbraidings of all who are now witnesses of the present solemn ceremony."

For obvious reasons, Trump chose not to borrow that particular passage. However, nor did he go the length of the longest address in U.S. history — that of William Henry Harrison, 8,445 words, six times the length of this article, on March 4, 1841.

The biggest question for Americans and the watching world ahead of Trump's speech was how much of his boisterous and far-reaching campaign promises would be rekindled.

The campaign is over, the transition period has ended. He is now president. Would he pledge mass deportations? Would he threaten political enemies and civil liberties? Would he repeat his promise to fire thousands of "disloyal" civil servants? Would he make any major foreign policy statements? He did. All along those campaign rally lines.

Even before his return to the White House, Trump has indicated on many occasions, and on a diverse set of topics, that he now regards presidential power — and his ability to exercise it —

differently than he did in 2017. Eight years ago, still shocked and disoriented by his own surprise victory, an inexperienced Trump — hostile to government but unfamiliar with its machinations and Washington's political culture — was paralyzed.

He failed to govern effectively and his administration was mostly dysfunctional. He was easily distracted, course-corrected — or derailed according to him — by frequent confrontations and vitriolic friction with federal bureaucracy, which he depicted as a "deep state" out to get him.

Now he believes he is ready and knowledgeable enough to take them on from the outset.

According to The New York Times, Trump already told people he wants to "sign around 100 executive orders" at the start, including what he boasts will be "the largest deportation operation in American history."

His list of campaign promises and pledges reads not like a major overhaul or reform but a full revolution upending what America is, how it has been governed and how it functioned for at least the last 50 years.

The framework is "Project 2025," a political initiative published in 2023 by conservative think tank the Heritage Foundation. Trump disavowed the project during the campaign after being attacked over it, claiming he had never heard of it. However, it resonated loudly and clearly in both his transition period statements and his inauguration speech.

Campaign is poetry and governance is prose, goes the cliché, and Trump will likely not achieve even 20 percent of his ambitious agenda. But it is still worthwhile recalling the laundry list of promises he made on the campaign trail.

Let's start with the easy part: foreign policy. Trump said he would "end the Ukraine war in 24 hours" once in office. "You're going to see peace in the Middle East." And, of course, "we will finish the process of reevaluating NATO's purpose and mission." If it comes to withdrawal from NATO, Trump will need congressional approval. But like everything he promises or entertains, that is easier said than done.

Immigration is his most blustery and contentious trademark issue. He proclaimed that he would begin a "mass deportation on Day One." He said he would close the border with Mexico, despite the fact that illegal immigration was down significantly over the last four years. That's a monumental undertaking that requires federal-state-municipal-multiagency law enforcement coordination, not to mention the horrid optics.

He also said he would end "birthright citizenship" for children born in the United States to illegal immigrants. The constitutionality of this will surely be challenged as a violation of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. If that's not enough, he vowed to "end sanctuary cities" — a biblical term referring to American cities that refuse to cooperate with the federal government on deporting immigrants.

On the economy, Trump vowed to "end inflation" and "make America affordable again" — just like that. "We will lower grocery and car prices, and gasoline prices to under \$2 a gallon," he said repeatedly.

Tariffs, one of Trump's favorite campaign and transition period topics, got a list of promises all to itself: a universal 10 to 20 percent tariff on all imported goods; a 25 percent tariff on goods imported from Canada and Mexico; and up to 60 percent tariffs on all imports from China. Warnings that this would raise prices and even inflation have been derided by Trump, as were threats by those countries to reciprocate.

Tariffs will be complemented by an extension and expansion of tax cuts from his previous term, particularly for the rich and corporations.

On energy, Trump said he would roll back federal incentives for buying electric cars and, simultaneously, increase and accelerate the production of oil and natural gas.

On crime and the police, he has pledged to increase the punishment for human and sex trafficking, impose the death penalty on illegal immigrants who commit deadly crimes, and substantially broaden police immunity against lawsuits for alleged brutality and illicit practices.

On education and America's universities, he vowed to shut the Department of Education and delegate oversight authority to states, defund universities that have enacted DEI — diversity, equity and inclusion — and end the "transgender insanity."

His threats and warnings about the Justice Department are especially alarming to those who see him as an illiberal authoritarian intent on undermining American democracy.

He vowed retribution against his political rivals to such an extent that, on his last day in office, Biden issued preemptive pardons to people Trump was targeting. These included the entire January 6 inquiry commission, as well as the former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley and Dr. Anthony Fauci — who dared call the coronavirus a pandemic and recommended the closure of public spaces and stores.

Trump promised to persecute media organizations whom he deems enemies. The ABC network's parent company, Disney, already rushed to pay \$15 million to settle a defamation lawsuit the president filed against George Stephanopoulos' "This Week" show. He then guaranteed pardons to January 6 insurrectionists who were sentenced to jail terms for violently attacking the U.S. Capitol Building in D.C.

His biggest political challenge is not his real or imagined enemies but the GOP's razor-tight congressional majority, especially in the House of Representatives. It requires airtight discipline from Republicans on almost every important vote, and any political deviance could cost him critical legislation and momentum. This means that in terms of planning, his political window essentially stretches from now until the congressional midterm elections in November 2026.

Aware of this constraint, Trump has already indicated that he plans to begin governing through executive orders that circumvent Congress. Tomorrow, Americans may find out, is the first day of the rest of their democracy. For the world, it could be the beginning of the end of the "American order." Half of America thinks that's a good thing.

May God bless the United States of America.

7. Is Israel's Strategic and Geopolitical Situation Really Better Now Than It Was Before the War? — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 24/01/2025

Some positive conventional wisdom is taking root in Israel and among many observers of Middle East politics: Israel's strategic environs have improved considerably and the country's position in January 2025 is significantly better than on the morning of October 7, 2023.

From a purely security and military perspective, this conventional wisdom is well-founded and sensible. It seems to be an incontrovertible strategic truism to argue that the past year produced major regional shifts that are clearly advantageous to Israel. Whether these shifts are "tectonic," as the most overused term goes, remains to be seen.

They certainly might wind up on that scale, but judging by Israel's policy, or lack thereof, they could equally turn out very differently, and the conventional wisdom might wind up premature.

There is no doubt that the erosion of Iran's geopolitical power is a net positive strategic gain for Israel, but this is offset by growing hostility around the world, the reemergence of the Palestinian issue, which Israel is neither prepared nor willing to engage in, and an ominous loss of levers in Washington given regional power plays and the identity of the new U.S. president, Donald Trump. These negatives are equally strategic in scope and meaning, so the validity of conventional wisdom can be challenged.

Which developments underlie this conventional wisdom? Militarily, Hamas has been immensely degraded, though not "eradicated" or "decimated," as the Israeli government under Benjamin Netanyahu vowed to do. It's very doubtful that in any postwar scenario Hamas will be able to restore its military capabilities to anywhere near those on October 7, 2023.

Hezbollah has been badly battered regarding both its political and military leadership and its missile capability. Furthermore, the Lebanese Shi'ite organization has lost much of the deterrent power it had over Israel for many years and the cover that this perceived deterrence provided Iran.

Iran has suffered major strategic setbacks. Even if temporarily, it has lost the ability to project power through Hezbollah, its prized asset and proxy. It has been attacked on its own soil, much of its antimissile-detection and air-defense system has been destroyed, and though Iran was more than able to retaliate with missiles and drones against Israel, it has been fundamentally weakened, its intelligence penetrated, its vulnerabilities exposed and its main land conduit for arms supplies to Hezbollah, Syria, eliminated for now with the collapse of the Assad regime.

Russia, an Iranian ally, quickly left Syria and is preoccupied with the war in Ukraine ahead of expected cease-fire negotiations in the coming months. This makes Iran's choice binary: break out of its nuclear-threshold status, try to develop a military nuclear capability and risk a major war, or engage in a new nuclear disarmament and supervision deal from a weakened position.

Saudi Arabia, which already improved relations with Iran in a Chinese-brokered rapprochement in 2023, is hospitable to both the United States and China, has potentially enormous sway on Trump, and isn't ruling out a normalization process with Israel under certain circumstances.

Russia is effectively out of the Middle East, even if it maintains a residual presence on Syria's Mediterranean coast and has announced that it still has interests in the region. Russia has nothing to sell or anything positive to provide the region.

Which brings us to the Palestinians. The savage terror attack on October 7, 2023, comprehensively set back Palestinian political aspirations.

Gaza has been pulverized and rendered uninhabitable, the Palestinian Authority is weak, ineffectual and dysfunctional, and Israel thinks, or at least the current coalition government thinks, that wide swaths of the West Bank can be annexed in the coming months. All this, particularly Iran's isolation and precariousness, amounts to an Israeli strategic triumph — so goes the conventional wisdom.

But there's a countervailing interpretation to the very same events and processes, and it begins with the Palestinians. The horrid catastrophe of October 7, 2023, and the ensuing war and devastation of Gaza, only exacerbated the Israeli-Palestinian problem. Decimating Hamas is good but doesn't change by one iota the demographic equilibrium between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.

The prevailing mindset in Israel that a Palestinian state is unviable, undesirable and would precipitate more "October 7s" is understandable and natural, but equally myopic. The status quo would also precipitate more October 7s, and certainly a one-state solution too.

The fundamental flaw in Israel's policy has been to deliberately and recklessly fail to define political goals for the war in Gaza and then refuse to engage in any postwar political framework that would replace Hamas. When a war has no political aims, when military means aren't derived from political objectives, even the greatest military accomplishments become perishable goods and go to waste.

Saudi Arabia is the one major regional actor that has real potential influence on Trump. On Wednesday, in a phone call with the U.S. president, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman promised that the Saudis would increase their investment and trade with the United States by "at least \$600 billion" over the next four years. Presumably that includes a \$40 billion to \$60 billion mega arms deal.

The Saudis would ask Trump to engage Iran in a new nuclear deal and could very well insist on a meaningful Israeli-Palestinian political process based on the principle of a Palestinian state as a condition to any kind of relations with Israel. Trump would ask the Saudis to use their clout in OPEC to lower oil prices, a good tool for Trump against Vladimir Putin to end the war in Ukraine.

Trump is transactional and the Saudis can transact. Israel can't; it has no tangible deliverables because it has no defined political goals in Gaza or the West Bank.

Then there is world opinion. Whether the world's hostility toward Israel is distorted, predicated on falsehoods and vilely motivated, or whether this is warranted criticism of the management of the war, the fact remains that Israel is ostracized and resented, with its claims about the Iranian threat accepted as a unique Israeli issue, not a global one. This is as important as striking Hezbollah and is a strategic debacle when it comes to reputation and brand value.

Actually, both interpretations of these dynamics — the strategic improvement and the longer-term disadvantages — are true.

The upside of these developments is that it's up to Israel to shape its environment by crafting smart policies, beginning with the Palestinians. The downside is that such policies cannot and will not be formed under the current prime minister and government.

8. Is There Less to Trump Than Meets the Eye? — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 28/01/2025

Think of Donald Trump as Newman, the mailman Jerry profoundly dislikes in "Seinfeld." There is an episode in which the quick-to-find-fault-in-women-he-dates Jerry discovers to his horror and disgust that a woman he is currently seeing used to go out with his reviled, unappealing neighbor Newman.

To make matters worse for his battered ego, the woman told Jerry that in fact it was Newman, not she, who broke off the relationship. When Jerry tells all this to his friend Elaine, a dialogue follows:

Elaine: "Perhaps there's more to Newman than meets the eye."

Jerry: "No, there's less."

Elaine: "It's possible."

Jerry: "No. it isn't. I've looked into his eyes. He's pure evil."

Elaine: "Maybe he's an enigma, a mystery wrapped in a riddle."

Jerry: "Yeah, he's a mystery wrapped in a Twinkie."

Related Articles

In Trump's case, the Newmannesque "there's less" is not a disparaging characterization, but more of an observation about the depth and longevity of his statements. This doesn't mean his statements are comical, irrelevant or just provocations meant to rile the world. Some of them he means seriously.

When Trump blurts out an idea with conviction, bluster and 100 percent certitude, or issues a statement with multiple exclamation points, it is almost never the product of a carefully crafted thought process.

Agree or disagree with those statements, Trump discharges copiously and bluntly what he believes to be common sensical truisms. About everything and anything. They do not express a coherent policy or plan of action, a thorough examination of options weighed carefully.

Trump is detail-averse, so one-line statements suffice. How people interpret them is not important to him. Most of these statements have the lifespan of mayflies, the aquatic insect that typically lives for only a day. They live until the next issue – say, sanctions threats on Colombia or confronting Denmark on the purchase of Greenland – crosses his mind and keyboard.

That is why neither the nationalistic far right and Netanyahu sycophants, nor the anti-Netanyahu liberal democrats (aka "the center-left"), should get excited or depressed, elated or disappointed, by something Trump says. The life expectancy of his controversy-generating statements is shorter than the time it takes him to type an agitated, impassioned response on social media or sanctimoniously whine on television.

His default modus operandi is based on pointing to what he believes to be plain common sense, which he then utters without any filters, regard for decorum or how it will be received. It's who he is.

So when he says that Egypt and Jordan – and even Indonesia, according to reports – should take in hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees from Gaza, which is "a giant demolition site," he is not calling for ethnic cleansing but in his mind stating an obvious fact from his default real-estate point of view: Gaza is currently uninhabitable and for all he knows, he just called it as he sees it.

Trump may be desultory, coarse and crude, but he is not the cause of the cracks and shifting plates of the world order. He is an accelerant of processes and dynamics that have already been set in motion. He does not care and is often openly resentful and hostile to the "rules-based," institutions-and-alliances-based, post-1945 American-led international order. He thinks it is costing America a lot and benefiting it little.

But he does relish being at the epicenter of American superpower swagger, thoroughly enjoying the confusion, discord and chaos his statements stir in the world.

If you tell Trump that what he calls "Making America Great Again" potentially destabilizes political power balances, alliances and financial markets, he would thank you for the compliment.

If you are Mexico, Colombia, Panama, Denmark, Ukraine, South Korea or Japan, do you: A) continue to rely on America for leadership, a strategic umbrella and maintain that, despite Trump's statements, America will remain a dependable ally; or B) diversify partnerships, consider augmenting your defense and even contemplate a nuclear option and improve relations with China.

If you picked option B, which many of these countries are likely to choose in the next couple of years, ask Trump: "How does that benefit America? How does that make America great again?"

Which brings us back to the Middle East and Israel. There is little I can add on the possible implications of Trump's idea to relocate Gazans to Egypt and Jordan, dissected and analyzed by Zvi Bar'el and the potential effects on Israel are critically described by Amir Tibon.

What is interesting about Trump's statements is less their unfeasibility, but how they are interpreted and received in Israel. Unlike his statements about Greenland, Panama and Colombia, this truly has comical qualities.

First there was the far right and the Netanyahu cult. They welcomed Trump's election with the delirium of the arrival of an earthly Cyrus and a heavenly Messiah combined. His insistence on ending the war in Gaza and concluding a hostage deal was dismissed offhandedly as something he had to say, but didn't really mean. Until they discovered that he meant it, and he also means that to end the war, there needs to be a stage 2 of the cease-fire deal.

The vile attacks on him, and especially on his Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff, soon followed. Nothing to worry about, Benjamin Netanyahu tried to placate them, I received assurances that the war will resume. Until they find out that no such assurances – short of the total collapse of the cease-fire – were given by Trump.

Then came Israel's Netanyahu-despising liberal democrats. They don't particularly like Trump, but quickly adopted a pro-Trump "he made the deal happen" stance, which rapidly evolved into a self-deluding notion that Trump will "pressure" Netanyahu in ways that Biden never did, and compel him to end the war and forge a normalization process with Saudi Arabia with a Palestinian component that would effectively disintegrate Netanyahu's ruling coalition.

Then came Trump's casual remark about Palestinian refugees from Gaza being settled in Egypt and Jordan, while Saudi, Qatari and Emirati money will build Mar-A-Jabalya with beautiful condos and a Trump golf course.

By now, neither side in Israel knows what to make of Trump. Here's an idea: Don't try to make sense of it. What he said yesterday could change or be ignored tomorrow. What he posts about Gaza can turn into Greenland within an hour.

If you think his ideas are patently impractical, that they can't be made into policy, or that he is unpresidential when he says those things, don't waste your time looking for telling clues and perceptive insights into what exactly he means.

There's no answer. Is there more to Trump than meets the eye? No. There's less, and that's not entirely a bad thing.

9. Is the Two-State Solution Still Valid? Yes, But a Preparation Period is Needed — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz / Shaul Arieli website, 30/01/2025

Donald Trump's return to the White House will likely be accompanied by a regional diplomatic initiative, running parallel to the fragile agreement between Israel and Hamas. This raises the question: Is the two-state solution still viable based on the parameters that guided the last effective negotiations between Ehud Olmert and Mahmoud Abbas at Annapolis in 2008?

The answer addresses two main components: examining feasibility in spatial-demographic, economic, political, and social dimensions — each being necessary but insufficient — and creating physical conditions for a gradual separation and rebuilding of trust between the parties, requiring both to settle for "half their desires."

An in-depth examination of the West Bank's spatial reality reveals a complex picture of demographic distribution and spatial control. In Areas A and B, which constitute nearly 40% of the West Bank, more than 2.5 million Palestinians live, plus about 400,000 in East Jerusalem. The built-up area in these regions spans 710 square kilometers — about a quarter of the West Bank.

These areas have no permanent Jewish presence, except for eight illegal outposts in Area B, half of which are defined as agricultural farms with one family each. Six are located in the so-called "Consensual Reserve" southeast of Bethlehem. Two additional outposts are in the Ramallah area, one near the Ofra settlement and the other in Turmus Ayya village territory. Importantly, all lands in Areas A and B are Palestinian-owned, either state or private property, according to Peace Now.

In Area C, the picture is more complex: As of late 2024, there are 134 settlements and 221 illegal outposts, 66 of them established during the current war. Despite the large number of Jewish communities, their built-up area is only 1.6% of the West Bank. Meanwhile, Palestinian settlement in Area C includes about 1,100 communities, covering 140 square kilometers — 2.4% of the West Bank.

Another significant fact is that about 81% of Palestinian settlement in Area C is actually a natural extension of communities located in Areas A and B, where construction has spilled over into Area C. The Palestinian population in Area C numbers about 400,000 people — 45% of the area's total residents. Adding to the complexity is the fact that 52% of Area C — the core of West Bank settlement — is privately owned Palestinian land.

Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics data for late 2024 paint a complex picture of Israeli presence in the West Bank: While it numbers 511,908 people, the demographic trends appear negative. This year, like three of the past five years, there is a negative migration balance, with more people leaving than joining, and a significant decline from 1,359 newcomers in 2023 to 1,880 departures in 2024.

This gloomy picture is reflected in both international migration, between the West Bank and abroad, which deteriorated from 809 to minus 284, and in internal migration, between Israel and the West Bank, which plummeted from 550 to minus 1,596. Population growth relies solely on natural increase, which rose from 12,499 to 12,998, with 58% concentrated in ultra-Orthodox settlements, particularly Modi'in Illit and Beitar Illit.

In a broader view, settlers currently represent only about 5.14% of Israel's population, 15% of the West Bank population, and 55% of the population in Area C. These figures point to a significant demographic shift, raising serious questions about the future of settlement and its social composition.

Regarding the economic feasibility of a two-state solution, examining relations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority indicates a trend of increasing dependency. According to research by Dr. Roee Faiberg from the Tamrur research group, Israel is the PA's main trading partner, with annual trade volume of \$5-6 billion. The data show that about 65% of Palestinian imports come from Israel, and 85% of Palestinian exports go to the Israeli market.

Another dimension of economic dependence is reflected in the labor market. Until the outbreak of the current war, about 130,000 Palestinians worked legally in Israel and the settlements, with another 50,000 working without permits. The war led to a dramatic surge in unemployment in the Palestinian Authority, from 25-30% to 50-60%, with unemployment particularly high among young people.

The budgetary picture further emphasizes Palestinians' deepening dependence on Israel. Of the PA's annual budget of \$5.6 billion, the portion of tax money Israel collects for the Authority has grown from 40% in 2010 to nearly two-thirds today. Meanwhile, funding from donor countries has significantly decreased, from 39% to just 4% of the PA budget. These figures reflect deepening economic dependence between the PA and Israel, originating in the Paris Protocol.

The demographic and economic reality among Israelis presents a complex and difficult picture: The rise in the proportion of ultra-Orthodox, who now constitute 36% of the West

Bank's population, alongside the decline in secular residents to 26%, reflects a profound change in the settlers' socio-economic fabric.

Striking statistics: 37% of settlers belong to the lowest socio-economic cluster, with another 9% in clusters 2 and 3. This means nearly half the population lives in deep poverty — ten times the Israeli average. The state tries to bridge this gap through government subsidies at twice the national average, but this is a problematic and unsustainable solution.

The demographic and land data in the West Bank paint a clear picture: Palestinians hold a significant demographic majority and spatial dominance, both in terms of land ownership and built-up area. This reality presents annexation advocates with an insoluble dilemma: either losing the Jewish majority or giving up Israel's democratic character.

Nevertheless, separation can be achieved through land swaps of about 4% of the West Bank's area. Such a solution would allow preserving 80% of the Israeli population currently living beyond the Green Line under Israeli sovereignty, while maintaining territorial continuity and the fabric of life for both Palestinians and Israelis.

The practical challenge of evacuating Israelis centers mainly on employment and housing aspects. Detailed analysis of the data shows the challenge can be addressed: Regarding employment, since 50% of settlers are children, their average employment rate stands at 63%. Of these, 62% already work in Israel, and 6% are retirees. This means only about 3,500 new jobs need to be created annually for five years, almost all in education and welfare systems. This is a modest challenge compared to Israel's job creation rate of about 100,000 new positions annually.

In housing, based on the percentage of adults over 19, 50%, and the marriage rate in this age group, 6,400 housing units would need to be built annually for five years. This too is an achievable goal considering Israel's annual construction pace of about 55,000 new housing units.

These figures emphasize that from a spatial perspective, separation between the two peoples within a two-state solution framework is feasible, especially if implemented over a five-year period.

Regarding the feasibility of a diplomatic settlement in the political dimension, the picture is more complex and includes challenges and contradictions. On the Israeli domestic front, the current government, relying on a Knesset where 16 MKs live in settlements and outposts, categorically rejects any arrangement including the establishment of a Palestinian state. In

monitoring government and Knesset committee decisions over the past two years, almost no mention of a long-term solution to the conflict was found.

Even in the opposition, there is reluctance to return to the Annapolis parameters. Meanwhile, the PLO, despite its official support for the two-state solution, faces significant internal challenges: loss of control in Gaza, Hamas' opposition to the two-state solution, splits within Fatah, and lack of public legitimacy. All these make it difficult to promote a diplomatic agreement.

However, the regional system has undergone dramatic change since October 7. Research by Dr. Moran Zaga from Tamrur reveals that six key Arab states — Egypt, Jordan, Bahrain, the UAE, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia — directly link ending the fighting in Gaza with progress toward a comprehensive diplomatic solution. These countries see the two-state solution as a key to regional stability and promote a shared vision linking the region's future to a sustainable resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The international arena shows a similar trend, with a sharp rise in declarations of support from the UN and European Union for the two-state solution. In the United States, despite declining support for this solution since Trump's victory, an assessment is emerging that a broad diplomatic initiative is needed to remove Hamas. The American plan aims to establish a regional defense alliance under its auspices to contain the "axis of chaos and terror" led by Iran.

The analysis reveals that Israel is diplomatically isolated due to its opposition to returning to a diplomatic process. The future of its position largely depends on the incoming American president's policy, who will need to deal with the Arab position conditioning normalization with Israel on progress in the Palestinian track.

As for feasibility in the social dimension — public opinion research conducted by Professors Sivan Hirsch-Hoefler and Gilad Hirschberger from Tamrur reveals an interesting picture of Israeli public attitudes regarding the territories' future. The December 2024 findings show a clear split: 50% of the Jewish public supports separation from Palestinians, either through a bilateral agreement, 25%, or unilateral action, 25%. The other half advocates continued Israeli control, either through formal annexation or maintaining the status quo.

Two prominent trends have emerged over the years among the Israeli-Jewish public: a dramatic decline in support for the two-state solution, from 47% in November 2018 to 25% in late 2024, and a significant rise in support for maintaining the status quo, from 9% to 22% in the same

period. Support for annexation also rose from 17% to 28%. These changes reflect a profound process that began well before the October 2023 events.

Among Israel's Arab public, the picture is completely different, with 84% supporting separation, including 58% through a two-state solution. Additionally, research by Dr. Maoz Rosenthal from Tamrur on discourse as expressed in social media, party leader statements, and print media — Haaretz, Israel Hayom and Yedioth Ahronoth — reveals that no significant discussion of a permanent solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is taking place.

On the Palestinian side, surveys conducted by the Institute for Social and Economic Progress indicate 69% of Palestinians support a two-state solution based on the 1967 lines, and 42% support a single state with equal rights. Research by Dr. Ronit Marzan and Sigalit Maor from Tamrur points to a significant change in Palestinian influencers' discourse on social media: an 80% decrease in using terms related to military and religious activism, in favor of discourse emphasizing media, cultural, and political activism.

Above all these data looms the trauma of the October 7 massacre and its implications for Israeli society, alongside the extensive destruction and heavy casualties in Gaza and their impact on the Palestinian side. These residual effects pose a significant challenge to any future solution.

The comprehensive review above raises a central insight: While there is spatial feasibility for a two-state solution, the political and social barriers, especially on the Israeli-Jewish side, require adopting a gradual approach. Instead of immediately pursuing a permanent arrangement, a preparation period is needed to build the conditions and trust necessary for significant compromises.

I propose a diplomatic framework for resolving the conflict focused on two main axes: The first is creating legitimate partners. In Israel: holding elections to form a government that renews commitment to the two-state solution based on traditional parameters. On the Palestinian side: holding presidential and parliamentary elections for the PA and PLO, aiming to create a unified and legitimate leadership including all factors that recognize Israel.

The second axis is building territorial and economic infrastructure to enable Palestinian governance: creating Palestinian territorial continuity in the West Bank by transferring parts of Area C to PA authority, including 2% of the built-up area that has spilled over from Areas A and B into Area C, based on Sharon and Olmert's plans, while deploying Palestinian police forces in these areas under agreed performance metrics.

In Gaza, the IDF would withdraw and Palestinian police would be deployed, with the possibility of Arab force reinforcement. The continuous connection between Gaza and the West Bank would be restored via railway, the "Safe Passage," by completing the track from Erez Crossing to Tarqumiya Crossing. The Paris Economic Protocol would be updated, including establishing an independent mechanism for clearing Palestinian indirect taxes. An international mechanism would be established to finance the process. Normalization between Israel and the Arab world would be promoted, especially in the context of building a regional alliance against Iran.

This framework offers a realistic framework for progress, recognizing existing political and social limitations and creating gradual conditions for building trust between the parties. This process will require considerable time and is based on a clear win-win concept: Israel will maintain substantive security authority in the West Bank, preserve the settlements and outposts, East Jerusalem, the Jordan Valley, and the border with Jordan. It will enjoy close security coordination with the PA, restoration of relations with Jordan and Egypt, and integration into a regional alliance against Iran.

The Palestinians will enjoy significant territorial continuity, albeit limited, dramatic economic strengthening, comprehensive rehabilitation of Gaza, renewal of the vital connection between the two parts of Palestine and effective governance, and will have a unified address representing the Palestinian people. The success of this phase will enable moving to negotiations on a permanent arrangement.

The main challenge, as the analysis above teaches, is not in spatial feasibility or technical issues, but in the willingness of leaders on both sides to lead their peoples to a historic compromise. The complex reality created after October 7 requires rethinking: Will we continue to be dragged toward a one-state reality, or will we find the courage and wisdom to implement the two-state alternative which, despite everything, remains possible?

The way forward necessarily passes through an interim stage: elections on both sides, gradual transfer of Area C territories to the Palestinian Authority, and restoration of the Gaza-West Bank connection. Only after building mutual trust and proving Palestinian governance can substantive negotiations on a permanent arrangement be held. This is not a fantasy, but a complex reality requiring courageous leadership on both sides.

10. What Could Happen When Unpredictable Trump Meets Arch Manipulator Netanyahu?

— Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 03/02/2025

Under different circumstances, Tuesday's meeting between Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu would be like the coming together of Nitro and Glycerin, or Horace Smith and Daniel Wesson. They would incite and radicalize each other with great fanfare.

But these are not ordinary circumstances, and the two leaders come into the meeting from starkly different political positions and with diverging expectations.

There is always an inherent, structural asymmetry between an American president and an Israeli prime minister, reflecting the fundamental asymmetry in the relationship. Now, it seems, the asymmetry is as clear as it's possible to be.

There's a simple equation here: There is very little that Netanyahu, aka "the manipulator," can offer Trump, aka "the transactionalist." The only thing he is expected to give — a commitment to adhere to a durable cease-fire in Gaza and continued implementation of the hostage and cease-fire agreement — he is there to whine and haggle about.

That cannot end well. So while the optics will be nice, the substance may prove down the road to be less amicable.

The prevalent conventional wisdom is that Netanyahu is going to Washington to derail the second stage of the Gaza cease-fire and hostage agreement.

Why? Because he has to, since it contradicts his grand statements on the war's objectives, and because stage two is critically endangering him politically.

How? By trying to manipulate Trump and saturate him with endless factoids and details that he is not familiar with, adding his typical hyperbolized threats. He will argue that after nearly 16 months, Hamas still needs to be defeated, therefore the war must be resumed after the first stage's 42 days have elapsed.

Since Trump is considered "anarchy in human form," and since Netanyahu is confident in his ability to deceive American presidents at will, he believes it will work. It won't.

The second prevalent conventional wisdom is that Trump is going to promise a normalization of relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia. Perhaps, but not anytime soon — certainly not after the president's suggestion that 1.5 million Palestinians be relocated to an adamantly reluctant Egypt and Jordan.

The two wisdoms are probably accurate, but there's another truism at play here: In Trump's world, Netanyahu is an irritant who cannot, however hard he tries, provide the United States with tangible benefits.

Trump's main foreign policy target is China, and Netanyahu is not exactly an ally in that regard. Unlike Saudi Arabia, Netanyahu has nothing of value to offer a notoriously transactional operator like Trump.

It appears that he is intent on trying to relitigate and possibly renege on the one thing Trump actually wants from him: an end to the war in Gaza. He may succeed in slightly changing the sequence of the deal's second stage, perhaps obtain consent to a slight change in the demarcation lines of the Israeli withdrawal. But what he cannot do is renege on the agreement.

From Trump's perspective, this goes beyond stage two of the cease-fire and hostage release deal. This is about how he defines an ally — a term he views with skepticism and derision to begin with.

Look at his bellicose, brute decision last weekend to impose 25 percent tariffs on Canada and Mexico, last week's threats against Colombia and a statement that he will be weighing the imposition of tariffs on the European Union next week. He imposed tariffs on allies.

He makes no distinction between tariffs on a rival like China, 10 percent on all imported goods, and tariffs on America's two closest geographical allies, Canada and Mexico, as well as threats against Denmark — a founding member of NATO — over Greenland.

Israel needs to reinvent itself as a positive ally in Trump's world, and that will not be accomplished by manipulating him into permitting the resumption of the war in Gaza, or being perceived as trying to drag the Americans into a war with Iran.

The one thing Netanyahu should desperately hope Trump doesn't raise is the China issue. In his blustery, confrontational engagement with China, Trump is binary. Surely he remembers that in August 2023, Netanyahu claimed he was invited to visit China by President Xi Jinping. An hour later, an anonymous comment from the PM's office said that "the trip to China is meant to signal to President Biden that 'Israel has options'" — all this against the backdrop of U.S. criticism of his constitutional coup.

Trump couldn't care less about Netanyahu's constitutional coup, but he surely also remembers that the prime minister never remarked on the China-Iran "strategic cooperation" agreement signed in 2021.

Netanyahu has a strange political timeline evolution. In the months after the October 7 calamity, he had a vested interest in prolonging the war without any clear and viable political objectives. He profusely used verbs such as "eradicate," "obliterate," "annihilate" and "topple" Hamas, and one adjective, "total" — as in "total victory."

The idea was to distance himself from his responsibility for the worst debacle in Israel's history. His motivation and calculus was based solely on political survival: The war must be prolonged so that Netanyahu can live another day, and if that means more hostages die — so be it. According to Netanyahu's megalomania, Israel can survive without some unfortunate hostages. But it surely cannot survive without him, the divine savior of Jewish nationhood.

In his mind, every passing day distanced him from being held accountable for October 7. This allowed him to blame an imaginary cabal working against him, which included the Israeli army, the intelligence agencies, Iran, Qatar, pro-democracy demonstrators, President Joe Biden and the entire world. Everyone was responsible except him, the Israeli prime minister who had actively and by design strengthened Hamas since 2017.

Then came last month's cease-fire agreement and now the timeline had been reversed: Every day that goes by and the cease-fire and hostage release deal is implemented draws him closer to his day of reckoning. He cannot allow that to happen. It's not just his responsibility for the October 7 catastrophe, but the fact that after 16 months, Hamas has been militarily decimated but not eradicated. No substitute political entity or power is filling the governance vacuum in Gaza and no one regards the war as a "total victory."

In order to avoid that reckoning and inevitable encounter with reality, Netanyahu has a vested interest in derailing stage two of the agreement, according to which by day 42, Monday was day 16, Israel will have to begin a force reduction. By day 50, it will have to complete its withdrawal from most of Gaza and be party to a permanent cease-fire.

Predictably, in the days leading up to his meeting with Trump, he began the process of undermining stage two negotiations by spreading a new narrative: Hamas will not free all the hostages, Hamas is intent on violating the agreement — ergo, the war will have to resume. He is confident that he can convince and manipulate a details-averse Trump to buy into his "Once we eradicate Hamas, there's a better deal to be had" theory.

Trump will of course recall how the very same Netanyahu encouraged him in 2018 to withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal, promising a better deal because Iran would collapse under the "maximum pressure" sanctions policy. In today's reality, though, Iran is much closer to military

nuclear capability than it ever was — which is why Saudi Arabia will have a much bigger say on Trump's foreign policy than Netanyahu.

The main reason no one really knows where the meeting is headed is less because of Trump's trademark unpredictability and more because Netanyahu has no coherent or definable strategy. He's just making up moves along the way with one overriding, guiding principle: his political survival. That is not something Trump does or should care about.

11. Impractical, Incomprehensible, Illegal: Trump Traps Netanyahu and Sows Chaos With U.S. Takeover Plan for Gaza — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 05/02/2025

"Ah, you loved me as a loser, but now you're worried that I just might win.

You know the way to stop me, but you don't have the discipline.

How many nights I prayed for this, to let my work begin.

First we take Manhattan, then we take Berlin."

"First We Take Manhattan," Leonard Cohen

You have to admire the noble attempts to instantly try and make sense of something U.S. President Donald Trump says one day, only to furiously rebuke and deride him the next. Oh wow, the sheer creativity and sublime "out of the box" innovation of proposing to relocate over 2 million Gazans and then "take over Gaza." Genius.

Makes sense, right? Of course it does, because Gaza truly is uninhabitable. Oh no, but it's not practical or viable. In fact, it's incomprehensible.

So what does Trump want? Distraction. He thrives in the chaos and constant distractions he creates. Did he not impose 25 percent tariffs on Canada and Mexico, and then grant them a 30-day extension since they promised they would do the things they are already doing?

Trump is a preeminent agent of chaos. That's a trademark he has always paraded, boastfully and defiantly. As he said he would, he is actively generating and promoting chaos in America, discord within alliances, and is out to undermine the world order.

Agents of chaos sow chaos. It's that simple. They instill discordance, confusion, controversy and uncertainty. That's a modus operandi, not a tailored policy or crisis management technique. Agents of chaos and anarchy are by definition out to disrupt the status quo by floating outrageous ideas, based on a simple principle: Everyone viscerally understands the status quo has exhausted its usefulness, more-of-the-same doesn't work anymore.

As for the Israeli-Palestinian issue, the endless, irrelevant and incoherent mumbling about "the two-state solution" is just an exercise in futility. Trump only said what many are thinking, right?

Yet still, you might have missed three critical points in Tuesday's reality TV sitcom in the East Room of the White House. First, until the United States "takes over Gaza," the cease-fire and stage two of the hostage release agreement need to continue — otherwise how will the Americans take over Gaza?

Second, the United States is applying "maximum pressure" on Iran to compel it to engage in a new nuclear deal. So, no U.S. war in Iran for the time being.

Third, what happened to the "Saudi-Israeli normalization" process?

After Trump returned to power, initially it was all about annexing Canada and turning it into the 51st state. Then came the renaming of the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of America. Then came the audacious proposal to purchase Greenland from Denmark — and now the United States wants to take over Gaza and turn it into a Riviera.

That's not a bad harvest for two weeks by the "America First" president of a superpower that has always prided itself on being "a reluctant empire." Are these imperialist tantrums, common-sense truisms aimed at provoking and stirring emotions, a coherent plan? Or are they just outlandish and left-field comments with a life expectancy of several days at best? It could very well be all of the above.

The realtor-in-chief came up with an amazingly simple idea: empty the Gaza Strip so that reconstruction can begin. This real-estate development process evolved throughout Tuesday. First Trump called it a "demolition site," repeating things he said a few days earlier about how the devastated-to-rubble Strip was uninhabitable. Then his aides said Gaza effectively required 15 years and billions of dollars for reconstruction, so the Palestinians would have no alternative but to move out. That makes sense when you come from real estate.

By noon, Gaza was a "hellhole," which means that 2 million Palestinians must quickly move to Egypt and Jordan — who, according to Trump, will agree to accept them.

By late afternoon in the White House, Trump was proclaiming that America will take over and turn Gaza into "the Riviera of the Middle East." But if the Palestinians are relocated, who will this Mar-a-Gaza be built for? Ah, that's easy according to Trump: "Palestinians, mostly," though it would also be "an international, unbelievable place." So maybe Greenlanders fed up with the cold, or Canadians who want an NHL expansion team in Rafah.

Even if you're not instinctively dismissive of or resistant to Trump's idea, the total lack of details and specificity make it impossible to endorse or repudiate.

There is no reference to legal matters: By what power and authority can the United States take over Gaza? Logistics: How do you relocate 2 million people, most of whom may not want to leave? Political: Who will manage this process? Financial: Who will fund this monumental undertaking? Regional: Most Arab countries have already vehemently rejected the idea.

Beyond the intuitive inclination to deride the concept, there is really no way to endorse, refute or examine its feasibility. So here's the bottom line: Do not try to find logic, coherence or patterns. Just wait a few weeks. It may all change.

Throughout his career, Benjamin Netanyahu always followed the sage advice of Yogi Berra: "When you come to a fork in the road, take it." Years of solipsism, manipulation, deceit, duplicity, confabulation, interpolation and retraction, all woven into a *modus operandi* that provided him with success.

The indecision-maker would always come up with a speech, delivered with a tormented face and melodramatic baritone, describing the excruciating dilemmas he faced before making no decision. But not making a decision is a decision in and of itself, and he was good at it. Now Trump, for better or worse, is making decisions for him.

Netanyahu's jig is up. He was nothing more than a prop in the Trump White House show. Trump upended the playing field on Gaza, Iran and everything else. It may not be sustainable, but as of today Netanyahu has to play by Trump's rules.

Before going to Washington and after his meeting with Trump, he was presented with a fork in the road, a binary choice: desert the hostages, resume a goalless war and save his government in the immediate time frame. Or adhere to the cease-fire agreement he signed, move on to stage two and risk losing his ruling coalition.

Sometimes, making contradictory promises and giving inconsistent assurances is impossible to square. Now Netanyahu will try to market a mirage, according to which he was in on Trump's plans. Maybe he was.

How does that change the future of Israeli-Palestinian relations? It doesn't. Can he now annex the West Bank? He cannot. Does it add stability and predictability to relations with the United States? It doesn't.

So what did Netanyahu get out of his Washington trip? A few days' reprieve for his coalition, during which he can persuade them that Trump proved he'll allow Israel to resume the war. And did Trump do that? No.

12. Trump's Intimidation of U.S. Allies Is Creating a Dangerous, Unstable World — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 09/02/2025

Here's a multiple choice question for Canadians, Mexicans, Colombians, Taiwanese, Japanese, South Koreans, Filipinos, Ukrainians, Danes, European Union countries, Egyptians and Jordanians:

When you look at U.S. President Donald Trump's frenzied, retribution-motivated wrecking-ball purges of America's federal government and democracy's guardrails, when you're listening to his imperialistic tantrums on Greenland, the Panama Canal, the Gazan Riviera and others, do you:

- A) Conclude that the United States is no longer a dependable ally.
- B) Realize that the United States is no longer a model democracy and no longer has any pretense of being "the leader of the free world."
- C) Gather that the United States no longer cares about alliances and its allies.
- D) Think that it would be wise to hedge your national strategy and be willing to get closer to China.
- E) Consider that perhaps your country should develop a military nuclear capability, just as an insurance policy.
- F) All of the above.

