**I have a few suggestions to strengthen and improve this article.**

1. **There is a lot of missing information. Don’t assume that non-Israeli readers will understand from a last name who the person is and what that person’s position is. Each time, introduce the person with both names, title, year elected, and a few words on the person’s position on this issue. Also, several key issues are mentioned in passing, with no explanation (the separation wall, the withdrawal from Gaza). Give a sentence or two of explanation.**
2. **The organization of the article is confusing. It skips around and there is a lot of repetition (for example, the phrase "extortion game" is used 10 times). I suggest putting the historical and background information in chronological order (at least within a section). There can be sub-sections within this: religious factors, first intifada, Oslo Accords, Obama era, Trump era, etc.**
3. **Then have a separate section with the analysis and discussion. Within the Discussion or Analysis section there can be a sub-section titled Israel’s Strategy of Playing a Game of Extortion (or something like that). Put all 10 sentences that use that phrase under that heading, and see if anything can be cut or shortened. Same for other major issues that are part of the analysis: Palestinians Facing a Stalemate, Military and Militarism, Public Opinion…etc. I think this will make the article much clearer and stronger.**

**Palestinian Article**

**Introduction**

Examination of the conflict between the Zionist movement and the Palestinians, from the beginning of the 20th century to the present, indicates that conflict has continually played out in favor of the Zionist movement. The Zionist movement has grown stronger, and succeeded in establishing a state with military, technological, and economic power that has become one of the leading world powers. Moreover, time is working in Israel’s favor in terms of territorial gains.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has deep religious and historical roots. It is multi-faceted, and the actors are characterized by unpredictable factors and uncontrollable sub-groups. All this makes it difficult to find a solution to the conflict. The many reasons for this include the religious component of the conflict, which is rooted in the interaction between Judaism and Islam[[1]](#footnote-1) and their conceptions of this territory. Large segments of both sides consider the same territory to be sacred: the Land of Israel, in the eyes of Jews, and the Wakf (Muslim sacred property) in the eyes of Palestinians. Holy sites, such as the Temple Mount in Jerusalem and Rachel's Tomb in Hebron further intensify the emotions on both sides. This territorial conflict has become a zero-sum game, which makes it difficult to reach a solution that satisfies both parties. It is an ethnic, linguistic, and cultural conflict among heterogenous populations who have a long history of bloodshed, mutual hostility, and deep psychological fears and barriers affecting their perceptions of the conflict (Baukhol, 2015).

This chapter examines Israeli strategy regarding political components of the conflict, the influence of public opinion, and the central role of the military and militarism in shaping the process. A key premise is that large gaps exist between the two sides in all areas: Israel has absolute military, economic, political, and strategic superiority over the Palestinians, making it difficult to create a level playing field. Due to these conditions, Israel has, over time, moved from a strategy of negotiation towards a strategy of issuing dictates. This strategy has yielded good returns for the Israeli side, and led to a loss of hope and collapse of trust in the process on the Palestinian side. This is the current situation.

Over the years, those who sought to mediate the conflict were perceived as biased: the Palestinians perceived the American administration as supporting Israel, while Israel perceived the Europeans as supporting the Palestinians. The conflict continues without any progress towards a solution, even though a quarter of a century has passed since the Oslo Accords were signed, according to which a permanent solution was to be reached within five years.

**Brief Historical Overview**

On November 29, 1947, the United Nations adopted Resolution 181, the Partition Plan, which designated 15,000 km2 for the Jews, representing 55% of the territory of Palestine, and only 12,000 km2 for the Palestinians (45%). The Jews accepted the Partition Plan even though they sought larger territories.[[2]](#footnote-2) The Palestinians rejected it because they saw it as unfair. War broke out, ending with a ceasefire in March 1949. During this war, most of the Palestinians, about a million people, were expelled and fled, while only 156,000 remained in the territory of the State of Israel and became Israeli citizens. During the Six Day War (1967), Israel occupied additional territories from Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, including the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Palestinian residents of these areas, unlike those who became civilians after the 1948 war, were placed under military rule.

In the first twenty years of the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Israel managed to exert control over these territories without much difficulty. Then on December 8, 1987 the intifada, a widespread popular uprising, broke out in the Gaza Strip. This changed the picture. Sparked by a serious car accident in the Gaza Strip, the intifada expressed an explosion of frustration and opposition to the Israeli occupation, especially the massive expropriation of land for Jewish settlements, and Israel’s withdrawal from a national policy that had been based on minimal friction with the local population.

Israel tried to forcefully suppress the intifada through its military and security apparatus. One of the results of the intifada was the growth of Hamas, an Islamic movement associated with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Israel had ignored Hamas, partially due to their hope that Hamas would weaken the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). However, Israel found itself faced with a more radical movement, which refuses to recognize Israel and does not hesitate to use severe violence. At the same time, the PLO, which was expelled from Lebanon in 1982 and relocated far away in Tunis, was greatly weakened (Sela, 2014). In Gaza and the West Bank, an independent local leadership has emerged, which is affiliated with the PLO but not subordinate to it. Israel found itself facing a stalemate, as all its efforts to suppress the intifada failed, and Israel's image in the world was damaged. It also harmed the Israeli economy and way of life. The need arose for Israel to find ways to deal with this threat.

Contacts were made between Israeli politicians and the PLO, but were kept secret, because at that time there was an Israeli law that prevented any contact with the PLO. Following the Gulf War, the Madrid conference opened talks between Israel and a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation. In fact, this was initiated by the PLO, with no thanks to Israel, which was led by Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir. These talks were doomed to failure in advance, due to mutual suspicion and because the Palestinian delegation was not directly subordinate to the PLO. Some people were convinced that there was no point in the negotiations, the whole purpose being to fulfill the will of the United States, led by George W. Bush and Secretary of State James Baker. The chairman of the delegation, Hyder Abd al-Shafi, stated at every opportunity that the talks were null and void.

**The Oslo Accords: The Most Serious Attempt to Reach a Solution to the Conflict**

Much has been written about the Oslo Accords process (Beilin, 1997; Ghanem, Mostafa & Brake, 2019; Hirschfeld, 2000; Inn, 2013; Peres, 1993; Savir, 1998). The basis of the accords can be found in indirect contacts between the United States and the PLO as early as 1988, which were followed by direct discussions. Between 1989 and 1990, discussions were held between Israelis and Palestinians from the West Bank, such as Hanan Asrawi and Faisal al-Husseini, with the aim of advancing negotiations between the parties. However, the Likud government led by Shamir rejected any such attempt.

