

MADAR Strategic Report 2018

The Israeli Scene 2017

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MADAR Strategic Report 2018: The Israeli Scene 2017

The Palestinian Forum for Israeli Studies (MADAR) presents the MADAR Strategic Report 2018 - Israeli Scene 2017 to political decision- and public opinion-makers.

MADAR's Strategic Report 2018 monitors and analyses key events and developments on the Israeli scene throughout 2017. The report seeks to explore the course of developments over the upcoming period, particularly from the perspective of their influence on the question of Palestine and its dynamics.

The Report investigates the Israeli scene in seven key areas: Israel and the Palestinian file; Israeli domestic politics; Israel's foreign relations; security-military issues; economy; social affairs; and Palestinians of Israel. An Executive Summary provides an overview of major strategic changes, which have impacted Israel and its internal and regional standings. It is hoped that the report shed light on the Israeli scene, including relevant key influencing factors.

As usual, a group of specialist researchers and observers of Israeli affairs have contributed to preparing and compiling the MADAR Strategic Report 2018.

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MADAR Strategic Report 2018: The Israeli Scene 2017

Executive Summary

Honaida Ghanim

The 2017 Israeli scene was impacted by a set of international, regional and local developments, which are expected to increasingly leave their imprint in the medium to long terms.

At the front of these variables, the inauguration of Donald Trump as President of the United States of America in January 2017 represented a major international event that has strategic impacts on the question of Palestine. This is not only because of Trump's unconditional support of Israel, but also due to the composition of the new administration, which Trump surrounds himself with. Distinctive of an ideological affiliation with the far right wing or (evangelical) Christian Zionism, the US Administration supports and deals with Israel and the question of Palestine in line with ideological perceptions, which combine a transcendental religious vision with politics.

On the regional level, changes on the Syrian scene have posed a key challenge, which preoccupied political and security circles in Israel. Notwithstanding the declining power of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Israel is of the view that Iran's presence in Syria is consolidating.

On the domestic level, corruption cases against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have seen rapid developments until the time of reporting. As a consequence, police recommended that charging instruments be filed against Netanyahu, who would potentially be put on trial or even resign from his position. Corruption cases are a key driver that has influenced the future direction of the Israeli partisan and political scene. Several observers anticipate that these will lead to early general elections. Possibly, new partisan alliances will emerge to compete for the composition of the future government. However, nothing suggests that this development will cause a significant change in Israel's policy towards the Palestinian question.

All the developments above reflect directly on the Palestinians. In addition to placing it in new contexts of power, these developments arguably pose significant challenges to the question of Palestine. At the same time, the impacts of various factors produce contradictory tracks, which furnish opportunities in spite of the seemingly static conditions in the near future. The fact that evangelical Zionism identifies with the Israeli New Right led by Netanyahu allows Israel, in the short term, the chance to escalate annexation and settlement practices in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) and to expedite racist and hostile legislation against Palestinians on both sides of the Green Line. However, this identification furnishes an opportunity for liberation from the US hegemony of the political process. Secondly, it turns Israel (in the grip of the right wing) into a "partisan player", which is subservient to the Republican party. Contrary to customary practice, Israel no longer reflects a transient US consensus among parties, despite what this implies in the future if the US Administration changes. Thirdly, the alliance between Israel and global far right and nationalist movements across Europe and the USA promotes the positioning of Israel as part of global far right movements. By contrast, it opens the door to Palestinians (if they make the best use of the

chance) to develop synergies between the question of Palestine and global democratic systems and to win more support for the Palestinian civil struggle movements, particularly for the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS).

I. Inauguration of Trump as President of the USA - A paradigmatic shift

The official inauguration of Trump as US President in January 2017 and the appointment of figures with an (evangelical¹) Biblical-Zionist orientation in key positions are defining moments for Israel and Israeli right wing, settler policies.

Considered as a representative of Christian Evangelicalism, Mike Pence is one of the most prominent figures known for their ideological identification with Zionism.² In addition, Orthodox Jew David Friedman renowned for his support for settlement activity was appointed as the US ambassador to Israel in May 2017.

Trump's rise to power turned the page on eight years of tense relations between Netanyahu and Barack Obama, priority disputes, and means of confrontation regarding the Iranian, Palestinian or Syrian files.