If you haven't already chosen answer "F," don't worry — you will in a few months.

The post-1945 world order, aka the American order or Pax Americana, is coming apart at the seams. Trump has begun to shake its foundations and question its very utility. Historically, he may not be the core cause of this, but he is most certainly a catalyst and accelerant who is intent on making it happen.

In the 80 years since World War II, and in the 33 years that have elapsed since the disintegration of the Soviet Union and its spheres of influence, the world order the Americans forged and managed was not seriously challenged or tested.

For most of the past 33 years, the world was unipolar. The ascent of China and the wealth it accumulated led some to think that structural bipolarity is back. That is misleading, although China does present the United States and the world system with a challenge. The Americans and Chinese are economically interdependent. In 1992, the volume of trade between the

United States and the Soviet Union was \$500 million. By comparison, Sino-American trade in 2023 was around \$690 billion.

Second, there are no clearly demarcated lines showing spheres of influence between the United States and China. The Chinese are demanding that there should be. If the Panama Canal is a backyard issue for Washington, then Taiwan is a backyard issue for Beijing, goes the logic. Trump may agree with that, but the consequences may be grievous.

Dismiss Trump's bluster and one-line foreign policy statements all you want. But it becomes important when "the foreign policy of the world's most powerful country ... makes a sudden and far-reaching lurch into the bizarre," as Stephen M. Walt wrote in *Foreign Policy* last week.

This isn't about a competing superpower or recalibrating regional alliances. It is about allies. In the three weeks since he has been back in the White House, Trump has tariffed America's closest geographical allies, Mexico and Canada. He is pledging to impose tariffs on the EU as early as this week. He threatened Denmark — a founding member of the NATO military alliance — over Greenland, which he wants to "acquire."

He threatened Colombia over immigration. He is threatening Panama over control of the Panama Canal. And he has unilaterally informed Egypt and Jordan that they will have to take in the 2 million Palestinians he wants to evacuate or expel from Gaza, which the U.S. "will own."

What do all these abovementioned countries have in common? They have been and still are allies of the United States. In other words, Trump likes Vladimir Putin's Russia and dislikes NATO. He loves Kim Jong Un of North Korea but despises Justin Trudeau of Canada.

This has consequences. Countries now have to assume that the United States is "actively malevolent," as Walt calls it — and that could lead to extreme uncertainty.

In the worst-case scenario, this could result in an unfathomable development: U.S. allies could be the ones forming a balancing counter-coalition. Canada, Mexico, Panama, the EU and some Mideast states may now consider hedging their national strategies and alliances with the United States. Furthermore, Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Vietnam and Taiwan would have to fundamentally revisit basic assumptions regarding the world order.

In Asia, if Trump persists in his transactional and hostile attitude to alliances, the differences between him and Chinese President Xi Jinping will be blurred. These countries do not just follow America's foreign policy spasms, but are closely observing what Trump is doing

domestically. Their inevitable conclusion may be that the era of looking up to American democracy as a model and something to emulate is over.

Walt applies international relations theory to explain where the United States may inexorably be headed if Trump continues with his policy of deriding alliances, questioning international institutions and abdicating the basic tenets of America's foreign policy since 1945. The most applicable theory is that of "balance of power/threat."

Since 1945, the United States has become the most potent and predominant economic, military and political power. Despite the division of the world into American and Soviet spheres of influence, the U.S. was unequivocally the dominant superpower. Historically, when a hegemonic power emerges, small- and medium-size countries form short- or long-term coalitions to balance that superpower.

Yet countries did not perceive the United States as a threat, but rather a benevolent guarantor of their security and democracy, and of a "rules-based" world. This became national strategy for most countries when the post-1945 bipolar structure of the international system made the Soviet Union the formidable threat that needed balancing, and countries aligned themselves with the Americans.

Despite its vast power and ability to project it, the United States did not face a balancing coalition even after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. There were hostile ad-hoc coalitions, such as the various versions of the "axis of evil" or the current "axis of resistance" consisting of Iran, Iraq, Syria, North Korea and non-state terror organizations such as Al-Qaida or the Islamic State.

However, other than criticizing U.S. policies in various regions or questioning America's judgment and understanding of specific conflicts, there was no challenge to its supremacy.

Since 1945, during both Democratic and Republican administrations, the United States exercised power through alliances, multilateral diplomacy and consultation mechanisms, institutionalized intelligence cooperation and the application of "soft diplomacy."

As Trump is crudely departing from these principles and policies, U.S. allies will be compelled to reexamine their options and adjust their grand strategic posture accordingly.

Organizing and managing a balancing coalition requires not just a decision but resources and, most importantly, resolute leadership and a political center of gravity. It is unclear that such

leadership exists at this point — certainly not in Europe — or that the common denominators shared by Mexico, Denmark and the Philippines are strong enough to forge a durable coalition.

Still, Trump does what Trump does best: inserting discord and a potent element of uncertainty and anxiety that did not exist in the last 80 years. This will create a chaotic, unstable, dangerous, each-to-his-own international system.

It's not that the system and America's place in it do not require modifications. They do. It's not that Trump's doubts about America's continued and expensive role as the world's CEO are baseless. They are not.

Equally, China's demands that the international system and the world order reflect more fairly and accurately its power are warranted, as are questions about the composition of the UN Security Council.

Trump is not really addressing these issues with a coherent plan, though. No matter how much his visceral animosity toward the world order might be justified, he is upending it unilaterally. He is employing brute economic intimidation like a bully taking lunch money from kids in the playground, displaying quasi-imperialistic muscle flexing without offering an alternative structure other than transactional trade balances.

13. The Path to Peace Will Require Accepting Painful Notions That We Are All Here to Stay — Gilad Hirschberger, Jerusalem Post, 11/02/2025

The ink has barely dried on Donald Trump's second presidential oath, and his unorthodox proposals are already making headlines — from Greenland acquisition schemes to his latest focus: Gaza.

Viewing the Gaza Strip through a real estate mogul's lens, Trump envisions lush golf courses and luxury resorts along Gaza's Mediterranean coastline. However, this vision conveniently ignores the current reality: 37 million tons of rubble, over 400,000 precarious structures, and over two million Palestinians, most displaced from their homes.

The proposal for "humanitarian migration" — a sanitized term for ethnic cleansing — is being marketed as a moral solution to Gaza's humanitarian crisis.

The logic seems deceptively simple: since the widespread destruction has made the territory uninhabitable, shouldn't we help its residents relocate? Yet this seemingly compassionate proposal masks a dangerous fantasy.

The impracticality of this scheme is evident. The man who failed to build his promised Mexican border wall during his first term is unlikely to successfully orchestrate the transfer of two million Palestinians or find willing host countries.

It comes as no surprise that the plan's implementation details remain troublingly vague, particularly regarding the role of American forces and potential destination countries.

No Arab nation has expressed willingness to absorb Gaza's residents, and previous attempts at Palestinian resettlement have historically faced fierce resistance. Is the American public ready for the costs and risks of an American occupation in Gaza, particularly given the challenges of urban warfare in one of the world's most densely populated areas?

The transition from the Gaza Strip to MAGA Strip is unlikely to go smoothly.

The proposal has already strained relationships with key regional allies. Jordan and Egypt, crucial partners in maintaining regional stability, have strongly opposed any forced population transfers, viewing such moves as potentially destabilizing to their own security interests.

Even Saudi Arabia, despite potential normalization talks with Israel, has explicitly rejected the plan, reaffirming its support for Palestinian statehood.

For Israel's far Right, the plan offers a dangerous illusion — the possibility of eventually resettling Gaza with Jewish civilians, a long-held desire that would only perpetuate the cycle of conflict.

Practical obstacles notwithstanding, the mere discussion of such ideas causes significant damage, even without relocating a single Palestinian. Trump's humanitarian migration plan has reignited population transfer fantasies among many Israelis, nurturing false hopes for an easy resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The very suggestion creates an illusion that this intractable conflict spanning over a century can be solved through the relocation of an entire population. In reality, promoting such ideas only intensifies the conflict and delays realistic solutions.

Historical evidence from violent intergroup conflicts shows that resolution comes not from mutual understanding or empathy but from deep frustration and exhaustion with the fantasy of defeating or eliminating the other side.

Germany and Japan transformed from belligerent powers into peaceful nations because they had no alternative. The Irish, Scottish, and English learned to coexist after centuries of failed warfare because no better option existed.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict requires both sides to become sufficiently frustrated with the fantasy of total victory. As long as either side believes it can end the conflict through force, expulsion, or annihilation, the motivation for compromise remains low.

Ideas like "voluntary migration" reinforce the hope that the conflict can be resolved through unilateral force rather than fostering the understanding that real solutions require mutual concessions and accepting, perhaps reluctantly, the other's presence.

Trump's proposal, despite its stated aim of resolving the conflict, actually exacerbates it by offering Israelis false hope in an unworkable solution to a complex problem.

When this false hope confronts reality, it will likely lead to another cycle of bloody violence between two people who have yet to accept that the other side isn't going anywhere. Just as Palestinian calls to expel Jews "back to Europe" fuel hostility, Trump's humanitarian migration plan will only intensify hatred and violence.

The mere existence of transfer discourse diminishes the possibility of genuine dialogue with Palestinians, as it will be seen as proof that Israel no longer seeks conflict resolution.

This rhetoric will distance Israel from potential agreements with Saudi Arabia and other moderate Arab states, potentially sending Trump to The Hague as a war criminal rather than Oslo as a peacemaker.

While Gaza's current situation is untenable for both its residents and Israel, magical solutions like population transfer are merely smoke and mirrors. Such false solutions generate dangerous hope and distance us from the frustration necessary to reach a painful but essential compromise.

The path to peace lies not in fantasies of elimination but in the acceptance of the, admittedly painful, notion that both people are here to stay and must find a way to share this land.

14. Trump's Gaza Mirage Gave Israel and Hamas the Perfect Excuse to Abandon the Cease-fire — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 12/02/2025

Jordan's King Abdullah II could barely conceal his bewilderment. Everything he heard in the White House on Tuesday was predictable and anticipated. And while he knows exactly who Donald Trump is, is familiar with his rhetorical modus operandi and knows he has no real concrete plan for Gaza, still the Hashemite kingdom's ruler looked shell-shocked.

Abdullah bin Al-Hussein is a smart, sophisticated, articulate man. Since his ascent to the throne in 1999, succeeding his father King Hussein, he has been an anchor of stability, geopolitical balance and reason through multiple crises: the Iraq War in 2003; the second intifada from 2000-2005; the Syrian civil war that began in 2011; the latest Israel-Gaza war; last year's Israel-Iran escalation.

He also thought Jordan was a staunch American ally. Think again, your majesty. Trump has no allies, and the United States under Trump is deliberately alienating those who were its allies.

The day before the king's visit, Trump threatened Egypt and Jordan — both American allies until this year — with cutting U.S. aid if the two refuse to take in some 2 million Palestinians whom Trump wants to expel from Gaza to achieve his combined political/real estate deal of the century.

"We will take Gaza," he said on Tuesday while sitting next to Abdullah, who was listening carefully but was surely thinking "What the hell is this guy talking about?" — in reference to Trump's chaos-inducing idea that would almost inevitably destabilize Jordan, which is already home to over 3 million Palestinians.

"We're going to have it, we're going to keep it and we're going to make sure that there's going to be peace. ... We're going to cherish it," the president added, failing to explain what exactly "cherish" — in the sense of holding something dear and showing affection for — means in the context of Gaza.

Trump had already come up with another of his sensible-sounding-but havoc-wreaking remarks on Monday: If all of the Israeli hostages aren't released by noon on Saturday, he advised, Israel should break the cease-fire, resume the war and "let hell break out," as if the last 16 months in Gaza were just a game of golf.

That was exactly what Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu wanted to hear, and he repeated it exponentially on Tuesday and Wednesday. First he mentioned "the three hostages" who were

originally due to be freed on Saturday, then "all remaining nine hostages" from the first stage of the cease-fire deal, and then he parroted Trump about "all hostages."

The cease-fire agreement's most glaring weakness and vulnerability is its staged structure, with every stage further divided into phases. This meant that the week between each hostage release would be dangerous, the viability of the cease-fire and entire agreement challenged.

Then came Trump with his grandiose idea to build a Riviera in Gaza.

Putting the feasibility of this aside, it gave both Israel and Hamas the pretext they needed and wanted to halt the agreement's implementation.

If Hamas knows the United States supports the total expulsion of Palestinians from Gaza, that clearly means there is no "stage two" including a full Israeli withdrawal. So what is the group's incentive to continue with the first stage?

If Israel does not want to move into the second stage, which Netanyahu clearly does not for political reasons because it entails withdrawal, then what is he planning to do? He is already callously willing to sacrifice all remaining hostages and condemn them to a painful death. But then what? After 16 months of war, he suddenly has a magical plan to eliminate Hamas? If he thinks he does, then it most certainly involves occupying the entire Gaza Strip. Fine. Good luck with that, and may the force be with you.

And then what? He actually thinks that Trump's divisions of demolitions experts, disposal managers, civilian engineers and architects are standing by to commence turning Gaza City into Mar-a-Gaza? First you need to "relocate" 2.3 million desolate, hopeless people. Surely the United States can take 500,000 in the Palm Beach, Florida, area? Another 500,000 in Dearborn, Michigan? Half a million in Jamaica, Queens? Some 250,000 in the Pacific Palisades, and the rest in Greenland or Canada?

But if that doesn't work, does Israel remain in Gaza indefinitely? That's not a plan. That's hollow nothingness that stems solely from the political considerations of a failed prime minister who wants to stay in power at any cost, and who will say and do anything to achieve that. Israelis are collateral damage in his world.

The next phase of the hostage release, scheduled for Saturday, is the only important thing. But the game-changing ingredient was Trump's idea of emptying Gaza of its people.

As the days passed, the more he fell in love with the real estate developer's inner logic of the idea. Once rebuked by everyone involved except Netanyahu, the direct correlation that governs

his actions kicked in: The more a Trump idea draws ridicule and derision, the deeper and broader he doubles down on it. The less details and specificity he offers, the bolder the one-line statements become.

This is compounded by the fact that while in his first term there were some people with gravitas and experience to challenge him, he has now surrounded himself with obedient serfs whose appointment and standing are based on extreme fealty.

In his first term, Thomas Friedman wrote in *The New York Times* on Tuesday, "Trump was surrounded by buffers: aides, cabinet secretaries and generals who deflected and restrained his worst impulses many times. Now Trump is surrounded only by amplifiers: aides, cabinet secretaries, senators and House members who live in fear of his wrath or of being set upon by online mobs unleashed by his enforcer, Elon Musk, should they step out of line."

To be fair, Trump made the right diagnosis regarding Gaza — it is uninhabitable and cannot be reconstructed under the current political conditions. Then, though, he came up with an unworkable prognosis, one so outlandish that he fell in love with it.

It may be too late to warn Trump of Netanyahu's mendacious, manipulative and deceitful style, all wrapped up in sugary sycophancy about Trump's ingenious, outside-the-box thinking. He went to Washington to convince Trump that the cease-fire agreement, the one he signed and commended Trump for pushing, cannot be implemented and the war must resume.

Trump was conned, but Netanyahu made him feel good about it. If Trump had said the Earth is flat, Netanyahu would have commended him for his brave and audacious originality, fearlessly challenging old conventions. If Trump had said he met Elvis Presley in Palm Beach last week, Netanyahu would say he had just spoken with Elvis, who was full of praise for Trump and his co-president, Elon Musk.

The problem with Trump's ideas — break the cease-fire, expel all Palestinians and build a gorgeous resort — is not their feasibility. It's that Israel is stuck with the repercussions while Trump will soon move on to another issue.

15. “The Solution is a Land of Israel Without Arabs”: A Chronicle of 100 Years of Support for Transfer — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz / Shaul Arieli website, 12/02/2025

President Trump's proposal for the voluntary transfer of Gaza Strip residents has received positive responses from parts of Israeli society, particularly from the political establishment led by ministers and Knesset members from the Religious Zionist party. While Israeli public discourse has previously tended to view the idea of transfer — relocating the Arab population from the Land of Israel — as a product of political extremism, historical examination reveals a more complex picture. This idea has accompanied the Zionist movement from its inception and was an integral part of its leaders' strategic thinking.

Although the early Zionist movement assumed that a Jewish majority in the Land of Israel would be achieved mainly through mass Jewish immigration, it never refrained from considering the possibility that the Jewish majority could also be created by transferring part of the Arab population beyond the borders of what was meant to be the Jewish national home. The Zionist leadership believed that the idea of absorbing persecuted Jews in the Land of Israel and creating a Jewish majority enjoyed strong moral justification as long as Jewish rights were weighed against the rights of Arabs in the Land of Israel; after all, these particular Arabs were no different from their brethren in neighboring Arab countries, and it made no difference to them which country they lived in. Given moral justification, all that was needed to implement the transfer idea was adequate financial support.

Edward Said wrote that as early as June 1895, Theodor Herzl raised the possibility of executing a limited "relocation" of the weak Arab population, writing in his diary: "We shall try to spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it any employment in our country."

Herzl was not alone. Writer and Zionist activist Israel Zangwill was less subtle when he said in 1905: "Palestine itself is already occupied [...] We must be prepared either to drive out by the sword the tribes in possession as our forefathers did, or to grapple with the problem of a large alien population, mostly Mohammedan and accustomed to despise us." Zangwill was the first to formulate in 1920 what would become a central argument in Zionist history: The Arabs have the entire Arab world at their disposal, while the Jews have only one Land of Israel. This argument served as the basis for justifying the transfer idea throughout the Zionist movement's existence.

Ben-Gurion, still believing in immigration, rejected this and wrote in 1918: "Palestine is not an uninhabited country... Under no circumstances should we touch the rights of these inhabitants. Only 'ghetto dreamers' like Zangwill can imagine that Palestine will be given to the Jews with the right to remove non-Jews from the country. No state would agree to this. Even if this right were granted to us — Jews have neither the right nor the ability to use it. It is neither desirable nor possible to evict the country's current inhabitants. This is not Zionism's mission."

What might surprise is that the transfer idea was not exclusive to the Zionist right. Chaim Kalvarisky, later one of the founders of the leftist "Brit Shalom," admitted at a meeting of the Temporary Committee in June 1919: "During my 25 years of colonization work, I displaced many Arabs from their land, and you understand that this work — displacing people from land where they, and perhaps their fathers too, were born — is not at all easy, especially when the displacer doesn't view the displaced as mere sheep but as people with heart and soul."

Ze'ev Jabotinsky, leader of the Revisionist movement, shared Ben-Gurion's position during these years and wrote in 1923: "I consider the removal of Arabs from Palestine absolutely inconceivable; Palestine will always have two peoples... I am prepared to swear in our name and our descendants' that we shall never violate this equality of rights, and never attempt to displace anyone." However, in a 1926 book, he already eloquently articulated what he saw as the inevitable conflict with Palestine's indigenous people: "The tragedy lies in the clash between two truths, though our justice is greater [...] The Arab — culturally backward — but whose patriotism is as pure and noble as ours; it cannot be bought with money, it can only be curbed by superior force."

Historian Tom Segev notes that in June 1931, Jacob Thon, a central Zionist activist in settlement affairs, wrote to Colonel Frederick Kisch, head of the Jewish Agency's Political Department, that from the Zionist movement's perspective, the ideal solution was transferring Arabs to Transjordan. He added that this was highly desirable from the Arabs' perspective as well, since with the money they would receive for 100 dunams in Palestine, they could purchase at least 500 dunams in Transjordan. Michael Bar-Zohar wrote that in July 1936, as part of Ben-Gurion's attempts as chairman of the Zionist Executive to thwart the High Commissioner's "Land Law" — which would guarantee every Arab peasant a minimum living space — the "Old Man" proposed at a Mapai meeting that Jews buy land in Transjordan and transfer there any peasants who would sell their lands to Jews in Palestine.

1937 marks a turning point in the history of the transfer idea, with the British Peel Commission's proposal to implement an extensive population transfer: 350,000 Arabs from the Galilee and 2,500 Jews from the planned Arab state. The British Colonial Secretary, Ormsby-Gore, argued that the country's Arabs "had not seen themselves as Palestinians until now, but rather as part of Syria, part of the Arab world," and therefore their transfer would not be difficult.

Berl Katznelson viewed this matter very positively and said: "The matter of population transfer has sparked debate among us: permitted or forbidden. My conscience is completely clear about this, better a distant neighbor than a close enemy, they won't lose from their transfer, and we certainly won't. In the final calculation — this is a political-settlement reform benefiting both sides. I have long believed this is the best solution... I believed and still believe they will eventually move to Syria and Iraq."

David Ben-Gurion received the recommendation with extraordinary enthusiasm. On July 12, 1937, he wrote in his diary that this point of forced transfer "outweighs all the deficiencies and shortcomings in the report," and it "could give us something we never had [...] even during the First Temple and Second Temple periods." He added that the Zionist movement should use all its "pressure power" to make Britain "forcibly uproot about one hundred thousand Arabs from their villages where they have lived for hundreds of years."

In late July 1937, speaking before the World Council of Poalei Zion in Zurich, Ben-Gurion expanded his doctrine: "It is difficult to find any political or moral argument against transferring those Arabs from territory under Jewish rule to territory under Arab rule [...] Even from excessive piety and maximum moral scrupulousness, one cannot oppose transfer, which ensures the transferees both sufficient material conditions and maximum national security."

However, Ben-Gurion sought to exercise caution due to potential implications for establishing a Jewish state, and in June 1938 said: "I support forced transfer and see nothing immoral in it," but "only if England does it — and the British government has abandoned the idea... Therefore, not only is it impractical for us to carry this out but it's also impractical for us to propose it... This proposal poses an enormous danger to Zionism in the country and to Jews in general."

Moshe Sharett also supported population transfer. At a party at Dr. Halpern's house on December 12, 1937, in Jerusalem, Sharett said: "I want to reject the comparison with Germany. What Germany is doing to Jews is a government taking people and throwing them out, not caring what happens to them, not allowing them to take their wealth with them — such a transfer is impossible. The matter of transfer here is very simple [...] Even when it's forced, it

will be with compensation for the assets they leave here and with concern for their situation in the new place."

The Chairman of the Arab Higher Committee, Mufti Amin al-Husseini, addressed this in his 1954 memoirs, expressing the resolute opposition that has persisted to this day: "Already in 1934, British emissaries contacted me personally and other Palestinian national figures, proposing that Palestine's Arabs move to eastern Transjordan — where they would be given twice the land they owned. They also proposed that Jews would pay all funds necessary to implement the proposal. It was only natural for Arabs to reject this ridiculous proposal."

Once World War II broke out, discussions about transfer took place against the backdrop of massive and violent population transfers of many nations from territories conquered by the German army. Tom Segev notes that Jabotinsky wrote the following about this: "The world has grown accustomed to the idea of mass migrations and has almost come to like it. Hitler — however much we hate him — has added popularity to the idea of transfer in the world."

News about the fate of European Jewry intensified the tone and decisiveness of Zionist movement leaders regarding Arabs in the country. Jabotinsky wrote in early 1940: "If the Arabs don't want to stay, the author sees no tragedy or disaster in their willingness to emigrate... We shouldn't be alarmed by the possibility that 900,000 will leave the country..."

More decisive was Josef Weitz, who wrote in his personal diary in 1940: "We toured Arab villages this morning. I contemplated the plan I've been thinking about for years: clearing the land for us. Between ourselves it must be clear: there's no room in the country for both peoples together. If the Arabs leave, the country will become wide and spacious for us. If the Arabs stay, the country will remain narrow and miserable. The only solution is the Land of Israel without Arabs. There's no room for compromise! Transfer them all. Don't leave a single village, not a single tribe. Only through this method — transfer of Israel's Arabs — will redemption come."

However, opposing voices were also heard within the Zionist movement. Pinhas Lavon warned at a Mapai bureau meeting in 1950: "It's impossible to work among Arabs when the policy is transfer. It's impossible to work among them — if the policy is Arab oppression. What's being implemented is dramatic and brutal oppression of Arabs in the State of Israel."

Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, later Israel's president, raised pointed questions at a Mapai meeting in July 1950: "The question is what is the state's position toward minorities? Do we want them to remain in the state, be absorbed into the state, or leave the state [...] We declared equality for

citizens regardless of race. Is the intention for a time when there will be no Arabs in the state? If so, this is deception."

The transfer idea gained renewed momentum after the Six-Day War. Israel actually implemented a transfer of 90-95 thousand Syrians from the Golan Heights. In the 1980s, Rabbi Meir Kahane raised the demand to expel Palestinian citizens of Israel, and right-wing parties like Moledet and the National Union adopted the idea of "voluntary transfer" in their platforms. Today, Bezalel Smotrich continues this line when he declares: "There is room here [in the Land of Israel] for national self-determination and fulfillment of national aspirations for only one people — the Jewish people. This is just. This is moral." Smotrich proposes the "Decisive Plan" based on three options: "Those who want to accept — will accept," "Those who want to leave — will leave," and "Those who want to fight — will fight."

From the history of the transfer idea, three central lessons can be learned: First, this is not a marginal or extreme idea, but an inherent part of Zionist thinking about resolving the Jewish-Arab conflict. Second, the idea received legitimacy from international factors, especially in the period between the world wars. Third, even when the idea seemed abandoned, it continued to exist and influence decision-makers.

We must confront the fact that the transfer idea was not solely the domain of "extremists." Leaders from across the Zionist political spectrum — from "Brit Shalom" members to Revisionists — supported the idea in one form or another. Even apparent "moderates" saw transfer as a legitimate solution.

Moreover, the Zionist movement didn't just stop at words. As Josef Weitz wrote at a government meeting in August 1948: "If we say it's not good to have empty villages that will call Arabs to return and infiltrate — they shouldn't remain standing." This was a practical approach that led to policies preventing refugee return and encouraging emigration of Arab citizens of Israel.

Genuine confrontation with the transfer issue requires recognizing that it's not just a historical idea, but an active force in current Israeli politics. Instead of continuing to cling to ideas of forced separation, Israel must develop new models of coexistence. As Yitzhak Ben-Zvi said: "We declared equality for citizens regardless of race" — we must implement this declaration in practice. Only honest confrontation with the past, and recognition that the transfer idea was and remains part of Zionist discourse, will allow us to build a future based on equality, mutual respect, and recognition of both peoples' legitimate rights.

16. Netanyahu Plans to Attack Iran and Is Plotting to Lure Trump Into the War — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 14/02/2025

The Iran nuclear issue, in the context of U.S.-Israeli relations, can develop in four starkly different directions in the next few months.

In the first scenario, Washington and Jerusalem clash when Donald Trump concludes that Benjamin Netanyahu is manipulating him into entering an unnecessary war on Iran, despite the U.S. president's intentions to negotiate with Tehran and seal a nuclear deal.

In the second scenario, the United States and Israel collaborate in attacking Iran's nuclear sites, following a Trump ultimatum that Iran must totally disband its military nuclear program "Libya-style."

In the third scenario, Israel attacks Iran's nuclear facilities without direct American cooperation but with its implicit consent, following Tehran's refusal to cave to Trump's coercive diplomacy and threats.

For Iran, the dilemma is excruciating. Refusal to assent to Trump's maximalist demands in order to avert a national humiliation and keep the ayatollahs' regime stable could trigger a war that would dent both the regime's pride and its stability. The Iranians can preempt this with a supervised disarmament initiative that Trump finds attractive enough, but this is unlikely to happen.

Then there's the fourth scenario: Saudi Arabia, the key regional actor with sway over Trump, convinces the president to make Iran a "golden bridge" offer, à la the great Chinese military strategist from ancient times, Sun Tzu. This would ensure nuclear disarmament but provide Iran with economic incentives and keep its pride intact.

Saudi Arabia is a U.S. ally that can offer Trump many things that Israel cannot, not least \$600 billion in investments in the United States. So it's logical to assume that while the Saudis perceive Iran as a long-term potential threat, a regional disrupter and a pyromaniac, they will warn Trump of the destabilizing repercussions of an attack and cater to his self-aggrandizing deal-making proclivities. This scenario is viable but could also serve as the preamble to the first scenario: a U.S.-Israeli clash.

Somewhat ironically, all four scenarios stem from the same core assessment: Iran is now weak, vulnerable and isolated, lacking both deterrent power and significant retaliatory capabilities.

In the past year, Iran lost its prized proxy asset, Hezbollah, and with this the deterrence that weighed heavily on Israel's military planners. With the fall of the Assad regime, Iran lost Syria as an arms conduit, and with it, Russia's military presence. And in October, Iran suffered setbacks to its air defenses and missile-production capabilities after its missile-and-drone exchanges with Israel.

None of this means that Trump is trigger-happy and pining to bomb Iran. As he told Fox News this week, "I would prefer that not happen. ... I'd much rather see a deal with Iran. ... There's two ways of stopping them: with bombs or with a written piece of paper." He was referring to his attempts late in his first term, in 2019 and 2020, to renew the nuclear deal after he unilaterally withdrew from it in 2018.

This is further reinforced by his recent overtures to Vladimir Putin, an Iranian ally over the last three years, as both countries suffered severe sanctions. Trump's exultant account of his "great" phone conversation with Putin implies that he may have acquiesced to Russia's maximalist demands on ending the war in Ukraine. His desertion of Ukraine is no longer a question, it's a matter of time and style. But in his next conversations with Putin, Iran is bound to come up, and Russia, a signatory to the 2015 nuclear deal, will surely caution him about attacking.

When Netanyahu went to the White House 10 days ago, the assumption was that the conversation would focus on the second stage of the Gaza cease-fire and hostage deal. After the meeting, the whole Middle East went apoplectic over Trump's ingenious idea to empty Gaza of its 2.3 million Palestinians, relocating, later amended to expelling, them to Egypt, Jordan, Somalia and Indonesia. Then he would build a Gaza Riviera.

But Iran came up and we can assume that this was the first of a series of discussions Netanyahu plans on having with Trump over his pet project and obsession.

"Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has discussed with Trump several possible levels of American backing, ranging from active military support for a kinetic strike — such as intelligence, refueling or other assistance — to more limited political backing for a coercive ultimatum," David Ignatius wrote in The Washington Post on Thursday. He noted the paper's report the previous day: U.S. military intelligence assessed in January that, absent an agreement, Israel would probably strike Iran's nuclear facilities, most likely the Fordow enrichment plant, in the first half of 2025.

Israel lacks "bunker buster" bombs and the capacity to mount a sustained air attack that would destroy Iran's entire nuclear program. That would take the GBU-57A/B MOP, the Massive Ordnance Penetrator, a 30,000-pound, 14,000-kilogram monster that needs a B-2 bomber.

Israel has smaller bunker busters, so whatever damage it could do would set back Iran anywhere between six and 18 months, according to rough estimates. That's not insignificant, but it carries risks. A sense of urgency prevails: Israeli intelligence estimates that Iran now has uranium-enrichment capabilities reaching the 90 percent military-grade level and can theoretically make several bombs in several months if it goes that route.

Despite the threat and challenges that Iran poses, the real urgency isn't uranium enrichment, it's all about Netanyahu's political considerations. By attacking Iran, with or without the United States, he seeks to turn the October 7, 2023, calamity into what he believes would be an epic strategic triumph.

Iran, not Gaza or the Palestinians, has always been Netanyahu's claim to fame and how he defines his self-ordained role as the savior of Israel and Western civilization. That's why, while the hostage deal and the Gaza cease-fire are rightly getting all the attention, we should pay close attention to his Iran policy.

17. Trump's Self-inflicted Ukraine Dilemma: Dismantle the European Alliance, or Break With Putin — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 18/02/2025

"Therefore I say that it is a narrow policy to suppose that this country or that is to be marked out as the eternal ally or the perpetual enemy of England. We have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow" — Lord Palmerston, foreign secretary and later prime minister of the United Kingdom, 1848.

Replace "England" with "the United States," then replace "interests" with "profits," and you have U.S. President Donald Trump's foreign policy in a nutshell.

His admiration for Russian President Vladimir Putin, and his disdain and condescension toward Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, are widely known, as is his hostility toward the NATO military alliance. Yet his rush to conclude an end to the war in Ukraine was anticipated and is arguably commendable. His approach, however, is much less so.

He wants a deal — and NATO members are surmising that he wants any deal provided he gets credit for it. That will mean acquiescing to Russia's maximalist demands and signaling that the United States is upending 80 years of leadership and responsibility.

In effect, Trump is not only blatantly deserting European security concerns and undermining the basic tenets of NATO. He is actually flirting, no less, with the idea of aligning the United States with Russia at Europe's expense. On Tuesday, he went as far as blaming Ukraine for Russia invading its territory and mocked Zelenskyy for complaining about being excluded from the talks in Riyadh.

In Saudi Arabia on Tuesday, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov came to "discuss ending the war in Ukraine." Conspicuously absent were Ukraine and NATO's European countries, leading Zelenskyy to say that he knew nothing about the talks.

On the election campaign trail, Trump promised that he could end the war in a single day: "They're dying, Russians and Ukrainians. I want them to stop dying. And I'll have that done — I'll have that done in 24 hours," he announced last July.

Once president, he repeated the ludicrously false claim that Russia invaded Ukraine because then-President Joe Biden guaranteed Ukraine accession to NATO. Biden made no such promise. In their presidential debate, Trump boasted that if America had "a real president," one

"respected by Putin," Russia would never have invaded Ukraine. Notwithstanding his deep knowledge of Russian history and the dynamics of Russia-Ukraine relations, his message was clear: The war needs to end, and I will end it.

Trump's total disregard for the existing world order, his suspicion of the advantages of the last 80 years of a U.S.-led "rules-based world" and his outright hostility to an alliance-based, multilateral U.S. foreign policy, are also known aspects of his mind-set. Rather than stability, balance and predictability, the United States is now an agent of the exact opposite. This is where it becomes destabilizing and dangerous.

Thanks to his hyperbolic let's-just-blurt-it-out-and-see-what-happens annexation of Canada, acquisition of Greenland, takeover of the Panama Canal and evacuation of Gaza, what you get is not only an agent of global chaos, but currently the main source of geopolitical uncertainty. And this is before he even said anything about Taiwan or the Korean Peninsula.

Irrespective of who won the U.S. presidential election, 2025 was meant to be the year of negotiations.

The Ukraine conflict had devolved into an unwinnable, World War I-esque war of attrition. It became evidently clear that Kyiv could not eject the Russians from the eastern provinces they occupied, despite some impressive military offensives. Russia, meanwhile, could not mount a decisive offensive that would force Ukraine to capitulate. Notwithstanding his relations with Putin, Trump sensed that he could be the one to end the war that "Biden started."

Then a new variable entered the equation: rare earths. More specifically, Ukraine's vast reservoir of minerals and metals that are critical to modern industry and technology. U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent approached the Ukrainians at last week's Munich Security Conference with a draft agreement: Transfer ownership of 50 percent of your rare earth deposits to the United States in exchange for U.S. support, and as payment for U.S. assistance during the war.

The message was also tacitly directed to Moscow ahead of negotiations: The United States has strategic interests in Ukraine. In fact, the idea wasn't American but rather Ukrainian, first proposed — albeit differently to the American draft — by Zelenskyy himself last September.

Rare earth minerals are critical in the production lines of advanced modern industry: They are materials such as graphite, titanium, lithium, beryllium and uranium, with unusually high fluorescent, conductive and magnetic properties. Their rarity stems not from scarcity, but rather from the difficulty of mining and extracting them.

Ukraine has deposits of 117 of the 120 minerals most relevant for commercial use, and these deposits are estimated to be worth a whopping \$15 trillion. However, over 50 percent of them are in southeastern Ukraine, in areas annexed by Russia since the February 2022 invasion. Despite Trump's commercial-transactional logic, this complicates negotiations with Russia in a significant way.

On the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference, U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham said the main thing for him was that "Ukraine has value. Literally has value... Trump now sees Ukraine differently... I said these people are sitting on a gold mine... I showed him a map: 'Look!'"

Graham's enthusiasm for Trump's newfound curiosity may be premature, but the idea is certainly consistent with Trump's transactional, "We don't have allies and we want to make a profit" approach to global affairs.

"I want to have the security of rare earth. We're putting in hundreds of billions of dollars. They have great rare earth. And I want security of the rare earth, and they're willing to do it," Trump said, neglecting to mention that most of Ukraine's deposits are in areas currently under Russian control.

In a display of no-coherent-policy, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said U.S. troops would not be deployed to Ukraine as part of any security guarantees for the country. Vice President JD Vance, meanwhile, told The Wall Street Journal that the U.S. sending troops to Ukraine is "on the table" if Russia does not negotiate a peace agreement in good faith. Naturally, good faith is in abundance in both Putin and Trump's approaches and styles.

There is a consistent abundance of anti-Ukraine and pro-Russia remarks from Trump since 2022. Now, with the rare earth deposits on the table, his incentive to end the war is considerably bigger than just his adulation of Putin.

This is where it may get complicated, though. Now Putin knows there is something that Trump badly wants but cannot get if he simply tries to coerce Ukraine, yet will not necessarily get from Russia either.

Unlike Gaza, Ukraine presents a Holy Grail of sorts both diplomatically and economically. But to get there, Trump may have to accelerate the dismantling of the European alliance or, conversely, break with Putin. This will be neither a quick nor a smooth process.

18. What Does Netanyahu Mean When He Vows to 'Resume the War' in Gaza? — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 21/02/2025

"I am sick and tired of fighting — its glory is all moonshine; even success the most brilliant is over dead and mangled bodies, with the anguish and lamentations of distant families appealing to me for sons, husbands, and fathers. ... It is only those who have never heard a shot, never heard the shriek and groans of the wounded and lacerated ... that cry aloud for more blood, more vengeance, more desolation."

William Tecumseh Sherman

Hamas' nauseating depravity when returning the remains of two viciously murdered young children — 4-year-old Ariel and 10-month-old Kfir Bibas — and the body of a woman the group falsely claimed to be the boys' mother Shiri, should surprise no one. Rarely in human history has there been a more vile, gruesome and murderous terror organization.

It makes no difference if it was an independent Salafist terror group that held the Bibases since October 7, 2023. The January cease-fire deal that sees hostages exchanged for Palestinian prisoners was signed with Hamas, not splinter groups.

Hamas, if you recall, is the organization that Benjamin Netanyahu boasted for more than 16 months would be "eradicated," "annihilated," "destroyed" and "toppled." This is the same Hamas that Netanyahu for years was busy indirectly funding and strengthening, arrogantly explaining that this was how he would weaken the Palestinian Authority. Unfortunately for Netanyahu, Donald Trump's new worst-ever enemy of humanity is Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, not Hamas.

The fallout of Hamas' transfer of an anonymous body, one reportedly not linked by DNA to any of the hostages taken on October 7, 2023, is still unclear. Israel considers this a flagrant violation of the cease-fire and hostage-release agreement — which it is — something Israel says threatens not only the weekly exchange due Saturday but also the future of the agreement.

Which brings us to that "future," aka Stage 2 of the deal. No one in his or her right mind believes that Netanyahu intends to implement this stage. The insistence that it should happen and the optimism that it will happen courtesy Trump's Mideast envoy, Steve Witkoff, is commendable, but his optimism and resolve will soon meet Netanyahu's deceit and manipulations.

Toward that end, Netanyahu reshuffled the Israeli negotiating team; basically, he dismissed Mossad chief David Barnea and Shin Bet head Ronen Bar as the top negotiators. Since fealty is

the only relevant criterion for Netanyahu, he appointed a loyal and able crony, Ron Dermer, to head the team. His purpose is clear: stall, delay, procrastinate, introduce new conditions, relitigate the existing agreement, try to derail it and hope that in the process, the cease-fire will collapse naturally.

The hostages? In Netanyahu's world, they're an expendable distraction. This forms the basis of his spurious pledge to his coalition partners that Trump assured him that "the war will resume," a course he intends to pursue because, as he says, there can't be a Stage 2 unless Hamas is totally destroyed, something he unfortunately has failed to do for nearly a year and a half.

There are basically four possible scenarios for the coming weeks.

Stage 2 goes into effect after the exact sequencing is agreed on — the details were taken care of in the January agreement — and implementation begins.

Stage 2 isn't signed and in its place comes an indefinite extension of Stage 1 — as stipulated by the agreement if Stage 2 isn't mutually concluded. This extension would include the continued cessation of hostilities but not further hostage releases or a reduction of Israeli forces in the Netzarim and Philadelphi corridors on Day 42 of the agreement — eight days from now — or the Israeli withdrawal from most of Gaza scheduled for Day 50, March 9, or a declaration of a permanent cease-fire.