Yitzhak Rabin, who was elected as Prime Minister in 1992, sought to strive for a political solution. He adopted an outline that began with the initiative of two academics who were sponsored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Shimon Peres. The outline included two phases: a transition phase and a final phase in which explosive issues such as the status of Jerusalem, refugees, and settlements would be discussed (Beilin, 2001; Hirschfield, 2000; Inn, 2013, Ramon, 2019: 429-431). In August 1993, talks between Israel and the PLO were publicly announced. On September 13, 1993, the Oslo I Accords were signed on the White House lawn. This agreement included mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO.

The weakness of the PLO at the time led them to agree, almost without appeal, to the conditions set by Israel (Ghanem et al., 2019). Even some on the Israeli side admitted, in internal talks, that Israel gave too little to the Palestinians. In January 1994, during a discussion on the draft of the Cairo Agreement, Foreign Minister Peres said in internal talks to Chief of Staff Ehud Barak: “You are giving them a lousy deal ... you would not agree [to them giving you this]”.

**Background Information on the Difficulty of Reaching an Agreement between the Parties**

There is much literature concerned with the premise raised here, that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is complicated and includes multiple facets: national, religious, historical-narrative, psychological, military, and diplomatic. This is in addition to the existence of disruptive and uncontrollable factions within each side. Further, of course, there has been the cumulative price in blood paid by each of the parties, which makes it difficult for them to reconcile and reach a compromise (Bar-Tal, 2007, 2011).

In recent negotiations (2013-2014), as in earlier times, various aspects of this situation can be seen in the parties' insistence on religious issues, such as the al-Aqsa mosque or the Israeli presence in Hebron. These reflect emotional and religious beliefs, rather than rational positions that can be discussed in a matter-of-fact manner that enables the parties to come to a solution in negotiations. The various ascents to the Temple Mount by Israeli politicians, or statements in this spirit made even by non-religious politicians, prove that the religious aspects are at the core of the conflict, and cannot be dealt with by rational means of reaching solutions through negotiations and compromises.

At the same time, there is no doubt that the rounds of negotiations held under the leadership of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu were doomed to failure, not only because of the issues at stake, but mainly because of the complete lack of trust between the parties (Bayraktar, 2014). The pressure exerted by President Obama was perceived in Israel as one-sided and even hostile. Netanyahu, who occasionally showed flexibility in the discussions, did not hide his distaste for Obama and the lack of trust in his staff. This was accompanied by massive pressure from Netanyahu’s coalition partners. He realized that if he continued to make progress with the Palestinians, he could lose his support base from the right-wing and among the settlers. Therefore, Netanyahu destroyed the negotiations by refusing to fulfill the government's commitment to release veteran Arab prisoners with Israeli citizenship (Ghanem et al., 2019).

These issues take on a different validity when taking a long-term view and examine Israel's reluctant behavior regarding any concessions or flexibility demonstrated by the Palestinian side. The 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, backed by the Arab and Muslim countries of the world, presented Israel with a fair deal in the form of a withdrawal from the territories it occupied in 1967 in exchange for full recognition and diplomatic relations between Israel and all the partner countries.

The PLO became more flexible on its positions throughout the negotiations, for example on the issues of Palestinian refugees and their right of return, which became a symbolic issue, to include only a few thousand people, as expressed in the Beilin-Abu-Mazen Agreement.[[3]](#footnote-3) The PLO has consistently declared its commitment to the understandings expressed in the documents it has published throughout the years of negotiations, and until current times.[[4]](#footnote-4) Similarly, the reason for the cessation of negotiations between the parties was Israel’s refusal to release Israeli- Palestinians imprisoned for harming IDF soldiers, even though they had been imprisoned for over thirty years, were already at an advanced age, and no longer pose a danger to Israel if released.

**Israeli Militarism and Forceful Approach**

The Israeli army and its soldiers hold a central place in Israeli society, ethos, and identity. The army is one of the main employers, and makes up a significant share of the Israeli economy. Veterans of Israel’s military and security forces frequently hold about 15% of the Knesset seats, and many other senior and central positions in the government (Brick, 2019). Some of Israel’s prime ministers were previously army generals, and were elected in part because of their aura of heroism. The Blue and White Party, founded in 2019, was led by three generals, with several others who had been senior officers in the army and security forces within its upper ranks.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the discourse on security is dominant in Israeli society, politics, foreign policy, and the media. Militarism is intertwined with the perception of war as necessary for security, which is the duty of the state to ensure (Tally, 1985). Much has been written about militarism in Israeli society and its impact on how relations with the Palestinians are conducted; this is beyond the scope of the current chapter.[[5]](#footnote-5) The heavy hand of military activity and violent policing against the Palestinians (for example in East Jerusalem) or destructive military operations, such as in the Gaza Strip, are intended to subdue the Palestinians by force, not reach a proper and satisfactory settlement with both sides.

**Economic Relations and the Dependence of the Palestinian Economy on Israel**

In general, any possibility of an independent Palestinian economy was eliminated by the Paris Protocol, a part of the Oslo Accords dealing with economic relations and control of the passage of Palestinian goods from and under Israeli-controlled Palestinian territories, including the collection of taxes and similar issues (Lavie, 2012). In practice, Israel controls the currency, markets, imports, exports, trade industries, economic climate, and fiscal planning. This is in addition to the taxation mentioned above.

In addition, Israel causes considerable damage to the Palestinian economy through its policies of imposing closures, restrictions, taxes, and various commissions. A UN study found that economic damage to the PA between 2000 and 2017 reached $47 billion.[[6]](#footnote-6) Israel also controls the labor market and regulates the monetary exchanges for labor. The GDP per capita in the PA is $4,578 compared to $40,270 in Israel.[[7]](#footnote-7) Another illustration of Israel's complete control over Palestinian funds is Israel offsetting the tax that Israel is supposed to carry out, and even passing a special law to that effect in the Knesset.