In spite of the obscurity that initially engulfed Trump's approach to the Palestinian file, such obscurity faded away less than a year after his inauguration, unveiling his bias as well as his Administration's identification with the Israeli policies. On 6 January 2017, Trump announced the "recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel" and issued instructions to the Department of State to start preparations to relocate the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. As a justification, Trump asserted he fulfilled his election promises and practically, implemented the Congress resolution of 1995.³ Later, Trump tweeted that he has taken Jerusalem off the negotiation table.⁴ In a special interview with Israel Hayom, Trump stated that his decision on Jerusalem represented the "climax of his first year".⁵ This was followed by the White House announcement of 23 February 2018 that the US embassy would be officially inaugurated on 14 May 2018 - the day which marks the anniversary of the proclamation of Israel 70 years ago and, namely, the Nakba of the Palestinian people. Israeli sources also indicated that Trump himself may attend the opening of the US embassy in a grand celebration.

Netanyahu's right wing, settler government has found in Trump and in his evangelical Zionism-supported Administration an "ideal" ally. Netanyahu summed up the mutual relationship with Trump, stating after a meeting with Trump: "Believe me. This is the most friendly administration to Israel."⁶ Boaz Bismuth, a right wing journalist of Israel Hayom, put it in a nutshell on 25 February 2018: "The man in the White House is the best thing that has happened to Israel over the past years."⁷

The Trump Administration has allowed Netanyahu's government to shift from absorbing crises and "relative caution", which Israel practiced under the Obama Administration, to a stage of active initiative-taking in order to materialise Israel's political vision, mainly towards the Palestinian file and broadly towards regional files, particularly the Iranian file. A US administration that identifies ideologically with Zionist-settler perceptions allows room for Israeli political circles to try and grab the chance to make the largest possible number of achievements, which serve their own vision.

The impact of intersection and identification between the Trump Administration and the New Right in Israel is not only limited to conflict, but it also bolsters Israel's internal shift to the populist right wing and rise of fascism.

It further promotes the New Right's efforts to institutionalise its nationalist perceptions in the civil space and to tighten the grip on the elites, particularly the judicial apparatus.

Israel and the Palestinian File under Trump:

Chances for Israel in the Short Term, and Challenges in the Medium Term

A US administration that identifies with the Zionist right wing drives the right wing government and supporting parties to resolve the question of Palestine on two parallel tracks. Firstly, a political discourse provides an unprecedented escalation of the discourse of annexation and delegitimation of the two-state solution rhetoric. This is fulfilled by means of ideological justifications at one time, and utilitarian and security rationale at another. Secondly, a legislative track helps to implement creeping annexation and enforce Israel's sovereignty over settlements in the West Bank and Jerusalem.

- **Political discourse - Escalating the discourse of annexation and acquisition of sovereignty vis-à-vis withdrawal from the two-state solution**

While 2016 marked some attempts to revive the political process, 2017 was distinctive of absent international attempts in general, and US efforts in particular. Still, a public discussion revolved around an unannounced US plan for a solution, under the name Deal of the Century. Let alone how serious it is, details of this deal remain far from clear. By contrast, in practice, 2017 saw an unprecedented US shift to the side of Israel, reflecting in the US discourse towards Israel as well as in concrete practice on the ground. The US Administration's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel has been the most crucial of these steps. In the context of ideological identification, this shift has been framed by central figures within the US Administration. It was also articulated in US Vice President's address to the Knesset of 22 January 2018, which was described as a distinctively Zionist speech.

A US Administration that identifies with Israel's right wing was seen as a favourable moment to promote alternatives to the two-state solution, which is grounded in internationally recognised resolutions. As spelled out in the chapter on "Israel and the Question of Palestine", over the past year, Israel saw a growing debate over different formulas of a potential Palestinian state, other than the traditional image of the state. Along this vein, Netanyahu indicated that, in many instances, states' experience in the Middle East has failed.

In this context, on 22 January 2018, two days after the official inauguration of Trump, Netanyahu announced in a session held with the Likud ministers his perception of a solution, which would comprise a "state minus", namely a state with incomplete sovereignty.⁸ This way, Netanyahu has rendered meaningless his approval of the two-state solution - a principle he had already declared as the grounds for a solution in the so-called First Bar-Ilan Speech of 2009. Although Netanyahu's reference to a 'state minus' is not new, it has not previously been endorsed by the USA. When Netanyahu proposed it to Joe Biden, the latter answered resentfully: "What you're suggesting to them [the Palestinians] isn't a sovereign state"!