A stop-gap combination of extending Stage 1 while implementing limited elements of Stage 2. How this would affect both the hostage release and the army's withdrawal is anyone's guess.

A resumption of the war, based on the collapse of the cease-fire.

The first three scenarios will continue to be dissected as the negotiations take place. So it's more important to explore what exactly is meant by "resuming the war."

Field Marshal Bezalel Smotrich and General of the Armies Itamar Ben-Gvir are the two main advocates of renewing the war, destroying Hamas and settling Gaza. In his army days, Smotrich served as a clerk for only 18 months, not the normal three-year service for male conscripts. Ben-Gvir, meanwhile, never served in the military, which didn't want him because of his subversive, far-right political activities.

Ben-Gvir has already left the government, possibly temporarily, because of the cease-fire and hostage release agreement, and Smotrich threatens to do the same every other day. Members of Netanyahu's Likud party tout the same line. Why shouldn't they if Netanyahu told them he received assurances from Trump that he can renew the war?

But what would a resumption of the war achieve? Nothing. Bomb Gaza or deploy two or three divisions? To achieve what? And suffer how many casualties? Does the military have any attainable deliverables? Maybe it does, but on a very tactical level.

Is there an overriding political objective from which military means and operational goals are derived? No. There has never been a political goal in terms of a postwar political framework and an entity to fill the vacuum in governance. Israel refused to engage the United States in this respect, which is precisely Israel's predicament at this point.

Netanyahu says the Trump "plan" to empty Gaza by expelling 2.3 million Palestinians and building a "Riviera" there is his postwar plan. This is farcical. It's doubtful that even Trump takes him seriously on this. Trump spewed out a status-quo-rattling idea whose feasibility is zero. Netanyahu's turning it into his strategy is tragically laughable.

If the objective is to destroy Hamas as a military force and political entity, there is only one very costly way to do it: occupy Gaza. But that entails owning Gaza — food, water, medicine, electricity, humanitarian aid, law and order, social services. Is Israel really intent on doing this, or equipped?

Of course not. Imagine Netanyahu finding the pretext to resume the war. He occupies Gaza, eradicates Hamas and then calls Trump and says: "I've done what you expected of me; now it's ready for you to take it, own it and build a Riviera as you said." And Trump grumbles, "Nah, I'm busy with Ukraine and Taiwan now. But great job." Who then stays with Gaza?

So the "resumption of war" is nothing but a hollow slogan designed to placate political allies without whom Netanyahu's government is in danger. But wars are the epitome of the unpredictable and the realm of unintended consequences. If like Netanyahu you set out to derail the agreement and incessantly promise to resume the war, the war can start again — however futile, wasteful and imprudent this path may be.

19. The Great Geopolitical Awakening: Europe's Trump Conundrum — and Its Way Out — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 24/02/2025

"My absolute priority will be to strengthen Europe as quickly as possible so that, step by step, we can really achieve independence from the USA," said Friedrich Merz, the man expected to become Germany's next chancellor, at a post-election event in Berlin on Sunday night.

"I would never have believed that I would have to say something like that on television. But at the very least, after Donald Trump's statements last week, it is clear that the Americans — at least this part of the Americans in this administration — are largely indifferent to the fate of Europe," he continued.

Saying he had no illusions about what was happening Stateside, including Elon Musk's championing of the far-right Alternative for Germany party prior to the election won by Merz's center-right Christian Democrats, he added: "The interventions from Washington were no less dramatic and drastic, and ultimately outrageous, than the interventions we have seen from Moscow. We are under such massive pressure from two sides that my top priority is to create unity in Europe."

Is the United States listening? Doubtful. Does it care? Doubtful. Will it matter? Undoubtedly.

It is time for a great geopolitical awakening. Europe needs to come to terms with the disillusioning idea and rapidly congealing reality that the America it has known since World War II is no longer there. The America that described itself as "the shining city upon a hill" and ordained itself "the indispensable nation" is no longer either, and has no pretense at being. America is changing course and upending a world order it no longer sees as advantageous, and the hell with any repercussions.

This is not the end of the world, but it is a process that will gradually remodel the international system. Some will see it through a dark prism, expecting gloom, doom, unpredictability, instability and heightened security tensions everywhere. Others may view it as a long overdue and imperative modification of a world order that, to a large extent, ceased to reflect contemporary power relations.

It is neither a good nor a bad dynamic, neither clearly dangerous nor potentially promising. It's like tectonic shifts of the Earth's plates: You have to recognize that it's happening, accept its inexorability and try to make the most of it — because you can't really stop it, only mitigate the adverse effects.

Western Europeans since 1945, and an expanded Europe since the dissolution of the USSR and the Soviet bloc in the early 1990s, perceived America as the leader of the Free World, a force for balance, dependability and peace. They enjoyed a U.S. military umbrella and deferred to Washington on foreign policy and grand strategy.

But Trump's America is now closer to imperialistic mercantilism than it is to the 1948 Marshall Plan, when it transferred to postwar Europe the equivalent of roughly \$174 billion in today's money. It is now closer to being a malevolent agent of instability than a shining city upon a hill instilling confidence and hope.

Eighty years of American leadership, reliability and dependability expressed by a sturdy, stable alliance and cooperation have effectively come to an end — even if it takes a few more years. The post-1945 world order, "the American Order," interchangeably defined as the U.S.-led, rules-based world that produced the era of Pax Americana, is over.

It may have outlived its usefulness or reached the end of its natural life expectancy. NATO being the longest durably existing military alliance in history since the Athens-dominated Delian League established in 478 B.C.E. is now facing an existential threat from its founder, the United States. But Europe is still tied to the obsolete idea that these changes and this course reversal is a unilateral American issue. Europe needs to recalibrate, and quickly.

In geopolitical terms, there is a staggering disparity between Europe and America's economic power. The European Union is a geopolitical and geo-economic sphere of some 450 million people, compared to the U.S. population of about 350 million. Europe has a combined gross domestic product of \$29 trillion in terms of purchasing power parity, compared to the U.S.' \$27 trillion. Yet however powerful and potent the EU is economically, Europe exudes weakness and disunity when it comes to foreign policy and security.

This political frailty is manifested in two aspects. First, despite enhanced economic integration, open borders, free movement of labor, commodities and capital, enabled through voluntary diminished national sovereignty, there is a conspicuous absence of anything resembling unified European foreign policy. There are historically extenuating circumstances to explain this, such as countries' political-cultural differences, national experiences, elite traditions, relative strengths and foreign policy priorities through hundreds of years, but those are not relevant here.

Second, there is internal political turmoil, fragility and instability in many EU countries these days, but most important in the two strongest powers: Germany and France.

The cumulative effect of the complexity of modern governance, immigration issues, inequality and a pervasive political culture of misinformation, alternative facts and incendiary social media have all contributed to this political weakness, wherein all incumbent parties across the Continent have been losing strength in recent years and their longevity in office is questionable.

The one relatively stable European power, the United Kingdom, is no longer a member of the EU, but could still have a major say on devising European defense and foreign policy.

In the face of a fast-changing world order, this political deficiency is most accentuated in a lack of leadership. Europe currently has no political center of gravity in terms of leadership, and the disconnect between political elites and the general public on all things governmental and societal is growing. To confront the changes America is imposing on Europe will require more leadership gravitas and vision than Europe currently has.

Ironically, Trump's chaos-inducing rhetorical tantrums on the EU, NATO, tariffs, Greenland and, especially, Ukraine could end up having a positive effect on Europe by expediting a necessarily rude awakening.

Europe's aversion to wars and haunting memories of strongmen cynically and callously deciding the fate of nations has been ingrained in its political culture for the last 80 years. Once Europe — if we can use the term collectively — concludes that Trump is essentially no different to Russian President Vladimir Putin or Chinese President Xi Jinping, it may be impelled by circumstance to forge a unified policy and exert the power it has, rather than conveniently deferring to America as it has done since 1945.

So what can Europe do? First, it needs to fully grasp the paradigm shift and realize that this is irreversible. Then it needs to deliberate the various dimensions and eventually adopt a blueprint. One such set of ideas and recommendations was proposed in a challenging, intriguing, provocative and compelling essay by geopolitical scholar Kishore Mahbubani, a former Singaporean diplomat who was president of the UN Security Council in the early 2000s.

Europe, he argues, needs to disassociate from the United States in regard to the formulation of foreign policy. Europe has been "slavishly" dependent on the Americans. It could voluntarily redefine and even threaten to dissolve NATO. Trump is constantly — not without logic — complaining that NATO countries are critically under-investing on defense. He says Europe should allocate 4 to 5 percent of its GDP, and not rely on or free-ride U.S. defense expenditure.

If each European country invests 5 percent of its GDP on defense, the cumulative sum will be in excess of \$1 trillion. That is far more than the United States expends on NATO, not to mention

the added benefit that budgets will be funneled to technological and military development within Europe, adding jobs and growth.

Europe, Mahbubani further argues, should seriously consider a grand bargain with Russia, which is far from the perceived threat the Soviet Union posed during the Cold War. Europe needs Russian oil, but can also alleviate Russian concerns about "NATO enlargement" — and in fact offer Moscow a better relationship with the world's richest market.

In a rebuke to the Americans, but out of legitimate self-interest, Europe should strive to forge a new and expansive relationship with China, positioning itself as an independent actor rather than a U.S. foreign-policy satellite, constantly looking to Washington.

If U.S.-Canadian relations deteriorate further, Europe could even consider a bold move: inviting Canada to join the EU, thus maintaining an Atlanticist link.

These ideas are easier written and recommended than done, considering Europe's relative disunity and political weakness. But they do highlight a critical element: Europe has much more potential power than both it and Trump think.

20. What Do Ukraine and Taiwan Have in Common? A U.S. They Can't Depend On — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 28/02/2025

Outside of Ukraine itself, the one country where everyone is looking anxiously at how U.S. President Donald Trump is callously sacrificing Kyiv and catering to Russian interests is Taiwan. NATO is worried. Japan and South Korea are jittery. But nowhere are these concerns more emphatically accentuated than in Taiwan. Why? Because it could be the collateral victim of a grand geopolitical and economic deal between Trump and China. Ironically, that is something both Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping agree on. The confusion is exacerbated because all they get from Trump are mixed signals wrapped in the traditional U.S. "strategic ambiguity" about Taiwan.

The analogy to Ukraine may be somewhat alarmist, given the circumstances and geopolitical context are different. But they do make sense. Much the same way that the Americans have deserted Ukraine, they could also desert Taiwan.

Much the same way Trump is negotiating with Russia over the fate of Ukraine while excluding the Ukrainians from the talks, he could negotiate the eventual fate of Taiwan with China without the Taiwanese being present.

Much the same way Trump has a natural and expressive pro-Russia bias, he can easily and quickly conjure a pro-China bias in respect to Taiwan. As much as he has a Vladimir Putin adulation bias, he could also develop a pro-Xi bias.

Much the same way he mendaciously blamed Ukraine for the Russian invasion, blaming his predecessor Joe Biden for "promising" Kyiv accession to NATO and thus threatening Russia, he can unflinchingly and effortlessly blame Taiwan for creating tensions in the Taiwan Strait since 1949. He can also blame Biden for making reckless defense commitments despite not having a formal defense pact with Taipei.

Much the same way the United States is blackmailing Ukraine into a rare earths-sharing agreement worth in excess of \$500 billion to compensate for U.S. assistance during the last three years of war with Russia, it is also eyeing TSMC — Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company, the company that manufactures 90 percent of the world's advanced chips.

Last July, Trump told Bloomberg Businessweek that Taiwan should pay the United States for defense, especially after how "they took almost 100 percent of our chip industry. ... You know, we're no different than an insurance company. Taiwan doesn't give us anything."

In a New Year's address last December, meanwhile, President Xi bluntly said that "no one can stop the historical trend of national reunification."

There is also a strategic analogy to be made between Ukraine and Taiwan. In the same way that Canada, Mexico and the Panama Canal are perceived in Washington as an exclusive U.S. sphere of influence, Beijing may likewise define Taiwan and the Korean Peninsula as natural Chinese spheres of interest. The Americans would hesitate to project power there, which might lead to an armed conflict with China.

And so, the same way he sacrificed Ukraine for relations with Russia, once he begins negotiating a grand trade deal with China — which is what he wants — Trump will surely sacrifice Taiwan. In terms of the world order he is actively undermining, both Ukraine and Taiwan are eminently expendable.

On the other hand, Trump's record on Taiwan during his first term was much more sympathetic, which only adds to Taipei's sense of uncertainty concerning Washington.

During that first term, defense sales to Taiwan were the highest in years: the Americans struck around \$18 billion of military deals with Taiwan, including 66 F-16 fighter jets for \$8 billion. By contrast, during President Barack Obama's eight years in office, there was only \$14 billion in military sales to Taiwan, while Biden — who twice broke with "strategic ambiguity" and pledged to assist Taiwan if it were to be attacked by China — sold military equipment worth \$8 billion.

While China keeps pressuring other countries to sever relations with Taiwan, and has consistently condemned Taiwan's inclusion in international forums such as the World Trade Organization, it was the Trump administration that in 2020 enacted the Taiwan Allies International Protection and Enhancement Initiative, apt acronym: the TAIPEI Act.

Strategic ambiguity has essentially been the U.S. policy since President Richard Nixon's visit to China in 1972, and particularly after President Jimmy Carter switched America's diplomatic relations from Taiwan to communist China in 1979.

Taiwan was contested during the Chinese Civil War that ended in 1949, after which — in the context of the Cold War — the Americans recognized the Republic of China in Taiwan, formerly the Portuguese colony of Formosa, headed by Chiang Kai-shek after the Chinese Nationalist Party lost the civil war to the communists.

During Nixon's visit in 1972, the People's Republic of China issued a communique asserting that "Taiwan is a province of China." The Americans acknowledged that "across the mainland

and Taiwan" there is "one China," and that Washington would not challenge that principle. This became known as the "One China" policy.

In 1979, the same year the U.S. change of diplomatic relations went into effect, the U.S. Congress passed the Taiwan Relations Act. This stated that peace and stability in the region covering Taiwan and China is "in the political, security, and economic interests" of the United States, and that "the future of Taiwan will be determined by peaceful means."

Under that law, the Americans could provide Taiwan with military means and platforms, but would not come to Taipei's defense in the event of an attack. The mutual defense treaty the United States and Taiwan had maintained since 1955 was unilaterally terminated by the Americans in 1979.

Nowhere are China-U.S. relations more potentially explosive than around Taiwan and the Taiwan Strait — a choke point for maritime traffic where \$2.5 trillion passes in a year. That makes it second only to the Strait of Malacca, which is the shortest shipping route between the Far East and the Indian Ocean.

It is noteworthy that in terms of Sino-American relations, Taiwan is mentioned far more frequently than North Korea — which reportedly possesses 40 nuclear weapons and is developing advanced intercontinental ballistic missiles.

Today's China is completely different to the China of 1949, or even 1979. It is a superpower, the world's second-largest economy, with a population of some 1.4 billion, possessing significant and advanced high-tech capabilities, exerting and projecting power in Asia and beyond.

China is also defined by the United States as the greatest strategic challenge of the coming decades, and an unofficial spectrum of relations has been defined by several U.S. administrations: competition-rivalry-hostility-enmity.

While so-called China hawks have prevailed in the realm of public discourse and policy shaping in Washington in recent years, perceiving China as an enemy for all intents and purposes, there is also a potent school of thought which argues that the economic interdependence is broad and deep; that reconciliation and cooperation on issues from climate change to artificial intelligence to regional conflicts can be developed; and that belligerent rhetoric can lead to catastrophic unintended consequences such as a total and utterly devastating war.

It is unclear to Taiwan on which side Trump will end up. His animosity toward China is not geostrategic, political or ideological. It is trade-related. When foreign policy becomes a financial transaction in all but name, Taiwan is right to feel threatened. When Trump demands more investments from Taiwan, it will gladly agree. But China can obviously invest more.

Following the 10 percent tariffs he imposed on China, and the most recent threat to impose an additional 10 percent, Trump may be preparing a crackdown on Chinese investment and access to technology. But that could be a tactical move to get better leverage in trade talks. The last thing Trump will do is decline major Chinese investment in the United States if China offers it.

The Americans know that containing and deterring China by committing to Taiwan's defense exposes it to the risk of miscalculated escalation. Some in Washington are contending that U.S. policy in the Indo-Pacific, and particularly in the South China Sea, cannot hinge on defending Taiwan.

On the other hand, deserting Taiwan after Trump's Ukraine betrayal is something that will cost the Americans dearly in terms of reputation, prestige, dependability and reliability. That is why so many in Taipei are studying Kyiv for clues.

21. Ambushed: How Ukraine Was Sacrificed for the Latest Disgraceful Episode of Trump's Reality Show — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 01/03/2025

"Therefore I say that it is a narrow policy to suppose that this country or that is to be marked out as the eternal ally or the perpetual enemy of England. We have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow" — Lord Palmerston, foreign secretary and later prime minister of the United Kingdom, 1848.

Replace "England" with "the United States," then replace "interests" with "profits," and you have U.S. President Donald Trump's foreign policy in a nutshell.

His admiration for Russian President Vladimir Putin, and his disdain and condescension toward Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, are widely known, as is his hostility toward the NATO military alliance. Yet his rush to conclude an end to the war in Ukraine was anticipated and is arguably commendable. His approach, however, is much less so.

He wants a deal — and NATO members are surmising that he wants any deal provided he gets credit for it. That will mean acquiescing to Russia's maximalist demands and signaling that the United States is upending 80 years of leadership and responsibility.

In effect, Trump is not only blatantly deserting European security concerns and undermining the basic tenets of NATO. He is actually flirting, no less, with the idea of aligning the United States with Russia at Europe's expense. On Tuesday, he went as far as blaming Ukraine for Russia invading its territory and mocked Zelenskyy for complaining about being excluded from the talks in Riyadh.

In Saudi Arabia on Tuesday, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov came to "discuss ending the war in Ukraine." Conspicuously absent were Ukraine and NATO's European countries, leading Zelenskyy to say that he knew nothing about the talks.

On the election campaign trail, Trump promised that he could end the war in a single day: "They're dying, Russians and Ukrainians. I want them to stop dying. And I'll have that done — I'll have that done in 24 hours," he announced last July.

Once president, he repeated the ludicrously false claim that Russia invaded Ukraine because then-President Joe Biden guaranteed Ukraine accession to NATO. Biden made no such promise. In their presidential debate, Trump boasted that if America had "a real president," one

"respected by Putin," Russia would never have invaded Ukraine. Notwithstanding his deep knowledge of Russian history and the dynamics of Russia-Ukraine relations, his message was clear: The war needs to end, and I will end it.

Trump's total disregard for the existing world order, his suspicion of the advantages of the last 80 years of a U.S.-led "rules-based world" and his outright hostility to an alliance-based, multilateral U.S. foreign policy, are also known aspects of his mind-set. Rather than stability, balance and predictability, the United States is now an agent of the exact opposite. This is where it becomes destabilizing and dangerous.

Thanks to his hyperbolic let's-just-blurt-it-out-and-see-what-happens annexation of Canada, acquisition of Greenland, takeover of the Panama Canal and evacuation of Gaza, what you get is not only an agent of global chaos, but currently the main source of geopolitical uncertainty. And this is before he even said anything about Taiwan or the Korean Peninsula.

Irrespective of who won the U.S. presidential election, 2025 was meant to be the year of negotiations.

The Ukraine conflict had devolved into an unwinnable, World War I-esque war of attrition. It became evidently clear that Kyiv could not eject the Russians from the eastern provinces they occupied, despite some impressive military offensives. Russia, meanwhile, could not mount a decisive offensive that would force Ukraine to capitulate. Notwithstanding his relations with Putin, Trump sensed that he could be the one to end the war that "Biden started."

Then a new variable entered the equation: rare earths. More specifically, Ukraine's vast reservoir of minerals and metals that are critical to modern industry and technology. U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent approached the Ukrainians at last week's Munich Security Conference with a draft agreement: Transfer ownership of 50 percent of your rare earth deposits to the United States in exchange for U.S. support, and as payment for U.S. assistance during the war.

The message was also tacitly directed to Moscow ahead of negotiations: The United States has strategic interests in Ukraine. In fact, the idea wasn't American but rather Ukrainian, first proposed — albeit differently to the American draft — by Zelenskyy himself last September.

Rare earth minerals are critical in the production lines of advanced modern industry: They are materials such as graphite, titanium, lithium, beryllium and uranium, with unusually high fluorescent, conductive and magnetic properties. Their rarity stems not from scarcity, but rather from the difficulty of mining and extracting them.

Ukraine has deposits of 117 of the 120 minerals most relevant for commercial use, and these deposits are estimated to be worth a whopping \$15 trillion. However, over 50 percent of them are in southeastern Ukraine, in areas annexed by Russia since the February 2022 invasion. Despite Trump's commercial-transactional logic, this complicates negotiations with Russia in a significant way.

On the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference, U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham said the main thing for him was that "Ukraine has value. Literally has value... Trump now sees Ukraine differently... I said these people are sitting on a gold mine... I showed him a map: 'Look!'"

Graham's enthusiasm for Trump's newfound curiosity may be premature, but the idea is certainly consistent with Trump's transactional, "We don't have allies and we want to make a profit" approach to global affairs.

"I want to have the security of rare earth. We're putting in hundreds of billions of dollars. They have great rare earth. And I want security of the rare earth, and they're willing to do it," Trump said, neglecting to mention that most of Ukraine's deposits are in areas currently under Russian control.

In a display of no-coherent-policy, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said U.S. troops would not be deployed to Ukraine as part of any security guarantees for the country. Vice President JD Vance, meanwhile, told The Wall Street Journal that the U.S. sending troops to Ukraine is "on the table" if Russia does not negotiate a peace agreement in good faith. Naturally, good faith is in abundance in both Putin and Trump's approaches and styles.

There is a consistent abundance of anti-Ukraine and pro-Russia remarks from Trump since 2022. Now, with the rare earth deposits on the table, his incentive to end the war is considerably bigger than just his adulation of Putin.

This is where it may get complicated, though. Now Putin knows there is something that Trump badly wants but cannot get if he simply tries to coerce Ukraine, yet will not necessarily get from Russia either.

Unlike Gaza, Ukraine presents a Holy Grail of sorts both diplomatically and economically. But to get there, Trump may have to accelerate the dismantling of the European alliance or, conversely, break with Putin. This will be neither a quick nor a smooth process.

22. Netanyahu's Dirty War Against the IDF and Shin Bet Would Shock Even George Orwell — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 05/03/2025

You have to feel for George Orwell.

Here was the office of the prime minister of Israel making Orwell's Newspeak, the language of Oceania, pale in comparison. Mr. Netanyahu's office, reacting to the publication of the Shin Bet security service's internal inquiry on the causes behind the October 7 debacle, lashed out at the agency's director, Ronen Bar. He accused him of "misreading the intelligence picture on 7 October 2023 and being transfixed by 'the concept'" — a term used in Israel, conceptzia, since the 1973 Yom Kippur War fiasco.

Orwell was undoubtedly cringing in jealous agony at that moment, thinking: How was my "1984" dystopian book bested so easily? The spectacular audacity of this pure fabrication retroactively put every mendacious leader in history to shame.

Mr. Netanyahu, the self-proclaimed world-renowned, consummate warrior on terrorism and the ultimate protector of Israel, invented this malignant "concept." He recklessly concocted a sweeping concept according to which Hamas could be deterred and its non-belligerency could be bought with money, so Israel would persuade, encourage and vet Qatari funds being funneled into the Gaza Strip.

A strong Hamas in Gaza would, by extension, weaken the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, providing Netanyahu with a pretext for never entering negotiations on a final settlement with the Palestinians, because "there's no credible partner on the other side."

This from a man who had hugged Yasser Arafat as early as 1998. Not only did Netanyahu invent, develop and polish this strategy, but his devotion to "the concept" warrants an eponymous doctrine: "The Netanyahu Doctrine": Strengthen Hamas, then blame the entire world if it proved to be fundamentally wrong — which, tragically, it was.

The Shin Bet report is self-flagellating. Bar not only took full responsibility for the agency's failure to provide timely, accurate intelligence on Hamas' intentions. He also shouldered the blame for failing to anticipate Hamas well before October 2023. He has previously said he intends to resign over this abject failure.

Bar's mea culpa was resounding not because it was right and pertinent, but because responsibility is an alien concept for Netanyahu. Five hundred and sixteen days after the

calamitous attack, not once has he admitted that he is responsible for what happened on his watch as a direct result of his policy.

Yes, the Shin Bet and the army bore the brunt of the intelligence failure and the tactical and operational response that day, but "the concept" is 100 percent made in Netanyahu. Even the Shin Bet's claim that it objected to Qatari money being transferred to Hamas cannot conceal the fact that everything Qatar did was at Netanyahu's request and approval. He even secured U.S. support for this policy from the Trump administration in 2019.

Presumably, Netanyahu and his parroting minions wanted a more contrite report with an understated, elegant prologue beginning with: "I, Ronen Bar, as head of the organization and on behalf of all Shin Bet workers, wish to apologize from the bottom of my heart for failing, misleading and betraying the trust of the great, the glorious and the magnificent leader, our Sun King, the savior of Israel, the lord protector of the West, the custodian of Jewish civilization, the love child of Joshua Bin Nun and Winston Churchill, Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu.

"What I callously caused Mr. Netanyahu in my abject performance will forever be an indelible stain on my reputation. I cannot ever repent enough nor expect to be absolved of these atrocious sins, and, therefore, I hereby tender my resignation with profound shame."

Surely Netanyahu would have added a few points, but that's the gist of what he believes he is owed. Instead, the Shin Bet report was harshly self-critical and dared to point a finger at the government, with Netanyahu being the prime minister for 13 of the last 15 years.

The Netanyahu versus Israel's defense establishment story does not begin after October 7. In fact, it is a defining theme in his career.

It began in the late 1990s as fervent anti-elite animosity, a belief that he is persecuted by Israel's elites — jealous ingrates who do not fully appreciate his historical qualities.

His incendiary rhetoric before the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 was embellished as anti-secular-liberal Israel rhetoric when he was prime minister from 1996 to 1999.

Then, in 2017, a police investigation began, culminating in 2019 with Netanyahu being indicted on three counts of bribery, fraud and breach of trust.

Around that time, he adopted Donald Trump's rich lexicon of Newspeak: deep state, fake news, liberal elites, woke, vast security service conspiracies against him. In January 2023, he launched his constitutional coup, essentially declaring war on his own country: the judiciary, checks and balances, the civil service, civic society, "the left," and the democratic system.

Peel off the anti-elitist and you get just another wannabe quasi-dictator. He evolved, like many of his MAGA friends in Washington, into an anti-elite elitist. Here is a privileged, successful elitist who invents enemies, manufactures demons and concocts conspiracies that are supposedly directed against him.

The Mossad and the Shin Bet were always part of the elite, and he saw them as imaginary nemeses. In October 2023, all hell broke loose. Now the army was part of the cabal out to get him.

After a few days, Netanyahu instigated a campaign underlined by a clear narrative: he was deliberately duped. Duped by the military, the Shin Bet and they all, out of nowhere, think that the prime minister is responsible for Israel's day of infamy.

Therefore, he cannot risk a state commission of inquiry or an election. To avoid those, he needs the war to continue and gradually purge the defense establishment. This is where Ronen Bar fits in the story, and the question is where it is going.

23. Raging, Petulant, Contradictory: How to Interpret Trump's Middle East March Madness — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 12/03/2025

The only thing that matches U.S. President Donald Trump's wild rhetorical pendulum swings on the Middle East in recent weeks is the equally wild pendulum swings of reactions and confused interpretations in Israel.

What began with praise and adulation that Trump will expel all Palestinians from Gaza, and that he "assured" Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that Israel can resume the war, ended with: "He ingeniously concocted a scheme with Qatar to circumvent Israel because he is fed up with Netanyahu's recalcitrance and stalling, and then authorized direct talks with Hamas through his hostage envoy, Adam Boehler."

In both Washington and Jerusalem, there were contradictory clarifications and modified statements. But none can spin or conceal the inconvenient truth: Israel has very limited levers over the Trump administration, and the president may not really view Israel as an indispensable ally.

Here's a sample of those contradictions:

"Trump wants the Gaza war to end immediately" / "Trump green-lighted Israel's resumption of the war."

"Trump insists on the implementation of stage two of the cease-fire agreement" / "Trump is threatening that unless Hamas releases all the hostages by noon tomorrow, all hell will break loose."

"Trump wants all hostages released immediately" / "Trump wants all hostages with U.S. citizenship released."

"Trump wants to depopulate Gaza, expel 2.3 million Palestinians and build a beautiful Riviera" / "Trump endorses Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff's plan — a hostage release and extended cease-fire framework — that essentially ensures Hamas stays in Gaza, although without governing powers."

This may all seem replete with inconsistencies and glaring lack of a clear policy. It is, but it does have one overriding principle: Trump wants this Gaza saga off his table and is unhappy with Netanyahu's habitual procrastination and manipulation.

The president is busy with tariffs, Wall Street, Ukraine, egg prices, Iran and China. If there's ever going to be a "Saudi deal" as an extension of the Abraham Accords, Gaza must be wrapped up.

If you accept this logic, then all the inconsistencies and contradictions make some sense. But there's a bigger picture here too. Trump's Middle East pendulum swings, his approach to Ukraine, his bellicose rhetoric over tariffs on Canada, Mexico and China, and his lax attitude to the possibility of a U.S. recession and how financial markets react, all stem from the fact that he is an agent of chaos. He is very enthusiastically intent on demolishing old structures, but is very deficient in presenting alternatives.

In this respect, his policy on impose-suspend-threaten-halt tariffs and his statements on Gaza are similar. They are destructive, which is not necessarily a bad thing, but not constructive — which is necessarily a very bad thing.

To understand Trump's *modus operandi*, it is worth looking at the core of what explains, partially, as is always the case with him, his behavior and policy predilections.

Trump's most recurring theme, style and tone are constant moaning, whining, bitterness and plaintiveness. While these sentiments are broadly directed with rage and acrimony at liberal elites and the domestic "deep state," it is most conspicuous and crude in his foreign policy.

We tend to describe it as "transactional" and financially driven, but the underlying impetus is that America has no allies, pretty much everyone else is a loser and, thus, Trump needs to do everything himself. Everyone is cheating and duping America; everyone is out to get him; everyone hates America, and therefore everyone hates him.

In order to govern, a querulous Trump — like his sniveling hitherto soulmate in Israel — needs to take this cacophony of real and imagined grievances and turn it into a coherent narrative. To achieve this, he spuriously exaggerates and promiscuously lies to create a simple story: "The world outside and liberal elites inside are out to get me — and us — and I'm the only one standing in their way."

Enough people are incited and angered by this, and buy into the "us against them" theory of life. It allows people to project, deflect and blame abstract entities for everything. It is the fuel of authoritarian power: NATO is ripping us off. Mexico and Canada are cheating us. China is duping us. The deep state is complicit with them by showering hard-earned taxpayers' money on drug-infested illegal immigration, on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and on radical university curricula.

Trump, as David Brooks wrote in *The New York Times* last week, "lives for perpetual conflict and endless domination games."

The main instrument used to promote his narrative and provide it with continuous traction is language. This is a populist language that has no tones, nuances or recognition of reality's complexities. It is exactly what liberal democrats around the world lack: a clear, oversimplified, immediately understandable and conveniently adoptable black-and-white depiction of reality. His shifting policy announcements, flip-flopping and contradictory statements, on everything from tariffs to Ukraine to the hostages in Gaza, cannot be dismissed as just a lack of clarity or coherence. That's a given. It is deliberate and provides Trump with the ultimate cover at any point.

One day he severs intelligence cooperation with Ukraine; the next he threatens Russia with sanctions. One day he sends a letter to Iran's supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, explaining that he wants a nuclear deal; the next he threatens Iran militarily. One day he encourages Israel to resume the war; the next he sends an envoy to talk directly to Hamas; and the day after that, he echoes on his social media platform some genius pundit on a U.S. TV show who quotes "sources" saying that unless Hamas frees all of the hostages, "they will meet U.S. Special Forces" — and not for tea — in a crude, no-confidence rebuke of Israel "resuming the war."

If Trump is unhappy with Netanyahu's less-than-cooperative management of the Gaza impasse, Iran will present a much greater disagreement between the two countries. If Trump did in fact bypass Netanyahu regarding Gaza, imagine what he might do when Netanyahu tries to undermine his attempts to reach a new nuclear deal with Iran, provided Tehran gets on board.

Despite Trump's famous unpredictability, and notwithstanding his threats against Hamas, there does appear to be a degree of impatience with Netanyahu — whom Trump views as someone who not only failed on October 7, but failed to eradicate Hamas as he's vowed to do for 17 months and is now dragging the United States into the mix. This is likely to grow rather than be mitigated. And we all know what Trump thinks of losers.

24. Netanyahu vs. the Shin Bet: An Unprecedented War to End All Wars — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 14/03/2025

Even for a country accustomed to and notorious for frequent, vociferous political scandals that would rock other countries' foundations, Thursday's comments about Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu by the previous head of the Shin Bet security service are a bombshell rare in their potential explosiveness and audacity.

"Without democracy we have nothing. ... If Netanyahu breaks the law, I will come out and tell everything I know about him," Nadav Argaman said on Israel's Channel 12 News.

Argaman, with a proven track record of opposing Netanyahu's "strengthen Hamas" policy between 2014-2023, has spoken out before, but never like this — implicitly threatening a sitting prime minister.

An agitated, shaken and riled Netanyahu immediately responded. "I am being extorted under threats by the current head [Ronen Bar] and previous head of the Shin Bet. ... These Mafia-like criminal threats will not deter me," Netanyahu said in a statement, not specifying what he is being extorted over or what exactly it would not deter him from doing.

That is quite the accusation, bordering on alleging blackmail by a former director and insubordination by the current one — J. Edgar Hoover-style in the best case and treason in the worst.

He went further on Friday, filing a complaint against Argaman with the police commissioner. In it, he accused the former Shin Bet chief of extortion, undermining the rule of law and government, and disclosing secret information.

Also Friday, 151 former heads of the Mossad, Shin Bet, department heads in both organizations and dozens of former IDF generals and officers signed a letter of support for Bar, whom Netanyahu sees as a political nemesis and badly wants to fire.

Within a few short days, Israel will doubtless smoothly transition on to a new scandal. But the magnitude of Argaman's thinly veiled threat is hard to exaggerate.

Its uniqueness centers on the fact that it applies to a series of issues converging around Netanyahu: his trial for bribery, fraud and breach of trust; the constitutional coup that he instigated 15 months ago and is now forcefully pushing; and the acrimonious relationship he's had with the Shin Bet ever since the calamity of the October 7 massacre. This has led to

poisonous attacks on Bar, including over the initial Hamas attack and investigations into the Prime Minister's Office.

All prime ministers and presidents are paranoid to some degree. In most cases, you don't get to be leader unless you combine paranoia and megalomania. Those two qualities are then exacerbated on the job. Netanyahu is not unique in this, but he may be an extreme example of what happens when you acutely overdose on both.

In Netanyahu's eyes, everyone is out to get him. A left-wing "deep state," judicial system and media cabal is persecuting him out of blatant jealousy and ingratitude.

In this context, Argaman's threat fit perfectly into Netanyahu's perpetual victim narrative: The elites always hated him and, through successive heads of the Mossad and Shin Bet, put out a political contract on him. He has been framed on criminal charges, and then failed by the security service before October 7 in order to conceal their abject failure in anticipating the Hamas attack. Since then, the Shin Bet — as well as the IDF's top brass — incited the public against him by tacitly pressing for his resignation.

For him, that is unthinkable. Netanyahu sees himself as the lord protector and savior of Israel. A combination of Louis XIV's "l'état, c'est moi" and Jesus, who "suffered for our sins," in the eyes of his cult followers. And along comes an insolent Ronen Bar, and then his co-conspirator Nadav Argaman, making threats.

Netanyahu's approach of all-out war against his own country has its antecedents in the constitutional coup he launched in January 2023 — a hasty attempt to transition Israel from liberal democracy to an illiberal, quasi-authoritarian electoral democracy like Hungary and Turkey. The prime minister and his acolytes adorably and disarmingly called it a "judicial reform," which is tantamount to calling an armed robbery a "financial rearrangement."

Both the Shin Bet and the IDF warned of the consequences and how it erodes Israel's perceived power, which only fortified Netanyahu's notion that Israel's security bodies are mutinous.

After the murderous Hamas attack in October 2023 and the 15-month Gaza war that followed, a devastated Israeli public was not only agonizing and grief-stricken. It also became desensitized to Netanyahu's political and legal theatrics and transgressions, almost indifferent to his and his minions' vitriolic attacks on Bar, the just-departed IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Herzl Halevi and Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara, whom Netanyahu already commenced a motion to oust.

Yet Argaman's warning came at a dangerous moment for Netanyahu: the confluence of the deliberate impasse he created on the second stage of the hostage release deal with Hamas; his crude, evasive maneuvers on the mandatory legal drafting of young Haredi men; his ongoing corruption trial; and his daily threats to fire both Baharav-Miara and Bar — the final two effective guardrails against his authoritarian power grab.

This explains the timing of Argaman's interview, but it also leaves some fundamental questions open.

What exactly does Argaman know about Netanyahu that is so incriminating or damning that he thinks it would work as an effective deterrent? If what he knows is allegedly criminal or directly pertains to national security, why did he not investigate it when he was Shin Bet chief, or at the very least come out and divulge it once he left his position in October 2021? If what he knows is relevant to Netanyahu's trial, wasn't he obliged to share it with the prosecution or the court?

If the information is of a personal nature, then it is likely irrelevant gossip and cannot be a deterrent against someone like Netanyahu, whose demeanor, ethical and moral codes are well known — so why threaten him?

What is Argaman's threshold for Netanyahu's illegal actions that would trigger him to speak out? If Netanyahu calls it extortion, by definition he is being extorted specifically — so why hasn't he said what it is? And if this really is "criminal extortion," why hasn't Argaman already been questioned by the police for allegedly blackmailing an incumbent prime minister on live television?

This could all go away in a matter of days, precisely because Israelis have been desensitized and another scandal will arrive to dominate their brief attention spans. But in terms of precedence and scale, something like this has never happened before in Israel.

25. Netanyahu's Firing of Shin Bet Head Is Israel's 'Weimar Moment' — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 17/03/2025

There is no going back from this precipice. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's predictable but nonetheless callous and crude firing of the head of the Shin Bet security service, Ronen Bar, is not only an affront to democracy but a visible inflection point in Israeli history.

There are numerous learned articles on the legal and political aspects of the event, but there's a much broader and ominous picture here: that of a fundamental constitutional crisis that is not your standard Israeli political emergency.

This is why extreme — but always lawful — measures are called for. To effectively stop Netanyahu's brutal assault on Israeli democracy, the entire opposition needs to resign. Even if only 40 of the opposition's 52 members, out of 120 Knesset members, quit, effective immediately, it creates an unprecedented constitutional crisis that would likely trigger an election.

Can the Israeli public count on the opposition to do the right thing, even if such an action is very much out of the box? No. Of course not.

That means there are only two elements that can stem this political earthquake that threatens to cause a tsunami: the public flooding the streets in far greater numbers than during the 2023 constitutional coup; and the Supreme Court. While the latter is limited in how much it can intervene, the public isn't.

Will the public rise to the occasion? That remains to be seen — but the critical factor here is the urgency. There may not be a more pertinent moment.

In a functioning democracy with multiple layers of effective checks, balances and guardrails, the dismissal of the head of an internal security agency is not a defining moment. In a functioning democracy, the head of the Shin Bet is both replaceable and even expendable.

But Israel under Netanyahu is not a functioning democracy but rather, a liberal democracy being coerced into transforming to a quasi-authoritarian illiberal democracy.

Netanyahu's claim that "there is no trust" between himself and Bar is peculiar. If mutual trust is the criterion that defines Netanyahu's ability to work with someone, then he'd be self-employed and in solitary confinement.

This is Israeli democracy's "to be or not to be" moment. I rarely tend to dramatize events, and deeply dislike speculation and conjecture. However, this is the real deal. It is not a portentous

alarm bell, nor a red flag seen from afar. It is a clear and present danger. This is the moment of truth.

If this dismissal passes, there may never be free democratic elections in Israel ever again. A pro forma, electoral pseudo-democracy, perhaps. But not a democracy.

This is Israel's "Weimar moment," and its fragile, brittle, precarious democracy is being lethally challenged by a desperate, unhinged man who has waged war on his own country for the past two years. If you think this is hyperbole, look at the Weimar Republic and think of Israel being in a "Weimar moment" ever since Netanyahu instigated his constitutional coup in January 2023.