**Issues for a Permanent Agreement**

During the negotiations between the parties, it was decided that the most explosive issues would be remain to be discussed in the permanent settlement negotiations, scheduled to begin five years later. This was reflected a perception about using a negotiation management strategy based on “easy” and flexible first steps to build trust between the parties, and then to discuss highly controversial issues after progress was made on the ground between the parties and trust was built. The following are the issues that were postponed to the permanent settlement negotiations:

**Settlements**: When the Oslo Accords were signed, there were 105,000 settlers. The agreements did not state that the settlements would be frozen. The Palestinians later claimed that even if this was not clearly stated, the prior publicity had indicated that Israel would not expand the settlements until this issue was discussed in the permanent status negotiations. This “constructive obfuscation” was used by Israel to continue to expand the settlements and increase their number after the agreement. Rabin made a distinction between “political settlements” and “security settlements”. It was understood that the former would be reduced and even evacuated at some point. At the height of the controversy between the Rabin government and the leaders of the settlers, Rabin grew furious with the settlers and called them “agitators”.

Under Netanyahu, the number of settlers increased. They had representatives in the government who ensured that the policy favoring them did not change. This reached a climax after Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon returned from the United States and loosened the restrictions on existing settlements and their seizure of land by building outposts. Even during the Barak government, the percentage of settlers increased significantly, even though he was involved in trying to resolve the conflict with the Palestinian Authority, beginning with the Camp David accords through the Taba agreements. The problem was not only with the number of settlements and the work they carried out on occupied Palestinian land, but also in Israel’s procurement of land for bypass roads, military bases that would secure the settlements, and the like.

After the al-Aqsa Intifada, there have been significant changes in policy regarding settlements and outposts, 83 of which were built during the Sharon government alone. These were added in two main ways. First, not only was the government authorized to establish settlements, the issue was also handed over to the Yesha Council (and to private landholdings of hilltop youth and other factors).

The second is that the government began to support illegal and questionable actions such as the seizure of private Palestinian land for settlement purposes (Sasson, 2015). Additionally, there was a policy of turning a blind eye towards the violence of some settlers towards Palestinians, particularly the so-called “price tag” actions designed to make life so difficult and bitter for Palestinians that they would eventually leave. These actions include harassment and felling of olive trees and vineyards. The violence reached a peak with the deadly arson attack against the Dawabsheh family in 2015.

Currently, 427,800 settlers live in 135 settlements and 121 outposts, not including East Jerusalem.[[8]](#footnote-8) Recently, has been was a fundamental change in the policy of the US administration, which no longer considers the settlements to be in violation of international law. The plan proposed by Trump proposed an exchange of territories with the Palestinians and transfer of the areas of the Big Triangle and the Small Triangle in exchange for settlements.

**Refugees**: One of the most emotionally and symbolically charged issues concerns Palestinian refugees. During the Nakba, about a million refugees were deported or fled the country and dispersed into neighboring countries of Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan and other countries around the world. The 2015 UN Relief and Works Agency (UNWRA) report estimated the number of refugees at over five million, while the Palestinians report a higher number, close to seven million.[[9]](#footnote-9) UN Resolution 191 requires the return of refugees and constitutes a legal basis for a discussion with Israel on this issue.

It was clear to the Palestinians that Israel perceived the exercise of this right of return as meaning elimination of Israel a Jewish state. This issue, therefore, was deferred postponed to discussions in the permanent status. At the same time, the Palestinians have shown great flexibility on this issue, such as the Beilin-Abu Mazen agreement and the Beilin-Eitan agreement, which are based on understandings with the Palestinians that everyone is speaking of only a symbolic return of refugees to a future Palestinian state. Abu Mazen stated more than once that he does not expect the refugees to return, but rather that compensation from an international fund should be set up for that purpose.

**Jerusalem**: In this chapter, I discuss the status of Jerusalem as it is perceived by the monotheistic religions of Judaism and Islam and how each sees it according to their beliefs about the city's status for them. I have no pretensions of entering into eschatological and theological questions and disputes related to religious disputes over the sanctity of the city.

The city holds a unique place in Jewish history and religion. It is where the Foundation Stone is located. According to Jewish belief, at the end of times this city will become the center of the world for Jews, and the Gentiles will also flock to it. The Temple Mount or Mount Zion, after which their national movement is named, is where King Solomon built the Temple in ancient Jerusalem. The city has a central place in the Jewish religion and tradition and in the history of the Jewish people. In the Jewish faith, the construction of the Third Temple is a key element in bringing the redemption closer.

Although the Zionist movement is secular at its core, it had maintained a connection to religion through its definition as representing the Jewish people. Jerusalem has retained a central place for Jerusalem as a symbol in the process of nation building and the creation of the national ethos.

The Muslims consider al-Quds to be their third holiest city (*Thalat al-Qubaltin*), and according to Muslims, it is second, following Mecca. According to some *hadiths* in the future, the sacred stone in Mecca will move to Jerusalem, where Judgment Day will take place. Moreover, they believe that from the al-Aqsa Mosque, Muhammad ascended to heaven to meet Abraham, the father of the Muslim nation, and the other prophets (al-Asra'a and al-Mar'aj).

The caliph Umar ibn Al-Khattābconquered Jerusalem in 638, a few years after the death of the Prophet. He allowed the Jews to settle in the city, thus making the city a meeting point for members of the three monotheistic religions. As he approached the city, he read three times "Allah Akbar", which is the origin of the name of the neighborhood "Jabal Mukaber". He built the renewed al-Aqsa Mosque and the Masjid Omar. In 691, the caliph 'Abd al-Malik bin Marwan built the Dome of the Rock, one of the central symbols of Islam, thus fortifying the status of the three holy mosques in the city.

The massacres committed by the Crusaders when they conquered the city is enshrined in the collective memory of the Muslims. This city differs from the other two Muslim holy cities, Mecca and Medina, in that its population is not exclusively Muslim. This could jeopardize its status due to the desire of other religions to conquer or gain hegemony over it. The Mamluk commander Salah al-Din al-Ayoubi liberated the city in the 12th century, and thus began a renaissance in which the city developed, and the number of Muslims living in and around it increased.

The period of Ottoman rule over the city was not always positive. Their weakness at times vis-à-vis the European powers was manifested in a willingness to compromise on hegemony in the city, and increased the influence of Christians. Residents of the city opposed these trends and saw their lofty status as guardians of the sanctity of the city "Al-Murabton", a role that gave them a unique aura.