By contrast, following his meeting with Netanyahu in February 2017, the statement made by Trump unveils that the nature of the solution is determined by both parties in agreement: "I am looking at two-state, and one-state, and I like the one that both parties like."⁹ Trump's statement legitimises and highlights right wing positions that reject the two-state solution. Free of concerns, rising voices can claim an "end to the two-state

solution”¹⁰. Trump’s position was widely welcomed by right wing leaders in general, and right wing, settler movement in particular. Naftali Bennett viewed it as bringing down and replacing the flag of Palestine with that of Israel. Minister Ofir Akunis from the Likud party commented: “The two-state solution has been terminated.”¹¹

Influenced by the relaxed atmosphere created by the US one-sidedness with Israel, and in an unprecedented move, the Likud Party Centre unanimously made a decision on 31 December 2017, obliging all party members to seek to “allow free construction and enforce Israel’s laws and sovereignty to all liberated settlement areas in Judea and Samaria.”¹²

Influenced by the right wing domination of the public discourse, Elected Chair of the Labour party Avi Gabbay has sought to compete with the Likud by shifting towards the right wing movement. To this avail, Gabbay declared that in every government he forms, he will not let the “Joint List” into the government coalition. He further described the Joint List as anti-Israel and preoccupied with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. In October 2017,¹³ Gabbay announced it was not necessary to evacuate settlements within the framework of a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. Later, in January 2019, he asserted that if negotiations with Palestinians failed, he would implement a unilateral withdrawal. This plan does not require that settlements be evacuated.¹⁴

On the other hand, the right wing settler movement, led by the Jewish Home party, demanded that Netanyahu declare the end of the two-state solution and work towards enforcing Israel’s sovereignty over the West Bank.

- **Legislative track: A shift towards creeping annexation and enforcing sovereignty**

Since Netanyahu’s second government came to power, Israel has been steadily working towards implementing a creeping annexation and enforcing sovereignty over the oPt, either wholly or partly. Legislation has also been designed to exercise control over the civil society, discourse, and Palestinians in Israel, and to consolidate the Jewish nation state at the expense of the pillars of democracy.

Since the 20th Knesset was launched on 7 May 2015 and towards late February 2018, a total of 41 laws and bills were proposed, all serving the purpose of annexing the West Bank and settlements to the so-called “Israeli sovereignty”. Of these, 31 laws provide for direct annexation and 10 for indirect annexation. One of the laws on direct annexation, specifically concerning Jerusalem, was approved in the final reading. Another four laws on indirect annexation were also finally approved. These do not include six listed bills, some of which were enacted into laws and approved. All these pertain to the law on the pillage and plunder of privately owned Palestinian land.¹⁵

In practice, these bills were only enacted into laws after Trump had been elected president of the USA in November 2016. Before he made it to the White House, the coalition had already started to propose bills. These were successively endorsed by the government before they were approved by the Knesset plenum. This is evidenced by the dates, on which the laws were approved in various stages of the law-making process.

This has been the case with the law on the pillage and plunder of privately owned land. Initiated by MK Yoav Kish from the Likud party, the first bill was placed on the Knesset agenda in late July 2015, but it went unnoticed. A second bill was on the Knesset agenda in early July 2016. The latter was only processed a few days after Trump

had been elected in November 2016. The bill was hastily enacted into a law and finally approved within three months from the date of voting in the preliminary reading. It received the final approval in February 2017.

This is also the case with the parliamentary activity regarding endorsement of the Law on the Annexation of Jerusalem, which was approved on the first day of 2018; that is, less than a month after Trump's announcement on Jerusalem. This involved a parliamentary activity to introduce bills to the effect of annexing settlements to Jerusalem and isolating Palestinian neighbourhoods from the city. Later and until the time of writing this report, the frequency of parliamentary activity has declined due to the dispute caused by Netanyahu's speech in a session with government blocs on 12 February 2018. Netanyahu asserted that, for a while, he had been coordinating measures with American officials to enforce sovereignty over the West Bank. According to Netanyahu, since it concerns a "historical event",¹⁶ such an initiative needs to be governmental, rather than personal. However, the White House categorically denied Netanyahu's statement during a visit by the US Secretary of State to the Middle East. This incident came at an awkward moment as Washington was also seeking to maintain US relations with Arab allies, primarily Saudi Arabia. Washington wished to avoid over-embarrassment, particularly in the aftermath of Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. To some extent, this explains Trump's call to reduce settlement activity. In a special interview with Israel Hayom (11 February 2018), Trump also tried to talk about settlement activity in a balanced way. In parallel, Trump was sceptic of the willingness for peace between Israel and the Palestinians!