A "Weimar moment" is not only a catchy political-science term, or an exact analogy to the Weimar Republic in Germany between 1919-1933, but also a description of trends and trajectories. It is a period of extreme political instability, populism, insecurity leading to demagogic vitriol against the judiciary and so-called elites. A time when a delicate democracy faces severe internal political challenges that might lead to its implosion or collapse. Meanwhile, the public may have no faith in the political system, but it may also be jaded, confused and paralyzed into inaction.

This is the precipice to which Mr. Netanyahu has brought Israel. "My primary obligation is to the law, not a personal oath of loyalty," Shin Bet chief Bar said in response to his dismissal. His firing awaits both the attorney general's opinion on the legality and justification of it, and then, almost inevitably, the Supreme Court, sitting as the High Court of Justice, which is already being petitioned to issue an injunction on the grounds of Netanyahu's conflict of interests — since the Shin Bet is currently investigating his office for breaches of national security protocols.

The dismissal of the Shin Bet chief goes to the very heart of three interconnected things. First, Mr. Netanyahu's inherent authoritarian tendencies, expressed by his launching of the constitutional coup and subsequent actions. His disdain for the self-imposed constraints of democracy and the core values of liberal democracy are well documented.

Second, his sole motivation: political survival after the October 7 calamity and his grandiose attempts to forge an alternative narrative based on prevarication and distortion that the Israeli army and Shin Bet were in fact responsible for the debacle, not him, the actual prime minister. He was failed, he was misled, he knew nothing. Ignorance is bliss.

Third, his ongoing war against the reviled "deep state" elites. Last Thursday, former Shin Bet Director Nadav Argaman threatened to "tell all I know about him" in the event that Netanyahu "breaks the law." For Netanyahu, who filed a complaint with the police commissioner the next day, this was a moment of unadulterated clarity and vindication, providing tangible proof that there's a cabal made up of Israel's defense establishment and judiciary out to get him.

Netanyahu immediately accused Argaman and Bar of extortion. When, during their 15-minute meeting on Sunday, Netanyahu notified Bar that he plans to dismiss him, Bar responded: "On what possible basis are you accusing me of extortion? Where and on what exactly am I extorting you?" Netanyahu answered: "I read it in [Yedioth Ahronoth political columnist] Sima Kadmon's column on Friday." That revelation was reported by Yedioth's acclaimed veteran columnist Nahum Barnea.

It would be misleading to assume that Netanyahu fired Bar because the Shin Bet is investigating the Prime Minister's Office. That certainly contributed to the timing of the decision, but is not the real motivation. This is all about the narrative: A failed prime minister trying to crudely absolve himself of responsibility for the policies that led to the October 7 catastrophe.

Netanyahu's detractors and critical commentators are now completing each other's sentences: He is destroying Israel. He is unhinged. He is in the throes of a continuous political tantrum. He is in meltdown. He is scared, panicky and impulsive — or, conversely, he knows exactly what he's doing and thinks he can get away with it.

Perhaps. But the bigger issue is the well-being and immediate future of Israeli democracy — and that is more in the public's hands than Mr. Netanyahu's. But if the public succumbs to fatigue and resignation, there is no going back from this.

26. Israel's Democratic Guardrails Come Crashing Down as Netanyahu Imitates Trump — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 21/03/2025

The planned firing of Shin Bet chief Ronen Bar by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, approved unanimously Thursday night by the best and brightest of Israel's kakistocracy — its government of the worst — is far from an isolated event. The Supreme Court's injunction Friday on the decision, and Netanyahu's previous hints that he might not heed the court's ruling, make this a constitutional crisis of monumental proportions.

The dubious legality of the firing procedure — not approved by the attorney general and destined to reach the court after a hail of petitions — is of course important. The unbridgeable lack of trust between Netanyahu and Bar is of course critical.

The Shin Bet security service's inquiry into the events leading up to the calamity of October 7, 2023 — some of it containing scathing criticism of Netanyahu's policy and performance — is an obviously acute situation. So here's a brief status report on the precarious state of the country's checks and balances, as Israeli democracy's guardrails come crashing down fast and furious by Netanyahu's design.

- The Knesset is ineffective and weak, and the structure of Israel's parliamentary democracy, where somehow so many lawmakers are in the cabinet, negates the notion of the separation of powers.
- The opposition is dysfunctional, devoid of ideas and paralyzed into inaction by the Knesset's perennial weakness.
- The defense and finance ministries are under the total control of Netanyahu and his acolytes.
- The State Comptroller's Office has become a nonentity that doesn't bother itself with supervising the government.
- The civil service commissioner has become a political appointee who advances political goals.
- The police have almost ceased to exist as an independent investigative and law enforcement agency. They've become the feudal fiefdom of the far right, a political militia.
- Most of the media has been voluntarily subdued, fully complicit with the government, or regularly harassed and intimidated by it. Haaretz is a rare outlier.

- The cabinet has unanimously approved the firing of the Shin Bet chief, and next week it will deliberate on the dismissal of Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara.

So what's left of a once-effective system of checks and balances? And then there were two: the Supreme Court and the Israeli public. The court, whose president, Justice Isaac Amit, is being boycotted by both the prime minister and the justice minister, is a guardrail that deflects malfeasance only when the court is petitioned. So the Israeli public becomes the only potentially effective check.

But the term "the public" is amorphous. How the public will act is always unpredictable and now contingent on fatigue and a realization that Israel's democracy is on a life-support system. After massive demonstrations against Netanyahu's constitutional coup in 2023, the devastation, shock and agony of October 7 naturally resulted in reticence, and other than demonstrating for a hostage deal, the public has remained subdued and introspective.

Netanyahu is obviously inspired and empowered by Trump's wrecking-ball, let's-destroy-everything approach in the United States. Despite the enormous structural and systemic differences between the two countries, their political systems and their political cultures, Netanyahu sees Trump as a model to emulate.

The only reason Netanyahu isn't dismantling ministries and government agencies like Trump and his co-president, Elon Musk, is because in Israel's decrepit politics, ministers dole out thousands of jobs and government contracts to friends and allies.

Neither Trump nor Netanyahu are democrats. Despite their different styles, they're wannabe autocrats disdainful of democracy and resentful of the checks and balances of a modern democracy.

Netanyahu has fully adopted Trump's incendiary rhetoric and catchy political language: The "deep state" is out to get me, everything written or broadcast about me is fake news, the liberal elites are persecuting me, the bureaucracy is illegally preventing me from governing, the judiciary is rigged against me, I represent the real people but the elites are trying to deprive the people of their free will. The groveling and sycophancy toward Trump is direct.

"In America and in Israel, when a strong right wing leader wins an election, the leftist Deep State weaponizes the justice system to thwart the people's will. They won't win in either place! We stand strong together," Netanyahu posted on X.

The timing of the post wasn't coincidental. Netanyahu was trying to convey a message to Trump, and that message is his ulterior motive. Firing the Shin Bet chief and beginning a process to dismiss the attorney general is an imitation of what Trump is doing, after Netanyahu launched a broadside attack on democracy and a furious constitutional coup in 2023. It's a message to Trump: Look at me, I'm strong and instill chaos just like you.

Netanyahu knows that Trump is the type of bully who detests weakness and anything that reeks of "losers." In October 2023, less than a week after Hamas' attack and the most catastrophic day in Israel's history, all Trump had to say about Netanyahu was "he's a loser." Trump regularly brandishes that moniker against generals who caution against reckless military operations, and he has used it profusely to batter Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Trump is surely familiar with the polls showing that 76 percent of Israelis see Netanyahu as responsible for the October 7 debacle and 65 percent think he should resign. Netanyahu is aware that any events that expose his political vulnerabilities — mass demonstrations, frailty in his governing coalition, pushback by gatekeepers like the Shin Bet chief, the attorney general and the Supreme Court, or threats by former intelligence chiefs and defense officials to speak out — exude the wimpiness that Trump dislikes.

Add to that a growing impression around Trump that Netanyahu is manipulating him over Gaza, and worse, trying to create conditions that will drag America into a war with Iran, and it's clear why Netanyahu, afraid that Trump will turn against him, had to project what he thinks is strength.

27. An Authoritarian Solar System Is Orbiting Around Trumpism. We Can't Take Democracy for Granted — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 25/03/2025

"Many forms of Government have been tried, and will be tried in this world of sin and woe. No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time..."

Winston Churchill, November 11, 1947.

The above quote has been used profusely and is regarded as a cliché, but it seems to be a guiding principle of contemporary political confrontations and upheavals in the world today.

What do anti-MAGA democrats (or endangered-species legacy Republicans) in the United States, liberal-democrats in Israel, opposition protesters in Turkey, political dissidents in Hungary and pro-democracy demonstrators in South Korea have in common? Each other. The United States stands before two gargantuan, momentous challenges: Whether the 21st century will be a second "American century" or the first "Chinese century," and how to positively harness and regulate the imminent, exponential and limitless power of Artificial Intelligence.

At such a juncture, its president, Donald Trump, is busy dismantling the U.S. federal government, vilifying imaginary enemies in the "deep state", defying the courts, imposing tariffs on anyone he meets and endangering alliances. Israel is in the midst of a three-front war and has no coherent plan for a political settlement with the Palestinians, who comprise almost 50 percent of the inhabitants between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.

Yet, its prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, is expanding the war for political purposes, firing the head of the Shin Bet as well as the attorney general, boycotting the president of the Supreme Court and resuming the constitutional coup he initiated in 2023.

Turkey is faced with a legitimate political challenge to President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and the government arrests the mayor of Istanbul on bogus charges of corruption. In all three countries – you can add Hungary and South Korea – democracy is threatened and attacked in the same way: From within, but emboldened from abroad.

When it comes to democracy as the preferred organizing principle for governing societies, democrats in these countries have more in common with each other than with the other half of the population in their own societies.

This is not meant to be a "globalist," "universalist," or "post-national sovereignty" observation but a political fact of life regarding contemporary crises in democratic countries.

Notwithstanding a person's national, ethnic or religious identity or the cultural affinities and social attributes she or he possesses, liberal democrats in New York, Tel Aviv, Istanbul, Budapest, Seoul, Tbilisi, or Buenos Aires have more in common with each other than they do with their government and many other people in their countries.

Despite the significant differences in their countries' circumstances, these democrats all face a monumental challenge: Preserving a value system and safeguarding democracy.

They are pushing back against populist, demagogic, atavistic and authoritarian leaders and popular sentiment that divide their countries almost evenly along the middle.

Is this cultural divide a local issue within a country's boundaries, or does it have global common denominators?

Both. When Trump adulates Putin, calls Orbán a great leader, mocks Ukraine and Canada, Putin sees Trump as an asset, and Netanyahu says the same and laments his political persecution, the pattern of an authoritarian solar system, all orbiting around Trumpism and complementing each other, is revealed.

They all claim to speak for regular people, duped by sinister elites. They barely represent half of their societies.

The most daunting political fault line in the world today is not between warring superpowers or the haves and have-nots, nor between the global north and south or between democracies and autocracies.

These schisms exist, to be sure, but there is a huge and broadening cultural divide that threatens democracy. The "Blue" half of America, majorities in Western Europe, Canada, Australia, Japan, South Korea, half of Israel, half of Turkey and half of Hungary all share a fundamentally secular, individualistic, post-modern, rights-based, equality-based, and expertise-based version of what is known as liberal democracy.

We take democracy for granted, as if it is the natural order of things, the way polities have always been organized.

It is very far from the natural order. In fact, modern democracy is a recent configuration, not even 100 years old. Democracy, or more precisely, Western-style liberal democracy, is a

political, social, and cultural phenomenon that took several hundred years of revolutions, struggles for civil and political rights, and the adoption of the rule of law to mature and develop.

Democracy has an a priori quality, and so very few – often dismissed as alarmists – understand from history what happens when liberties are stripped away.

This is exactly where the boiling frog analogy is relevant. If a frog is put suddenly into boiling water, the political equivalent being a military or quick constitutional coup, it will jump out.

Yet, if the frog is in tepid water brought to a boil slowly, it will not perceive the danger and will be eventually cooked to death. That's what half of America, Israel and Turkey are experiencing right now.

It is understandable to take democracy, with all its frustrating flaws, for granted. A person living in what we call a "Western democracy" born in 1945 or afterward knows no other reality. Only a very few countries descended into authoritarianism but managed to restore democracy. Spain, Portugal, Greece, Brazil, Argentina, and South Korea all went through episodes of military rule, but democracy ultimately prevailed.

Contemporary Western societies, a term used loosely here, are torn between the conflicting values of modernism and old conservative traditions, globalism and nationalism, and ethnic identity and immigration.

Democracy cannot adequately reconcile these divisions. So cynical authoritarians came up with an ingenious idea: Ditch the checks and balances of democracy, restore past glory, tell a spurious alternative narrative, invent enemies and make people believe they've been conned.

This is why the MAGA ilk admire Vladimir Putin and why Netanyahu's cult adores Trump. They are on the same bank of the cultural divide "as us". On one side, there are Trump, Putin, Netanyahu, Erdoğan Orbán, the self-ordained "strongmen" who implement anti-modernist illiberal policies, authoritarianism, and yes, quasi-fascism.

On the other side there are modern liberal democracy, checks and balances, diversity, multiculturalism, science, expertise, rights, universities and yes, extreme forms of wokeness and excessive political correctness.

The MAGA crowd sees them as radicalized sacrilegious heathens, intent on controlling the average person's life against their will and values.

The Netanyahu sycophantic groupies have been further radicalized by constant incendiary language and regard the other side as "leftist traitors" who think the Supreme Court should govern the country.

To paraphrase Martin Luther King Jr. and replace "justice" with "liberalism" (lower case), illiberalism anywhere threatens liberalism everywhere.

Demonstrations in Tel Aviv, Istanbul, Budapest, and, possibly in the not-so-distant future, New York, Chicago, or San Francisco may only seem different, but they are a response to the same thing: an onslaught on democracy and the rule of law.

What do half of America, half of Israel, most of Canada, Australia and Western Europe have in common with Trump or Netanyahu? Nothing. What do Trump and Netanyahu have in common with Putin? Everything.

28. Can American Jews Recognize the Israel of Today? Only if They Keep Looking Away — Alon Pinkas, Haaretz, 28/03/2025

Dear American Jews, do you even recognize 2025 Israel? Has Tikkun Olam — repairing the world — been confined to your immediate community and degraded to a podcast adage or a bumper sticker?

Be honest. Does Israel today resemble anything you remember from Jewish Federation brochures or your visit a few years ago? Is it the Israel your grandmother in Boca Raton thinks she knew and loved? Does she still shed tears over Leon Uris' hero Ari Ben Canaan in "Exodus" — the character played by Paul Newman in the movie — or Moshe Dayan in the 1967 Six-Day War?

Do you care enough to apply some analysis and figure out what's happening in Israel? Do you fully understand that "constitutional coup" isn't the name of a new Tel Aviv restaurant but a frenetic, undemocratic assault on Israel by Benjamin Netanyahu, explicitly aimed to dismantle the Israeli democracy you were rightly proud of for so many years?

This isn't in any way an admonition, lamentation or critique, nor is it a call for action. It's just a bewildered question, because we don't really know where you stand and there's a growing sense that we've lost each other beyond the sugary platitudes and hollow fundraising slogans.

And while you're here, I have a few inconvenient follow-up questions for American Jews, a vibrant, caring and politically engaged community. And yes, I personally know hundreds of you and speak regularly to dozens of you who are knowledgeable, in the loop and involved. But I address these questions in the most general way to a community of roughly 7.5 million.

Do you remember the concept of "shared values" that you expounded on so eloquently for years to describe both Israel-U.S. relations and ties between Israel and the American Jewish community? Do you think this concept is still valid?

Do you remember how you loved to repeat the moral-high-ground mantra of "Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East"? Are you still comfortable with that?

Do you remember how you pointed to Israel's judicial system as a source of democratic strength and pride? Do you still believe that?

Do you remember reciting how Israel's army is "the most moral army in the world"? Do you still use that phrase?

Do you remember the demeaning monopoly of Israel's government and ultra-Orthodox community over "Judaism"? Do you remember how this cartel has been treating Reform and Conservative Jews in Israel, the communities that account for around 80 percent of you? Or did this situation just grow on you?

Do you remember the slogans "We Are One" and "A Shared Destiny"? Do you still really subscribe to them other than your whining about how Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu are soulmates who mimic each other?

The simple but big and very vexing question arising from all this is whether Israel makes you feel a little uncomfortable. Do some of you quietly even ascribe some blame to Israel for your queasiness, some responsibility for your predicament? I'm not saying that you should. But it would be nice to know.

In the last two years, American Jews have undergone a pendulum swing, which started with deafening silence or increasing alienation from Israel before the war. With the fighting this moved on to genuine care and engagement, and then back to inaction and paralysis. Currently, and in very broad-brush terms, American Jews are showing three types of sentiment toward Israel.

- Anxiety, fear, anger and increased involvement emanating directly from the devastation and shock of Hamas' savagery on October 7, 2023, which was followed by a rise in antisemitism in America that U.S. Jews believe is directly linked to the war. Sometimes, anti-Israeli, anti-Zionist and pure antisemitic trends are indistinguishably entangled.
- Denialism regarding the fate of Israeli democracy, an approach of "This is just another cyclical Israeli political crisis we shouldn't get involved in." This evolved into alienation from Israeli politics and a natural focus on U.S. politics and its effects on the Jewish community.
- Voluntary dissociation, when a person consciously chooses to disconnect from their immediate emotional, physical or situational experience. Unlike involuntary dissociation, which occurs as an unconscious defense, voluntary dissociation is an intentional act of psychological distancing.

This is not denialism in the sense mentioned above but a convenient way to cope with very unpleasant events while being fully aware that they're happening. This is arguably where a majority of Zionist American Jews are right now.

The October 7 catastrophe proved to be a temporary inflection point for many American Jews. In the last two decades, large groups, especially people up to age 45, have become increasingly distant and somewhat alienated from Israel. They've resented the ultra-Orthodox community's religious monopoly and outsized power, and the absence of a resolution to the Palestinian issue that has subjected Israel to criticism of colonialism and even apartheid through occupation. And against the backdrop of Israel's military and economic power, many people drifted into a gradual disconnect.

Throughout the constitutional coup that Netanyahu instigated in early 2023, American Jews, visibly unhappy with what they were seeing, cocooned into a slumber, shielding behind time-proven explanations such as "Our children don't serve in the Israeli military"; "We don't pay taxes in Israel"; "It's not my place to criticize Israel's democratically elected government"; "It'll pass like every other crisis in Israel."

October 7 returned the paradigm to common threats, anxiety, panic and commiserations. This was coupled with a visible rise in anti-Israel demonstrations on U.S. university campuses that featured strains of antisemitism.

So American Jews, like Israeli Jews, felt besieged. As the tide of the war turned for the better, despite frequent accusations of excessive force and war crimes, American Jews slowly reverted to their prewar positions. With the massive and crude resumption of the constitutional coup threatening the very foundations of Israeli democracy and dismantling all checks and balances, American Jews went back to a deafening silence.

I don't fault them, but I repeat the fundamental question: Dear American Jews, do you even recognize contemporary Israel, or are you still gazing at 1990s brochures and thinking that this is reality?

29. The Status Quo Illusion Is a Recipe for Another Disaster — Shaul Arieli and Maoz Rosenthal, Haaretz / Shaul Arieli website, 02/04/2025

While public attention is fixated on the renewed war in the Gaza Strip, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen, led by Israel's nationalist-messianic government, alongside attempts to dismiss the gatekeepers, a highly dangerous process is accelerating below the news radar. Israel is rapidly moving toward annexation and the loss of its identity as a Jewish and democratic state. This is not an apocalyptic prophecy of doom, but an insight based on systematic and consistent analysis of political discourse in Israel regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

A comprehensive study we recently conducted, based on an analysis of more than 15,000 posts on X, formerly Twitter, by party leaders in Israel from 2018 to the end of 2024, exposes the falsehood in the "status quo" perception — the comfortable illusion known to the Israeli public as "conflict management." Beneath the veneer of ongoing crisis management, Israel is advancing with determined steps toward the annexation of territories and the application of Israeli sovereignty over them. This move will seal its fate as either an apartheid state or a binational state.

The data speak with disturbing clarity: Of the 15,135 posts analyzed, 9,692 dealt with the status quo, compared to minute numbers of posts dealing with long-term policy alternatives: 886 for separation, 848 for annexation, and only 333 for the two-state agreement. The meaning is clear: The political establishment prefers to nurture the status quo illusion, which is nothing but a disguise for creeping annexation. This is a mechanism of collective self-deception, allowing the public to believe that the current situation can continue forever, while in practice each day advances Israel toward an irreversible one-state reality. While the public is captive to the illusion of "the existing situation," the messianic-nationalist right works to promote the reality of one state.

The analysis reveals the division of "ideological territory" between the political camps in Israel. Bezalel Smotrich leads the annexation discourse with 143 mentions — about a third, 31.1 percent, of all mentions in this category, and an almost absolute level of support. Itamar Ben-Gvir demonstrates full support for annexation, and Benjamin Netanyahu, although for international media he disguises his true positions under the pretense of "I'm not connected to this," displays complete support for annexation when he addresses the topic.

Surprising, though perhaps not entirely, is discovering that Yitzhak Goldknopf, leader of an ultra-Orthodox party, is an active ideological partner of Smotrich and Ben-Gvir. This is further

confirmation of the alliance of interests between religious-nationalist neo-messianism and ultra-Orthodox orthodoxy; an alliance that endangers the secular-liberal character of Israel.

In the second camp, Yair Lapid leads the discourse on the possibility of a diplomatic agreement with 83 mentions, about half of all mentions in this category. Yair Golan and Ayman Odeh, representing the left edge of the spectrum, consistently support the two-state agreement and separation, but their voice is increasingly weakening in the radicalizing political landscape.

Benny Gantz continues to adhere to the status quo discourse, with 637 mentions, and only rarely expresses support for a diplomatic agreement. This is a clear symptom of the reluctance of central Israeli politicians to courageously confront the need for strategic decision-making.

One of the fascinating phenomena revealed by the research is the use of the term "separation" — the magic word, enabling everything and nothing — by almost all political camps, while each camp has its own interpretation of the concept. For Odeh and Golan, separation is the basis for political and geographical division, leading to two states. Lapid and Gantz see separation as a move that will ensure a Jewish majority in a democratic state. Ben-Gvir and Smotrich interpret separation as ethnic separation without territorial concessions; meaning, ghettoization of the Palestinian population under Israeli sovereignty.

This is a classic exercise in political Orwellianism. The same word is used to describe completely opposing visions, creating the illusion of broad agreement. In reality, the term "separation" is nothing but a semantic fiction, enabling the continuation of procrastination and avoidance of decisions. Contrary to what might have been expected, the events of October 7 did not lead to a strategic soul-searching on the failure of the "conflict management" policy. On the contrary, they served as a catalyst for the radicalization of positions and the strengthening of short-term security discourse.

As evidence, 53.5 percent of the posts supporting annexation were published since October 2023. The discourse on the status quo has almost doubled, from 1,451 supportive posts before October 2023 to 2,658 supportive posts afterward. Support for separation, however, decreased by 24 percent. This is a particularly troubling paradox. The very event that exposed the failure of the conflict management policy led to the strengthening of discourse supporting this failed policy. Israel behaves like an addict standing before a broken trough, but instead of sobering up from the addiction to the status quo illusion, he increases the dosage.

The last quarter of 2024 provides an up-to-date picture of the political discourse. Despite a general decrease in the scope of discourse on the conflict, 1,097 posts compared to 1,260 in

the previous quarter, trends of radicalization and polarization are strengthening. 96 percent of the posts referring to annexation support it — an alarming rate indicating a developing consensus among those dealing with the issue. Netanyahu, in a familiar exercise of "conscious denial," avoids posting on the topic of annexation in the last quarter; a transparent move, designed to preserve the ambiguity he so desperately needs in the international arena.

Meanwhile, Goldknopf deviates from the traditional neutrality of the ultra-Orthodox and presents a distinctly right-wing position on annexation — another worrying sign of overall radicalization in the political system. Lapid, Golan, and Odeh continue to adhere to the approach of diplomatic agreement and separation, but their voice is increasingly eroded in the general public discourse.

Conflict researchers warn that the point of no return in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not a theoretical matter, but a tangible threshold that Israel is rapidly approaching. The UN report from 2017 already indicated that the conflict is approaching "a point of no return," and the trends since then have only intensified.

The demographic, geopolitical, and infrastructural reality in the territories has already created a situation where physical separation between the populations is possible, but at increasing costs. The Palestinian population in the West Bank numbers about 3.2 million people, but the road system that Israel has built and continues to build has created a reality of intertwining and confinement of Palestinians between settlement areas, to which illegal outposts are added, mainly in the pattern of agricultural farms.

In this situation, adherence to the status quo illusion is essentially a passive choice in the path leading to a one-state reality. A reality in which Israel will be forced to choose between its Jewish character and its democratic character.

The political elite in Israel, led by Netanyahu, has chosen a strategy of postponing decisions and avoiding difficult choices. But the bitter irony is that the attempt to avoid choice is itself a choice. A choice that led to the events of October 7 and will lead to the loss of the Jewish and democratic state.

The iron law of demography does not allow Israel to continue ruling over millions of Palestinians without civil and political rights, without becoming an apartheid state. At the same time, granting full rights to Palestinians will fundamentally change the Jewish character of the state. The evasive choice of the status quo is a slow but certain slide toward an abyss. Especially in

a period of geopolitical turmoil, Israel needs brave leadership, willing to make the difficult choices necessary to secure its future as a Jewish and democratic state.

Separation from the Palestinians and the establishment of two states for two peoples — this is the only solution that will ensure Israel's future as a Jewish and democratic state. Any other solution represents one version or another of denial, self-deception, or fraud. The sooner we come to our senses, the smaller the national price we will pay.

30. Victories on the Battlefield, Crushing Defeats in the Arena of Perception — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz / Shaul Arieli website, 20/05/2025

The war goals set by the government — dismantling Hamas and freeing the hostages — have become empty words. Only a few blind people still believe that Israel can achieve them. Israel continues to flounder in a war without political purpose, while increasing its hold on the Gaza Strip by expanding the buffer zone, building outposts and roads, and pushing Palestinians into half of the Strip's territory. At the same time, it is renewing humanitarian aid, managed by an American company and secured by the IDF.

Another undeclared goal of the war is to create a perception screen that will allow the messianic and nationalist government to achieve its ultimate goal — annexation moves in the West Bank and preparing conditions for renewed Jewish settlement in the Gaza Strip.

The efforts to achieve the ultimate goal are accompanied by a lot of smoke and little fire. Bezalel Smotrich has managed to implement several tangible steps toward it, such as establishing a full apartheid regime by transferring civil authority from the military to his hands, channeling billions to settlements, budgeting for the construction of new bypass roads, building dozens of illegal outposts, proposing a law for Israel to implement an official land settlement in Judea and Samaria, demolishing Palestinian homes built without permits, and encouraging settler terrorism with a blind eye, if not backing, from the legal and security systems.

Alongside these tangible moves, propaganda efforts have taken place: separating 13 neighborhoods from parent settlements and declaring them independent settlements. Most of the new outposts are grazing farms, which have a severe impact on Palestinians' daily lives — violence, expulsion of Palestinian communities, seizure of lands, and more. However, in terms of permanent settlement, the farms, where only a single family or a few hilltop youth live, have no demographic or spatial impact.

Against these real and imagined moves, Netanyahu's government's failures stand out: the migration balance in the West Bank is negative. In four of the last six years, more Israelis left the area than those who moved there from within the Green Line or Jews from abroad who came to the West Bank; the poverty rate, consisting entirely of the ultra-Orthodox population, has grown; the number of residents in Ma'ale Adumim, the third-largest city, has decreased; government subsidies have increased; young people have left, and more.

One "success," which is a foundational pillar of the government's nationalist-racist-messianic worldview, can be attributed to its "credit" — pushing Israel into the position of regional and global pariah, in accordance with the coalition's interpretation of Balaam's words, "Lo, it is a people that shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations." Originally, this statement was interpreted as a promise that the people of Israel would not assimilate with the nations and would maintain their dignity, Jewish identity, and unique way of life. In the hands of the current government ministers, the verse has become an arrogant expression of Jewish superiority and complete contempt for the international community.

In a comprehensive study conducted by researchers of the T-Politography research group in recent years, it was found that Israel is losing its standing and image among regional countries, the United States, the European Union, and world Jewry.

For a decade, the U.S. relationship with Israel has undergone a deep systemic change with three characteristics: the gradual distancing of the United States from direct involvement in attempts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since 2014, the failure of John Kerry's mission; erosion of the traditional relationship foundations with Israel, "shared values" and "strategic alliance"; and a consistent decline in support for the two-state solution, with a low point in references in 2024.

The European Union has related to Israel in a positive manner since the formation of the current government, considering its composition. After Yair Lapid's efforts as foreign minister and prime minister to rehabilitate relations after a "lost" decade, the European Union did not want to damage the delicate fabric of renewed relations. On October 7, the European Union stood unequivocally by Israel. However, in those days, a "multiplicity of voices" began regarding what was happening in Gaza. This multiplicity of voices, which has grown since then, typically paralyzes the European Union's ability to act in a unified and meaningful way against the government, even when it is accused of ethnic cleansing and genocide in Gaza and when the prime minister faces a warrant from the International Criminal Court.

Arab countries that maintain diplomatic and other relations with Israel and were once on the path to normalization have become hostile. The Israeli-Palestinian arena continues to occupy a central place in the foreign policy of Arab countries. They still focus on calling for the establishment of a Palestinian state along the 1967 lines, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and ending the occupation. All countries view the conflict as a source of regional instability and work to promote a settlement.

Egypt, a cornerstone of regional peace, focuses on mediating between Israel and Hamas and strongly criticizes the effectiveness of the international community. It firmly opposes the Israeli law restricting UNRWA's activities and rejects the transfer ideas promoted by members of the Israeli government.

Jordan, our peace partner for almost three decades, has dramatically raised its level of criticism. It expresses special concern about Israel's policy in the West Bank and the Temple Mount, calling the war "barbaric" and accusing Israel of "ethnic cleansing." Jordan's call for an arms embargo on Israel, which has continued for a second consecutive quarter, is unprecedented.

Saudi Arabia, which was on the path to normalization, now promotes an "Israel bypass route" and calls for international involvement that excludes Israel from the process. It strongly opposes Israeli measures against UNRWA and rejects any normalization with Israel until the war ends and the political process to establish a Palestinian state is renewed.

The United Arab Emirates, which led the Abraham Accords, now focuses on humanitarian aid to Gaza and criticizes the situation in the Strip. Its opposition to Israeli measures against UNRWA is prominent, and unlike in the past, there is a significant decrease in engagement with joint future plans.

Qatar, the central mediator, calls for an immediate and permanent cease-fire and the opening of crossings, strengthens UNRWA with financial support of \$49 million, and accuses Israel of "genocide" and attempting to "exterminate the Palestinian people."

Bahrain calls for convening an international peace conference and international recognition of a Palestinian state and offers unique educational initiatives in conflict zones.

The central trends across the Arab region are concerning: an organized attempt to create an "Israel bypass route," political and economic support for UNRWA in light of Israeli legislation, opposition to Israeli transfer ideas, and personalization of the conflict accompanied by personal criticism of Israeli leaders.

Turkey's policy has undergone a fundamental change, stemming from neo-Ottoman and pan-Islamic ideology, expressed in increasing support for Hamas and growing hostility toward Israel. Iran, which sponsors the entire ring of fire surrounding Israel, maintains its basic ideological position, denying Israel's existence, but its strategic priorities are changing. Urgent internal and external challenges are leading to a shift in Iranian focus away from the Palestinian

issue. Despite the decrease in the intensity of statements, Iran continues to support the "resistance" and emphasize that Israel has failed to achieve its war goals.

A dramatic change has also occurred in the positions of American Jewish organizations. AIPAC, which for years was the cornerstone of support for Israel, has reduced its support for the two-state solution to zero by 2025. The Anti-Defamation League has stopped supporting this solution, and the American Jewish Committee has almost completely abandoned the issue. Jewish Federations avoid addressing it, and only J Street raises a more critical voice.

The international legal reality is not encouraging either. The slow but steady progress toward annexation, led by Smotrich and supported by Netanyahu, is perceived as an irreversible process leading to apartheid, and from there to sanctions and boycotts.

Israel stands at a critical crossroads. We are witnessing a shift from almost unconditional American support to a more balanced and reserved approach, the distancing of moderate Arab countries, a deepening rift with American Jewry, and the strengthening of the Palestinian narrative in the international arena.

The conflict has not disappeared; it has only changed form. Even if Israel claims victories on the battlefield, it is suffering crushing defeats in the global arena of perception. In the absence of a clear policy and tangible steps toward a solution, Israel is leading itself into increasing isolation, which could severely damage its economic and political resilience in the coming years.

31. Israel at a Critical Crossroads: Most of the World Is Fed Up With It — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz, 05/06/2025

The war's goals as set by the government — the collapse of Hamas and the release of the hostages — have become empty words. Only a few people, wearing blinders, still believe that Israel can achieve these aims.

Israel keeps wallowing in a war lacking any political purpose while increasing its hold on Gaza by expanding its buffer zone, building military outposts and roads, and pushing Palestinians into half of the enclave. At the same time, it's renewing humanitarian aid under management by an American company and secured by the Israeli army.

An undeclared war goal is to put up a screen that will allow this messianic, nationalist government to achieve its main aim: taking steps toward an annexation in the West Bank and preparing the ground for bringing settlers back to Gaza.

Far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich has managed to push through a long list of steps toward this end. He has established a full-on apartheid regime by taking civilian powers from the military, siphoned billions to settlements, funded new roads that skirt Palestinian villages, built dozens of illegal settler outposts, demolished illegally built Palestinian homes and encouraged settler terrorism by having law enforcement and the military turn a blind eye.

There has also been a notable propaganda achievement: separating 13 neighborhoods from their mother settlements and declaring them independent settlements. Most new outposts are grazing farms that beleaguer Palestinians with ills like violence, the expulsion of whole communities and the takeover of land. But these new farms, each housing a family or members of the so-called hilltop youth, aren't doing anything demographically.

These real and imaginary moves bring into sharp relief the failings of the Netanyahu government. More Israelis are moving out of the West Bank than are moving in, whether from Israel proper or abroad. Young people are leaving, but the number of poor people, mostly from the ultra-Orthodox community, has increased.

There has been a notable "success," a cornerstone of the government's nationalist, racist and messianic worldview: making Israel a pariah state both in the region and around the world. The governing coalition is putting into practice Balaam's famous words in the Book of Numbers: "lo, it is a people that shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations."

This declaration was originally interpreted as a promise that the Jewish people would not mix with the gentiles and would preserve its Jewish identity and unique lifestyle. But ministers of the current government have made this pledge an expression of Jewish supremacy and total disregard for the international community.

A study by the T-Politography research group shows that Israel has been suffering hits to its image in the region, in the United States, in the European Union and among Jews around the world.

Over the past decade, the Americans' approach to Israel has deeply changed in three ways: gradually fewer direct attempts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, beginning in 2014 with the failure of John Kerry's mission; an erosion of the "shared values" and "strategic partnership" relationship; and a decline in support for the two-state solution, reaching a nadir in 2024.

The EU has treated Israel positively since the current government formed, considering the parties in it. Following Yair Lapid's efforts as foreign minister and prime minister to rebuild relations after a lost decade, the EU didn't want to damage the delicate fabric.

On October 7, the EU stood with Israel in no uncertain terms. But during the war in Gaza it began to experience a plurality of voices. This diversity, which has intensified over time, usually blocks a unified EU voice on the Israeli government, even when it's accused of ethnic cleansing and genocide in Gaza, and with a warrant out against the prime minister at the International Criminal Court.

Arab countries with diplomatic or other relations with Israel, which once were on their way to normalization, have become hostile. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains the top issue in Arab countries' foreign policy. They're still calling for the establishment of a Palestinian state along the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital and an end to the occupation. All countries view the conflict as a source of regional instability and keep pushing for an agreement.

Egypt, a cornerstone of regional peace, is focusing on mediation between Israel and Hamas and is harshly questioning the effectiveness of the international community. It firmly objects to the Israeli law hamstringing the UNRWA refugee agency, and rejects notions of population transfer brandished by Israeli cabinet members.

Jordan, our partner in peace for nearly three decades, has dramatically ramped up its criticism. It's particularly concerned about Israel's policy in the West Bank and on the Temple Mount/Al-

Aqsa, has called Israel's airstrikes "barbaric," and has accused Israel of ethnic cleansing. Jordan's call this year for an arms embargo on Israel is without precedence.

Saudi Arabia, which was on the road to normalization with Israel, is now advancing an "Israel bypass route" and has been calling for international involvement that would keep Israel out of the process. The Saudis firmly object to Israeli steps against UNRWA and decline any normalization with Israel without an end to the war and the renewal of the diplomatic process leading to a Palestinian state.

The United Arab Emirates, the spearhead of the Abraham Accords, is now focusing on humanitarian aid to Gaza and is critical of the situation in Gaza. It objects to Israel's steps against UNRWA and has ramped down its efforts to craft joint plans for the future.

Qatar, the leading mediator, is calling for an immediate and permanent cease-fire and for the border crossings to reopen. It has bolstered UNRWA with \$49 million in financial support and has accused Israel of genocide, even an attempt to "exterminate the Palestinian people."

Bahrain has called for an international peace conference and international recognition of a Palestinian state, on top of its educational initiatives.

The major trends in the Arab world are worrying: a concerted effort to create an "Israel bypass route," political and financial support for UNRWA in light of the Israeli legislation, wholesale opposition to Israeli notions of transfer and a personalization of the conflict in the form of direct criticism of Israeli leaders.

Turkey's policy, with its roots in neo-Ottoman and pan-Islamic ideology, is increasingly supporting Hamas while being increasingly hostile to Israel. Iran, the patron of the battered "ring of fire" around Israel, is maintaining its objection to Israel's existence, but its strategic priorities are changing.

Urgent internal and external challenges have diverted Iran's focus from the Palestinian issue. Still, Iran continues to support the "resistance" and declares that Israel has failed to achieve its war aims.

At the same time, there has been a dramatic shift among Jewish American organizations. This year AIPAC, for years a cornerstone of support for Israel, has reduced its support for a two-state solution to nothing. The Anti-Defamation League had withdrawn its support for such a solution, and the American Jewish Committee has almost entirely stopped addressing the issue. Only J Street is voicing some criticism.

The international legal situation also isn't encouraging. The slow but steady progress toward annexation under Smotrich's leadership and with Benjamin Netanyahu's support is perceived as an irreversible process leading to apartheid, and then to sanctions and boycotts.

Israel is at a critical crossroads. We are witnessing a transition from almost unconditional American support to a more reserved approach, a distancing by moderate Arab countries, a growing rift with the American Jewish community and a strengthening of the Palestinian narrative in the international arena.

The conflict hasn't gone away, it's only changing shape. While Israel is claiming triumphs on the battlefield, it's being roundly defeated in the international consciousness. In the absence of any clear policy or steps toward a solution, Israel is heading toward an isolation that could critically damage it economically and politically in the coming years.

32. The Next Elections Will Be Decisive in the Battle Between the Zionist and Messianic Camps — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz / Shaul Arieli website, 12/06/2025

As time passes, the intensity of the war between Zionist society and messianic society in Israel becomes clearer. This did not begin with the judicial overhaul, but rather with the establishment of Gush Emunim in 1974, when the messianists decided to dismount from the secular-Zionist donkey and lead Israel toward realizing their vision: the re-establishment of the Kingdom of David. The war has revolved around almost every issue, from the hostage deal and ending the war to the nature of the regime and political culture.

Until 1974, the messianists saw the achievements of Zionism — the Balfour Declaration, the Mandate document, the Partition Resolution, the victories in the War of Independence, Operation Kadesh, the Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War — as the beginning of the redemption of the people of Israel within the framework of the divine plan. Therefore, Rabbi Abraham Isaac HaCohen Kook, the Rayah, justified cooperation with the pioneers and members of the Zionist immigrations who challenged the conception of passive waiting for the coming of the Messiah, arguing, "Even if they are lawless, they are redeeming."

The withdrawal from Quneitra within the framework of the disengagement agreement signed in 1974 with Syria was, according to messianic belief, a violation of the divine commandment, similar to what the chief rabbis wrote in response to the Peel Report in 1937: "From a purely religious perspective... any knowing concession [of territories] constitutes intentional desecration of the sanctity of the Land and the covenant between the pieces."