To this day, the residents of East Jerusalem and its surroundings consider themselves the guardians of the holy sites of Islam and feel they have a special place among all Muslims. In recent decades, this trend has intensified, with the focus of the Islamic Movement in Israel on this issue. The leader Raed Salah’s declaration that the al-Aqsa Mosque is in danger echoed throughout the Muslim world, especially in light of attempts by Jews to ascend the Temple Mount and calls by Israeli politicians for actions that were interpreted as an attempt to harm the Muslim holy sites in the city.[[10]](#footnote-10)

The fears of Muslim and Palestinian leaders intensified after the 1967 occupation of the city and the events surrounding the Temple Mount. For example, in 1969, there was an attempt to burn down the mosque. In the Temple Mount riots of October 1990, 17 Palestinians from East Jerusalem were killed and more than 200 were injured. The riots surrounding the opening of the Western Wall tunnel in 1996. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's ascent to the Temple Mount in September 2000 ignited the second intifada. In 2017, protests surrounding installation of metal detectors ended in Israeli removing them under pressure from the King of Jordan. (An agreement gives the King of Jordan special status as the trustee over the holy places in the city, which often causes friction with the Palestinian Authority).

Due to the sanctity of the city for all Muslims, the Palestinians do not always find themselves able to compromise with the Israeli side. In the Camp David talks, when Ehud Barak increased the pressure on Arafat to deal with issue according to the Clinton plan, Arafat stated that he was not representing only the Palestinians on this issue, but all Muslims, and Mubarak was preventing him from being flexible in this regard (Ghanem et al., 2019).

**Postponement of the Permanent Settlement and Later Rounds of Negotiations**

The permanent settlement negotiations were supposed to begin in 1998. Many developments led to doubts about the ability to achieve this goal: the assassination of Rabin, the election of Netanyahu and the resultant change in policy, and the multiple terrorist attacks that claimed many victims. The parties agreed to postpone the permanent settlement until 1999. That year, Ehud Barak was elected prime minister. On the one hand, this was a positive sign for the peace process in general, in light of Barak's stated commitment to resolving the conflict. On the other hand, there was a fear that Barak would oppose the Oslo Accords. He was perceived as having rigid attitudes towards the Palestinians, and as preferring to end the conflict with the Syrians first and postponing the Oslo talks until afterwards.

After the IDF withdrew from Lebanon, Barak began promoting the idea of a Palestinian-Israeli summit in the United States. Many people, including some on the Israeli side, were not enthusiastic about this idea, feared the possible failure of the talks, and said it would be preferable to do serious preparatory work before these significant and fateful talks (Bailey, 2001; Gil, 2018). Indeed, these talks did fail, and no small part of the fault lay with Israel and Barak personally (Drucker, 2002; Ghanem et al., 2019). After the failure of the Camp David talks, in which Barak offered the Palestinians much less than what had been suggested publicly; certainly, they were not offered a contiguous territory.[[11]](#footnote-11)

The Taba talks, despite being constructive and promising, came considerably late, and Barak called for them in the special climate of the upcoming election. The political constellation that existed at that time, after the al-Aqsa Intifada and the intensification of Ariel Sharon's power, led the Palestinians to predict that the Oslo era had probably come to an end. Indeed, the Sharon government occupied large areas in Area A and in practice ignored the Oslo Accords.

Arafat's death and the appointment of Abu Mazen in his place heralded a kind of diplomatic and non-violent struggle among the Palestinians. This relieved much of the security pressure that existed during the time of severe terrorist attacks. There was also a change in the White House. Clinton was replaced by George W. Bush, a friend of Sharon, and he now set the policy towards the Palestinians. After Arafat, Abu Mazen began a process of ensuring security and calm, by allowing Israel full control of the territory, including dismantling all pockets of armed resistance. However, he did not create any leverage against the Israelis, and was left without any bargaining chips. He had to play a game of extortion, with no real ability to influence the outcome.

**The Americans as a Key but Biased Player in the Conflict**

American policy fully identifies with Israel and the Zionist ideal, and is completely alienated from the Palestinians and their rights. In the American media, Palestinians and Arafat are often portrayed as terrorists unworthy of assistance. This was true even at the height of the Oslo process, when there was a working relationship between the United States and the Palestinian Authority. The two parties compete for the support of Israel and AIPAC. There have been many cases in which US government representatives mediating between Israelis and Palestinians have taken even tougher positions than the Likud party. Edward Said noted the biased positions of the leading US media outlets against the Palestinians. He said that he had no chance of being granted a fair interview on the Palestinian issue in the US press, certainly not in the mainstream press or in cities like New York (Said, 2000).

The Americans have always been biased in favor of the Israeli side in the Israeli-Arab conflict in general and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in particular. The American positions regarding the Israeli-Egyptian conflict, for example, are known to be a factor that eventually led to the Yom Kippur War. The Americans were dominant in leading the Camp David accords, which laid the foundations for a future solution between Israel and the Palestinians on a hierarchical basis, and which were reflected in the Oslo Accords signed in 1993-1994. None of this dispels Americans’ suspicion towards the Palestinians, biases against them, or the conditions they set for even being willing to engage in dialogue with them.[[12]](#footnote-12)

Even if we assume that the Rabin government made an honest and serious and effort to reach an agreement with the Palestinians (as mediated by the Clinton administration, beginning with Oslo, which was hidden from the Americans), any attempts to resolve the conflict that involved the American government were doomed to failure. Their biases and the preconceptions of the diplomats entrusted with mediation posed stumbling blocks. President Clinton secretly agreed with Barak to blame Arafat if the negotiations at Camp David did not succeed. Barak offered the Palestinians unsatisfactory and mostly non-binding proposals (using the “non-paper” method).[[13]](#footnote-13) The American bias is manifested mainly through the positions of the senior officials who were involved in the negotiations and who led the mediation. These officials were mostly Jews with hardline and right-wing positions. For example, Dennis Ross, one of the American leaders in the mediation, almost always blamed the Palestinians for any failure (Ross, 2004). It has been said more than once about Dennis Ross, including by many Israelis who were familiar with his conduct, that his positions were to the right of the Likud (Ghanem et al., 2019).