- **Opportunities in the Medium and Long Range**

1. Rapprochement between the New Right in Israel and the right wing in the USA is paralleled with a declining support for Israel among constituencies of the Democratic party, who distinctively belong racially diverse groups and classes. According to a survey released on 23 January 2018 by the Washington-based Pew Research Centre, a key public opinion poll centre in the USA, since 2001, the share of Republicans sympathising more with Israel than the Palestinians has increased from 50 to 79 percent in 2018. Over the same period, the share of Democrats voters saying this has declined from 38 to 27 percent.¹⁷ This data reflects contradictory processes, which are taking shape among voter groups in Israel and the USA. Ideological intersection between Republicans and Christian Zionists on the one hand, and the New Right in Israel on the other, contrasts with a growing rift between Democratic public and Israel. In the context of continued domination of the right wing, it also transforms Israel into a "partisan" and ideological "player", which is subservient to the Republican party. Contrary to customary practice, Israel no longer reflects a US consensus among American Public. These fragilities allow room for the Palestinians to work and network with groups, particularly students, Youth, immigrants, feminists, and Afro-Americans, who object to the Republican right wing.

Under the leadership of Netanyahu, Israel's transformation into a domestic partisan player raises the concerns of Israeli movements, which viewed it as a loss for Israel in the long term. According to these movements, apart from debilitating Israel's solid status in the USA, this shift disrupts the relation between Jews of the USA and Israel given that the majority of the Jews stand by the Democratic party.

2. Continued decline in the US role and status in the region and around the world vis-à-vis growing Russian role: Seven years after internal bloody confrontations, changes on the Syrian scene show that Russia has managed - due to active Russian role in supporting the Syrian regime - to strengthen its strategic position

in the Middle East. It is expected that the Russian role boosts in the near future in light of Russia's key role in consolidating the Syrian regime and in the upcoming reconstruction process. By contrast, the USA has seen a diminishing role and capability of exerting impact on ongoing events in Syria and on relevant arrangements. While it is still early to clearly judge the future course of the US international relations, the reality is that Russia has turned into an international power, which is capable of playing an influential role due to its status and good relations with the conflicting parties. To this avail, Russia enjoys good relations with Iran, Syria and Hezbollah on the one hand, and with Israel on the other. In light of US alignment with Israel and its deteriorating status, these relations leave Russia in a powerful position to play a pivotal role in an alternative political/ peace process.

II. Israeli Assessments of the Changes on the Syrian Front:

Increasing Iranian presence and Lebanese-Syrian unity on a single northern front

Israel argues that the increasing Iranian presence in Syria is one of the key variable witnessed in 2017. Israel views this a new strategic development and an "probability to pose a serious traditional threat in the future by deploying Shiite militias on the Israeli-Syrian border in the Golan Heights". Israeli sources report that, following the collapse of ISIS, Iran is strengthening its presence in liberated areas. These can, then, be used to transport weapons to Hezbollah bases in Lebanon and to establish a land corridor from Iran through Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon to an outlet to the eastern Mediterranean coast in Lebanon. Israel further argues that Iran seeks to invest its support of the Syrian regime by establishing bases and military encampments for the Shiite militias it backs and constructing infrastructure for the manufacture and stockpiling of weapons. Israel is of the view that Iran, by promoting its presence in close proximity to Israel, seeks to create a new arena of confrontation in the Golan Heights, away from Iran's nuclear sites.

As articulated in the Israeli Army Strategy, which was released in late 2017, Israeli military assessments envisage that the Palestinian front is the most potentially volatile. However, this front is listed as a second threat for which the army is preparing. In the opinion of the General Staff, the Palestinian front is supersede by the threat posed by the Shiite axis, which is being created by Iran. Over the past two years, this axis has included Syria side by side with Hezbollah in Lebanon.¹⁸

According to recent Israeli assessments, in light of the increasing threat of the Iranian Shiite axis, Israel has upgraded its red lines, which are tailored to ensure a strategic military superiority vis-à-vis the Lebanese-Syrian front. Earlier, Israel's red lines used to cover three aspects: (1) preventing the transportation of high quality weapons to Hezbollah; (2) preventing Iranian and/or Iran-supported Hezbollah forces from approaching the border either in the Golan Heights or in Lebanon; and (3) retaliating against any breach of Israel's sovereignty. In 2017, another two points were added to the Israeli red lines: (1) preventing an Iranian military presence in Syria and Lebanon; and (2) preventing the construction of military industrial installations, particularly for the manufacture of rockets, in Lebanon.