From the perspective of messianic believers, the teaching of the Kook rabbis — the Rayah and his son the Raziyah, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda HaCohen Kook — this was the moment, in 1974, when it became necessary to replace the Zionist leadership that had violated the divine promise: "For the Lord has given into our hands all the land, and also all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before us" (Joshua 2:24). The replacement sat well with the Hegelian dialectic that the Rayah adopted: "Initially the power is revealed in the form of chaos, and finally it will be taken from the hands of the wicked [the Zionists] and given into the hands of the righteous and heroes like lions." The fact that today messianic society has dozens of Knesset members and ministers, who completely control the prime minister and Israel's policy, is from their perspective evidence of the fulfillment of the "prophecy."

Taking the reins was expressed practically in the establishment of the Gush Emunim movement, "with the aim of instilling a new-old message in existing vessels and patterns, in

order to reawaken complete Zionist realization... while recognizing that the source of the vision is in Israel's heritage and the roots of Judaism," as written in the movement's founding document. To this was added the clear messianic goal: "The complete redemption of the people of Israel and the entire world."

In 1981, the Yesha Council inherited Gush Emunim and radicalized the movement's approach: "The Council views any proposal aimed at handing over parts of the Land of Israel to foreign sovereignty as a denial of the destiny of the Jewish people, the goals of the Zionist enterprise, and an illegal act," was written in its founding document. In other words, the elected institutions of Israeli democracy have no legitimacy to return territories, not even in exchange for other values such as peace.

From 1974 onward, messianic society declared war on Zionist society, which did not recognize the threat against it, and even saw the struggle as part of the democracy and pluralism required within it. Despite countless warnings — from Yeshayahu Leibowitz, through Yitzhak Rabin and Menachem Begin to Yosef Burg — years were needed for it to identify that this was not a struggle over the complete Land of Israel, but over the identity, character and regime of the State of Israel. This became clear in the battles against the peace agreement with Egypt, against the Oslo Accords and against the disengagement, and reached its peak in the judicial overhaul and the current war.

Zionist society and messianic society have contradictory visions that affect all areas of our lives. The Zionist vision is based on clear democratic principles alongside a Jewish majority: equality of rights, protection of minority rights, membership in the family of nations, separation of religion and state, and a system of checks and balances. The messianic vision is based on theocratic principles, as stated by Hanan Porat: "The establishment of a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, the return of the Divine Presence to Zion, the establishment of the Kingdom of the House of David and the building of the Temple," Jewish sovereignty over all the territories of the Land of Israel and denial of rights to the Palestinians.

Zionist society saw the Jewish people's need for a "safe haven" as the motive for establishing the state. As Herzl wrote in "The Jewish State": "Let sovereignty be granted us over a portion of the globe adequate to our righteous needs; we will take care of the rest ourselves." In contrast, messianic society saw the divine commandment to realize the biblical promise as the motive for establishing the state. Menachem Felix, one of the leaders of Gush Emunim, declared in

1979: "We settled... because we were commanded to inherit the land that God Almighty gave to our forefathers" (High Court case Elon Moreh).

Zionist society saw international legitimacy as the political-legal foundation for establishing the state, as David Ben-Gurion declared on May 14, 1948: "By virtue of our natural and historic right and on the basis of the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly," while maintaining the values of equality and freedom for all citizens of the state. Messianic society, on the other hand, believes, as Bezalel Smotrich tweeted in November 2017, "It's important to remember that it's not the UN decision that is the source of our right to the land, but the Bible and God's promise."

Zionist society views democracy as a supreme value. It believes in the rule of law, separation of powers, and the right of every citizen to influence the state's course. Democracy is not just a procedure, but an idea based on a value system that has developed over hundreds of years. Messianic society views democracy as a tool. As Benny Katzover said in 2012: "Israeli democracy has completed its function, and it must disintegrate and bow before Judaism." In other words, the democratic regime is merely a temporary platform for realizing the messianic vision.

Zionist society sought to determine Israel's borders with consideration for the state's future. Ben-Gurion and Yitzhak Ben-Zvi wrote in 1918: "If we seek to determine the borders of today's Land of Israel... we cannot take full account of the ideal borders." Therefore, Zionist leadership always preferred to keep the State of Israel democratic with a Jewish majority, at the expense of parts of the territories of the Land of Israel. Messianic society views borders as the heart of the matter. The Raziyah declared: "This land is ours... and it belongs in all its biblical borders to Israeli rule." Any concession on territory is perceived as desecration of the holy, and he ruled that concession is a transgression of "yehareg ve'al ya'avur" — be killed rather than transgress.

Zionist society is committed, according to the Declaration of Independence, to "complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex." Messianic society distinguishes between Jews and gentiles. According to its approach, only the Jewish people have the right to self-determination in the Land of Israel. More severe than this is the doctrine of Rabbi Kahane — whose follower, Itamar Ben-Gvir, serves as a minister in the Israeli government — which calls for revoking the voting rights of Arab Israelis and removing them from the public sphere.

For years, other warnings were needed for Zionist society to recognize that the struggle was not about the complete Land of Israel but about the identity and regime of the state.

Zionist society believes in the importance of international legitimacy and international law. It sees Israel as part of the family of nations. Messianic society rejects the legitimacy of international law, as stated by Rabbi Shlomo Goren: "No national or international law has the power to change our status or our rights."

Zionist society believes in open Judaism, which sees human beings as the source of authority for managing their lives and defines Judaism as their national identity, and bases culture on the history of the Jewish people throughout the generations; a history that includes connection and mutual enrichment with all of humanity. In contrast, according to the messianic conception, Judaism grants God the source of authority for managing the lives of believers whose identity is religious, grants primacy to past generations, and bases its culture on biblical and Talmudic sources.

Zionist society views the October 7 massacre as a failure of conflict management policy and the strategy of separation between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority that Benjamin Netanyahu and Naftali Bennett led. Messianic society views it as part of the divine plan regarding Israelis who "bring disasters upon the people of Israel and thwart the divine plan" (Prof. Yoel Elitzur, on the Srugim website, October 13, 2023). Similar to their view of the Holocaust — as divine punishment for the Jewish people who chose not to immigrate to the Land after the Balfour Declaration, which heralded the beginning of redemption — Smotrich explained in an interview on Kan 11 why the massacre occurred: "Maybe we needed to receive this terrible and painful blow to remember for one second who we are and what we are."

Zionist society views "Iron Swords" as a war that was forced upon us, whose purpose is to return the hostages and create military conditions to achieve a political goal. Messianic society views the war, first, as revenge against the "Amalekite" Hamas. Revenge against gentiles, according to Kahane and his successors, is "the purpose of the State of Israel," and "whoever refrains from taking revenge on Israel's enemies, in effect waives God's revenge."

Second, according to their doctrine, the war is intended to conquer Gaza and capture it permanently under Israeli control, similar to the conditions Smotrich presented to the prime minister for maintaining the coalition. As Minister Orit Strock stated: "The State of Israel is in a process of repentance for the sin of disengagement... and I believe that the sin of disengagement, in its entirety, will ultimately be corrected... Unfortunately, returning to the

Gaza Strip will involve many casualties... but there's no doubt that ultimately we're talking about part of the Land of Israel, and the day will come when we return to it" (Channel 7, March 2023).

Third, the war is intended to expel Palestinians from Gaza as part of a "voluntary migration" plan, as Smotrich described at a Land of Israel lobby conference: "There's a huge logistical operation here. To get everyone out of Gaza, we'll need to remove 5,000 per day, seven days a week, for a year."

Therefore, this is a struggle between the camp seeking to strive for political arrangements that will ensure the Zionist vision, and the camp that maintains that "the sword will devour forever" and "a people dwelling alone." A struggle between the camp that wants to guarantee the rights of all citizens of the state, and the camp that sees democracy as an obstacle on the path to realizing the messianic vision that promises Jewish supremacy in the Land of Israel. One camp fights for the democratic political framework, the other struggles to change it to a tyrannical ethnocracy.

The decisive question is: Will the State of Israel remain a Jewish democracy, or will it become a messianic ethnocracy? As Leibowitz prophesied: "The messianic doctrine of the Razyah will cause a transition 'from humanity through nationalism to bestiality,' and will transform the 'people of God' into 'people of the land.'"

The answer will determine not only Israel's future, but the future of the Zionist project. Anyone who sees themselves as part of Zionist society must not vote in the upcoming elections "strategically" or "statist." One must vote for those who clearly commit to the vision of a democratic state that maintains full equality of rights for all its citizens and membership in the family of nations. The alternative is clear: a pariah state, poor, mired in infinite warfare and leading a discriminatory regime that officially practices apartheid. This struggle is not about territories or politics — it is about the identity, character and regime of the State of Israel.

33. Smotrich Spoke of Regulating 50 Settlements. Reality Tells a Story of Decline — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz / Shaul Arieli website, 02/07/2025

Among the signs that elections are approaching is Bezalel Smotrich's expected contribution: a propaganda campaign presenting achievements in strengthening the settlement enterprise in the West Bank. Prominent among the campaign slogans on social media is the declaration: "Since the establishment of the current government, 50 new settlements have been established or regulated in Judea and Samaria."

This is a public deception and an attempt to cross the electoral threshold using a national-messianic fantasy.

"50 new settlements" is a lie — a false display of settlement momentum. In reality:

- 19 of these are existing outposts, like Nofei Nehemia and Avigail.
- 7 are grazing farms, such as Malachei Hashalom and Sde Ephraim.
- 14 are existing neighborhoods within settlements, like Nofei Prat in Kfar Adumim and Kerem Re'im in Talmon.
- 10 are purely "on paper," such as the renewal of Sa-Nur and Ma'aleh Hahul.

In other words, no families were added, no houses built. This is an artificial bureaucratic maneuver designed to funnel billions under a new legal guise — platforms created to absorb yet more public funds, generously poured by the finance minister, who effectively serves as minister of settlements.

To Smotrich's credit, it must be said that at least in the field of outposts, the current government has broken records. Since taking office, 79 new outposts have been established, most of them grazing farms populated by single families or youths. Their impact is immense — expulsion of Palestinian communities, daily violence, hostile presence — but in demographic terms, their contribution is minimal. A few dozen families and some buildings or caravans amount to two or three apartment buildings in a city — no more.

Here lies the absurdity in declaring the establishment of new settlements: even the long-established settlements in the West Bank are not growing. According to the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, the past three years, the tenure of the current government, have been the worst period in terms of Israelis' internal migration balance in the West Bank.

In the four largest cities — Modiin Illit, Beitar Illit, Ma’ale Adumim, and Ariel — live 43 percent of the Israeli West Bank population, out of 513,000.

- A third of settlers live in Modiin Illit and Beitar Illit, both suffering four consecutive years of negative internal migration.
- In 2023, Modiin Illit lost 819 residents, and Beitar Illit reached a peak abandonment in 2022 with 1,799 leaving.
- Ma’ale Adumim has had 14 straight years of negative migration, peaking with a loss of 920 residents in 2021, and in 2024 its population even declined.
- Only Ariel recorded a minor positive migration of a few dozen in recent years.

The picture is similar in 14 local councils, home to 22 percent of settlers. In 2023, they recorded negative migration balances, led by Efrat, with 210 leaving, and Kiryat Arba, with 122 leaving. A similar trend continued in 11 councils in 2024, and in the first quarter of 2025, 11 councils continued losing residents, with Beit El joining the “abandonment champions.”

In practice, two-thirds of Israelis in the West Bank live in settlements that are losing residents. These were supposed to serve as centers of employment, culture, and education for settlers, but in reality, 62 percent work within Israel proper, study in Israeli universities and high schools, and enjoy the leisure culture of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

In the six regional councils, which are responsible for 88 percent of settlements and 260 outposts, only one — Mateh Binyamin — suffered negative migration in 2023–2024. In the second largest, Shomron, there was positive migration of about 800 residents, perhaps due to its status as the leader in illegal outposts, with about 80. Yet even within these councils, 45 settlements recorded negative migration in the first quarter of 2025.

True, the Israeli population in the West Bank continues to grow at a rate of about 12,000 per year, but this growth is entirely natural increase, and over half of it is in the ultra-Orthodox cities Modiin Illit and Beitar Illit, which are expected to be annexed to Israel in any agreement scenario. The number of residents there is almost equal to the total population of settlements and outposts in the six regional councils.

Adding to this is a painful fact: 42 percent of settlers are classified as socio-economic cluster 1, the lowest, ten times the rate in Israel.

Over the past decade, Israel has seen a rise in migration balances, until it halted with the Iron Swords war. In contrast, the West Bank has seen a consistent decline: international migration

dropped from 900 to 300, and internal migration collapsed from 4,000 to 1,900. Iron Swords worsened the situation. A new study by the Tamrur group, conducted by Profs. Gilad Hirschberger, Sivan Hirsch-Hoefler, and Moria Reshef, examined the war's impact on physical threat perception among Israeli Jews. The findings showed that:

- While the left tends to minimize the sense of threat,
- The right emphasizes it,
- These gaps widened after October 7.

The sharp rise in threat perception occurred particularly among West Bank settlers, enthusiastic supporters of settlement, who now feel less secure and thus are leaving.

Thus, Smotrich and Itamar Ben-Gvir, who block any cease-fire process, are in fact acting against their own vision. Their policies are undermining the settlement enterprise: settlements are not growing, residents are leaving despite massive investments, roads, expulsions, and Israel's deteriorating international standing.

Bottom line: Smotrich's "50 settlements" are mere propaganda. Reality tells a different story — of decline, abandonment, and a national-messianic dream fading away.

34. Between Gaza and Iran, Israel's Hidden War in the West Bank Is Flaring Up — Tom O'Connor, Newsweek, 03/07/2025

While much of the world's attention is fixated on Israel's ongoing conflict in the Gaza Strip and its unprecedented direct confrontation with Iran, another front has been quietly boiling over.

Violence is surging in the West Bank, undermining hopes for future Israeli-Palestinian peace and tearing at the already frayed fabrics of Israeli society.

Unrest in this roughly 2,200-square-mile territory that includes the disputed holy city of Jerusalem predates the ongoing war between Israel and Hamas. Like Gaza, the West Bank has long been a flashpoint in the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict, still serving as the primary catalyst for the region's current crisis.

But an intensification of Israel Defense Forces incursions, Palestinian militant activity and violence perpetrated by Israeli settlers seeking to expand territorial holdings considered illegal under international — and sometimes Israeli — law threatens to push the tense situation beyond the brink.

In recent days, Israeli settlers have torched Palestinian villages and even clashed with Israeli security forces in the West Bank, drawing rare criticism from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and far-right allies otherwise largely supportive of settler activity.

Among the organizations tracking the spike in violence in this theater is the Armed Conflict and Location Event Data monitor. ACLED's Middle East senior analyst, Ameneh Mehvar, paints an ominous picture of what lies ahead.

"Long-term, even in the optimistic scenario of peace talks being revived at some unknown point in the future — which at this stage appears increasingly unlikely — current developments suggest that the Israeli government would face serious challenges in disengaging and evacuating the roughly 200,000 ideological settlers living deep inside the West Bank," Mehvar told Newsweek.

"An increasingly powerful and well-armed settler movement will, in all likelihood, resist such efforts," she added, "and even the prospect of civil war cannot be ruled out."

The reality of the West Bank today is in some ways even more complex than Gaza. The two territories initially came under Arab rule following the 1948 war that erupted upon Israel's declaration of independence from collapsing British colonial rule, with Gaza being

administered by Egypt and the West Bank annexed by Jordan — until both lands were seized by Israel during a second war fought in 1967.

The fate of the West Bank was among the central issues discussed during the Oslo Accords of the 1990s, which also established the Palestinian National Authority. The agreements divided the territory into three zones — A, B and C — to fall under full PA control, joint Israeli-PA control and full Israeli control, respectively.

Yet Oslo was met with fierce opposition from hard-liners on both sides, ultimately leading to the eruption of the Second Intifada, a mass uprising in which over 1,000 Israelis and 3,000 Palestinians were killed around the dawn of the 21st century.

The end of the conflict paved the way for Israel's withdrawal from Gaza in 2005 — and Hamas' eventual 2007 takeover — but the PA's control over the West Bank would gradually decline in the face of Israeli expansion. Area C, the majority of the West Bank, has witnessed an explosion of Israeli settlers, now exceeding half a million people.

The PA, once hoped to be the vanguard of a future Palestinian state, is now viewed by many in the West Bank as corrupt and ineffective. Its sharp decrease in popularity has left many to turn to a variety of militant groups, including the Islamist Hamas, the leftist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and its splinters, breakaway groups from the PA's leading Fatah faction, as well as independent outfits such as the Nablus-based Lion's Den.

"Violence in the West Bank has been steadily increasing since 2021, a trend that accelerated significantly after the events of October 7," Mehvar said. "This escalation stems from three interconnected dynamics: the intensification of settler violence; the revival of armed Palestinian activity — particularly in the northern West Bank; and Israel's counter-militancy operations."

"The IDF's campaign following the launch of Operation Iron Wall has ultimately succeeded in curbing militant activity — though at the cost of displacing around 40,000 Palestinians," she added. "Isolated attacks by Palestinian militants, however, are likely to continue, as was the case last month when a pregnant settler was killed."

Mehvar was referring to Tzeela Gez, a 37-year-old Israeli mother of three who was shot near her home in the settlement of Bruchin in May, as she drove with her husband to the hospital to deliver her baby. Gez died but the baby survived. Israel has called the shooting a terrorist attack.

Shaul Arieli, a retired IDF colonel who previously headed the administration for the interim agreement for the West Bank in the 1990s, saw two primary factors driving the unrest in the West Bank.

"First, Israeli military operations against various terrorist organizations, primarily Hamas. Israel saw the war in Gaza as both a necessity and an opportunity to strike Hamas wherever it is found, particularly in the West Bank in addition to Gaza," Arieli, who is today head of the T-Politography research group dealing with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, told Newsweek.

"Second is settler violence against Palestinians, manifested in arson attacks, property damage, physical harm, and more," he added. "The purpose of this violence is twofold: to incite unrest that would compel the IDF to take action against Palestinians, and to drive communities away from areas considered strategically important by settlers for future annexation."

He, too, felt that the cycle of violence would likely persist in the absence of a new agreement.

"In my opinion," Arieli said, "if there is no political solution acceptable to both sides, violence in the West Bank will continue at various levels."

The scale of death and destruction inflicted by the ongoing war outweighs all previous Israeli-Palestinian flare-ups, with the vast majority of fatalities occurring in Gaza. The Hamas-run Palestinian Health Ministry counts more than 57,000 killed throughout the conflict.

The situation in the West Bank is in some ways more opaque. Israeli-Palestinian violence had already reached record-breaking levels in the leadup to the October 2023 attack led by Hamas from Gaza, which killed around 1,200 people in Israel, according to Israeli estimates.

The Shireen Monitor, a local organization named after Al Jazeera reporter Shireen Abu Akleh, who was slain by Israeli forces amid a May 2022 clash in East Jerusalem, counts more than 1,000 killed in the West Bank since the war in Gaza began. The figure roughly aligns with the latest available data shared with Newsweek by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs regarding Palestinian casualties during this period.

Newsweek reached out to the IDF, the State Department and the spokesperson for the Hebron settler community for comment.

The most recent casualties appear to be two young Palestinians, one of them 16 years old, who were shot dead Tuesday by Israeli soldiers during raids in Ramallah and Hebron, according to the PA-run Palestinian Health Ministry.

Last week, three more Palestinians were reported by local authorities to have been killed in a settler attack against the village of Kafr Malik, part of a spate of fresh violence that's on course to become one of the bloodiest for the West Bank in recent memory.

ACLED recorded "over 820 violent incidents involving settlers in the first six months of 2025 — a more than 20 percent increase compared to the same period last year," according to Mehvar. "As a result," she said, this year is "likely to become one of the most violent years for settler attacks since ACLED began its coverage in Palestine in 2016."

Issa Amro, a Palestinian activist and Nobel Peace Prize nominee, is one of the roughly 3.3 million residents in the West Bank who are forced to deal with the situation firsthand.

"The settlers see it as the best time now to take revenge on any Palestinian, and I am one of them, many other Palestinians are the same," Amro, whose non-violent activism against settlements was the subject of a recent BBC documentary, told Newsweek. "They are suffering over a political dispute, not a security dispute, because security is mutual for everybody, and certainly for a political agenda for taking more land."

He objects to the phrase "settler violence," arguing that a better word for it is "settler terror," citing sanctions issued last year by the European Union and U.S. on settlers accused of inciting violence against Palestinians in the West Bank.

"Every day and every night there is settler terror and organized terror pogroms toward Palestinian villages, Palestinian cities, Palestinian compounds," Amro told Newsweek. "It's really bad what's going on and what is new is that Israeli settlers attack with their guns."

While the IDF has recently moved to crack down on some unauthorized outposts amid direct attacks from settlers, Amro argued that Israeli troops have more often than not facilitated settler hostilities, allowing them to don military uniforms and bear arms.

Arieli, for his part, also noted that the IDF "relies, among other things, on reserve soldiers among the settlers who are happy to carry out this activity," despite the recent attacks directed by settlers against Israeli military personnel.

Arieli spoke of a "division in Israeli society" as it relates to the fate of the West Bank that has "existed for years," an issue he has tracked closely via his T-Politography project.

"Half support separation through an agreement or unilaterally, and half support continuing the current situation, creeping annexation, or annexation," Arieli said. "Since 2018, we have witnessed the strengthening of the half that refuses a political arrangement."

He warned it "appears that continued violence of this kind could lead to reservists refusing to serve in the West Bank and possibly to more violent incidents that could cost human lives."

Amro, the Palestinian activist, also saw members of the Israeli government as being directly complicit in the rise of settler violence. In particular, he blamed Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, who has openly touted handing out tens of thousands of assault rifles to settlers since the war began.

Adding further pressure, Smotrich last month ordered the cancellation of a waiver that allowed for cooperation between Israeli and Palestinian banks, a move that has strangled an already crippled economy in the West Bank.

"The Israeli banks are refusing to take the shekels, and the Palestinian economy is collapsing," Amro said. "So, they are making life harder and harder for the political agenda of Netanyahu and Ben-Gvir and Smotrich."

"From my opinion, Smotrich and Ben-Gvir can't do anything to Netanyahu if he doesn't agree," Amro added. "So, Netanyahu gets everything he wants, but he's using them as a stick, and he's using them to show that he's moderate and they are violent, and Likud is full of Itamar Ben-Gvir and Smotrich ideology."

Likud, which is Netanyahu's conservative party, forged a coalition with Ben-Gvir's Otzma Yehudit party and Smotrich's National Religious Party–Religious Zionism party, both widely viewed as far-right, which succeeded in bringing Netanyahu back to power in 2022. The two ultranationalist ministers have frequently sought to push the government further right, including through calls for the annexation of the West Bank and opposition to any ceasefire with Hamas in Gaza.

Nimrod Novik, fellow at the Israel Policy Forum and former senior adviser to former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres, also identified Ben-Gvir and Smotrich as central actors in the strife plaguing the West Bank.

"Since early 2023, two of the most extreme leaders of the annexationist and Jewish supremacist minority in Israel have been entrusted by PM Netanyahu with portfolios directly relevant to West Bank policies," Novik told Newsweek.

"One, Itamar Ben-Gvir, controls the national police, demands a 'hands off' policy concerning Jewish terrorists," Novik said. "The other, Bezalel Smotrich, employs his dual position as minister of finance and as a minister in the Ministry of Defense in the service of his three

related, publicly declared objectives: rapid expansion of Jewish settlements, increased pressure on Palestinians to encourage emigration, and choking the Palestinian Authority financially to bring about its collapse."

Novik also pointed to Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz, who he said has "signaled his support for Jewish violence by removing a critical measure in the toolkit of the Shin Bet, internal security: the authority to apply administrative detention to Jewish settlers."

"Emboldened by their leaders' serving in such powerful positions and regularly signaling tolerance if not support for violence against innocent Palestinians, those extremist settlers — by now organized and armed — have made the most of national, regional and international attention focused elsewhere," Novik said. "With all eyes on Gaza, Lebanon and more recently Iran, the intensity of their violence over the past year has been unprecedented."

With further conflagration all but guaranteed in the short term, what's left uncertain is what comes next. Questions over the fate of the West Bank are often sidelined over the quest to find a post-war plan for Gaza, an endeavor Israeli officials have yet to finalize.

The election of President Donald Trump, who has floated asserting U.S. control over Gaza and the voluntary resettlement of its population, and his choice of hard-liner Mike Huckabee as ambassador to Israel, were welcomed by settler groups who hoped the administration might greenlight the annexation of the West Bank.

The White House has yet to voice a definitive policy on the issue, but has also declined to take action against settler expansion while appearing open to Israeli control over the West Bank. Just days into office, Trump in January lifted the sanctions imposed by Biden on Israeli settlers accused of violence and, asked about potential Israeli annexation of the West Bank in February, the president simply spoke of how Israel is "a small country in terms of land."

More recently, on Wednesday, State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce only reiterated the administration's support for Israel when asked about a letter issued by 14 ministers and shared by Smotrich on X urging Netanyahu to move forward with the annexation of the West Bank.

"Our position regarding Israel, the choices it makes, is that we stand with Israel and its decisions and how it views its own internal security," Bruce told reporters.

Novik, however, argued that Israel's choice moving forward would be at least partially defined by internal boundaries already being tested by its longest war.

"With IDF manpower — regular conscripts and reservists — stretched to the limit, and the top brass consumed by tending to challenges from several fronts simultaneously," Novik said, "commanders of units deployed to the West Bank proved reluctant to confront the settlers, not the least given the back wind they enjoy from senior government circles."

And then, he added, there's the intractable situation faced by Palestinian youth, plagued by constant settler attacks while caught between the IDF and the PA, both largely unwilling to intervene.

"Thus, Israeli extremists and radicalized Palestinian youth feed on each other, justifying violence, and killing innocents in the process," Novik said.

If there is "a ray of hope in this dark trajectory," he argued it would lie in Netanyahu's willingness to condemn the settlers' latest "chaos, lawlessness and attacks on the troops." But whether the West Bank's chaos may come to resemble the situation in Gaza, where Hamas' rule remains relatively popular despite the costs of war, remains to be seen.

"Time will tell whether this wakeup call triggers effective measures," Novik said, "or the cycle of violence will see the Gaza-ization of the West Bank."

35. Israel's Next Election Will Decide the Battle Between the Zionist and Messianic Camps — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz, 10/07/2025

The ferocity of the war between Israel's Zionist and messianic communities is becoming ever clearer. This began with the establishment of the Gush Emunim settlement movement in 1974, when the messianists induced Israel to fulfill their vision: reestablishing the Kingdom of David.

Until 1974, the messianists viewed Zionism's achievements — the Balfour Declaration, the Mandate for Palestine, the UN Partition Plan, the War of Independence, the Sinai Campaign, the Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War — as the beginning of the Redemption. That's why Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook justified cooperation with the secular Zionist pioneers.

According to the messianists, the withdrawal from Quneitra as part of the 1974 Disengagement Agreement with Syria violated a divine command, a conceding of part of the Land of Israel.

To the messianists, the Zionist leadership now had to be replaced for violating the divine promise: "Truly the Lord hath delivered into our hands all the land" (Joshua 2:24). For people espousing this outlook today, the messianists' dozens of lawmakers and cabinet ministers, who control the prime minister and policy, reflect the fulfillment of this "prophecy."

According to Gush Emunim's founding document, "the source of the vision is the tradition of Israel and its Jewish roots." Then came the clear messianic goal: "The complete redemption of the Jewish people and the entire world."

In 1981, the Yesha Council of settlements inherited the role of Gush Emunim, and the movement became even more extreme. Yesha's founding document states: "The council sees any proposal for handing over parts of the Land of Israel ... as a denial of the Jewish people's mission and ... an illegal act." That is, Israeli democracy's elected institutions have no legitimacy to return territory, not even for peace.

In 1974, the messianists declared war on the Zionists, who didn't recognize the threat and even saw the struggle as part of the commitment to democracy and pluralism. Despite the warnings — from public intellectual Yeshayahu Leibowitz and political leaders like Yitzhak Rabin, Menachem Begin and Yosef Burg — it took the Zionists many years to realize that this wasn't just a struggle over the Land of Israel but over identity and the nature of the government.

This became clearer in the battles against the peace agreement with Egypt, the Oslo Accords and the Gaza pullout. These efforts peaked in the recent attempts to undermine the judiciary, and during the current war.

The Zionists and messianists have contradictory visions that affect all aspects of our lives. The Zionist dream is based on democratic principles and a Jewish majority: equal rights, minority-rights protections, membership in the community of nations, separation of religion and state, and checks and balances.

The messianic dream is based on theocratic principles, as espoused by settler leader Hanan Porat: "establishing a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, returning the presence of God to Zion." This included Jewish sovereignty over the whole Land of Israel and revoking the rights of the Palestinians.

In founding the state, the Zionists saw the Jewish people's need for a safe haven. As Theodor Herzl wrote in "The Jewish State," "Let the sovereignty be granted us over a portion of the globe large enough to satisfy the rightful requirements of a nation."

But the messianists saw the command to fulfill the biblical promise as the motive for establishing the state. Menachem Felix, a leader of Gush Emunim, declared in 1979, quoting the medieval scholar Nachmanides: "We have settled [the land] ... because we were commanded to inherit the land."

The Zionists viewed international legitimization as the basis for establishing the state, "by virtue of our natural and historic right and on the strength of the resolution of the UN General Assembly," as David Ben-Gurion proclaimed on May 14, 1948. The new state would ensure equality and liberty for all.

The messianists' view is reflected in a post by Bezael Smotrich in November 2017: "The UN resolution isn't the source of our right to this country, but rather the Bible and the promise of the Blessed Be He."

The Zionists see democracy as the supreme value. They believe in the rule of law and the separation of powers. The messianists view democracy as a tool, as expressed by settler leader Benny Katzover in 2012: "Israel's democracy has fulfilled its mission and must now break up and bow to Judaism."

The Zionists took into account the country's future when trying to determine Israel's borders. Zionist leaders have always preferred a democratic Israel with a Jewish majority at the expense of conceding parts of the country.

The messianists see borders as the crux of the problem. Any concession of territory is sacrilege, and one should sacrifice one's life to prevent this, ruled Kook's son, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook.

The Zionists are committed to the Declaration of Independence and the "complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex." The messianists believe that only the Jewish people have the right to self-determination in the Land of Israel. Even more severe is the doctrine of Rabbi Meir Kahane, whose disciple, Itamar Ben-Gvir, is in the cabinet. This outlook calls for annulling Arab Israelis' voting rights and excluding them from the public space.

The Zionists recognize the value of international legitimization; they consider Israel part of the family of nations. The messianists deny the legitimacy of international law.

The Zionists believe in an open Judaism where each person manages his or her life; Judaism is an identity based on the history of the Jewish people over the generations. This includes cross-fertilization with the rest of humanity. According to the messianists, Judaism's source of authority is God, who manages the lives of his believers. This view bases its culture on the Bible and the Talmud.

The Zionists see October 7 as a failure to "manage the crisis," which was the policy of Benjamin Netanyahu and Naftali Bennett and sowed divisions between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority. The messianists view the massacre as part of a divine plan.

This is similar to their view of the Holocaust, which they see as the divine punishment of Jews who did not go to the Land of Israel after the Balfour Declaration. In a TV interview, Smotrich said about October 7: "Maybe we needed to absorb that terrible and painful blow to remember for a second who and what we are."

The Zionists believe that the war in Gaza was imposed on us, with the goal to return the hostages and create conditions for diplomacy. Above all, the messianists see the conflict as a war against the biblical Amalek. Revenge on the gentiles, according to Kahane and his heirs, is Israel's goal.

This camp also views the war as a tool for holding Gaza forever. Cabinet member Orit Strock said in a TV interview in March 2023: "Israel is in a process of repentance over the sin of its disengagement from Gaza. ... I believe that this will ultimately be reversed."

Finally, this camp sees the war as a chance to expel Palestinians from Gaza as part of "voluntary emigration." "To remove all of them from Gaza we will need to expel 5,000 people a day, seven days a week, for a whole year," Smotrich has said.

Thus, this is a struggle between a camp that strives for diplomatic agreements that will ensure the Zionist vision and a camp that espouses an eternal war. It's a struggle between a camp seeking to ensure the rights of all the country's citizens and a camp viewing democracy as an obstacle on the road to Jewish supremacy. One camp is fighting for democracy, while the other is trying to make the country an oppressive ethnocracy.

The decisive question is whether the State of Israel will remain a Jewish democracy, or turn into a messianic ethnocracy.

Decades ago, Leibowitz predicted that the Kook doctrine would end in "bestiality." The answer will determine the future of the Zionist project.

One must vote for parties that commit to a democratic state upholding full equality, with the country belonging to the family of nations. The alternative is clear: a discriminatory regime and a pariah state, poor and mired in endless wars. The battle isn't over territory or politics, it's over Israel's identity and regime.

36. Hamas' Own Data Contradicts Genocide Allegations Against Israel — Ariel Kahana, Israel Hayom, 10/08/2025

Data from the "Palestinian Health Ministry" demonstrates there is no genocide occurring in Gaza. This conclusion emerges from groundbreaking research conducted by the Tamrur research group for Israeli-Palestinian conflict studies. Professor Gilad Hirschberger from Reichman University led the investigation, collaborating with Professor Sivan Hirsch-Hoefler and Dr. Lt. Col. (Ret.) Shaul Arieli.

The research team analyzed statistical distributions of casualty data from the Gaza Strip spanning November 2023 to the present, utilizing figures published by Hamas-controlled health authorities. "The Gaza Health Ministry operates as a partisan entity rather than a neutral source; its Hamas connections and political role in the conflict demand cautious interpretation of its data," the researchers document.

The ministry's inability to differentiate between civilian and armed casualties, combined with its failure to separate natural deaths from war-related fatalities, presented additional analytical challenges. Working within these constraints, the researchers focused exclusively on the proportion of men aged 17–55 among the deceased, representing the demographic most likely to include active combatants.

Initial findings revealed a "consistent and gradual reduction in total Palestinian casualties in Gaza throughout the conflict period." Furthermore, "during early war phases, characterized by extensive aerial bombardment, civilian casualty numbers significantly exceeded armed combatant fatalities. During this period, fighting-age men comprised approximately 20% of total casualties."

The most significant discovery showed that "across nearly two years of continuous combat operations, the proportion of potential armed casualties increased beyond 45%, indicating increasingly precise targeting and corresponding civilian casualty reductions." This data demonstrates that as the conflict progressed, men aged 17–55 represented an ever-growing percentage of total fatalities.

"The data reveals, despite inherent limitations, substantially higher civilian casualties during initial war stages, while recent months show fighting-age casualties approaching 50% of the total. This demonstrates IDF fire concentration on this specific demographic, indicating military efforts focus on eliminating terrorists. Combat forces avoid targeting children, women

or elderly populations, instead concentrating on military-age individuals," Professor Hirschberger explained.

He stresses that his research avoids determining whether alleged "genocide" exists in Gaza, recognizing this as fundamentally a legal determination. Nevertheless, he emphasizes that "the evidence shows increasingly precise fire concentration on this demographic group. This indicates successful efforts to target terrorists while protecting civilians. If Israel intended population destruction, military operations would target all demographic segments equally, and Hamas' own data would reflect this pattern. Current evidence shows no such pattern. No evidence supports this."

Hirschberger concluded that this analytical methodology will enable future examination of alleged starvation conditions in Gaza, as nutritional data can undergo similar statistical analysis.

37. Look at History and Understand: Israel Is a Step Away From Civil War — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz / Shaul Arieli website, 04/09/2025

A civil war in Israel is an idea that can no longer be dismissed as fiction or as a warning for the distant future. More and more citizens see it as a possible scenario, and some are convinced that it is inevitable. Many point to Netanyahu's government, to the judicial overhaul, and to the annexation moves it led as the direct causes of this; conversely, many see the protest, in its various aspects, as the cause.

The contribution of Netanyahu and his government to the situation is indeed great, but such a determination expresses a narrow view that focuses only on the present dimension. Such a view prevents a full understanding of the threat, of its historical roots, and of the possible ways to deal with it. To understand the whole picture, one must look at the struggle that has been taking place in Israel for more than a hundred years between three communities—the ultra-Orthodox, the Zionist, and the messianic—over the character, aims, and future of the State of Israel. And above all one must look at the sharp struggle between the Zionist community and the messianic community.

The basis for civil wars is the existence of opposing ideologies: different views of the regime, society, religious faith, and the essence of shared life. These views split the public into camps. When each camp sees the vision of the other camp as an existential threat, any compromise that enables shared existence is perceived as treason. In such a reality, the position and functioning of the leadership are of decisive importance. It can moderate the gaps between the camps or exacerbate them. In the Israeli case, the leadership itself often increases tensions out of a political interest in distinguishing itself, preserving power bases, and strengthening separate identities—which brings the danger of internal confrontation even closer.

The source of the split in Jewish society lies in the founding of the Zionist movement in the late 19th century. Its founders challenged the Jewish society in the Diaspora that sanctified passivity, as the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe wrote in 1900: "All our hopes and expectations are that the Holy One, blessed be He, will bring us our righteous Messiah speedily in our days, amen, and our redemption will be by the Holy One, blessed be He, Himself" ("Or LaYesharim," Warsaw).

Jewish society in the Diaspora held a fatalistic conception and believed that its fate was determined by God, and that its revival would occur only by a miracle. It largely adopted the legend of the Amora from the Land of Israel, Rabbi Yossi ben Hanina, that "there are three oaths

which the Holy One, blessed be He, made Israel swear: the most important of which is ‘that Israel shall not ascend as a wall’” (Babylonian Talmud). That is, that they shall not all go up to the Land by force, in an organized manner. Some descendants of this society, many of whom perished in the Holocaust, became the ultra-Orthodox community in the State of Israel—sanctifying the “ghetto” separatism, the rejection of the primacy of labor, the annulment of core studies, and evasion of military service.

All this while the ultra-Orthodox exert disproportionate political influence in a democratic state whose legitimacy, in their eyes, is in doubt. This built-in paradox—using democratic tools to strengthen an anti-democratic conception—is one of the deepest points of friction in Israeli society, and a source of constant tension among the other camps these days.

The Zionist movement held an opposite ideology and vision. It saw the individual and the nation as responsible for their fate. The goal of the national home, in its view, was to join the Jewish people to the family of nations according to the principles of the Enlightenment, and to embark on a path of renewal of modern nationality. The foundations of Zionism are “Eretz Israel... a Jewish majority, an Arab minority, and equal rights for all” (Menachem Begin, 1972). In the Declaration of Independence the Zionists pledged that “The State of Israel... will devote itself to developing the land for the benefit of all its inhabitants; it will be based on the foundations of liberty, justice, and peace...; it will uphold complete equality of social and political rights for all its citizens regardless of religion, race, or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education, and culture; it will safeguard the holy places of all the religions, and it will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.” This commitment was not an empty declaration but a clear social contract, and from a historical perspective one can see how much the components of this contract have been eroded in recent decades under political, demographic, and messianic pressures.

To this basic split a further community was added, which grew at the beginning of the 20th century on the basis of the teachings of Rabbi Abraham Isaac HaCohen Kook (the Ra’ayah), who saw the Balfour Declaration as the beginning of redemption, and of his son, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook (the RaTziyah), who distorted and radicalized his father’s teaching into territorial messianic nationalism. They read history differently from the Zionists: the Holy One, blessed be He, decided upon the redemption of the people of Israel and “pulled the strings” of world politics for that purpose. The building of the state was done by the “donkey of the Messiah” (the secular). Since then, God stood alongside Israel (the few) against the Arabs (the many) and won for them. The land was liberated, and Jerusalem was unified.

To complete the process of redemption, all the territories of the land must be settled, sovereignty must be declared over all of Eretz Israel, the Temple must be built, Torah must be studied, and the leadership of the state and its democratic regime must be replaced. All of these are necessary conditions for “the return of the Divine Presence to Zion, the establishment of the kingdom of the House of David, and the building of the Temple” (Hanan Porat in the introduction to the book “Against All Odds,” 2008). This approach frames the Zionist enterprise as part of a divine plan, and hence also the intransigence regarding territorial compromise and the nature of the regime.

The beginning of the struggle was on the eve of the convening of the First World Zionist Congress, which was supposed to take place on August 25, 1897, in Munich. Then opposition to the convening arose from religious, Orthodox, and Reform circles. The “General Association of Rabbis in Germany” convened in Berlin and published in several newspapers a resolution condemning Zionism and calling to stay away from it. In the rabbis’ proclamations it was emphasized that “the aspiration of those called Zionists to establish a Jewish national state in Eretz Israel contradicts the messianic purposes of Judaism; the Jewish religion requires faithful service to the state in which Jews live.”