**Figure 1: The Negotiations Index and the Oslo Index 1994-2015**

**Peace Index Analysis**

The Peace Index is based on longitudinal data published by the Tami Steinmetz Center. This index consists of two parts: the negotiations index and the index of support for the Oslo Accords. The gap in the graph indicates missing data on the index measuring support for the Oslo Accords during some years.

The Peace Index between the years 1994-2000 was relatively high (61% support, on average). In 2000, there was a decline in support, mainly due to the failure of negotiations at Camp David and Ehud Barak's claim that there is no partner on the other side. During this period support was 54.7% on average. From 2006 to the present, the index ranged from 46-56%, and for most of this period was below 50%. It should be noted that since 2006, they began including Arab citizens in the survey, which raised the index.

Distributions of the responses to the question: “Do you believe or do you not believe that the Oslo agreement between Israel and the PLO will lead to peace between Israel and the Palestinians in the coming years?”[[14]](#footnote-14) are given in the following tables.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Year/****Position** | **1996** | **1997** | **1998** | **1999** | **2000** | **6.2000** | **7.2000** | **8.2000** |
| **Believe** | 37.8 | 33.5 | 38.2 | 39.9 | 43.9 | 46.1 | 37.2 | 35.6 |
| **Do Not Believe** | 32.9 | 29.9 | 38.5 | 34.5 | 40.3 | 51.0 | 47.0 | 44.9 |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Year/****Position** | **26.9.2000** | **10.2000** | **2001** | **2002** | **2003** | **2004** | **2005** |
| **Believe** | 38.7 | 22.1 | 24.7 | 11.3 | 16.1 | 16.7 | 23.8 |
| **Do Not Believe** | 40 | 56.7 | 54.3 | 70.6 | 60.5 | 66.3 | 48.4 |

Since mid-2000, the percentage of respondents who said they do not believe in the chance for peace exceeded the percentage of those who said they do believe. The peak was in 2002 (following the attack on the Park Hotel and Operation Defensive Shield) when the percentage of those who said they believe in the chance for peace dropped to 11.3%, while the percentage who said they do not believe in it exceeded 70%. This trend lasted until 2005. However, the rate of support for negotiations continued to be above 50%. This indicates the distinction that the Israel public makes between support for negotiations and belief in the chance of success of these negotiations. This shows that the Israeli public understands that the negotiations themselves are important and play a positive role for Israel, regardless of their chance of success.



The rate of support for the Oslo Accords has always been low, indicating that the Israeli public did not accept these agreements in the first place. This made it easy for the Netanyahu government to sabotage them, for example by opening the Western Wall tunnels.

In response to the question: “What is your position regarding the agreement signed in Oslo between Israel and the PLO?", the respondents answered as follows:[[15]](#footnote-15)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Year/****Position** | **6.1994** | **1.1995** | **1.1996** | **1.1997** | **1.1998** | **1.1999** | **1.2000** | **7.2000** |
| **Support** | 43.4 | 33.3 | 38.0 | 44.8 | 38.4 | 41.9 | 38.5 | 36.3 |
| **Oppose** | 31.8 | 40.1 | 27.0 | 18.6 | 28.6 | 24.6 | 31.8 | 37.7 |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Year/****Position** | **8.2000** | **26.9.2000** | **10.2000** | **1.2001** | **1.2002** | **1.2003** | **1.2004** | **1.2005** |
| **Support** | 36.4 | 39.5 | 31.6 | 27.8 | 26.0 | 26.4 | 26.7 | 33.3 |
| **Oppose** | 35.4 | 29.4 | 41.9 | 41.9 | 46.4 | 42.3 | 40.4 | 30.1 |

Again, in the middle of 2000 there was a reversal of a trend, so that the percentage of those who opposed the Oslo Accords exceeded the percentage of supporters (37.7% and 36.3%, respectively). This trend continued until 2005.



These results reflect the position of the Israeli public: limited support in 1994-2000, further moderation of support in the following years, with a decline in support after the al-Aqsa intifada, and a partial recovery in support as the intifada weakened. This question also examined the assumption that the failure of the Camp David talks led to a decline in support for the Oslo Accords.

**Peace and Terrorist Attacks Index: Two Test Cases**

Examination of two representative cases of serious terrorist attacks shows that the Oslo Support Index fell to 30% in April-July 2000, and again fell to 31% in August-September 2003. At the same time, the negotiation index remained relatively high, ranging from 55% - 58%. That is, a majority of the Israeli public supported the negotiations as an end in itself, since the negotiations benefit the people of Israel, but a larger majority opposed the Oslo Accords throughout most of the timeline.

**Attempts to Revive Negotiations After the Sharon Government and the Period of Severe Terrorist Attacks**

Even before Ariel Sharon left the political arena, Ehud Olmert demonstrated moderate attitudes towards the Palestinians, and did not hide his desire to reach a fair settlement with them (Olmert, 2018). Disengagement from the Gaza Strip was completed in the summer of 2005. Olmert’s government was formed in 2006, with Tzipi Livni as foreign minister and Amir Peretz as defense minister. This paved the way for a return to negotiations over the Palestinian issue.

In 2008 the Annapolis talks began, which were a breath of fresh air for the Palestinian Authority. In these talks, the Israeli government demonstrated seriousness and deep commitment to the success of the process and reaching an agreement. This optimism was felt mainly towards the end, when a great rapprochement was reported between the Olmert-Livni government and the Palestinians. However, Olmert's legal situation did not allow him to end these talks successfully. At the time, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert was imbued with the belief that a peace settlement could be reached with Abu Mazen.[[16]](#footnote-16) He often stated that he was a step away from an arrangement between the parties, but this was not possible because he was forced to resign from his position (Olmert, 2018).

Netanyahu's election in 2009 heralded a significant withdrawal from the understandings between Israelis and Palestinians. Although Barack Obama was president of the United States, the government formed by Netanyahu did not bode well for the political process. Netanyahu's suspicion regarding the Obama administration should not be taken lightly. It was important to him to move the ball into the Palestinians’ court. Again, he chose a strategy of extortion, in which he withdrew from previous agreements or made new demands, in order to bring the Palestinians into a state of breaking the tools of negotiation.