Increasing presence of Iran and its allies, including the Shiite forces in Syria, has also led to upgrading Israeli assessments of the shape of the next confrontation. Israel claims that the Syrian and Lebanese fronts have merged into a new single front, namely the "northern front". This means that the next war will be the first to be waged against the unified northern front, rather than against a separate Lebanese or Syrian front.

The short-lived confrontation of 10 February 2018 constitutes a small-scale illustration of the challenges which Israel is facing in the pursuit to impose the new Israeli red lines.¹⁹ The air strike which targeted so-called Iran and Syrian sites was met with a Syrian retaliation that resulted, for the first time, in the shooting down of an Israeli F-16 fighter jet. This could have turned into a large-scale confrontation if it were not for the Russian intervention. Russia effectively demonstrated its capability of exercising influence over all parties. This incident also unveiled new parameters which the actors in Syria seek to impose on the freedom of action Israel used to enjoy. While it is still early to judge the future consequences of this air strike, Israel now anticipates that the development of a large-scale confrontation to “curb the presence” of Iran in Syria and Lebanon is just a matter of time.

However, the challenges Israel faces on the Lebanese-Syrian front contrast with factors that promote Israel's strategic superiority, most notably,

1. A comfortable Arab environment triggered by the Arab world's preoccupation with domestic problems. Arab countries have shifted to confronting their own problems at the expense of the question of Palestine, which used to be their focus of attention.
2. Arab countries are affected by polarisation, schism and splits into several conflicting axes. Israel and several Arab states have implicitly agreed on a common enemy, namely Iran. In addition to reshaping the designation of the enemy and the friend, this convergences gives Israel much room to act in the face of the parts, rather than the whole.

III. Domestic Changes

Between corruption cases and increasing right wing domination

2017 marked new developments with regard to corruption cases that involve Netanyahu. On 13 February 2018, the crisis escalated after the Israeli police announced its recommendations to file a charging instrument against Netanyahu on charges of receiving a bribe in Cases 1000 and 2000. In response, Netanyahu stated he was determined to keep his tasks and that he would not resign from his position. Senior government officials supported Netanyahu and stressed they would stay in the government. They would wait for a decision from the Legal Advisor to the Government Avichai Mandelblit regarding the police recommendations on both corruption cases against Netanyahu. However, that crisis has grown even greater when the police announced on 18 February 2018 that it had arrested close confidantes of Netanyahu on grounds of a third corruption case under investigation, namely Case 4000. Shlomo Felber, a close associate of Netanyahu, was recruited as a state's witness in the case.

Rapid developments in corruption cases, and the consequences of police recommendations, show that Netanyahu's political future is increasingly at stake. If he survives corruption cases without a charging instrument, this would usher a new era of Netanyahu's political life. Then, he would be the sole leader, not only prime minister, of Israel over the upcoming stage. It would consolidate his grassroots support as more politically prosecuted than any other prime minister and political leader in the history of Israel. As Netanyahu stated over and over again, that would be triggered by his political positions. As a result, Netanyahu would be increasingly popular in the eyes of his grassroots, electoral, national and right wing constituencies. He would continue to be the right wing leader for the next years and prime minister for more years to come, as he promised.

Nevertheless, if a charging instrument is submitted, that would be the end of Netanyahu's political career. It would allow room for large-scale mobility across the Israeli political scene, the boundaries of which are not necessarily confined to the present partisan landscape.

Netanyahu's demise may result in the emergence of new actors in the Israeli political-partisan scene. A new party, or even new parties, can be established. Candidates for the next partisan stage include former Israeli Minister of Defence Moshe Ya'alon and former Chief of Staff Gabi Ashkenazi. There is also talk about forming an alliance between Lapid and Kahlon.

The change of leadership in Israel, even if takes place by forming new governments that are not led by the Likud party, does not mean that Israel will necessarily see a change in political positions towards the occupation and settlement enterprise. In this context, the Israeli society is shifting towards the right wing. Maintaining Jewishness of the state, keeping up settlements, showing an aggressive attitude towards Palestinian citizens and casting doubts on the Palestinian leadership's intentions, the right wing's discourse has also transformed from peace and constituted part of the dominant discourse.