The protesting rabbis succeeded in removing the Congress from Munich, but thanks to the insistence of Herzl and the delegates it was held in Basel. Herzl published in the “Die Welt” organ a letter from the Preparatory Committee to the heads of the Jewish community in Munich, which said, among other things: “It seems to us that the Israelites who do not see themselves as national Jews but as belonging to another nation, ought to leave us in peace with the feelings of our people. We do not speak in their name, but in our own name alone; we respect their nationality; let them, please, respect ours” (Shlomo Avineri, “Herzl,” 2007).

The Congress ended with the historic resolution: “Zionism strives to establish for the Jewish people a home in Eretz Israel secured under public law.” This resolution set in motion the establishment of supra-communal institutions and the pioneering and national Second Aliyah, steps that became a practical turning point in realizing the Zionist vision, despite internal opposition.

The failure of Zionism’s attempt to move the masses of Jews to immigrate to Palestine in the 1920s and 1930s, and the awakening of the national movement of the Arabs of the land, led, with the outbreak of the Arab Revolt in 1936, to the establishment of the Peel Commission, which in 1937 published its plan to partition the land between the two peoples. Here too, the

voices of nationalist messianic refusal to any partition were heard: “The Jewish people will never accept any attempt to reduce the historical borders of Eretz Israel, as promised to the people of Israel by the Almighty,” thus was decided at the Mizrahi conference in 1937.

Even when the need became clear to establish a state in part of the land in order to save the Jews of Europe from the Nazis’ clutches, Rabbi Moshe Charlap rejected this and ruled: “It is clear that Israel is forbidden to give up any part of the Holy Land.” The Zionist leadership headed by Chaim Weizmann and David Ben-Gurion insisted and carried the resolution of the Congress in Zurich. Ben-Gurion determined: “From the point of view of realizing Zionism, preferable is the establishment of a Jewish state immediately, even in part of Eretz Israel, to the continuation of the Mandate over the entire land.”

The ultra-Orthodox and the messianics do not bear responsibility for the cancellation of the Peel Commission’s partition proposal, which perhaps would have saved European Jewry—the British government canceled it. But they explained the Holocaust in their own way: the Satmar Rebbe, Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum, wrote in his book “VaYoel Moshe” that the violation of the prohibition “to ascend as a wall” brought about the divine punishment of the Holocaust. Rabbi Shach, in a speech at the Ponevezh Yeshiva in 1990, summed up: “The Holy One, blessed be He, conducted... a long accounting extending over hundreds of years, until it accumulated to an account of six million Jews, and thus the Holocaust occurred.” And in the messianic-nationalist community, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook explained the Holocaust as a punishment for the fact that the people did not come up to the Land after the Balfour Declaration, which heralded the beginning of redemption: “The people of God clung so much to the impurity of the lands of the nations, to the point that it is compelled to be cut off and decreed from it in bloodshed” (“Eretz HaTzvi”).

No one tried to reconcile the contradiction between the Ra’ayah’s depiction—he died in 1935—of the Balfour Declaration as the beginning of redemption and the Holocaust that took place 25 years later. Blaming the victims is a deep component in the worldview of the messianic-nationalist camp, and it casts a heavy shadow over any possibility of a political compromise even today, due to the fear that returning the territories will engender divine punishment.

The attitude of the three communities to the UN partition resolution in 1947 was different: the fear of the price that opposition to the establishment of a Jewish state after 2,000 years would exact tipped the scales for most hawks. “A people that longs for life chooses independence and compromises on territory,” Zalman Shazar, later the President of the State, determined in

1947. Most of the Zionist-religious leadership, headed by the leaders of Mizrachi and HaPoel HaMizrachi, voted for partition for practical reasons. Rabbi Yehuda Leib Maimon, one of the leaders of Mizrachi, was among the prominent supporters of the resolution. He emphasized that the establishment of a state is a stage in redemption, signed the Declaration of Independence, and was the first Minister of Religious Affairs.

The ultra-Orthodox public was divided at that time: part of it saw the state as a somewhat positive stage, and part of it saw it as a negative stage. The Satmar Hasidic movement espoused absolute anti-Zionism. The Lithuanian public refused to see the state as a redemptive process because it was expected to have secular rule, and the Sephardi public was somewhat more favorable. Here it is important to note the status-quo letter that Ben-Gurion, then the Chairman of the Jewish Agency, sent to Agudat Israel in June 1947. The latter did not officially participate in the Zionist institutions and demanded guarantees that a future Jewish state would respect the principles of Halakha in central matters—so that it would be possible to present a unified Jewish front before the UN Special Committee, and to prevent a deep rift between the secular public and the religious and ultra-Orthodox public. The party's leader, Yitzhak Meir Levin, signed the Declaration of Independence and was the first Minister of Welfare, but the agreement regarding the status quo created a precedent of a state compromise with a sector that refuses to accept the foundations of the democratic regime, which includes separation between religion and politics, a precedent that continues to echo to this day.

For three decades the secular-traditional majority of Gahal-Likud and the Alignment-Labor preserved the integrity of Jewish society in Israel, even if ethnic rifts threatened it and gave birth to the “Black Panthers” and later to the ultra-Orthodox Shas party. The NRP (Mafdal) under Yosef Burg (1970–1986) was moderate and different from its successors; Burg warned against the messianics in his camp: “They raise the banner of the integrity of the Land and forgot the integrity of the state, forgot the integrity of the Torah, forgot the integrity of the camp. If by way of the idea of the integrity of the Land one can arrive in thought to [Meir] Kahane, that is a great guilt.”

Until 1974 the messianics saw the achievements of Zionism as the beginning of redemption. The withdrawal from Quneitra in the agreement with Syria in 1974 was perceived as a violation of the divine command prohibiting “voluntary concession of territories.” From this was born the “Gush Emunim” movement, and in 1981 it was succeeded by the Yesha Council, which radicalized its position. From 1974 onward the messianic community declared war on the

Zionist community—which was blind to the threat and even saw it as an expression of democracy and pluralism.

The messianic community, small but determined, received a tailwind from Menachem Begin's victory in the 1977 elections, which rested, among other things, on the fanning of ethnic tensions. Although he was aware of their doctrine—"You have one weakness—you have developed within yourselves a complex of messianism"—Begin, like them, dreamed of establishing a thousand Elon Morehs. Nonetheless, contrary to their vision, he signed the peace agreement with Egypt and the autonomy agreement in the territories. On the other hand, he enabled Ariel Sharon to establish 88 new settlements within eight years in the West Bank.

The Oslo Accords of Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres threatened the vision of the messianic, and they acted with Benjamin Netanyahu to topple them by violating the law and revoking the legitimacy of the elected institutions and of the majority's decision, because in their view it does not stand the test of the Torah. Netanyahu's return to the premiership in 2009 strengthened the alliance between the ultra-Orthodox, the messianic, and Likud. In his 15 years of rule, Netanyahu, who today fears for his political and personal future against the background of the trial being conducted against him, deepened the split. This reached a peak in the judicial overhaul and in refusal of any political process, while the messianic accompanied these steps with cynical exploitation of the public purse, with Jewish terrorism, with violation of international law, and with harm to the security systems.

Only in recent years has there been an awakening of the Zionist public, while the political opposition proves barren and enamored of the status quo and of "getting under the stretcher" of the rival. The warning of the High Priest Hanania after the conquest of the Temple by the extremists on the eve of its destruction by Titus remains relevant today to the apathetic public ensconced at home: "They rob you and you submit... they beat you and you are silent! Was it not you who caused their great number (of the extremists) by the silence you kept when they first joined together? ... Will you never rise up? ... Perhaps you have lost your most precious natural feeling, the longing for freedom?" (from "The Jewish March of Folly," by Amotz Asa-El).

Therefore, Israel is a step away from civil war. The messianic community and the ultra-Orthodox community see the current reality—a full-on right-wing government, the political captivity of Netanyahu and Likud, Trump's support, the military victories against Iran, Hezbollah, the Houthis, and Gaza—as the best opportunity to realize their vision. The messianic will do everything in their historical "window of opportunity" to succeed, and at any

price: harming innocents, violating international law and Israeli law, harming activists of the Zionist camp, abandoning the hostages, and more. Otherwise, their failure will be interpreted, according to their belief, as a total failure. The ultra-Orthodox, for their part, will try to entrench their separatism and their far-reaching benefits irreversibly. Conversely, the Zionists fear that with the completion of the judicial overhaul and the annexation of the territories, Israel will become a state they will not want to live in.

Therefore, the closer we get to elections, these tensions are increasingly amplified by government ministers, through annexation moves, the toppling of the rule of law, and the continuation of the futile war in Gaza, alongside refusal on the diplomatic level. The great threat stems from the attempt to appropriate the nation and religion—which are the first and last common denominator of all the Jewish communities in Israel—and to deny them, as it were, to the secular Zionist camp, by the prime minister and his camp, with statements like “the left has forgotten what it means to be Jews,” which cast secular Zionists out of the camp and bring Israel closer to a boiling point and a possible slide into violent confrontation.

On one side, which has already used murderous violence against peace activists and a sitting prime minister, a process of arming is taking place under the policy of distributing weapons to civilians of Minister Ben-Gvir and the regional defense forces in the settlements, while the other side is careful to distance itself from any such sign and emphasizes the lawful and non-violent civil struggle. Only a different leadership, in the coalition and in the opposition, courageous and committed to the integrity of the house and to the Zionist vision in whose light the state was established, will be able to dissuade the camps from the final move which, if it is realized, will horribly replicate the destruction of the Kingdom of Israel, the Kingdom of Judah, and the Hasmonean Kingdom, as it is described originally and boldly in the book “The Jewish March of Folly.”

38. Over Half of West Bank Palestinians in Favor of Two-state Solution, Survey Shows — Yonah Jeremy Bob, Jerusalem Post, 30/09/2025

Fifty-two percent of West Bank Palestinians still support a two-state solution with Israel despite the war, as opposed to 28% who hope for a single Palestinian state from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea, an INSS survey published on Tuesday found.

Commissioned conjointly with the T-Politography research group, the INSS's survey paints a picture of a confused Palestinian public, revealing "a profound divide over continued support for Hamas and the armed struggle, opposition to normalization, and Israel's right to exist."

According to the inquiry, this split in opinions also reflects deep generational and political divisions within Palestinian society regarding the future of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

While 49% of those surveyed supported continuing the armed struggle against Israel, 43% opposed it.

Yet many of those who favored this approach did not view it as a way out of the current conflict, with only 17% believing armed struggle is the best way "to end the Israeli occupation," compared to 43% who viewed negotiations as the best path forward.

Next, 46% said Hamas's decision to launch the October 7 invasion was a mistake, and 33% believed the attack harmed Palestinian chances of establishing an independent state.

Further complicating this picture, 43% of respondents opposed disarming Hamas, while 36% supported such a move.

Despite their pragmatic support for a two-state solution, ideologically, 54% believed Israel has no right to exist, and more than 69% thought Israel would not endure forever.

West Bank Palestinians also expressed pessimism regarding the future, with 59% believing Israelis and Palestinians cannot live together with full civic equality in a single state. In comparison, 40% believed coexistence is possible.

According to the survey, a large majority — 71% — viewed normalization steps between Israel and Arab states as a betrayal of Palestinian interests, while only 9% regarded these as contributing to the establishment of Palestinian statehood.

In contrast, 48% supported the idea of creating a regional alliance that would include Israel, the Palestinians, and Arab states, within which a Palestinian state could be established, compared to only 43% who opposed this notion.

Moreover, the study revealed a significant divide regarding who should govern Gaza in the future. There was no clear consensus on whether that should be Fatah, Hamas, or a technocratic regime.

Nevertheless, a plurality of 39% was in favor of a unity government involving both Fatah and Hamas, something which clashes with the majority found in the Israeli and Western stance that Hamas cannot be an official part of post-war Gaza governance.

Approximately 300 Palestinians over the age of 18 were surveyed in Arabic for the study between September 1 and September 7. This was before the announcement of the 20-point peace plan, which US President Donald Trump proposed.

A statement said that the maximum sampling error for the total sample is $\pm 5.7\%$ at a 95% confidence level.

39. Naftali Bennett Strengthened Hamas and Paved the Way for Smotrich and Ben Gvir - He Is Not the “Savior” — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz / Shaul Arieli website, 09/10/2025

In recent months, Naftali Bennett seems to be enjoying a public revival. He appears on screens, lectures at conferences, and rolls his eyes with false statesmanship, as if he were the last “enlightened” prime minister—the one who “saved” Israel from the abyss. But hypocrisy has its limits. The 20 seats he’s receiving in polls—while Bezalel Smotrich barely passes the threshold and Itamar Ben Gvir maintains his power—show that among centrists and leftists there are many “strategic” or simply naïve voters.

Bennett has found fertile ground for rewriting history. Behind the artificial halo stands a politician who grew from the nationalist-messianic right, promoted settlement expansion, pushed for annexing most of the West Bank, and ignored the Palestinians—directly contributing to the conditions that empowered Hamas and led to the collapse of October 7.

Bennett was never moderate. Quite the opposite: he legitimized political messianism and prepared the ground for the rise of ultra-nationalist forces—the same forces that opened the door to Smotrich and Ben Gvir. Anyone who now praises Bennett’s “achievements” must re-examine his record and its long-term consequences.

Bennett entered politics with a clear agenda: blocking the creation of a Palestinian state. In 2012 he launched his “Stabilization Plan,” whose first principle was the unilateral annexation of Area C. “Israel will act independently and fortify its vital interests,” he said. When asked about Gaza, he replied—blind to regional reality—that it was “already practically part of Egypt.” Fully aware of the sensitivities, he still wrote with arrogance: “The world won’t recognize our sovereignty there... it’ll get used to it over time” (Ynet, 23 Feb 2012).

At a time when Likud still sometimes pretended to moderation abroad, Bennett made his aim explicit: annexation. “We must move from defense to decision; our dream is for Judea and Samaria to be part of sovereign Israel,” he declared in Jerusalem in 2016. His “Stabilization Plan” envisioned permanent Israeli military control and Palestinian enclaves without territorial continuity—essentially identical to Smotrich’s later proposal.

In government, Bennett repeatedly advanced policies that deepened Israel’s control over the West Bank. As education minister, he infused the system with messianic ideology, saying: “We must restore pride in Zionism, without apology.” The result: politicization of education and exclusion of critical voices. As defense minister, he strengthened the army as a tool of settlement policy.

Israelis tend to forget Bennett's words and deeds. He made clear time and again his opposition to a Palestinian state—"Our ancestors and descendants will not forgive a leader who divides our land" (Maariv, 11 Aug 2014)—and never changed his stance. His anti-liberal worldview, shared with Shaked, Ben Gvir, and Smotrich, glorified militarism: "We will live forever by the sword." In a 2015 Facebook post to soldiers he wrote, "One day you'll be home with your wife and kids under a warm blanket—then new soldiers will guard you."

He even urged soldiers before elections to persuade their comrades to vote for his party.

In August 2024, Globes' fact-checking project Mishrokit exposed false statistics he spread about Muslims in Europe—some unverifiable, others nonexistent.

He didn't invent attacks on the judiciary either. In 2015 he warned against "judicial tyranny" and backed a Basic Law amendment enabling disqualification of Knesset candidates based on their statements, shifting the burden of proof to them. In 2023 he told NBC that "broad consensus" existed for judicial reform because the Supreme Court "does not fairly represent all opinions."

When Bennett became prime minister in 2021, many claimed he had changed. He sat with Lapid, Michaeli, and Horowitz, and for the first time included an Arab Islamist party, Ra'am, in the coalition—a rare moment that seemed to challenge the messianic narrative. But his policy toward Palestinians remained the same. In a Yesha Council speech he compared peace efforts to an unnecessary operation removing a "shard from the backside," insisting Israel must simply "live with it." His government advanced over 7,000 new housing units in settlements—a record even compared with previous right-wing governments. Internationally too, he accelerated settlement expansion while posing as a "pragmatist."

In Gaza, the same pattern persisted: strengthening Hamas as an alternative to the Palestinian Authority. The cynical logic was that as long as Hamas ruled Gaza, there was "no one to talk to." Economic concessions to Hamas continued—Qatari salary payments, more work permits—all under the "conflict-management" doctrine that sowed the winds which brought the storm of October 7.

Bennett believed Israel could expand settlements without paying a price, weaken the PA without losing stability, and tolerate Hamas as long as it was "quiet." That pessimism laid the groundwork for the despair fueling Palestinian terror. Hamas became richer, stronger, deadlier. As defense minister, Bennett's greatest failure was embracing "conflict

management.” He weakened the PA further, offering token economic gestures while proudly refusing to meet Abu Mazen or discuss diplomacy (Srugim, 17 Aug 2022).

Meanwhile, he helped legitimize the messianic right. As leader of HaBayit HaYehudi, he collaborated with those who saw settlements as a redemptive mission. He avoided confronting Ben Gvir, thus paving the way for Religious Zionism and Jewish Power—parties that later captured the finance and national security ministries. “Whoever lets tigers into the political cage shouldn’t be surprised when they devour the keeper.”

Bennett’s clean image, fluent English, and calm tone granted him an aura of responsibility that deceived both Israeli centrists and the foreign press. Yet the gap between image and reality is vast.

Historically, Bennett appears as both the prime minister who formed a coalition with an Arab party—an unprecedented step—and a politician who deepened the occupation and empowered extremists. These two faces complement each other: Ra’am served as his fig leaf while he quietly advanced the messianic agenda.

Right-wing leaders had long used the same tactic—moderate façade, annexation in practice—but Bennett perfected it and sold it to the center-left. That is his greatest political success and his most destructive legacy.

Israelis love myths, and Bennett exploited that. Draped in the image of “the responsible savior,” he now calls himself a pragmatic unifier. When asked if he might return to politics, he replied: “I don’t rule anything out. If I see the country in danger, I’ll consider returning” (Globes, 12 June 2024). The irony is sharp: the man who helped create the danger portrays himself as the one to rescue us from it.

He has already founded a new party—Bennett 2026—and appears frequently in international media as Israel’s self-appointed advocate.

Let it be stated clearly: Naftali Bennett is not the “responsible alternative.” He is part of the failure.

Anyone who weakened the Palestinian Authority, strengthened Hamas, and legitimized Smotrich and Ben Gvir cannot be the savior. He shares full responsibility for the chaos.

The lesson for the future is clear: if Israel wishes to recover from the trauma of October 7, it must stop clinging to false myths and stop treating those who created the problem as part of

the solution. Bennett, like Netanyahu and the rest of the messianic right, belongs to a past we must leave behind.

Those who vote for him will also bear responsibility for the policies that already led us to disaster.

What Israel needs is leadership that understands: the conflict cannot be managed forever; settlements cannot keep expanding without destroying stability; and extremists cannot be legitimized without dismantling democracy.

As long as the public remains captive to fake narratives of “responsible leaders” like Bennett, the future will mirror the present—another cycle of delusion and ruin.

Voters must resist “strategic voting” and choose those who truly represent their values.

40. In Trump's World There Is No Morality, No Limits, and No Shared Responsibility. This Is Bad for Israel — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz / Shaul Arieli website, 13/11/2025

Israelis, wrapped in joy and relief after the release of the hostages from Hamas captivity and the end of the war in Gaza, are thanking the person they believe delivered this achievement: President Donald Trump (according to last month's survey by the Israel Democracy Institute, 95 percent of the public believe the U.S. president "contributed somewhat" or "contributed greatly" to reaching the agreement). Trump's success—through coercion, blunt threats, and force-based diplomacy—against the background of a weakened international system, demonstrates how the American president is dismantling that very system from within.

Since returning for a second term, Trump has undermined the three pillars of the global order: international consensus, international law, and the multilateral system of institutions such as the UN General Assembly, the UN Security Council, and international courts. Trump does not view these as essential coordinating mechanisms but as shackles to be broken. He is dragging international relations back to the era before World War I, to the age of the "imperial principle," in which states were free to wage war, conquer territory, and demand recognition of their actions in the name of "the natural right of the strong."

On February 4, 2025, Trump signed an executive order directing the United States to withdraw from the UN Human Rights Council and to re-evaluate its participation in other international organizations. "The U.S. will not participate in the Human Rights Council and will not seek election to this body," Trump said, viewing multilateral partnerships as a burden rather than an asset. He approaches international relations the same way he approaches business: every cooperation must yield immediate benefit. No values, no institutional commitment—only interests. In doing so, Trump is dismantling one of the foundational pillars of the global order: the consensus that grants legitimacy to law, to values, and to the boundaries between permissible and forbidden.

Throughout both his terms, Trump has openly derided the international legal system. On February 6, 2025, he signed an order imposing sanctions on judges and staff of the International Criminal Court (ICC), arguing that the court crossed "red lines" by daring to investigate alleged crimes committed by U.S. or Israeli citizens. In effect, Trump declared that international law does not apply to those powerful enough. Human rights organizations described this step as "a betrayal of the international justice system," and more than 60 countries issued a joint statement affirming: "We reaffirm our unwavering support for the

independence, impartiality, and integrity of the International Criminal Court.” But Trump was unfazed. For him, the law is just a recommendation.

Thus, the principle of force becomes the supreme principle. Trump believes that military power, economic pressure, and personal threats are the only effective tools in international relations. He uses them freely and views them as legitimate weapons of policy. Institutions such as the UN Security Council, designed to deter states from acting unilaterally, are losing their influence not only because of the American veto but because Trump is drying up their budgets, reducing U.S. participation, and declaring: “The U.S. will not cooperate with institutions that try to harm our national interests.” The Security Council and the UN are becoming toothless bodies, with the United States—the same nation that built this system after World War II—leading its dismantling.

A profound transformation is taking place before our eyes: instead of collective responsibility—unilateral force; instead of diplomacy—threats; instead of law—interests. “Trump was right about the UN—your world order is over,” read the headline of a supportive article on the Modern Diplomacy website. This triumphant statement illustrates the depth of the shift: the global order, designed to protect the weak from the strong, is collapsing.

Trump is effectively returning the world to an older historical pattern. Before 1914, no international institutions existed to prevent one state from attacking another. Whoever could—conquered. Whoever weakened—was devoured. The world was built on empires. The global social contract that delegitimized conquest emerged as a lesson from the horrors of two world wars, which proved that without rules—destruction is total.

Trump, in many ways, embodies the opposite: he seeks to return humanity to an era when empires traded territories through wars and diplomacy was merely a tool for gaining temporary advantage. “The strong do what they can, and the weak suffer what they must,” wrote Thucydides 2,400 years ago. Trump has simply turned this saying into official policy, as reflected in his threats toward Canada and Denmark, his declared consideration of drone strikes against drug cartels inside Venezuela and Mexico, and his trade policies in which agreements are reshaped or canceled at will rather than by established norms.

This same logic is visible in the Gaza–hostage affair. Trump intervened not only out of a desire to promote regional stability but also to prove that American power can still impose solutions. His intervention is driven not just by regional interests but also by personal prestige. He seeks to be remembered as the leader who produced dramatic Middle East peace agreements—an

accomplishment with electoral value in the U.S. and symbolic weight in his pursuit of the Nobel Peace Prize.

To achieve this, Trump became personally involved and even dispatched an expanded diplomatic team to Israel that has been acting *de facto* as a substitute for the Israeli government on the international stage: managing the contacts with Arab states, supervising the implementation of the agreement with Hamas, and signaling to the world that the sole address for negotiation on Gaza is Washington—not multilateral institutions.

At the same time, Trump made clear the constraints he is imposing on Jerusalem: he warned that if Israel uses the momentum to annex territories in the West Bank, it will lose U.S. support entirely. This is not merely a tactical statement but a substantive condition: cooperation on the hostage release and regional coordination in exchange for halting annexation moves that would undermine America's ability to operate in the region.

"We made it happen because we made them fear the consequences," Trump told Fox News, speaking about the cease-fire. He did not hide that he used threats as a diplomatic tool. "You talk, you threaten, and then they move. That's how you make deals."

In his view, even human life is merely another element in a power game. Indeed, the achievement of the hostage release has been turned into a propaganda tool. The families of the hostages, desperate for results, praise "the man who brought the children home," but historically speaking, Trump merely exploited the collapse of international mechanisms to reinforce his position as the sole mediator. He did not save the system—he demonstrated that he can function without it.

The implications extend far beyond the Middle East. When a U.S. president treats international courts, the UN, or global agreements as adversaries, he sends a worldwide message. In a world without institutions that can prevent invasions, annexations, or unilateral declarations, every country is free to choose what suits it.

When the leader of a superpower boasts that "there is no international law—only national interest" and sends the aircraft carrier *Gerald Ford* to the shores of Venezuela, he sets a model for imitation. Russia, China, Turkey, and even smaller states—all are gaining legitimacy to ignore the rules. The result is a system of sophisticated anarchy, in which each state defines justice for itself.

This approach is not just ideological—it is strategic. Trump knows that a fragmented international system allows him easier control: no Security Council, no human-rights reports,

no laws limiting arms exports or mandating economic sanctions. Meanwhile, the American public is drawn to the old-new idea of “America First,” even if it means “the world can wait.” As the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) noted, “Trump’s address to the UN General Assembly on September 23 endangers the benefits of global cooperation.” He simply prefers a world without institutions to a world in which America, as global leader, must uphold rules and goals, such as those related to climate.

On the eve of the New York mayoral election, Trump offered another illustration of his cynical use of power. He attacked the Democratic candidate, Zohran Mamdani (who won nonetheless), calling him “the communist Mamdani,” and explicitly threatened—according to *The Guardian*—that “if a communist candidate wins the New York mayoral race, I doubt I’ll transfer federal funds beyond the bare minimum required to my first and beloved city” (Nov. 3).

The next day, Trump repeated the message on Fox News, saying: “Candidates who prefer the UN over America will not get a single penny from me when I’m in the White House.” Even in this seemingly local intervention, his coercive worldview is evident: using public funds as a means of pressure, portraying civic elections as an ideological struggle between “patriots” and “traitors,” and further eroding the checks and balances of federal institutions.

The problem is that the system cannot survive without the necessary institutions and balances. History shows that when there are no powerful mediating institutions, wars return, and scholars already warn of a “systemic U.S. withdrawal from global commitments.” Small states will try to arm themselves; middle powers will seek regional alliances; agreements will be replaced by secret and dangerous understandings. This is not a return to simplicity but a return to the danger of renewed escalation and violence.

Thus, at the very moment the world seeks a diplomatic solution in Gaza, Trump signals the opposite: not negotiation but coercion; not law but force. He determines whom to reward and whom to deter according to his immediate interests, using power rather than international law, replacing the idea of an international community with the logic of the jungle. If states adopt his approach, even the release of the hostages will become a precedent of coercive politics, not of human reconciliation.

In 2018, I wrote in *Haaretz* about this emerging trend in Trump’s policy: “The next U.S. presidential election (2020) will determine the direction of the world—toward an ice age in international relations or toward thawing.” After a short respite under Joe Biden, we have

returned to the ice age in full force. But this time, the ice is not just a metaphor for diplomatic frost—it is a moral freeze. In a world where Trump sets the rules, there is no morality, no limits, no shared responsibility. Only interests.

If this policy continues under Trump or his successor, or under leaders such as Putin, Erdoğan, or others, the world may enter a period in which each state acts according to its power rather than the law. Israel, which now feels grateful to the president who brought the hostages home, may soon discover that in the long run it will be the one paying the highest price for the collapse of the international order. In a world without security for small states, without shared values, without law, and without accountability, no one will be there to stop whoever comes next—Israel included. Nothing lasts forever.

2026

Significant Events

01.01.2026 - In the United States - President Donald Trump.

01.01.2026 - Speaker of the 25th Knesset – Amir Ohana.

01.01.2026 - Israel Police Commissioner – Commissioner Yaakov Shabtai.

01.01.2026 - President of the Supreme Court – Justice Isaac Amit.

01.01.2026 - President of Israel – Isaac Herzog.

01.01.2026 - The IDF arrests 50 Palestinians and demolishes homes in East Jerusalem as part of operations in the West Bank.

01.01.2026 - Chief of the General Staff – Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir.

01.01.2026 - 37th Prime Minister of Israel – Benjamin Netanyahu.

01.01.2026 - Israel's decision to suspend the activities of dozens of international aid organizations in Gaza takes effect.

03.01.2026 - The United States military captures Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro in Operation Absolute Resolve.

06.01.2026 - Israeli strike at Birzeit University – dozens injured.

08.01.2026 - 2025 set a record: tenders for 9,600 housing units – with the declared goal of "dealing a fatal blow to the idea of a Palestinian state."

12.01.2026 - Israel advances a "lethal" settlement plan in East Jerusalem – 9,000 housing units in Atarot (Qalandiya), along with a plan to evict 40 families in Sheikh Jarrah.

13.1.2026 - U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff announces the launch of the second phase of the Gaza ceasefire agreement, intended to transition from a ceasefire to demilitarization, technocratic governance, and reconstruction.

13.01.2026 - The northeastern Syria offensive begins, a military campaign between the Syrian transitional government and the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces in Syrian Kurdistan. The offensive ends about a week later with a ceasefire agreement.

13.01.2026 - Egyptian Foreign Minister Abdelatty holds talks with NATO's Special Representative for the Southern Neighbourhood and with his Qatari, German, and Turkish counterparts to discuss conflict resolution and the Gaza Strip.

13.01.2026 - Egyptian Foreign Minister Abdelatty speaks with Hussein al-Sheikh about Egypt's support for deploying a stabilization force in Gaza and establishing the technocrats committee.

14.01.2026 - The United States announces the transition to the second phase of the ceasefire plan.

14/01/2026 - Establishment of the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG), headed by Dr. Ali Abdel Hamid Ali Shaath.

15.01.2026 - Widespread raids and demolitions in the West Bank – more than 80 arrests, including a woman and two children.

15.01.2026 - The IDF carries out extensive raids and arrests across the West Bank, including Ramallah, Nablus, Tulkarm, and Jenin (Areas A+B) – more than 80 arrests; one Palestinian is injured.

15.01.2026 - The Palestinian committee intended to govern Gaza (NCAG), under the supervision of the Board of Peace, convenes in Cairo for its first meeting and presents an initial framework for restoring civilian governance in the Strip; Israeli officials voice objections to including representatives close to Hamas on the committee.

16.01.2026 - The White House issues a statement on progress in implementing the U.S. plan for Gaza.

17.01.2026 - Trump announces the members of the Board of Peace executive committee for the Gaza Strip, including representatives from Qatar and Turkey.

19.01.2026 - The IDF begins a major raid in Hebron (Area A/B) – dozens of vehicles and armored units, dozens of Palestinians arrested, a general curfew, and neighborhood closures.

20.01.2026 - Israel demolishes UNRWA headquarters in East Jerusalem (Sheikh Jarrah), despite UN condemnation.

20.01.2026 - Israeli forces fire tear gas at a UN vocational school in Qalandiya.

20.01.2026 - A series of 130 raids begins in Qalandiya refugee camp and Kafr Aqab near Jerusalem (Area B/Area A boundary).

21.01.2026 - Egyptian President el-Sisi meets Trump in Davos.

23.01.2026 - The U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee holds hearings concerning the Israeli-Palestinian arena.

25.01.2026 - UNRWA headquarters in East Jerusalem is deliberately set on fire – the site is torched after its demolition.

26.01.2026 - The body of the last hostage in the Gaza Strip, Ran Gvili, is returned as part of Operation "Brave Heart."

26.01.2026 - The IDF recovers the body of the last hostage from a cemetery in the Shuja'iyya–Daraj Tuffah area; Hamas claims it has fulfilled all commitments under the first phase.

28.01.2026 - Settlers set fire to Palestinian property in Khirbet al-Sidra, a Bedouin community northeast of East Jerusalem; IDF forces raid the area following the attack.

29.01.2026 - The IDF Spokesperson acknowledges the Gaza Health Ministry's estimate of approximately 70,000 Palestinians killed in the war.

31.01.2026 - Israeli strike on a police station in Gaza City – 14 killed, including four female police officers, civilians, and prisoners.

01.02.2026 - FIFA and the Board of Peace form a partnership to support Gaza reconstruction through sector-specific projects such as sports fields and infrastructure, a new initiative in socioeconomic reconstruction in the context of the conflict.

02.02.2026 - OCHA summary: approximately 130 IDF raids over two weeks (20.1–2.2) in Areas A+B – mass arrests, temporary evacuation of homes, and curfews in refugee camps.

03.02.2026 - Hamas is ready to transfer governance in Gaza to a technocratic committee; the death toll reaches 71,803.

08.02.2026 - Israel – policy/administrative change: the Security Cabinet approves measures to deepen Israeli control in the West Bank, including in land, planning, and registration: easing land purchases by Israelis, enforcing building violations in Areas A and B contrary to the Oslo Accords, and removing the Palestinian Hebron Municipality's oversight of construction in the city.

09.02.2026 - Egypt condemns the Israeli government's decision to expand its annexation plan in the West Bank and seize Palestinian assets, and calls on the UN Security Council to protect the rights of the Palestinian people.

16.02.2026 - The Palestinian Authority condemns Israel's decision to renew land registration (tabu) in Area C, calling it "de facto annexation," and launches a diplomatic effort to mobilize international pressure.

17.02.2026 - A committee of eight Arab and Islamic countries issues a statement condemning the Israeli government's decision regarding land registration in the West Bank.

18.02.2026 - The first summit of the Board of Peace is held in Washington.

19.02.2026 - The first Board of Peace gathering is held in Washington, with international commitments for Gaza reconstruction.

19.02.2026 - Israeli forces close a Palestinian community center in East Jerusalem – the second-largest Palestinian center in the city after Al-Aqsa Mosque.

19.02.2026 - First gathering of the Board of Peace in Washington, a U.S.-initiated framework for reconstructing the Gaza Strip and promoting a stable postwar process, attended by dozens of countries and featuring financial commitments and stabilization missions.

20.02.2026 - The status quo collapses – Israeli police raid the Al-Aqsa compound, arrest employees, and restrict Muslim access at the start of Ramadan.

20.02.2026 - Public debate in the United States over whether a financial commitment to Gaza reconstruction requires congressional approval.

22.02.2026 - Israeli authorities issue demolition orders for residential and agricultural structures in East Jerusalem – 59 demolitions in January (126 structures, including 77 inhabited homes).

23.02.2026 - Ministers from EU member states meet the leadership of the Board of Peace in Brussels to discuss the future of the Gaza Strip, Palestinian rights, and the relationship with the UN framework – exerting significant diplomatic pressure.

23.02.2026 - Twenty Arab and European countries issue a joint statement condemning measures to expand Israeli control in the West Bank.

28.02.2026 - Israel and the United States attack Iran in Operation "Lion's Roar."

01.03.2026 - Iranian state media confirm the death of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as a result of the opening strike of Operation Lion's Roar the previous day.

02.03.2026 - Lebanon front in Operation Lion's Roar (2026 Lebanon War): Hezbollah joins Iran's attacks against Israel in response to the killing of Ali Khamenei.

06.03.2026 - President el-Sisi speaks with Mahmoud Abbas about the need to prevent escalation and efforts to advance the second phase of Trump's plan.

08.03.2026 - Iran's Assembly of Experts selects Mojtaba Khamenei as the new ayatollah in place of his father, following injuries from an assassination attempt. The recognition ceremony takes place two days later.

16.03.2026 - Meeting of the EU Foreign Affairs Council.

24.03.2026 - European opposition to legislation establishing the death penalty in Israel.

30.03.2026 - The death penalty law for terrorists passes its second and third readings in the Knesset.

31.03.2026 - The Egyptian Foreign Ministry condemns the death penalty law for terrorists passed by the Knesset, calling it a grave escalation and a blatant violation of international humanitarian law and the Geneva Conventions.

01.04.2026 - Turkish Directorate of Communications head Burhanettin Duran and the Turkish Foreign Ministry condemn the death penalty law for terrorists: "The racist law is a continuation of genocidal activity and collective punishment against the Palestinian people" – IHH demonstrations in Istanbul.

04.04.2026 - Erdoğan– Hamas delegation summit in Istanbul.

06.04.2026 - National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir visits the Temple Mount.

07.04.2026 - Ceasefire between Iran and the United States.

07.04.2026 - Terrorist attack against the Israeli consulate in Istanbul – one attacker is killed and two others are injured. The Israeli Foreign Ministry thanks the Turkish police.

08.04.2026 - IDF Operation "Eternal Darkness" against Hezbollah targets in Lebanon.

09.04.2026 - After 41 days, the gates of Al-Aqsa Mosque reopen to worshippers.

09.04.2026 - It is reported that the Security Cabinet approved the establishment and legalization of 34 settlements in the West Bank – the largest number ever approved in a single decision – bringing the number of settlements approved by the current government to 103.

09.04.2026 - The Turkish Foreign Ministry condemns the construction of 34 new settlements in the West Bank.

15.04.2026 - A renewed wave of activity by successor organizations to the Jewish Defense League is exposed in the United States after the arrest of an activist who planned to attack a pro-Palestinian activist with Molotov cocktails.

16.04.2026 - The progressive Jewish organization Jews for Racial and Economic Justice participates in a rally calling on New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani to veto a buffer-zone law for protests near educational institutions, introduced following pro-Palestinian protests near synagogues.

16.04.2026 - President Trump announces a ceasefire in Lebanon.

20.04.2026 - Senior government ministers mark the renewal of settlement in Sanur in the northern West Bank, evacuated during the 2005 disengagement; the following day, demolition orders are issued for 15 businesses in the nearby Palestinian village of al-Fandaqumiya.

23.04.2026 - Peter Beinart's book, *Being Jewish After the Destruction of Gaza*, which criticized the American Jewish community's response to the Gaza war, wins a PEN America award.

23.04.2026 - The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs publishes a mapping of 925 movement obstacles in the West Bank, restricting the movement of approximately 3.4 million Palestinians.

24.04.2026 - New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani vetoes a buffer-zone law near schools, contrary to the position of major Jewish organizations that supported restrictions on pro-Palestinian protests near Jewish institutions.

25.04.2026 - Palestinian local elections are held in the West Bank and Deir al-Balah; these are the first elections of their kind in the Gaza Strip since 2006 and are also intended to strengthen the Palestinian Authority's claim to return to governing the Strip.

27.04.2026 - The Trump administration publishes a policy under which green cards may be denied to applicants with a history of anti-Israel activity or expression, including participation in pro-Palestinian protests.

28.04.2026 - Israeli former hostage Omer Shem Tov speaks at UCLA; following the event, the student association publishes a protest letter opposing the event and its pro-Israel messages.

28.04.2026 - A U.S. synagogue hosts a joint event with Palestinian activists to raise funds for humanitarian aid for children in Gaza.

28.04.2026 - Jeddah summit of GCC heads of state, who meet face-to-face for the first time since the fighting in Iran.

30.04.2026 - Israel takes control of the Sumud flotilla to Gaza near Greece. Senior Turkish officials issue strong condemnations; the Turkish Foreign Ministry states: "The attack carried out by Israeli forces in international waters is an act of piracy."

30.04.2026 - The U.S. State Department condemns the Global Sumud flotilla to Gaza, describes it as a pro-Hamas initiative, and claims it undermines U.S. peace efforts.

01.05.2026 - Report in Turkey: flotilla activists were subjected to torture and harassment by IDF soldiers.

04.05.2026 - Cornell University's president confronts pro-Palestinian students following a campus discussion about Israel and the war in Gaza.

05.05.2026 - Pro-Palestinian demonstrators again protest outside Park East Synagogue in New York against an Israeli real-estate event; police keep them away from the synagogue entrance.

06.05.2026 - It is reported that Israel continues to withhold approximately NIS 14 billion in tax revenues it collects for the Palestinian Authority, deepening the budget crisis and difficulties in paying salaries and funding public services.

08.01.2026 - Massacre of protesters in Iran: suppression of the protests that began on 28.12 escalates with a nationwide internet shutdown and widespread shooting at demonstrators.

11.05.2026 - A California judge disqualifies a Jewish district attorney from overseeing the trial of pro-Palestinian Stanford protesters on conflict-of-interest grounds; local Jewish organizations criticize the decision.

11.05.2026 - Hundreds of pro-Palestinian protesters gather near a Brooklyn synagogue hosting an Israeli real-estate fair; police erect barriers and the event takes place under heavy security.

13.05.2026 - The Sarah Lawrence College student senate rejects a request by Jewish students to establish a J Street chapter, even though the organization supports a Palestinian state and opposes Israeli government policy.

14.05.2026 - The Freedom Flotilla (Sumud), consisting of 54 yachts, sets sail from Marmaris, Turkey.

14.05.2026 - Fatah opens its eighth General Conference in Ramallah – the first in nearly a decade – amid succession struggles surrounding Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian Authority's economic crisis, and political stagnation.