Indeed, that is exactly what happened. Allegedly, Netanyahu accepted the principle of a two-state solution in a speech he gave at Bar-Ilan University. In reality, he sowed the seeds of the destruction of negotiations in that speech. He made it difficult for the Obama administration to blame the Israeli side. At least, Obama would find it difficult to hold in check Israel’s supporters in the US, who are led by Republicans and Christian evangelicals, passionate supporters of Netanyahu who unquestioningly adopt his views.

The Netanyahu government consistently made demands whose purpose was to prevent any progress in negotiations with the Palestinians. This involved defiance of the Obama administration and opposition against Obama personally. Netanyahu’s defense minister Ehud Barak helped gain acceptance by the Obama administration, claiming that he was mobilizing a majority for the process. In this way, Netanyahu softened criticism and pressure on him.

Through the speech he delivered at Bar-Ilan University, Netanyahu sought to ease American pressure on Israel, and place responsibility for the failure of the negotiations on the Palestinians. In this speech, he said, among other things: “[...] Anyone who thinks that the continuing hostility towards Israel is a result of our presence in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza, is confusing cause and effect... The connection of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel has lasted for more than 3500 years. Judah and Samaria are the places where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, David and Solomon, Isaiah and Jeremiah walked… I have already stated the first principle - recognition. The Palestinians must truly recognize Israel *as the state of the Jewish people* [my emphasis]. The second principle is demilitarization,” (Eldad, 2016: 466).

In this way, Netanyahu sought to enlist the support of the religious right and the settlers to help him fend off US President Barack Obama, while completely ignoring the pervasive reality clear to any observer: an occupation that existed since 1967. This discourse on historical rights has always captivated nationalist thinkers and intellectuals and led them to justify national claims, discrimination, and disregard for basic Palestinian rights. This approach leads to places that are not rationally debatable, mobilizes religious-emotional sentiments, and thus provokes opposition to any political-territorial arrangement with the other side (Bar-Tal, 2011). These words of Netanyahu’s relate to what he wrote in his books, and testify to the fact that he never really intended to reach peace with the Palestinians on the basis of the Green Line boundaries or to address the territorial claims made by the Palestinian side. The Palestinians realized as early as 1996 that the peace process was “dead”, although it was not yet clear to them how the Americans would behave and whether Netanyahu could indeed eliminate the political process as he aspired (Scheller, Wildangel, & Juachim, 2013).

Netanyahu's demand for Palestinian recognition of a Jewish state is a clear example of a strategy of extortion, in which each time the stronger party raises the stakes at the expense of the other party, unilaterally and without consideration for them. But here it is important to get to the heart of his strange demand: the Palestinians had already recognized the State of Israel, as Israel explicitly demanded of them, in the letters of mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO dated September 9, 1993. So why did Netanyahu again make this demand, which has no equivalent in international relations?

The fundamental reason is that Israel wants the representatives of the Palestinian people to recognize that the land belongs to Israel, thus erasing the Palestinian narrative based on a conception of Israel as a colonial power. This also endangers Arab citizens in Israel, who would become a minority, like any emerging minority.[[17]](#footnote-17) Such recognition of Israel by the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people would transform the Palestinian minority in Israel from an indigenous minority to a “mere” national minority. This would be an opening for Israel to infringe on their rights to civic equality (which does not exist in any case, due to Israel's treatment of the Palestinians as a fifth column and an undesirable minority). It also poses a future danger to Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, and would even allow theoretical justifications for future actions such as a population transfer, or other ambitions for the future, such as the Kingdom of Jordan as a “Palestinian state”.

In 2011, the Arab Spring broke out, diverting Arab attention from the Palestinian cause. The rise of Egyptian President al-Sisi in a coup in the summer of 2013 heralded a complete rift with Hamas and the Gaza Strip, and the removal of the Palestinian issue completely from the agenda. Israel took advantage of these developments and hardened its positions vis-à-vis the Palestinians, to the point of inability for purposeful negotiations to be conducted between the parties.[[18]](#footnote-18)

In 2014, Israel continued its game of extortion game by making additional demands from the Palestinians, such as the demand for clear and unequivocal recognition of Israel as the state of the Jewish people. At the same time, Israel violated its obligations to release Palestinian citizens of Israel who have been imprisoned since the 1980s. This breach of commitments was more than a result of internal pressure from ministers from right-wing parties and settlers. It came as part of the extortionary game, to further lower the threshold of Palestinian achievement, and perhaps, even more, to bring about a complete explosion of talks, which it did.

The Netanyahu government has in fact succeeded in removing the Palestinian issue from the agenda in Israel. In the 2015 elections, for example, the issue of an agreement with the Palestinians hardly came up, and only Meretz emphasized the need to continue the political process. Netanyahu knew that he could rely on the opinion held by the vast majority of the Israeli public opinion, who see the Palestinian issue as already having been settled in the fields of security, economic, political, and regional power, as well as on the growing role of Republicans and their supporters in the American Zionist lobby.

The analysis of the Peace Index and support for negotiations with the Palestinians further prove that Netanyahu remained on solid ground, and his policy strengthened his position among the Israeli public, who supported him in his efforts to completely push the Palestinian issue off the Israeli agenda.

**The Strategic Picture: Dictates by Israel as the Preferred Option**

Analysis of the strategic situation at three levels: general, regional, and the Israeli-Palestinian arena, shows that the current situation is the result of one-sided Israeli dictates and creating the reality on the ground in the spirit of the extortion strategy. At the general level, particularly since the election of Donald Trump as the president of the United States, Israel has had a free hand in the Occupied Territories.

In the regional arena, the Arab world has sunk into internal problems and struggles and attempts to preserve existing regimes. Egypt, the largest and most influential country in the Middle East, has tightened the blockade on the Gaza Strip on the one hand, and developed an attitude of alienation and disregard for the Palestinian cause and the PA on the other. The Kingdom of Jordan also found itself in an alarming situation, faced with the danger of flare-ups of demonstrations on the morning news, wrestling with the PA over security when Israel introduced the use of metal detectors at the al-Aqsa mosque in 2017. Thus, Abu Mazen found himself almost completely isolated and at the mercy of Israel.

In the domestic arena, the Palestinians have not gained any national achievements other than a slight improvement in the economic situation in the Palestinian cities. Rising incomes and the improved economic situation have diverted the attention of young Palestinians from the national issue (Ganiu, 2019). In this way, Abu Mazen found himself in the grip of Netanyahu's pliers: on the one hand, the weakness of opposition to the occupation and political isolation, and on the other hand, a reasonable rise in living standards and improvement in the economic situation, which was consistent with Netanyahu's perception of "economic peace".[[19]](#footnote-19)

**The Hardships of the Palestinians in the Face of a Stalemate**

In 2012, talks between Israel and the Palestinians began under the auspices of the Quartet, whose hegemony over the United States and the other partners was secondary. These talks yielded nothing. In November of that year, the UN General Assembly recognized Palestine as a “non-member” state. The route of these talks enabled this achievement, along with several other minor achievements at UNESCO or the decision of the International Court of Justice in The Hague that there is the possibility of investigating Israel's conduct in its military operations in Gaza, for example. In fact, the Palestinian Authority remains incapable of influencing events, because of its almost complete dependence on Israel in terms of the economy, movement, resources and more. Another reason for this was an internal rift between the PLO / PA and Hamas. Abu Mazen's support for the closure of the Gaza Strip by Israel and Egypt, as leverage to weaken Hamas further damaged the Palestinian side and gave Israel tools to subdue it to its dictates.

This strategic inferiority of the Palestinians is reflected in the extortion strategy discussed here. A clear expression of this is the transition to a strategy of unilateral solutions made without regard to the will of the Palestinian side. It began with the arbitrary determination of the Israeli border through the separation wall and continued with a policy continually went further in designing a one-sided strategy and dictating it to the other side.[[20]](#footnote-20)

**The Trump Administration and the "Deal of the Century"**

Since Trump’s rise to power, the US administration has clearly become one-sided in its role in subordinating the Palestinians to the dictates of the Israeli government. To that end, Trump took a series of painful steps on the way to creating the “deal of the century”. Trump recruited support not only for the unilateral benefit of Israel but also for the personal benefit of Netanyahu, with whom he has a friendly relationship. Trump recently turned the Palestinian issue into a card to be played in favor of Netanyahu's election campaign. His administration did not hide its unreserved support for the Israeli right-wing and its demands.[[21]](#footnote-21) An example of this is the government's support for the Jordan Valley annexation initiative, which is supported by the Blue and White Party list (Drucker, 2020). All of these measures, which the Trump administration initiated or supported, are intended for one purpose: to resolve the conflict according to Israeli parameters and thus to eliminate the Palestinian issue completely, rather than striving for a mutually agreed-upon solution.

The initiative Trump presented confirms this assertation, and added another tier: harming the status of the Arab citizens of Israel in the exchange proposal that was included in the proposal. The long-term strategy of the Americans in the Middle East is based on unconditional support for Israel, including the expropriation of the Palestinians (Chomsky & Pappe, 2015). Many Zionist leaders see this proposal as an opening for the existence of a Jewish state in 80% of historic Palestinian territory, without equality, as clearly reflected in the enactment of the Nationality Law by the Israeli government in 2018. In defining Israel as a Jewish state, a definition accepted by the Palestinians because it was imposed by Netanyahu as a mandatory condition, is a clear statement regarding the existence of a discriminatory state within the Green Line and a de facto apartheid state in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

**Conclusion**

Throughout the conflict, Israel's ties to the world powers, first Britain then France and the United States, gave it a clear diplomatic advantage, just as Herzl predicted. Therefore, based on solid American support, Israel always imposes excessive and unilateral security requirements, which make it difficult to reach an agreement. These demands are usually intended to torpedo any progress in negotiations with the Palestinians, or to force the Palestinians to make further concessions, depending on the game of extortion that represents the Israeli strategy towards them. This extortion strategy is based on an asymmetrical need to reach a settlement. A settlement is necessary for the Palestinians, but not necessarily for the Israeli side, which can live with the conflict, economically, diplomatically, and recently also in terms of security. The prevailing opinion is that the Palestinians, in a state of inferiority, will be forced to accept its dictates. This strategy enables Israeli control over the process, and more importantly, the results, the pace and the ability to slow down and even stop the process, as its interests require.

Beyond Israel’s unilateral measures intended to negate the Oslo Accords, the proposals presented to the Palestinians have been characterized by a continuous erosion in the various aspects of the negotiations, in terms of territory and in terms of periodic demands, such as recognition of Israel as the state of the Jewish people. All this as part of the extortion game, which assumes that the other side has no choice but to either succumb to dictates, or blow up the negotiations and then be held accountable for the consequences. In light of all this, it is clear that the conflict is unsolvable, in terms of its characteristics reviewed here, and in terms of the motivation of the key player, Israel, and the significant support it receives from the world powers including in the UN Security Council, as explained above.

Today, in light of Israel's security, military, intelligence, economic, political, and diplomatic superiority, the Israeli right can essentially ignore the Palestinians, and turn to management of the conflict as security experts often suggest. They can dictate unilateral separation, as seen the route of the separation fence, and treat the Palestinians as a “thorn in their side”. A moving expression of the helplessness of the Palestinians can be seen in Abu Mazen's speech to the UN following the presentation of Trump’s plan, which was coordinated with the Israeli government. It completely ignores the needs of the Palestinians and their legitimate aspirations to liberate themselves from the yoke of occupation and live with dignity in a contiguous and sustainable state.