15.05.2026 - Jews and pro-Israel activists protest outside The New York Times building following a column concerning allegations of sexual abuse of Palestinian detainees by Israeli prison guards; Netanyahu threatens to sue the newspaper.

15.05.2026 - National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir visits the Temple Mount and raises the Israeli flag.

17.05.2026 - Yasser Abbas, son of Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, is elected to Fatah's Central Committee; the election intensifies discussion over succession in the Palestinian leadership.

18.05.2026 - Israel takes control of the Sumud flotilla – an AKP spokesperson calls it "barbarism" – the Turkish Foreign Ministry condemns what it calls "another act of piracy by Israel."

19.05.2026 - Israeli Ambassador to the United States Yechiel Leiter calls J Street "a cancer within the Jewish community" following the organization's opposition to Israeli and U.S. military policy in the region.

19.05.2026 - The U.S. State Department imposes sanctions on Hamas support networks, including organizers of a Gaza flotilla and entities that assisted in financing the organization.

19.05.2026 - Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich announces that he has ordered the advancement of the evacuation of Khan al-Ahmar as part of a "war" against the Palestinian Authority, in response to its activity in the international legal arena.

21.05.2026 - More than 500 rabbis, cantors, and Jewish leaders in the United States sign a letter to Israel's ambassador demanding an apology for his public attack on J Street.

22.05.2026 - Seven Western countries issue a joint call on Israel to halt settlement expansion, curb settler violence, and refrain from advancing the E1 plan, which they say endangers the two-state solution.

26.05.2026 - A Jewish New York State legislator introduces a counter-bill to the Not on Our Dime Act, which seeks to restrict the transfer of charitable funds from the United States to West Bank settlements.

30.05.2026 - The IDF captures Beaufort Castle.

03.06.2026 - The finance minister announces the advancement of 2,162 new housing units in three West Bank settlements, including more than 1,000 units in the Jerusalem area and hundreds in the Nablus and Hebron areas.

09.06.2026 - A UN commission of inquiry determines that Israeli authorities and security forces protect settlers and are sometimes involved in attacks that caused deaths, injuries, and the displacement of Palestinians in the West Bank.

11.06.2026 - The government submits to the Security Cabinet a plan to allocate approximately NIS 1 billion for the establishment and expansion of new settlements in the West Bank.

15.06.2026 - A report warns that withholding tax revenues, canceling work permits, and other economic restrictions are pushing the West Bank economy and the Palestinian Authority toward collapse.

16.06.2026 - Smotrich cancels arrangements granting the Hebron Municipality planning and construction powers in the city's historic core, altering the division of authority established under the Hebron Agreement.

17.06.2026 - A democratic-socialist candidate who sharply criticized Israel leads in the Washington, D.C., mayoral primary after Jewish leaders express concern about his positions on Israel.

17.06.2026 - Israel approves the expansion of a school for settlers in the heart of Hebron and construction of a new building, following the cancellation of Palestinian planning powers in the area; Palestinians say the move violates the Hebron Agreement and creates facts on the ground.

18.06.2026 - Signing of a memorandum of understanding between Iran and the United States.

20.06.2026 - Negotiations between Iran and the United States begin in Switzerland.

23.06.2026 - The federal government opens an antisemitism investigation into the National Education Association following allegations that Jews were harassed and intimidated because of positions related to Israel and the war in Gaza.

23.06.2026 - It is reported that settlers are advancing efforts to take control of 18 strategic sites cutting across the largest contiguous Palestinian population area in the West Bank, alongside the establishment of new outposts and bases.

23.06.2026 - In New York primaries, policy toward Israel, AIPAC, and the claim of "genocide" in Gaza become central issues in several congressional races; Brad Lander, who refused AIPAC funding, wins a prominent race.

25.06.2026 - A bill advances in the Knesset to transfer archaeological sites in the West Bank to the civilian control of Israel's Ministry of Heritage, including the possibility of expropriating and purchasing land; Palestinians and human-rights organizations describe it as a step toward de facto annexation.

26.06.2026 - Signing of a memorandum of understanding between Israel and Lebanon.

28.06.2026 - At the New York Pride March, Jewish and LGBTQ groups receive both supportive cheers and pro-Palestinian protest chants over their participation and identification with Israel.

29.06.2026 - New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani says he cannot state that he supports Israel as a Jewish state, prompting strong reactions from Jewish leaders and organizations.

29.06.2026 - It is reported that the Palestinian health system in the West Bank is struggling to fund medicines, salaries, and doctors following the halt in transfers of tax revenues to the Palestinian Authority.

30.06.2026 - The Not on Our Dime bill, intended to prevent New York charities from funding West Bank settlements, gains growing support from lawmakers outside New York City.

30.06.2026 - An analysis reports that the current government has approved or legalized 103 new settlements in the West Bank, an unprecedented increase that has harmed the potential territorial contiguity of a Palestinian state.

10.07.2026 - Jewish federations in the United States begin publishing surveys on identification with Zionism; a Milwaukee survey finds an almost even split between Jews who identify as Zionists and those who do not.

12.07.2026 - Public debate is reported in the American Jewish community following a survey indicating that a significant share of younger Jews support a binational political framework for Israelis and Palestinians.

13.07.2026 - Maine's secretary of state, considered a possible Senate candidate, states that Israel committed "genocide" in Gaza – a statement that makes Israel a central issue in the race.

14.07.2026 - Mahmoud Khalil, a leader of the pro-Palestinian protest movement at Columbia University, files a lawsuit against the Trump administration, Betar, and Canary Mission, alleging that they conspired against him because of his activism.

14.07.2026 - Pro-Palestinian activists claim victory in a boycott campaign after Israeli-American chef Michael Solomonov's restaurant group announces the closure of six locations.

20.07.2026 - President Trump rejects New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani's statement that he would consider arresting Benjamin Netanyahu if he came to the city, based on the International Criminal Court warrant.

1. Any Future Discussion of the Territories Must Include the Question: Who Will Bear the Costs? — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz / Shaul Arieli website, 25/01/2026

In Israeli public discourse, Judea and Samaria are commonly discussed in terms of security, identity, history, civil rights, and belief. Far more rarely is Israeli settlement there examined through the simple, non-ideological prism of state economics: who pays, how much, and who receives. An examination of direct income tax contributions versus government investment reveals a sharp, and above all exceptional, picture, even when compared to the socio-economic periphery within the Green Line.

The Israeli population in Judea and Samaria constitutes approximately 5% of Israel's total population. This is a demographic minority whose share of income tax revenue is far lower than its relative share of the population, estimated based on Israel Tax Authority data at 1.5%–2.0% of total state income tax revenues. This gap is neither accidental nor the result of discrimination or statistical failure but rather stems from a unique socio-economic structure and from costly public policy, built over many years and entrenched with almost no public budgetary debate.

Per capita income tax contribution in Judea and Samaria is estimated at NIS 4,000–6,000 per year. In the periphery within the Green Line, even in localities ranked in the lowest socio-economic clusters, the contribution is higher, standing at approximately NIS 8,000–10,000 per capita. In central Israel, it reaches NIS 18,000–20,000.

The gap becomes even more pronounced when examining data at the household level. Because the proportion of ultra-Orthodox residents in Judea and Samaria is 3.5 times higher than their share in Israel as a whole, the average family in Judea and Samaria numbers about 4.9 persons, compared to approximately 3.7 nationwide.

Income tax is levied on working individuals, not on families. Therefore, the higher the number of dependents and the lower the rate of labor force participation, the more the tax base erodes. The classification of the large ultra-Orthodox settlements, Modiin Illit and Beitar Illit, along with several smaller localities, in the lowest socio-economic clusters (1 and 2), explains why 35% of Judea and Samaria residents pay no income tax at all (compared to 20% nationwide). Conversely, due to a dramatic decline over the past decade in the proportion of secular residents in Judea and Samaria, localities ranked in the upper clusters—those that finance the system (clusters 7–10)—now contain 41% of Israel's population, but only 21% of the residents of Judea and Samaria.

According to data from the Central Bureau of Statistics, the result is an average annual contribution of approximately NIS 25,000 per household in Judea and Samaria, compared to NIS 35,000–40,000 in the periphery and about NIS 60,000 in central Israel. The gap does not stem solely from lower income levels, but also from a high rate of tax credits, part-time employment, and above all an exceptional concentration of populations in the lower socio-economic clusters, alongside significant underrepresentation of clusters 7–10 in Judea and Samaria, which form the backbone of income tax collection in Israel.

On the other side of the balance sheet lies government investment. Here, the picture is reversed. According to Ministry of Finance data, public expenditure per capita in Judea and Samaria is estimated at NIS 22,000–26,000 per year, compared to NIS 18,000–20,000 in the periphery and NIS 13,000–15,000 in central Israel. Investment per child is also significantly higher: NIS 25,000–30,000 per year per child in Judea and Samaria, compared to NIS 21,000–23,000 in the periphery and NIS 17,000–19,000 in central Israel. These are gaps of tens of percent, which cannot be explained by exceptional social needs, but rather by structural costs.

It is important to emphasize that this gap does not reflect higher-quality services. On the contrary. It results from the extreme dispersion in Judea and Samaria of outposts, farms, and tiny settlements; from the establishment and maintenance of small and expensive education systems; from long transportation routes; and from duplicated infrastructure. In other words, this is not welfare policy but a settlement policy whose price is exceptionally high.

When all the data are combined, a clear picture emerges. An average household in central Israel is in a positive or balanced fiscal position. A household in the periphery is a net consumer of public budgets, but on a scale that is familiar and tolerable in a welfare state. A household in Judea and Samaria, by contrast, receives approximately NIS 115,000–120,000 per year from the state, while contributing only about NIS 25,000 in income tax. This is a deficit of roughly NIS 90,000 per household, three times or more that of the periphery, covered by taxpayers within the Green Line.

These figures, to which many additional data not detailed here in the fields of security and economics are added, carry broad significance that extends beyond the ideological debate. Any future discussion of expanding settlement, applying sovereignty, or changing the status of the territory must also include the simple but suppressed question: who bears the cost, and who finances these policy decisions over time.

Ignoring the fiscal dimension is not neutral; it is a political choice. A state may determine priorities, but it cannot ignore the bill. In the case of Judea and Samaria, the accounting is clear: low contribution, high investment, and a sustained deviation from the balance that characterizes even other disadvantaged areas within Israel.

2. When Israel Tries to Manage the Palestinians, It Only Brings the Next Cycle of Violence Closer — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz / Shaul Arieli website, 05/02/2026

Since October 2023, a profound and dangerous process has been unfolding before our eyes, one that many fail to notice: the Palestinian people are effectively losing their political representation. Not through a formal or dramatic decision, not through a declaration by the United Nations, but through a combination of a devastating war, Palestinian institutional collapse, and a conscious preference by external actors to manage reality rather than decide the future of the Palestinian people.

The Palestinian issue, which for decades revolved around national rights, sovereignty, and political determination, is increasingly being redefined as a technical problem: who will distribute aid, who will enforce order, who will administer a civilian population, and who will do so without requiring the Palestinians themselves to choose, consent, or bear responsibility.

This dispossession of representation is not a byproduct of chaos, but the result of a deliberate trend. It emerged from the failure of the Palestinian leaderships, but also from an Israeli strategic position and an international tendency to prefer illusory stability over a challenging political solution. The result is a quiet yet fundamental shift from viewing the Palestinians as a people with nationally recognized rights to viewing them as a population lacking a leadership address that must simply be managed.

Until October 2023, the Palestinian arena was marked by a severe representation crisis, but not by a vacuum. The PLO continued to be recognized internationally as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people; the Palestinian Authority exercised limited civilian and security governance in the West Bank; and Hamas ruled the Gaza Strip and presented itself as a national and ideological alternative, albeit an extremist and violent one. The political system was fragmented, frozen, and devoid of legitimacy due to the absence of elections, but it still provided a clear representational framework with identifiable addresses from which accountability could be demanded.

The war in Gaza collapsed that framework as well. Hamas, which embarked on an extreme course under the assumption that an unprecedented attack would return the Palestinian issue to center stage and force a political shift in its favor, lost its ability to function as a governing authority. Its institutions collapsed, its mechanisms were destroyed, and its senior leadership was eliminated or driven underground. Even if the organization retains some military capability and is rehabilitating parts of its institutions with the assistance of Turkey and Qatar, it is not a

civilian or political address for the day after, nor an actor from which responsibility toward the population it claims to represent can be demanded.

On the other hand, the Palestinian Authority was exposed in all its weakness. It had no influence on the course of the war and offered no political horizon. Public opinion polls conducted in December 2023 pointed to a dramatic collapse in Palestinian public trust in Mahmoud Abbas and the Authority, alongside an overwhelming demand for general Palestinian elections and leadership replacement. In practice, the Palestinian Authority continues to exist by virtue of security coordination with Israel, tax revenues transferred from Israel, donations, and international pressure, rather than by virtue of a public mandate.

At this point, external actors enter the picture, and this is where the truly problematic phase begins. The United States, Arab states, and the international community are no longer asking who represents the Palestinians, but how to manage them. The discussion has shifted from rights to regulation, from sovereignty to rehabilitation, from political determination to interim mechanisms. Gaza's future is discussed in terms of "civil administration" and a "stabilizing force," not in terms of choice, representation, and responsibility.

A series of steps taken by Israel, the United States, and Arab states since October 2023 have converged into a process that effectively stripped the Palestinians of their capacity for independent representation: the elimination of Hamas's governing power, the weakening of the Palestinian Authority and the PLO, and international attempts to engineer a "more suitable" Palestinian leadership. The plans for Gaza's future, whether a technocratic government or an international force, do not provide a genuine political solution, but rather a simulated substitute. Their common denominator is the absence of a Palestinian representative mechanism that is elected or broadly agreed upon. The Palestinians are not partners. They have no choice, no mandate, and no commitment to the proposed solutions.

Israel is not a passive observer. The current right-wing government explicitly rejects the return of the Palestinian Authority to Gaza and opposes any horizon of Palestinian sovereignty. In the absence of a legitimate Palestinian leadership, the claim that "there is no partner" turns from a distorted description of reality into a policy that creates reality. The representational vacuum is not a malfunction; it is a political asset in the eyes of the government.

In this case, history is not a literary analogy, but a warning sign. Similar to the events of October 7, the Nakba of 1948, which began with Palestinian rejection of the partition plan and the launch of a war to prevent its implementation, led to the loss of political representation of the

Palestinian people. Palestinian society disintegrated, its leadership was eliminated or exiled, and responsibility for addressing the “Palestinian problem” was transferred from the Palestinians to Arab states, both through the signing of the 1949 armistice agreements and during the Lausanne Conciliation Conference that same year regarding Palestinian refugees. The consequence was the loss of a political voice and, no less importantly, the loss of responsibility.

In the absence of a recognized and committed Palestinian body, there was no address capable of making decisions that could be held accountable under international norms. Instead, the Palestinian struggle became a tool in the hands of Arab regimes, which acted according to their own interests rather than those of the Palestinians. The Palestinians were physically present but absent as an independent political entity, a reality reflected in UN resolutions 194 of 1948 and 242 of 1967.

The result of their absence as an independent entity, alongside refusal to recognize Israel, was a wave of violence. In the 1950s and 1960s, alongside attempts at refugee return, the fedayeen emerged, carrying out infiltrations and attacks against Israel. There was no responsible Palestinian leadership from which restraint could be demanded, or that was willing or able to commit to political arrangements, and Arab states absorbed Israel’s retaliatory actions.

Only when the international community recognized the PLO in November 1974 as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people (UN General Assembly Resolution 3236) did a change occur in terms of representation. That recognition did not resolve the conflict, but it created a framework of responsibility. Once the PLO became a political address, it was required to bear the costs of its decisions and to confront the demands of the international system.

The culmination of this process came in 1988, when the PLO formally accepted UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, adopted the principle of a political settlement in the Palestinian Declaration of Independence in Algiers, and later, in the Oslo Accords of 1993, recognized the State of Israel within the 1967 borders. This did not happen because the Palestinians abandoned all their aspirations, but because they had a recognized leadership that was subject to international responsibility, which inevitably led to compromise. The historical conclusion is clear: a people without recognized leadership cannot be a partner to an agreement, nor is it bound by rules. In such a situation, violence is not an anomaly, but a structural outcome.

Therefore, the dispossession of Palestinian representation since October 2023 is not merely a moral problem or a political failure, but a strategic danger. Politically, the result is the creation of a dangerous vacuum and an expectation of increasing chaos and extremism. Legally, the result is the entrenchment of Israel's status as an occupying power and the Palestinians' status as a population requiring international protection. Attempting to manage the Palestinians without recognizing their representation does not produce moderation, but precisely recreates the conditions that previously led to violence.

The vacuum pushes Palestinian society toward radicalization, decentralization of power, the rise of local militias, and the weakening of any unifying national framework. In the West Bank, signs of this are already evident, with the erosion of Palestinian Authority authority in refugee camps and northern cities. Legally, the dispossession of representation entrenches Israel's responsibility as an occupying power. The absence of a functioning Palestinian Authority, and the lack of a recognized local government in Gaza, strengthen the claim that responsibility for the civilian population rests with Israel under international law. Israel's attempt to manage Gaza "from a distance" or through external actors does not absolve it of this responsibility.

International concern is also growing regarding the status of the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people. The Riyadh summit of Arab states in November 2023 reaffirmed that the PLO is the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and called for territorial unity between Gaza and the West Bank. In practice, however, decisions are made without the Palestinians, who are presented as a humanitarian problem rather than a people with political rights. Among Palestinians in the diaspora, this process intensifies alienation from the proposed solutions. Millions of refugees, who once viewed the PLO as a symbolic address, now find themselves excluded from discussions about their future. The mass protests worldwide since October 2023 express not only solidarity with Gaza, but also a demand for representation that has been stripped away.

Israel, the United States, Arab states, and Europe must internalize that prolonged control over a people without representation does not eliminate responsibility; it deepens it. It does not bring security, but postpones decision-making and prepares the ground for the next cycle of violence. Those who strip the Palestinians of their representation do not neutralize extremism, but preemptively relinquish the possibility of demanding responsibility. Ignoring the lessons of history at this stage is neither naïveté nor necessity; it is a choice. And that choice leads backward, not forward, not to a solution but to the repetition of a known failure. Without representation, there is no responsibility. Without responsibility, there is no commitment.

This situation calls for creative solutions. Restoring legitimacy to Palestinian representation will require comprehensive reform of the PLO, holding general elections with the participation of all factions and refugees in the diaspora, and giving special attention to the educated younger generation seeking change. Failure to achieve Palestinian unity may lead to continued “conflict management” by external actors, foremost among them Israel, and to the deferral of its resolution to an unknown future.

What is clear is that the Palestinian people themselves have not relinquished their aspiration for representation and liberation, which is legitimate and deeply rooted. However, the tools for achieving it have been taken from them, turning the PLO’s foundational principle of independent decision-making into a dead letter. Whether, out of the ruins of Gaza and the crisis in the West Bank, the Palestinians will succeed in forming a new, unified leadership that regains international legitimacy remains to be seen in the coming years.

3. The Collapse of the Two-State Solution Is a Political Decision, Not a Geographic or Economic One — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz / Shaul Arieli website, 26/02/2026

The position of the Israeli government regarding the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside it is one of absolute rejection. Senior ministers are not satisfied with principled opposition but openly call for the annexation of the West Bank to Israel. The position of the Jewish public reflects a similar trend: consistent surveys indicate a dramatic decline in support for the two-state solution, from half of the public a decade ago to only a quarter today, and concurrently a rise in support for annexation, from one-tenth of the public to one-third. The political and social feasibility of the two-state solution has been at a deep low for more than a decade, which intensified even further in the wake of the events of October 7.

However, the collapse of political feasibility does not answer the central question: has the third necessary condition, spatial feasibility, also been lost? Have the demographic and spatial trends of the past decade also rendered the practical possibility of territorial partition obsolete?

The spatial working assumption is clear: Jewish settlement up to ten kilometers from the Green Line, approximately a quarter of the width of the West Bank, does not negate the two-state solution. This is due to the principle of land swaps, which can allow the preservation of territorial and functional contiguity for both sides. In contrast, significant Jewish spatial and demographic presence in the area beyond this strip harms Palestinian contiguity and demands an impossible national price from Israel for evacuation.

In 2015 there were 68 Jewish localities in the 10-kilometer strip, and 59 beyond it. In 2025 the number of localities in the strip rose to 87, and beyond it to 80. Seemingly a dramatic change, yet within the strip are concentrated the four largest settlements: Modi'in Illit and Beitar Illit—in which alone about one-third of the Israelis in the West Bank reside—Ma'ale Adumim and Givat Ze'ev. Also located there are the large local councils: Efrat, Karnei Shomron, Oranit and Alfei Menashe, and the medium-sized local councils Beit Aryeh and Har Adar. East of the strip there is only one large locality, the city of Ariel, and six additional local councils. In contrast, on the Palestinian side there are about 200 cities and villages in Areas A and B, including Hebron and Nablus, in which about half a million residents live, alongside ten additional cities and a number of villages and hundreds of communities in Area C. The large cities have over 40,000 residents, and there are another 140 localities with over 5,000 residents.

The growth in the number of Jewish localities translated into relatively moderate growth in Jewish built-up area. In the strip it grew from 51 square kilometers to 58, and beyond it from 31 to 39 square kilometers. In contrast, the Palestinian built-up area in Area C stands at 140 square kilometers. One must add another 715 square kilometers of Palestinian built-up area in Areas A and B. Altogether, in the West Bank the ratio is 1:8.5 in favor of the Palestinians.

The demographic picture also does not change fundamentally. In 2015, 77% of the Israeli population in the West Bank resided within the ten-kilometer strip, and so too in 2025. To these one must add about 240,000 Israelis who live in neighborhoods established in areas annexed to Jerusalem after the Six-Day War, so that the overwhelming majority of the Israeli population beyond the Green Line is concentrated in the 10-kilometer strip. Overall, Israelis constitute 56% of the population of Area C, and only 15% of the population of the West Bank.

This is the largest number of Jews living outside the borders of the State of Israel, after the United States, and the largest Jewish minority within the population of another state, which has been recognized by 80 percent of the member states of the United Nations.

Natural increase within the 10-kilometer strip contributed about 78% of the natural increase of Israelis in the West Bank in 2015, and in 2025 rose to 79%. This figure derives from the ultra-Orthodox settlements of Modi'in Illit and Beitar Illit, and from Givat Ze'ev. The proportion of ultra-Orthodox among Israelis residing in the West Bank is 3.5 times their proportion in Israel's population. Their natural increase has become the main source of annual population growth, since migration to the settlements is low and in the past two years has even been negative.

In contrast, outside the 10-kilometer strip the trend looks different. In 2025 the number of residents outside the strip increased by more than 1,000 residents, a faster growth rate than in 2015. This is the result of Israeli policy, mainly of the current government, to try to deepen Jewish presence in the depth of the West Bank by building tiny farms and outposts at the expense of the large settlement blocs. Already in 2005 Ehud Barak said of this policy: "The plan... to spread so many settlements in so many points in Judea and Samaria until a Palestinian state can never arise... was an act of folly. The isolated settlements did not strengthen the settlement blocs but weakened them... a classic case of grasping too much—grasping nothing."

Economically, the population in the 10-kilometer strip is highly polarized. Most of it, the ultra-Orthodox, is located in clusters 1–2 of the socio-economic index, and the secular population is located in clusters 7–9. East of it, the population is located in clusters 4–5. The political

division is also very clear. Residents of the strip vote mostly for United Torah Judaism and Shas, and most residents east of it vote for Religious Zionism and Otzma Yehudit.

The claim that Israel will not be able to cope with the transition challenges of those who will not be annexed to its sovereignty does not withstand the test of the data. Within the framework of land swaps of about 4%, 80% of the Israelis beyond the Green Line will remain under Israeli sovereignty. If evacuation of settlements is required, this would involve tens of thousands of families, but half of the evacuees are children under the age of 18, who do not require jobs or separate housing.

With regard to employment, 62% of the Israeli workforce in the West Bank already works within Israel. After factoring in the proportion of retirees and those employed, an addition of about 20,000 new jobs over a five-year period will be required to implement the agreement, that is, about 4,000 per year. When Israel creates about 100,000 new jobs each year, this is a marginal challenge.

In housing as well the picture is similar. Among married persons over the age of 19, about 34,000 housing units will be required, that is, about 6,800 units per year. Israel builds on average 50–55 thousand housing units per year, and therefore here too this is not a real barrier.

If the two-state solution collapses, it is not because space has been decided or because demography has closed the option. It collapses because of political decisions, an ideology of annexation, a conscious turning away from the data, and the shaping of consciousness to a fictitious reality. Geography does not bury the two states, but rather the choice to stop struggling for them, and to slide into the abyss of one state bleeding in an endless war.

4. Iran vs. Gulf: The Battle Over Muslim Sovereignty and Western Dependence — Ronit Marzan, Haaretz, 06/03/2026

Iran's military campaign against Israel and the Gulf states isn't just a matter of missiles and drones. It's waging a struggle for independent Persian Islam in an attempt to differentiate itself from dependence on the West. The question at the center of the struggle is whether the Islamic space can stand on its feet without Western help.

The war being waged goes beyond tactics. While commentators count the missile interceptions and assess the physical damage to energy facilities, a widespread awareness campaign is transpiring beneath the surface. This campaign's symbolism and prestige have a strategic value worth as much as bombs. At the center of this struggle is a geopolitical confrontation between the non-Arab Islamic powers—Iran and Turkey, separately—and the Arab Gulf states.

When Iran launches missiles against targets in the Gulf states, it's not just doing so to deter them militarily or to apply pressure that would end the war against it. Rather, its goal is to expose their weakness. When Arab states with immense defense budgets, such as Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, find themselves vulnerable to attack or worse, and they are dependent on American radar and interceptors, it undermines their narrative as sovereign states.

Their vulnerability goes beyond technical questions, such as the effectiveness of the U.S. Patriot missiles. It touches on the exposed nerve of security independence. Revealing the limitations of these Arab states' military power presents their regimes as unable to defend themselves and reliant on external alliances.

Iran is seeking to establish a counter-narrative of "independent Iranian strength" versus "Arab dependence on a foreign umbrella." According to this narrative, Iran stands alone as an imperial power waging a campaign against Israel and the United States, while the Gulf states hide behind Washington's support. Iran is fighting for so-called Persian honor, intended to allow Tehran to enter future negotiations from a heroic position, while undermining the political and security standing of its Arab rivals in the eyes of the world's Muslims.

In this context, it's vital to distinguish the resounding words of Turkish opposition leader and former Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, which he spoke this week. "Those who remain silent about the attacks against Iran, using the logic of 'let the snake that doesn't touch me live a thousand years,' should realize that everyone will be next," he warned. His remarks are far

more than a domestic political attack on Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, whose silence he was criticizing.

Davutoglu has drawn a geopolitical map that divides the region into two kinds of entities. The non-Arab powers, Iran and Turkey, are on one side. They possess "strategic depth"—an imperial history, independent defense industry and sovereignty that does not rely on Western grace. In his view, these powers are the last independent Islamic strongholds. The Arab states are on the other side. He holds that they have surrendered their freedom of action in exchange for a foreign defense umbrella.

Davutoglu sees Erdoğan as being in a trap, trying to maneuver between his obligations to NATO and his ambition to lead the Muslim world. Davutoglu's message is that trying to buy temporary peace while abandoning Iran is a dangerous illusion, and that once Tehran is defeated, the West will turn to dealing with the next sovereign stronghold—Ankara.

The more sophisticated case of Qatar is prominent in this tension between Islamic sovereignty and Arab dependence. When Davutoglu openly calls for Muslims to stand strong against the "Western snake," Qatar prefers to weaken the "snake's" venom and remain in the field as the gatekeeper of its interests.

Qatar's strategic rationale doesn't seek the total collapse of the Western order, but rather its controlled weakening. Doha is playing a delicate balancing act. On the one hand, it cultivates anti-Western narratives that erode the West's liberal image and reduce international pressure on Qatar. On the other hand, it understands that an extreme weakening of the West would leave Qatar exposed and defenseless against dominant power centers such as Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia.

For Qatar, the United States is a safety net that grants it military defense and regional immunity. Qatar's interest is therefore for the West to remain strong enough to protect its physical existence, but weak enough not to restrict its ideological and diplomatic freedom of action. Qatar is like a protected tenant living in a Western home. It doesn't want to demolish the house, merely to change the locks. It uses Western tools—money, academe and international law—to drain the West of its moral and political power while remaining a player who can guard its own interests.

Davutoglu's remarks, combined with Iran's military moves and efforts to boost its image, reveal that the regional struggle doesn't just rest on nuclear arms or terrorism. It's a war over the definition of Muslim sovereignty in the 21st century. In this regard, the Arab states, which rely

on the West, are not just rivals of Iran and Turkey, but rather a symptom of historical weakness that the Turkey-Iran axis is determined to eradicate.

Ultimately, the Islamic Middle East is divided between two *Weltanschauungs*. One view of life sees the alliance with the West as an existential necessity. The other view seeks to replace dependence on the West with aggressive nationalism that sanctifies the power of the Muslim state over the well-being of the individual. Herein lies the great paradox of Iran and Turkey. Even as they flaunt "national honor" as a superior alternative to Arab dependence, they are forced to invest vast resources in oppressing their citizens, who find no consolation in sovereignty without freedom.

The bitter truth for these regimes is that, as they condemn the West and see it as a "snake" or waning power, the West is the preferred refuge of millions of migrants fleeing their "sovereign" states. Many Iranians, who are oppressed by the ayatollahs' regime, still look to the West and to its values. For them, the West isn't the aggressor but rather the only address that might save them from their dictatorial regime.

The winner of this campaign won't therefore be decided solely by the strength of its arms. It will be decided by the question of the extent to which the peoples of the region will cling to the narrative of Muslim independence, when they see how national sovereignty—in Turkey and Iran, for example—turns into an internal prison and ceases to be attractive to them.

5. The System of Restraints in the West Bank Is Eroding, and Israel Is Endangering Its Security and Democratic Character — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz / Shaul Arieli website, 18/03/2026

For many years, Israel's security establishment explained to the public and to the world that despite the exceptional reality of military control over millions of Palestinians in the West Bank, a system of institutional restraints existed to prevent a descent into arbitrary use of force. These were not mere slogans; there were concrete mechanisms: the Jewish Division in the Shin Bet, which fought Jewish terrorism; the Israel Police, tasked with enforcing the law on Israeli civilians in the West Bank; the Civil Administration, which worked to safeguard Palestinian rights; the Military Advocate General's Corps, which set legal boundaries; the senior IDF command, which sought to maintain balance amid pressure from settler leaders and political officials; the political echelon, which defined operational limits; and the public atmosphere in Israel, which, despite political disagreements, maintained a red line against civilian violence.

This system of restraints has eroded, and in recent years this erosion has become tangible and documented in reality. The change deepened with the establishment of the current government and intensified after October 7. Each of the restraints has been weakened, diverted, or subordinated to political pressure.

The Jewish Division of the Shin Bet was for years an important link in combating settler violence, but in recent years it has become a political target. Ministers and Knesset members from the right have accused it of ideological persecution and even called to limit its powers. A notable step was the decision by Defense Minister Israel Katz to reduce and even halt the use of administrative detention against far-right activists — a tool that had previously been central in preventing Jewish terrorism.

The Israel Police is also supposed to be one of the main restraints; Israeli civilians in the West Bank are subject to Israeli law, and the police are meant to investigate criminal offenses by settlers. However, enforcement data point to failure. Reports by Yesh Din show that only about 3% of investigation files concerning ideological offenses by Israelis against Palestinians lead to indictments. In other words, in the overwhelming majority of cases of violence — arson, assaults, property destruction — no one is brought to trial. Even when investigations are conducted, they often end with cases closed due to lack of evidence. An enforcement system led by Minister Itamar Ben Gvir effectively enables the continuation of violence.

The Civil Administration was for years a professional body within the security system, intended to manage civilian life in the West Bank and serve as a moderating factor against security activity that harms Palestinian rights. Under the coalition agreements of the current government, extensive powers were transferred from the Civil Administration to Minister in the Defense Ministry Bezalel Smotrich, who is responsible for settlement affairs. This is a dramatic structural change. Smotrich is one of the leading ideological proponents of settlement expansion. When a professional body is effectively subordinated to a political actor committed to expanding settlements, it is difficult to see it as an effective restraint.

The Military Advocate General's Corps was also one of the key oversight mechanisms — it determined the legality of military actions, initiated investigations, and at times blocked operational initiatives. In recent years, and especially since the war in the Gaza Strip, political and public pressure to limit legal oversight of the military has intensified. The rhetoric about “tying the hands of soldiers” has become widespread.

Above all stands the senior IDF command. For years, Central Command generals emphasized that settler violence is not only a moral problem but also a security threat. However, in recent years tension between the military echelon and the political echelon has grown. The appointment of Avi Bluth as head of Central Command has been perceived by many as politically significant. Bluth is identified with the religious-Zionist public and the settlement movement, and critics fear that his appointment signals greater willingness to accommodate settlement expansion and the presence of violent settlers.

The most significant restraint is the political echelon. When senior ministers publicly back settler actions or attack law enforcement authorities, the message permeates. When the political echelon ceases to function as a restraint, all other mechanisms weaken.

Finally, there is the public atmosphere. For years, Israel maintained a debate over settlements and the future of the West Bank, but there was broad consensus against civilian violence. Even most of those who supported settlement opposed “price tag” attacks. However, October 7 changed the public climate and led to hardened positions. Surveys indicate a decline in support for a political process and an increase in support for the use of force. When the public atmosphere becomes more tolerant of violence, institutional mechanisms struggle to act against it.

When examining the seven restraints, a troubling picture emerges. None of them has collapsed all at once. The Jewish Division still exists, the police still investigate, the Civil Administration

still operates, and the Military Advocate General still reviews actions — but each has lost strength.

Many studies on protracted conflicts point to a consistent pattern: when oversight mechanisms erode and violence becomes more frequent, a dynamic of escalation develops. Such a process is occurring in the West Bank. The number of violent incidents has increased significantly, both from settlers and within military activity. The implications are not only moral or legal; they are also security-related.

The history of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict shows that escalation in the West Bank does not remain local but tends to rapidly evolve into a broader confrontation. Therefore, the erosion of restraints is not merely a rule-of-law issue; it is a strategic problem. Ultimately, the question is not whether the State of Israel has the right to defend itself — that is a basic right of any state — but whether it succeeds in maintaining limits on the power it exercises.

The restraint mechanisms were created precisely for this purpose. If they erode, Israel not only loses an essential tool for managing the conflict; it also endangers its security stability and its democratic character.

6. Israel Digs Up the West Bank — and Reignites a Battle Over History — —, Jerusalem Post, 24/03/2026

On a jagged mountain top, with sweeping views of the Jordan Valley, the past and present converge. Around two dozen dust-covered archaeological workers are busy digging up mud and sifting through buckets of dirt.

Beneath their feet lie the remnants of ancient kingdoms, while the lush green landscape before them is dotted with Palestinian villages and Israeli settlements on one of the most geopolitically contested strips of land on Earth.

This is Alexandrion, named after Hasmonean King Alexander Jannaeus, who reigned here from 103–76 BCE and likely used the site as a desert stronghold commanding the Jordan Valley. Later, it is believed to have been restored by Herod the Great, who ruled from 37–4 BCE, as another of his signature fortresses, akin to Masada and Herodium farther south.

The site is also known as Sartaba, where, according to Jewish tradition, beacon fires once signaled the arrival of the new moon — Rosh Hodesh — to communities across the valley and toward Jerusalem.

Evidence of this layered past is scattered across the steep mountainside. Collapsed heart-shaped columns, shards of pottery, and fragments of fresco and stucco lie exposed, while other relics such as coins, walls, and water systems remain buried beneath centuries of sand.

While such dramatic ancient archaeological sites are located across this region, which Israelis call by its biblical name, Judea and Samaria, Alexandrion/Sartaba is now one of a handful of places where active excavations are taking place — for the first time in 40 years.

However, the renewed excavation here is not unfolding in isolation from modern events. It comes amid a sweeping Israeli government initiative to expand archaeological activity across the West Bank — territory Palestinians seek for a future state; territory which much of the international community considers “occupied.”

The renewed digging coincides with policies by Israel’s right-wing government aimed at tightening control over the territory and expanding Jewish settlement. Palestinians have described these measures as “de facto annexation.”

Much of the West Bank remains under Israeli military control, with limited Palestinian self-rule in areas administered by the Palestinian Authority.

At Sartaba, archaeologist Dvir Raviv of Bar-Ilan University leads the excavation, which is funded by Israel's Heritage Ministry and supported by the archaeology department of the Civil Administration — the Israeli military body overseeing civilian affairs in the West Bank. The project is now in its second season. The team includes both Israeli and Palestinian workers and volunteers.

"Last season, we had to walk 40 minutes every morning just to get here," Raviv told The Jerusalem Report during the magazine's recent visit to the site.

Standing on the very tip of the mountain, he explained that due to its geographical location, excavations at the site "are very complicated."

This year, access has improved after the Civil Administration paved a narrow road to the foot of the mountain, reducing the final climb to just a few minutes.

The last excavation here took place between 1981 and 1984. Archaeologists uncovered a storeroom, a ritual bath, or mikveh, and an elaborate water system on the eastern slope.

Then work stopped.

Part of the reason was logistical. The terrain is unforgiving. But geopolitics intervened as well. In 1987, the First Intifada erupted, drawing global attention to the Palestinian struggle for statehood in the West Bank and Gaza.

Suddenly, it was no longer appropriate for archaeologists working with renowned Israeli academic institutions to excavate in the area, which many of their counterparts around the world viewed as illegally occupied by Israel.

Raviv acknowledges the criticism but focuses on the historical potential of the site. Spanning five to seven dunams, 5,000–7,000 square meters, with the remains of a tower already visible, he expects that the excavation could continue for at least a decade.

Alongside architectural remains, the team has found evidence of vandalism and looting — scars of years when the site lay largely unmonitored.

"This is a place that was ruined and destroyed. We are now here saving it from looters and thieves," said Eyal Freiman, archaeologist and deputy head of the Civil Administration's Staff Office for the archaeology department.

According to Freiman, surveys conducted after Israel captured the West Bank in the 1967 Six-Day War identified roughly 5,000 archaeological sites across the territory.

Excavations took place sporadically during the 1970s and 1980s but slowed dramatically in the 1990s after the Oslo Accords divided the West Bank into Areas A, B, and C, assigning varying degrees of Israeli and Palestinian control.

Freiman estimates that 3,000 sites lie in Area C, under full Israeli control; about 1,000 are in Area B, under Israeli security control and Palestinian civil administration; and another 1,000 are located in Area A, administered by the Palestinian Authority.

Five years ago, he said, a government decision was made to develop — and, more importantly, protect — some of those places, although funding was initially limited.

That changed in July 2023, when a multi-year plan allocated additional millions of shekels to combat antiquities theft and expand development of archaeological and tourism sites in the West Bank.

The initiative was spearheaded by Heritage Minister Amichai Eliyahu, a member of the Otzma Yehudit party, alongside Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and Tourism Minister Haim Katz.

“We are investing in this out of the understanding that we are not just a lone olive leaf but an olive growing on earlier branches. We are not alone in the world but are deeply rooted in the soil,” Eliyahu told the Report. “One who has no roots is a single olive, detached, new, a leaf blown in the wind. But one who has roots can flourish, and his growth can develop,” he elaborated.

The minister said that close to NIS 300 million has now been invested in the project, with the overarching goal of proving Israel’s connection to the land via archaeology.

“The struggle is ideological. It is not about money,” Eliyahu said. “They, Palestinians, want to destroy us. If we forget for a moment why we are here and what our right is here, what happened on October 7 will happen again.

“But if we remember our path, it will also be better for them,” he continued. “There are Arabs here who understand that we returned after 2,000 years of exile. Some even preserved our names and parts of our history in the names of their villages.

“That they now deny the historical role they played in preserving the land’s heritage is because they lost their way, not because we lost ours,” the minister said.

With increased funding, Freiman and his unit have expanded enforcement — monitoring not only looting but also construction projects that might threaten antiquities.

The delicate divide between the geopolitics and conflicts of today and the secrets of the past is fully on display a few miles south of Alexandrion/Sartaba, just north of the Palestinian city of Jericho.

Archelais, also known as Khirbet el-Beiyudat, was once a fortified administrative center active during the Hasmonean and Herodian periods. Today, it sits beside the main highway through the Jordan Valley.

The site is enclosed by fencing and surveillance cameras. Palestinian homes in the nearby town of Al-Auja stand just beyond.

Close to the fence, Freiman pointed out areas that had been destroyed, he said, by looters looking for antiquities or flattened by bulldozers and tractors clearing the way for more buildings in the Palestinian village.