1. The religious conflict between Islam and Judaism dates back to the days of Muhammad. When the Prophet moved to Medina, he established the "Treaty of the Nations" [note: in academic sources in English, this referred to as the Medina Charter or the Constitution of Medina] which included three Jewish tribes, Qurayza, Nadir, and Qaynuqa [spelling of these tribes is from: <https://www.pbs.org/muhammad/ma_jews.shtml> and Halverson J. R., Goodall, H. L., & Corman, S. R. (2011). The battle of Khaybar. In *Master narratives of Islamist extremism* (pp. 67-80). Each is prefaced by Bani or Banu (Bani Nadir etc.) which I assume means tribe]. The Jewish tribes were soon expelled, and the last of them, the Qurayza, were massacred. The Hebrew poet Saul Tchernichovsky dedicated a poem to them, lamenting their fate (Lecker, 2004). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Regarding this controversy see: Pape (1994); Segev (2018). Shalim (2006) notes the severity of the dispute between David Ben-Gurion against Menachem Begin and those in the paramilitary organizations the Irgun and Lehi, who Ben-Gurion contemptuously called the “verbal maximalists” (p. 73). [or literal maximalists?] [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. In a document of the agreement between Yossi Beilin and Mahmoud Abbas, section VII (1) states: “... The [Palestinian side] recognizes that the conditions [...] have made these rights unenforceable. Therefore, the Palestinian side declares its readiness to accept and implement policies and measures that will ensure, as far as possible, the well-being of these refugees.” Section (2) states: “... The [the Israeli side] also recognizes the right of Palestinian refugees to return to the Palestinian state as well as their right to receive compensation and rehabilitation for material and mental losses,” (Beilin, 2001, p. 274). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See, for example, the PLO document of March 2019 (p. 17), in which it reiterates the conditions of the Palestinian side and notes, among other things: “The Arab Peace Initiative of March 2002, which adopted a just and agreed-upon solution to the Palestinian refugee problem on the basis of UN General Assembly Resolution 194.” [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. For more information on Israeli militarism, see, for example, Ben-Eliezer, 1995, 2019; Levy, 2003. Regarding the treatment of Palestinians from the beginning of the Oslo process until the disengagement from Gaza, see Greenberg, 2007. On the policy towards the Gaza Strip from the disengagement until the end of the Oslo process in 2014, see Ghanem, Mostafa, and Brake (2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Middle East Eye and agencies (2 December, 2019). "Israeli Occupation Cost Palestinian Economy $74 billion in 18 Years, Says UN", *MEE* <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/israeli-occupation-cost-palestinian-economy-477-billion-seventeen-years-un-report>. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. <https://www.google.com/search?sxsrf=ACYBGNRAwzc6_mks854SXuKvRhtLQe-EhQ%3A1579718170182&ei=GpYoXozgCtSBi-gP9-yh-A4&q=%D7%AA%D7%9E%22%D7%92+%D7%9C%D7%A0%D7%A4%D7%A9+%D7%91%D7%99%D7%A9%D7%A8%D7%90%D7%9C&oq=%D7%AA%D7%9E%22%D7%92+&gs_l=psy-ab.1.3.0l10.4660.9187..13465...0.2..1.461.3180.0j17j2j0j1......0....1..gws-wiz.......0i71j35i39j0i67j0i131j0i10i67.p7C2_X5wtvg> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Data source: "Peace Now" website <https://peacenow.org.il/settlements-watch/matzav/population> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Data source: <http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/unrwa_in_figures_2015.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Quite a few Israeli politicians have contributed to this atmosphere in explicit statements, such as Minister Miri Regev and Deputy Foreign Minister Tzipi Hotovely, who said on one occasion that she [Hotovely or Regev?] hoped to see the city without Masjid al-Aqsa, and statements by other religious politicians. [references for these statements?] [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Much has been written about the strange talks at Camp David. It is important to note that Barak decided from the beginning to follow a hard line towards the Palestinians. This began by curtailing Shimon Peres and his followers (Gil, 2018) and making elusive and non-binding proposals to the Palestinians. However, some progress was made there. Barak agreed that the area to be annexed by Israel would be only 9%, and the Palestinians would have a sphere of control in East Jerusalem (Beilin, 2001). The agreements regarding Jerusalem were unclear, since after Barak returned from Camp David, he reported to Ehud Olmert that he did not make any concessions on Jerusalem (Olmert, 2018, pp. 540-541). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. In the 1970s, some Palestinian leaders realized that they must come closer to the Americans’ positions in order to engage in even informal dialogue with them. The “Red Prince” led this movement, which caused Israel to eliminate [assassinate?] him, in order to stem this trend. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. See a map of Barak's proposals (No. 30) in Arieli, 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, Peace Index Surveys 1996, 1997, 1998, 1998, 6.2000, 7.2000, 8.2000, 26.9.2000, 10.2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, Peace Index Surveys: 6.1994, 1.1995, 1.1996, 1.1997, 1.1998, 1.1999, 1.2000, 7.2000, 8.2000, 26.9.2000, 10.2000, 1.2001, 1.2002, 1.2003, 1.2004, 1.2005. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. These statements are based, among other things, on conversations with then-Deputy Foreign Minister, Majalli Wahabi. [mention he is Druze?] [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Many scholars have upheld the colonialist foundations of the Zionist movement. Suffice it to say that Herzl [explain who he was] himself wrote in his book *The Jewish State*: “[...] We should there form a portion of a rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism. We should as a neutral State remain in contact with all Europe, which would have to guarantee our existence,” (Herzl, 1985, p. 24). [I took this translation from p. 96 of the 1988 version published by Dover, reproducing a previous translation by Sylvie d’Avigdor]. Moreover, many colonialist motifs are intertwined throughout his book *Altneuland*. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Even before the Arab Spring, the Israeli government further hardened its rigid line with the Palestinians. See for example the speech of Foreign Minister Lieberman at the UN https://www.mako.co.il/news-military/israel/Article-e51c54672785b21004.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. In preparation for writing this article, I spoke with Palestinians and researchers involved in the Palestinian issue. Frequently, they emphasized interest in the improved situation for business owners in the construction industry, the middle class, and the merchant class, who are served by the calm in the territories, and are therefore not motivated to actively oppose the occupation. This is reminiscent of the perceptions that characterized the Nashashibi faction in the West Bank in the 1930s and 1940s, which advocated security and calm as a condition for economic prosperity, and not necessarily engaging in a national struggle involving a heavy economic price. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. These sentiments are expressed in statements by key politicians who deny the Palestinian perspective, such as Minister Naftali Bennett's statement that the conflict with the Palestinians is a "thorn in our side", as well as positions of senior political and security officials in the spirit of unilateral approach. See for example Orion and Dekel (2016); Yadlin (2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. There is ample evidence for this: the appointment to Tel Aviv of a right-wing Jewish ambassador who supports the settlers; publicizing the deal to correspond with Netanyahu's election campaign; relocation of the American embassy to Jerusalem [year?]; damaging the United Nations Relief and Works Agency; abolishing the Palestinian diplomatic delegation in the United States, and more. All of these are steps in the framework of a policy based on the assumption that Palestinians have no ability to respond, and have no backing from other Arab states, neither in neighboring Egypt and Jordan, and certainly not in the Gulf states. It represents the end of the Oslo Accords. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)