“It’s a race to save the archaeological remains at this site,” he stated.

He explained that modern construction methods, which require deeper foundations, increasingly threaten subsurface remains.

Alex Melamed, an archaeologist overseeing work at Archelais, said that previous excavations uncovered the foundations of a Byzantine church with a mosaic floor, as well as a tower from the Second Temple, Herodian period.

It is believed that Herod’s son Archelaus built and resided at the site, which functioned as a commercial hub for the area.

“What’s amazing here is that in the future, visitors will be able to come and see a church next to a synagogue, and see all the layers and stages of what happened here,” Melamed marveled.

Freiman said he believes that heritage preservation should transcend politics.

“Not all the sites are Jewish, but they do tell the story of the region, and all the layers of this area show us how it all fits together,” he explained, adding that everything of significance in the Bible happened here, and this area is important to other groups as well.

“When Jesus walked from Nazareth to Jerusalem, it wasn’t via Tel Aviv, it was through the Jordan Valley, right through here,” said Freiman, gesturing to the area around him.

Critics argue that the renewed archaeological impetus is inseparable from settlement expansion and Israeli efforts to consolidate long-term control over the territory.

Several sites slated for development lie adjacent to Jewish settlements or outposts. A planned community near Mount Ebal, in northern Samaria, is situated roughly one kilometer from a site identified by some as Joshua bin Nun's Altar.

Near Sebastia — a location with layers of Israelite, Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine history — renewed excavation efforts coincide with the recent approval of the Homesh settlement nearby.

While the new farming communities are boosting the archaeological developments, the settlements are also benefiting from the presence of ancient sites. The hundreds of hilltop farms that are springing up throughout the West Bank were initially uncoordinated with the authorities; now they are being more well planned in order to avoid damage to antiquities and ancient sites.

Freiman agrees that it is strategic and pointed out that if Palestinians took control of such sites, they would likely prevent Jews from visiting altogether and might even work to erase or minimize the Jewish connection to them.

"We have seen a lot of destruction of the Jewish period of history in Palestinian areas," he said.

"Archaeology is always connected to nationality, as it strengthens the narrative of the Jewish people," he explained. "The fact that the minister and the government are pushing this plan, protecting these sites, is also strengthening the Jewish presence in Israel."

On the summit of Alexandrion/Sartaba, the debate feels both distant and immediate. Each layer of earth removed reveals traces of ancient sovereignty — Hasmonean, Herodian, Byzantine — while the contemporary struggle over sovereignty continues all around it.

In this area, the past is never only the past. It is argument, evidence, and aspiration — unearthed one bucket of soil at a time.

7. Government Declarations of Total Victory Create a Violent Vicious Cycle. We Must Not Believe Them — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz / Shaul Arieli website, 09/04/2026

In recent years, under the leadership of Benjamin Netanyahu, a political and security discourse has taken root in Israel that is based on an imagined reality and is gradually drifting away from the facts. This language has become a central tool in managing government policy, expressed through promises of “total victory,” the “complete elimination” of enemies, and the prevention of any threat “at any cost.” The problem lies in the vast gap between these promises and reality—a gap that is increasingly becoming a defining feature of Israeli policy.

Thus, following the outbreak of the Gaza war after the events of October 7, 2023, Netanyahu declared that the war’s objective was the “elimination of Hamas throughout the Gaza Strip” and stated that Israel was “on the verge of total victory”—a phrase he repeated many times. Regarding the Iranian arena, at the outset of the war on February 28, he declared: “This war will lead to a true peace... We will change the face of the Middle East,” and later added: “We will create the conditions for the brave Iranian people to free themselves from the chains of tyranny.”

These were not slips of the tongue or momentary exaggerations, but a method that prefers absolute formulations over realistic assessments, presenting the public with objectives that are neither attainable nor even measurable. “Total victory” is not an operationally achievable goal but a slogan. When the prime minister repeatedly invokes such slogans, he transforms them into policy and creates public expectations for their realization.

This is where the real problem begins, because the public is not merely a passive audience; it is an active partner in shaping political reality. When the public adopts these slogans without examining their feasibility, it absolves itself of the responsibility to exercise critical thinking. Belief in impossible promises is not only a mistake or a deception by the leadership, it is also an error by a public that chooses to believe.

Various surveys demonstrate how deeply the ideas of absolute and unrealistic objectives have taken root. They show that a majority of the Jewish public supports continuing the fighting on all fronts “until complete victory is achieved.” A Tel Aviv University survey from January 2024 found that more than 60% of respondents believed the war should continue until the “complete destruction of Hamas.” A March survey by the Israel Democracy Institute found that approximately two-thirds of the public supported continuing Operation “Rising Lion.” These

figures do not merely reflect a security-oriented position; they testify to the near-complete internalization of misleading governmental rhetoric.

The problem is that reality does not align with slogans. Hamas has not been eliminated. It has been severely damaged but continues to rule Gaza. Its military capabilities have been reduced but not destroyed. Hezbollah has also not been defeated, and the confrontation in the north continues at varying levels of intensity while displaying the characteristics of an organized army. As for Iran—not only has its regime not been replaced, but its regional influence remains stable; it continues to operate through proxy mechanisms and has even pushed Trump to declare a near-unilateral ceasefire.

The gap between declarations and reality drives a dangerous political process. When a leadership promises an absolute objective and fails to achieve it, it cannot admit failure without paying a heavy political price. Therefore, it tends to escalate its actions, expand its objectives, or alternatively redefine the criteria for success.

Thus, a vicious cycle is created: impossible promises lead to unrealistically high expectations, which generate public pressure to continue operations, resulting in further escalation in a futile attempt to achieve unattainable goals—at an ever-increasing cost. This is not theoretical. This dynamic has been evident in Israeli public and political discourse since the outbreak of the war in 2023.

In Netanyahu's case, this constitutes a deep-seated pattern not limited to the current campaign. As early as 2002, Netanyahu encouraged the United States to invade Iraq, arguing that the move would democratize the Middle East and weaken Iran in testimony before the U.S. Congress. In practice, the 2003 invasion of Iraq produced the opposite result: the collapse of regional order and a significant strengthening of Iran. Even then, the gap between promises and reality was evident. Even then, no lessons were learned.

The problem does not lie in a mistaken assessment, but in the preference for a fictitious narrative over reality. Instead of adopting a policy that recognizes the complexity of the arena and the limits of power—and therefore selects achievable goals—a policy based on sweeping declarations is adopted, designed to create among the public the impression that the leadership is in control.

Netanyahu's political survival relies on cultivating a constant and absolute existential enemy, such as Hamas and Iran. He needs this to claim his indispensability as Israel's sole protector. If reality is perceived as complex or as requiring compromise, his absolute necessity as a

leader is undermined—and such doubt is portrayed as a threat to the survival of the Jewish people.

Yet illusory control cannot replace real control. On the contrary, it weakens it. When the public discovers that promises are not fulfilled, trust erodes. When the leadership continues to make the same promises, the gap between rhetoric and reality only widens.

At this point, the responsibility of the public comes into focus. Belief in these promises is not the result of coercion but of choice—the choice to prefer a simple message over recognition of a complex reality; the choice to believe that conflicts can be “ended” through force alone; the choice to forgo doubt and independent critical thinking. In this sense, the public is not merely a victim of misleading political rhetoric, but a partner in it.

Anyone who believes that a “total victory” can be achieved over a fanatic organization embedded within a civilian population, or that a regional threat such as Iran can be “eliminated” solely through military means, chooses to ignore the lessons of history. The result is the marginalization of realistic policy. Any proposal for practical solutions—compromise, arrangements, or conflict management—is perceived as failure. Any attempt to define limited objectives is seen as weakness. Thus, the leadership’s room for maneuver narrows—not because it lacks options, but because it is bound by its own promises.

This also carries a price in the international arena. States act according to interests, not slogans. When Israel presents unattainable objectives, it struggles to persuade international partners to support its policies over time. The gap between ambitious declarations and actual results undermines its credibility.

The lesson is clear: a responsible leadership does not promise the impossible and does not pledge “total victory.” Instead, it defines achievable policies and objectives, manages risks, and recognizes the limits of power. It strives to achieve a relative advantage within a complex reality.

The fact that the prime minister continues to employ the same rhetoric, even after it has been repeatedly disproven, is no coincidence. It serves short-term political need—preserving support, creating an illusion of control and direction, and deflecting criticism. In the long term, however, it undermines the ability to conduct effective policy, and the boomerang inevitably returns. This does not necessarily occur in a single dramatic event, but through an ongoing process of eroding trust, aimless escalation, and the entrenchment of empty slogans among both the leadership and the public.

The question is not whether the gap between promises and reality will be exposed—it already has been. The question is how long it will take before Israel’s political system and public decide to face reality, draw the necessary conclusions, and confront it.

8. The Security Establishment Has Learned Nothing and the Mistakes of the Separation Barrier Will Be Repeated in the Jordan Valley — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz / Shaul Arieli website, 23/04/2026

Twenty-four years after the decision by Ariel Sharon's government to construct the separation barrier along the Green Line, the time has come to judge it by its results. It turns out that the gap between promise and reality is not merely technical or budgetary, but a deep conceptual gap: the barrier, which was built in the name of security, does not fulfill its purpose because it was never designed as a security project. This insight should have guided the security establishment when it mapped out the route of the new barrier now being constructed in the Jordan Valley, as part of the "Blue Thread" project—but it appears that nothing has been learned.

When the decision to build the barrier was made in 2002, at the height of the Second Intifada, the logic behind it was clear: to create a system that would provide early warning, delay infiltration, and enable security forces to respond quickly. However, already then, as was written and presented before the High Court of Justice in petitions submitted over the years, the chosen route did not reflect this logic, but rather a combination of political, settlement-related, and strategic considerations. What began as deviations from security logic gradually became the method itself.

To understand the depth of the problem, one need only look at the data and official statements, which outline three consistent systemic failures:

Lack of physical continuity. According to State Comptroller reports, only about 61% of the route has an actual built barrier. In other words, dozens of kilometers are not fenced at all, for example in Gush Etzion, East Jerusalem, and southeastern Mount Hebron. The main reason is political pressure exerted by leaders of the Yesha Council and their representatives in the Knesset, contrary to the position of the security establishment. This is compounded by hundreds of breaches—sometimes small, sometimes wide enough for vehicles—through which tens of thousands of people pass daily. Even replacing the fence with a high wall, as was done in southwestern Mount Hebron at a cost of billions of shekels, has not provided an adequate solution to infiltration. For years, security officials have warned that in practice "there is no barrier." A barrier that is not continuous is not a barrier—as the security establishment itself determined in 2003.

Lack of an effective operational response. Official data indicate that less than one percent of infiltrations through the barrier are met with a response from forces on the ground. And even then, when response times reach tens of minutes, as testified by a Border Police representative in a Knesset committee, the operational system loses its relevance. The reason is a shortage of forces, as many battalions are occupied with securing settlements. Even in light of the Chief of Staff's warning last month—"I am raising ten red flags"—the situation does not appear likely to improve.

Lack of enforcement and deterrence. In Knesset discussions and official reports, enforcement authorities admitted that a shortage of detention facilities leads to the release of suspects and the cancellation of indictments. When there is no effective punishment, there is no deterrence. When there is no deterrence, the barrier has no meaning.

These three failures create a situation in which each component underlying the operational logic—detection, response, enforcement—is compromised. When all three are compromised, this constitutes a deep systemic failure.

Here another dimension of the problem emerges—the legal dimension. Over the years, the security establishment consistently argued before the High Court of Justice that the route was determined by security considerations, and that the harm to Palestinian rights was a proportional and necessary byproduct of these considerations. On this basis, petitions against the route were examined and large portions of it were approved. Full disclosure: I submitted a security expert opinion on behalf of the petitioners.

However, during the hearings it became clear that the route was not primarily driven by security considerations but by considerations related to expanding settlements. This led the court to invalidate the route in many cases and to criticize the security establishment for concealing these considerations from the court.

The fact that the barrier does not provide the security benefit attributed to it requires the High Court of Justice to reexamine the balance between security considerations and harm to Palestinian rights; not because the court erred in the past, but because the reality presented to it no longer exists. When the benefit does not materialize, the claim of proportionality also collapses. This lesson should stand before the court now in discussions on the construction of the new barrier in the Jordan Valley.

This is compounded by the international dimension. Israel has long presented the barrier as a purely security tool. Indeed, international law recognizes a state's right to defend itself and to

build a barrier within its territory. But when it becomes clear that the barrier, built beyond Israel's borders, does not provide the protection it was claimed to provide, the question arises whether the primary consideration was security or the attempt to determine the borders of future annexation. This question is present in international deliberations and decisions and affects how other countries assess Israel's policy.

Operating the separation barrier along the Green Line according to political considerations harms security. And this is exactly what is being done with the new barrier being constructed in the Jordan Valley.

Here we return to the root of the problem. The separation barrier is not merely a security project. It is part of a broader policy based on three historical principles for determining Israel's borders: security, demography, and settlement. These principles, established already in the 1930s, have guided Israeli policy for decades. But when they clash, a decision must be made. In the case of the separation barrier, no such decision was made. Instead, a hybrid was created: a route that seeks to be both a security border and a political tool. Such a hybrid is inherently unstable. This lesson has not been learned, as evidenced by the construction of the new barrier in the Jordan Valley, intended to strengthen settlement there and, as recently stated by Defense Minister Israel Katz, to separate it from the rest of the West Bank and annex it.

Already in the settlement plans of the 1970s, Israel sought to create "security zones" that would establish political facts on the ground. The barrier, built decades later, largely adopted this goal. The point is that a security barrier should be built according to principles of operational efficiency, while a political route is built according to principles of agreed sovereignty. When the two are mixed, the result is a compromise that harms both. Security is undermined, and no political decision is achieved.

Twenty-four years after construction began, it can be stated unequivocally: the failure of the barrier is not only due to its incomplete construction or lack of budget. It stems from the gap between its definition and its implementation. As long as the barrier is presented as a security tool but operated partially due to political considerations, it cannot be expected to provide full security.

There is a certain irony in the fact that the original idea—physical separation that would reduce friction and allow better security control—remains valid. But to realize it, one basic condition is required: consistency. If it is a security tool, it must be physically completed, enforced, and

properly resourced. If it is a political tool, this must be stated openly and its consequences addressed.

The cynicism is fully revealed in the intensive construction of farms and outposts east of the existing barrier. The Jewish violence they generate indicates that there is no truth behind the claim of a desire to “reduce friction,” and that the goal is to exclude Palestinians from the seam zone and displace them from Area C east of the barrier.

Meanwhile, reality is not waiting for a decision. It crosses the barrier through physical breaches and conceptual breaches alike. Whether these are undocumented workers, criminals, or terrorists, the conclusion is one: a barrier that is not maintained and not enforced does not protect; it merely creates the illusion of protection.

9. Arab Society Is Changing. Listen to Them — Shaul Arieli and Thaar Abu Ras, Haaretz / Shaul Arieli website, 14/05/2026

Amid the chaos, polarization and internal fracture in Israel, a tectonic shift is taking place that many in the Jewish mainstream, and especially in the center-left camp, are missing: Arab society in Israel has undergone an accelerated political transformation. Instead of withdrawing in the face of an extreme right-wing government perceived as hostile, the Arab public wants to be involved also in foreign affairs and is demanding a seat at the decision-making table.

A recent survey conducted by Prof. Gilad Hirschberger and Prof. Sivan Hirsch-Hoefler of the Tamarur–Politography research group points to practical civic integration and social changes, alongside firm national positions and criticism of the state leadership’s management of the conflict.

The “demographic demon,” which politicians used for decades as a tool of fearmongering, is gradually dissipating. The share of the Arab population is stabilizing at 21.1 percent of Israel’s total population. Alongside the decline in fertility, a revolution is taking place in higher education. Arabs today constitute about 19 percent of all undergraduate students, and there are already more than 1,000 Arab doctoral students, out of about 12,000. A new generation, educated, self-confident and aspiring to mobility, is reshaping Arab society.

One of the most prominent changes concerns attitudes toward politics, and particularly toward joining a coalition. Despite the alienation they experience from the government, 70 percent of respondents in the survey accept the majority’s decision and prefer a democratically elected government, even if they disagree with its policies. But the real shift concerns the desire to influence. In the past, sitting in a Zionist government was taboo. Today, 55.7 percent of respondents state that they would “definitely not” vote for an Arab party that declares in advance that it would refuse to join a coalition. The Arab voter is tired of the Arab parties’ retreat to the opposition benches and demands pragmatism from them. About 58 percent of respondents want the formation of a center-left government with the participation of Arab parties.

Support for civic integration does not stem from blindness regarding the state of Israeli democracy, nor does it express a retreat on the Palestinian issue. Most of the Arab public believes that democracy is in danger as long as control over the territories of the West Bank continues. Unlike many in the Jewish center, who prefer to ignore the issue, for most Arab

citizens a substantive liberal democracy cannot coexist with occupation of the territories, and this position is expected to affect their vote.

The deepest perceptual gap between the Jewish and Arab mainstream is revealed in relation to October 7: the survey reflects a position that must be acknowledged. About 90 percent of the Arab public do not support the massacre carried out by Hamas, but nearly 70 percent attribute the main blame for the massacre to the occupation. Contrary to the prevailing conception among Jews, according to which the occupation of Gaza ended with the disengagement, Arabs identify the policy of closure and the separation of the Strip from the West Bank as a continuation of Israeli control over the Strip.

This is also where the key to a solution lies. The Arab public remains the most stable and consistent ideological camp in its support for peace: support for the two-state solution is sweeping and reaches more than 75 percent. At the same time, like Jews, the Arab public views the unilateral separation from Gaza as a failed experiment. Unlike the Jewish public, it tends to blame the Israeli government for the failure, because it sees the unilateral separation paradigm as a solution that does not address the essential needs of the Palestinians: independence and freedom of movement.

In addition to interest in the diplomatic-security debate, the Arab public today demands partnership in the management of national moves: more than two-thirds of respondents believe that the Palestinian Authority should govern the Gaza Strip on the “day after” the war, and most expect their leaders in the Knesset to take an active part in shaping policy on the issue. The demand for influence has expanded from matters of budgeting and violence within Arab society to a pursuit of partnership also in shaping foreign and security policy.

Another sensitive issue is the question of Haram al-Sharif, the Temple Mount. About 95 percent of respondents state unequivocally that the site should remain under Muslim control. This figure clarifies the background to violent eruptions in the past, from the events of October 2000 to Operation Guardian of the Walls in 2021, which broke out alongside restrictions imposed on the mosques of the Temple Mount. But when respondents were asked to consider the establishment of a Palestinian state to which sovereignty over the Temple Mount would be transferred, a move that could require Arab citizens of Israel to cross an international border in order to pray at the mosque, support for the idea fell to 63.5 percent. This figure shows that despite their deep religious identity, most Arab citizens of Israel feel a strong attachment to the

Israeli reality, and are not quick to give up the convenience or free access to Haram al-Sharif that derive from their being citizens of the state.

With regard to the war with Iran as well, the Arab public demonstrates a sober reading of reality: while it is almost completely divided on the question of whether the war will contribute to renewing the peace process with the Palestinians, a clear majority assesses that the current confrontation will actually lead to the expansion of the Abraham Accords with Arab states. In other words, the Arab public correctly evaluates the strength of Israel's regional alliances with the pragmatic Arab world, even if it remains skeptical regarding the achievements that can be attained in the Palestinian arena following the war.

This survey shatters a long series of myths: Arab society is not disconnected, and it is not an insular community that rejects the existence of the State of Israel, and certainly not a fifth column. It is a society undergoing accelerated processes of education, and it opposes terrorism, while insisting on its demand for an end to the occupation as the only guarantee of Israeli democracy. More than anything, it is a society that explicitly demands to be a full partner in the leadership of the state.

If the center-left camp, or the entire democratic camp in Israel, ever wants to return to power and secure the future of the state, it must stop treating the Arab public as mandates meant only to serve as a safety net, or alternatively as a threat to be managed. It must begin seeing them as strategic and political partners in building a governing alternative, through a fair allocation of internal resources, shaping the outline for the "day after" in Gaza, and returning the two-state solution to the public debate. This is a historic moment in which the Arab voter is extending a hand for active coalition partnership. Those who continue to ignore the outstretched hand will condemn themselves to many more years on the opposition benches.

10. The Selective Use of History by the Right Carries a Heavy Public and Diplomatic Price — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz, 04/06/2026

Political debate in Israel is not only about borders, security or identity. It is also about collective memory, and about the question of who is entitled to use history - and, above all, how. Israel's right has a consistent method: when it needs to explain a failure, disaster or crisis, the blame is found on the left side of the political map, because of mistakes it made in the past. When it needs to justify a controversial policy in the present, history is turned on its head, and actions taken by the left in the past suddenly become a precedent that confers legitimacy.

The most prominent example is the Oslo Accords. In right-wing discourse, Oslo is not a diplomatic process that failed to mature into a permanent-status agreement, but a fundamental mistake that can explain every failure. Benjamin Netanyahu has repeatedly claimed that Oslo is the "mother of all sins," and has even drawn a distinction between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority in which the only difference is the pace of our annihilation at their hands, not their intent. In December 2023, Netanyahu even compared the number of people killed since the Oslo Accords with the October 7 massacre, in an attempt to assign responsibility for the disaster to those accords (The Times of Israel, December 12, 2023). This is not merely a historical interpretation; it is a conceptual framework according to which the left brought terrorism - including October 7. And there are people who buy it, even though Netanyahu himself has served as prime minister since 2009.

Throughout those years, right-wing governments adhered to the same diplomatic and security outlook, within which the historical context of the early 1990s, the broad international support for the talks and the effort to reach an agreement, and the fact that the Oslo Accords were designed from the outset as a gradual process dependent on difficult decisions later on - decisions that Israel, too, and not only the Palestinian side, refused to make - have almost entirely disappeared. Instead of examining what worked, what failed, and what was designed in a way that required additional decisions in order to succeed, one total conclusion is asserted: it was a disaster, and therefore any future diplomatic initiative is doomed to reproduce that disaster.

A similar pattern applies to the disengagement from the Gaza Strip. Although the move was carried out by a right-wing government headed by Ariel Sharon, and was not intended to advance an agreement but rather - as his bureau chief, Dov Weisglass, put it - to "put the diplomatic process in formaldehyde," the political right adopted the disengagement as a

symbol of the "doctrine of withdrawals" and regards it as proof that every withdrawal from territory necessarily leads to a security threat.

The disengagement, too, is presented apart from its context: a unilateral move, without an agreement, without coordination and without international accompaniment. At the same time, the debate erases the separation policy pursued by Netanyahu and his successors, the explicit assertion that " Hamas is an asset" (precisely because of its opposition to a diplomatic solution), and the strategic choice to manage the conflict rather than resolve it.

Instead of conducting a substantive discussion of the disengagement and the conditions necessary for any diplomatic move, it has become a warning sign that need only be raised to shut down any discussion. Thus, almost absurdly, a move intended to prevent a diplomatic agreement is used as proof that any future diplomatic agreement will necessarily be a disaster. The basic distinction between a unilateral withdrawal and a diplomatic agreement has been erased in favor of a simple and effective narrative of fear.

Yet when the right wants to justify controversial steps in the present, it uses history in the opposite direction. Thus, for example, when Bezael Smotrich said from the Knesset podium that Ben-Gurion should have "finished the job" and expelled all the Arabs (The Times of Israel, October 13, 2021), the debate was not only about the statement itself, but about the psychological mechanism it activates: David Ben-Gurion, the father of the Labor movement, who advocated compromises, is used by the right to justify extremism. If the left of that time was complicit in the injustices of 1948, the argument goes, then today's left has no moral right to preach. This is not a historical reading, but a cynical use of the past, detached from the complexity in which Ben-Gurion operated on the eve of the state's establishment and from the existential circumstances of that period.

The same logic is also applied to the settlement enterprise. When criticism is voiced, the right's standard response is: "Who started it? The left." Indeed, between 1967 and 1977, dozens of settlements were established in accordance with the Allon Plan. But the context is cut away. Against the background of the continuing Arab refusal to recognize Israel and the threat of a potential eastern front, the Allon Plan was intended to minimize, as far as possible, the inclusion of a Palestinian population under Israeli sovereignty.

It was no coincidence that Yitzhak Rabin wrote in his book *The Rabin Memoirs*: "We must not push Jewish settlers into the heart of the West Bank, which is densely populated by Arabs." To

say "the left started it" without saying how, where and why is not history, but a slogan intended for consumers of ignorance.

One cannot argue simultaneously that the left is dangerous because it made mistakes in the past, and that the right's policy is legitimate because it continues what the left did in the past. Either the past is a warning that requires correction, or it is a precedent that legitimizes continuation. Each time, the right chooses the option that serves its immediate purpose: delegitimizing its rival when it needs to place responsibility on it, and legitimizing itself when it seeks to validate a problematic move.

The political center and the ultra-Orthodox parties also participate in this game. The centrist parties adopt convenient parts of the right-wing narrative, distance themselves from Oslo as a decision made under different conditions, yet avoid defending the very idea of a diplomatic agreement. In doing so, they enable the right to entrench Oslo as an absolute failure without offering an alternative.

Among the ultra-Orthodox parties, the use of history is even more pragmatic: when military service, education or budgets are at issue, they enthusiastically embrace Ben-Gurion's legacy and the status quo (Ben-Gurion's letters to Agudat Yisrael, 1947). When settlements, annexation or diplomatic confrontation are at issue, they align themselves with the right and claim that this is a "Zionist continuity" that must not be challenged (coalition agreements with Likud in the years 2015-2023). The fact that Ben-Gurion himself, that secular socialist leader, is both the father of the status quo and the man identified with the Nakba allows the ultra-Orthodox parties to move freely between narratives. For them, history is not a moral or ideological anchor, but a repository of useful quotations.

This selective use of history comes at a heavy public and diplomatic price. When every diplomatic initiative is rejected in advance as a continuation of the "Oslo disaster," discussion of the future is blocked. Instead of asking what has changed, what structural flaws existed in the Oslo Accords, and what mechanisms were missing from them, Israeli politics contents itself with a single slogan: we already tried. That is not a historical lesson, but an evasion of thought.

The contradiction becomes even sharper in view of the fact that, since 2009, Israel has been governed almost continuously by right-wing or center-right governments. During this period, no diplomatic agreements were advanced, Israeli control over the West Bank deepened, and the conflict became more complicated. Yet whenever a failure occurs - culminating in October 7 -

the finger points backward: to Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres and the Oslo Accords. History serves here as a kind of political insurance policy that prevents a genuine discussion of responsibility in the present.

The left is not free of mistakes, and the right is not wrong in all its claims. The problem lies in the use of history as a mechanism of explanation and justification. Mobilized history is narrow and detached from context. The past becomes a political commodity, and as a result, the future, too, remains directionless. A state that argues about history without holding it in its entirety finds it difficult to formulate a vision.

11. The Danger Is Not Civil War, but That the State Will Cease to Be a Shared Home — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz, 25/06/2026

The discourse about civil war in Israel no longer sounds like rhetorical exaggeration. Over the past decade, it has provided a reasonable interpretive framework for understanding the dangerous processes arising from internal polarization: the struggle over the character of the regime, the attempt to change its nature, the deepening of control over the territories, the erosion of social cohesion, the politicization of the security bodies, the deterioration of Israel's standing in the world, and the growing distancing of parts of world Jewry from Israel. The question is not whether street battles between organized camps will break out here tomorrow morning, but whether we are in a situation in which political violence, mass civil disobedience, the collapse of trust in institutions, and the replacement of democratic decision-making with coercion become part of routine life

The root of the crisis does not lie in the current Netanyahu government, though it has accelerated it dramatically. A decade ago I wrote about this danger as the result of the continuing flight from a decision between two states and one state. I assessed that Israel would slide into "features of governmental anarchy... violence at the personal and daily level, in the absence of police enforcement, the collapse of the status of the High Court of Justice and armed organizations" ("Haaretz", May 24, 2016). Reality has indeed deteriorated. The status quo disintegrated from within: Israel deepened its control over the Palestinians, expanded de facto annexation, without assuming full civil responsibility, and left the space between the Jordan River and the sea in a state of permanent temporariness. In other words, it continues with the same political fiction for which states pay compound interest.

The present stage in the internal fracture became possible when the coalition linked the idea of Greater Israel to changing the rules of the democratic game - a connection that has not yet penetrated the consciousness and activity of the leaders of the protest against the regime coup. That is the core of the matter: in the eyes of the messianic camp, territorial compromise does not express an ordinary policy dispute but heresy against a historical-religious course; in the eyes of the democratic Zionist camp, continued control over the Palestinians and the destruction of democratic checks and balances are a threat to Israel's existence as a Jewish and democratic state. And when the two camps no longer share a common vision, the terms "right" and "left" become too meager to understand the gaps. The dispute is not over the education budget, but over the source of sovereignty: the citizens of the state, or those who see themselves as interpreters of God's will.

To this is added the Haredi struggle, which has turned from a budgetary and social dispute into an issue of basic civic equality. The High Court ruling of June 2024 held that, in the absence of a legal basis for an exemption from military service, the state must enlist yeshiva students, and ordered it to stop funding yeshivas whose students do not enlist. Since then the confrontation has sharpened: in April 2026 the High Court ordered economic sanctions to be imposed on Haredi draft evaders, and since then broad and violent Haredi demonstrations against conscription have taken place.

The danger intensifies as the elections approach. The coalition will try to frame any possible election loss as theft by the "civil service," the attorney general, the High Court, the media, or the elites. The opposition will see another victory by the coalition as a mandate to complete the regime coup and annexation, and will intensify its struggle.

The senior appointments now being made at an accelerated pace are also not a technical matter. There is nothing inherently wrong with a prime minister appointing senior officeholders, but there is something wrong with a sequence of appointments taking place during a severe crisis of trust, being made by someone facing criminal charges and bearing responsibility for the October 7 massacre, while waging a struggle against the judicial system and in the shadow of elections in which the independence of these institutions is being challenged.

The discourse on social networks reflects the radicalization. Annexation has returned to the lead, accounting for 38.51% of the discourse about solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with support from 84.3% of those mentioning it. The two-state solution appeared in only 21.37% of the posts, and 82.8% of its mentions were by its opponents. In other words, the public expressing itself online is not moving toward compromise, but is entrenching itself in opposing ideological conceptions.

Civil wars arise from a collision between ideologies and opposing views of the regime, society, religious faith and the essence of shared life - views that split the public into camps. When each camp sees a threat in the other camp's vision, any compromise in favor of coexistence is perceived as betrayal. The Haredim seek to entrench separatism, exemption and benefits; the messianic camp seeks to entrench Jewish supremacy, control and sovereignty throughout the land; democratic Zionists seek to save the state framework that enables a Jewish majority, equality, separation of powers and international recognition. The three camps no longer fit under the same rickety constitutional roof.

Migration from Israel is also a warning sign. A report by the Knesset Research and Information Center published this month shows that in 2022-2024 Israel had a negative migration balance of Israelis, and about 140,000 people were subtracted from the total population. According to reports based on Central Bureau of Statistics data, in 2025 more than 69,000 Israelis left Israel, and the number of immigrants to Israel fell to about 24,600. Migration reflects damage to citizens' trust in the state. When Israelis with financial and human capital transfer their lives, future, children and capital to other countries, they are expressing distrust in the state's ability to guarantee them stability, security and freedom.

Therefore the danger is not that a "civil war" will break out in the sense of armed forces standing opposite one another. The danger is a creeping process in which the state loses its ability to be a shared home: the rule of law becomes partisan; politicians suspect the security establishment; the court is portrayed as the enemy of the people; the Haredim reject the principle of equality in shouldering the burden; the messianics reject the principle of the border; and democratic Zionists believe that a government that seeks to dismantle the rules that allowed it to be elected is illegitimate.

To emerge from the danger, a decision is required instead of continuing to manage the conflict among the camps. Party leaders must present the voter with clear alternatives that enable a decision: a democratic state with a Jewish majority within recognized borders that is a member of the family of nations, or a regime of Jewish supremacy in a binational space; a state, nonpartisan army or political militias; the rule of law or personal loyalty; civic partnership or sectoral coalitions that extort the state.

Civil war is not fate, but a state cannot prevent it merely by declarations in the style of "together we will win." It can be saved from it only if it decides what the "together" is, who is included in it, and what must not be done, even for the sake of the victory of one camp or another.

12. The decisive question is whether the State of Israel will remain a Jewish democracy, or turn into a messianic ethnocracy — Shaul Arieli, Haaretz, 10/07/2026

The ferocity of the war between Israel's Zionist and messianic communities is becoming ever clearer. This began with the establishment of the Gush Emunim settlement movement in 1974, when the messianists induced Israel to fulfill their vision: reestablishing the Kingdom of David.

Until 1974, the messianists viewed Zionism's achievements – the Balfour Declaration, the Mandate for Palestine, the UN Partition Plan, the War of Independence, the Sinai Campaign, the Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War – as the beginning of the Redemption. That's why Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook justified cooperation with the secular Zionist pioneers.

According to the messianists, the withdrawal from Quneitra as part of the 1974 Disengagement Agreement with Syria violated a divine command, a conceding of part of the Land of Israel.

To the messianists, the Zionist leadership now had to be replaced for violating the divine promise: "Truly the Lord hath delivered into our hands all the land" (Joshua 2:24). For people espousing this outlook today, the messianists' dozens of lawmakers and cabinet ministers, who control the prime minister and policy, reflect the fulfillment of this "prophecy."

According to Gush Emunim's founding document, "the source of the vision is the tradition of Israel and its Jewish roots." Then came the clear messianic goal: "The complete redemption of the Jewish people and the entire world."

In 1981, the Yesha Council of settlements inherited the role of Gush Emunim, and the movement became even more extreme. Yesha's founding document states: "The council sees any proposal for handing over parts of the Land of Israel ... as a denial of the Jewish people's mission and ... an illegal act." That is, Israeli democracy's elected institutions have no legitimacy to return territory, not even for peace.

In 1974, the messianists declared war on the Zionists, who didn't recognize the threat and even saw the struggle as part of the commitment to democracy and pluralism. Despite the warnings – from public intellectual Yeshayahu Leibowitz and political leaders like Yitzhak Rabin, Menachem Begin and Yosef Burg – it took the Zionists many years to realize that this wasn't just a struggle over the Land of Israel but over identity and the nature of the government.

This became clearer in the battles against the peace agreement with Egypt, the Oslo Accords and the Gaza pullout. These efforts peaked in the recent attempts to undermine the judiciary, and during the current war.

The Zionists and messianists have contradictory visions that affect all aspects of our lives. The Zionist dream is based on democratic principles and a Jewish majority: equal rights, minority-rights protections, membership in the community of nations, separation of religion and state, and checks and balances.

The messianic dream is based on theocratic principles, as espoused by settler leader Hanan Porat (1943-2011): "establishing a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, returning the presence of God to Zion." This included Jewish sovereignty over the whole Land of Israel and revoking the rights of the Palestinians.

In founding the state, the Zionists saw the Jewish people's need for a safe haven. As Theodor Herzl wrote in "The Jewish State," "Let the sovereignty be granted us over a portion of the globe large enough to satisfy the rightful requirements of a nation."

But the messianists saw the command to fulfill the biblical promise as the motive for establishing the state. Menachem Felix, a leader of Gush Emunim, declared in 1979, quoting the medieval scholar Nachmanides: "We have settled [the land] ... because we were commanded to inherit the land."

The Zionists viewed international legitimization as the basis for establishing the state, "by virtue of our natural and historic right and on the strength of the resolution of the UN General Assembly," as David Ben-Gurion proclaimed on May 14, 1948. The new state would ensure equality and liberty for all.

The messianists' view is reflected in a post by Bezael Smotrich in November 2017: "The UN resolution isn't the source of our right to this country, but rather the Bible and the promise of the Blessed Be He."

The Zionists see democracy as the supreme value. They believe in the rule of law and the separation of powers. The messianists view democracy as a tool, as expressed by settler leader Benny Katzover in 2012: "Israel's democracy has fulfilled its mission and must now break up and bow to Judaism."

The Zionists took into account the country's future when trying to determine Israel's borders. Zionist leaders have always preferred a democratic Israel with a Jewish majority at the expense of conceding parts of the country.

The messianists see borders as the crux of the problem. Any concession of territory is sacrilege, and one should sacrifice one's life to prevent this, ruled Kook's son, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook.

The Zionists are committed to the Declaration of Independence and the "complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex." The messianists believe that only the Jewish people have the right to self-determination in the Land of Israel. Even more severe is the doctrine of Rabbi Meir Kahane, whose disciple, Itamar Ben-Gvir, is in the cabinet. This outlook calls for annulling Arab Israelis' voting rights and excluding them from the public space.

The Zionists recognize the value of international legitimization; they consider Israel part of the family of nations. The messianists deny the legitimacy of international law.

The Zionists believe in an open Judaism where each person manages his or her life; Judaism is an identity based on the history of the Jewish people over the generations. This includes cross-fertilization with the rest of humanity. According to the messianists, Judaism's source of authority is God, who manages the lives of his believers. This view bases its culture on the Bible and the Talmud.

The Zionists see October 7 as a failure to "manage the crisis," which was the policy of Benjamin Netanyahu and Naftali Bennett and sowed divisions between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority. The messianists view the massacre as part of a divine plan.

This is similar to their view of the Holocaust, which they see as the divine punishment of Jews who did not go to the Land of Israel after the Balfour Declaration. In a TV interview, Smotrich said about October 7: "Maybe we needed to absorb that terrible and painful blow to remember for a second who and what we are."

The Zionists believe that the war in Gaza was imposed on us, with the goal to return the hostages and create conditions for diplomacy. Above all, the messianists see the conflict as a war against the biblical Amalek. Revenge on the gentiles, according to Kahane and his heirs, is Israel's goal.

This camp also views the war as a tool for holding Gaza forever. Cabinet member Orit Strock said in a TV interview in March 2023: "Israel is in a process of repentance over the sin of its disengagement from Gaza. ... I believe that this will ultimately be reversed."

Finally, this camp sees the war as a chance to expel Palestinians from Gaza as part of "voluntary emigration." "To remove all of them from Gaza we will need to expel 5,000 people a day, seven days a week, for a whole year," Smotrich has said.

Thus, this is a struggle between a camp that strives for diplomatic agreements that will ensure the Zionist vision and a camp that espouses an eternal war. It's a struggle between a camp seeking to ensure the rights of all the country's citizens and a camp viewing democracy as an obstacle on the road to Jewish supremacy. One camp is fighting for democracy, while the other is trying to make the country an oppressive ethnocracy.

The decisive question is whether the State of Israel will remain a Jewish democracy, or turn into a messianic ethnocracy.

Decades ago, Leibowitz predicted that the Kook doctrine would end in "bestiality." The answer will determine the future of the Zionist project.

One must vote for parties that commit to a democratic state upholding full equality, with the country belonging to the family of nations. The alternative is clear: a discriminatory regime and a pariah state, poor and mired in endless wars. The battle isn't over territory or politics, it's over Israel's identity and regime.

This month marks the fourth anniversary of the establishment of the Tamrur Politography Research Group. Four years of sustained, intensive, and collaborative work during one of the most complex and turbulent periods in the history of the State of Israel, against the backdrop of profound changes in the region and around the world. The wars involving Iran, Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in the Gaza Strip, the Houthis in Yemen, and jihadist militias in Syria have once again demonstrated the extent to which the Israeli-Palestinian conflict does not exist in a vacuum, but is intertwined with a broader, evolving, and highly consequential regional and international system.

Within this challenging reality, we succeeded in establishing and consolidating Tamrur's dashboard systems, providing the public, researchers, and decision-makers with the most comprehensive database on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The system comprises approximately 18,000 indicators across seven fields of research: Economic, geo-spatial, security, social, Diplomatic, political and legal.

Over the past two years, we have continued to expand and enhance the system through the development of an indicator catalog, a unique survey dashboard, a graphs dashboard, a system for monitoring use of the database, and a dedicated dashboard chat interface, which is currently under development.

This collection of articles is, first and foremost, the product of the dedicated work of Tamrur's researchers and their research assistants. It brings together articles written between January 2023 and mid-2026, based on the quarterly reports prepared by the researchers throughout this period.

Each article draws on the data, findings, and insights presented in those reports and remains faithful to them in both its description and analysis of reality. Alongside these are traditional opinion pieces reflecting the individual views and interpretations of their authors. Beyond being a collection of research-based articles, this volume embodies the spirit at the heart of Tamrur's work: a belief in the power of reliable data, systematic research, and clear-eyed analysis to contribute to serious and responsible public discourse. We hope that these articles will help promote a factual, broad, and long-term discussion of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, its regional implications, and its place within the international system, while providing readers with better tools for understanding the complex reality in which we live and operate.