As mentioned in previous MADAR Strategic Reports and spelled out in the chapter on "Social Report" below, this shift unveils deep structural changes within Israel. These are linked to demographic changes and social transformations within the colonial immigrant community as well as the strategic impacts of the 1967 occupation. Along this vein, particular reference is made to the repositioning of parts of the groups, which were viewed as peripheral (in terms of the power of influence) in decision-making circles. These include the Mizrahi Jews, residents of development towns, Haredi Jews, and settler groups. By contrast, the centre forces which comprise the secular, socialist-oriented Ashkenazi group is being gradually driven to the periphery. Competition for the leadership of the Labour party, the stronghold of traditional secular socialism, is a significant indicator in the course of these transformations. On 10 July 2017, two candidates of oriental Moroccan ancestry, Amir Peretz and Avi Gabbay, ran for the chairmanship of the party. The latter won.

Structural changes and transformation within the structures of the elite in Israel have given rise to several important consequences. First and foremost, ongoing Zionisation has targeted segments that were outside the scope of Zionism. These include the Haredi Jews, who now represent the largest settler group (30 percent of the entire settler population). In addition, the Mizrahi Jews' support of the right wing has transformed from being protest-driven (e.g. the 1977 vote) into ideologically motivated and separate from relevant root causes. According to the annual survey of sociologist Sami Smouha,²⁰ compared to 50 percent of the persons who define themselves as Ashkenazim, 85 percent of those who identify themselves as Mizrahim want the right wing to rule Israel. Additionally, only 13 percent of the Jews view themselves as moderate leftists and 4 percent left wingers.

The shift towards the right wing has reflected in deep and persistent changes that have also affected the judicial apparatus, particularly the High Court of Justice.²¹ The right wing accuses the High Court of excessively repealing Knesset laws, which it considers as unconstitutional and of standing by the Palestinian petitioners. The latter allegation is not grounded in serious evidence, however. The right wing is working towards restricting the Court's role to interpreting laws, rather than examining cases that concern the executive and legal branches of government. In the context of these changes, Minister of "Justice " Ayelet Shaked has sought to alter the High Court's composition with a view to producing a conservative panel by means of appointing new judges with a conservative stance. To this avail, Shaked has lately managed to appoint two judges she had nominated herself.

Shaked also seeks to prevent the High Court from examining petitions filed by Palestinians from the West Bank. This jurisdiction over these petitions would be transferred to the Central Court of Jerusalem, at which pro-settlement activist Haya Zandberg was appointed as a judge. On Sunday, 25 February 2018, the Ministerial Committee for Legislation approved a bill proposed by Shaked, obliging Palestinian complainants from the West Bank to file petitions on building and land disputes to a central court, rather than to the High Court of Justice. The Judicial Selection Committee endorsed the appointment of Zandberg as a judge at the Central Court of Jerusalem. Earlier, Zandberg chaired the committee for legitimating illegal settlement outposts in the West Bank. She is a close associate of the Minister of Justice.

Conclusion

The shift towards the right wing and change of Israel's elites, the latest of whom were those of the High Court of Justice, intersect with a relative stable security situation, which the Israelis saw in 2017, as well as with a low international price for the continued occupation and associated atrocities. In addition to economic stability, the shift is taking place in the context of a sharp polarisation across the Arab region, neighbouring countries' preoccupation with their own internal affairs, and a compliant US Administration. All these drivers are in favour of sustaining the right wing settlement enterprise and supporting efforts to resolve the conflict in line with the right wing's ideological vision.

Combined with the right wing's fear of a close election ahead, the risks Netanyahu's government faces on the grounds of increasing corruption cases may end up with the establishment of a new coalition. Acting beyond its scope, at least the right wing will not prevail over such a coalition. In light of the ideological agreement with the Trump Administration, these risks may expedite legislative and practical steps to annex settlement blocs, demarcate Jerusalem boundaries, and pre-empt the two-state-solution in accordance with internationally recognised resolutions.

Despite the challenges posed by international, regional and Israeli challenges, Palestinians still have the chance to stand in the face of Israel and the occupation. In addition to all the anomalies produced by Israel's alignment with the Trumpian and global right wing, new international players, including Russia, have emerged. A wide range of international civil society actors are aware of the dangers posed by the various formulas of the New Right and religious right wing.

- 1 Despite the fact that Evangelicalism and Zionism are not completely identical, evangelicals sometimes refer to Zionist Christians. Statistics show that evangelicals in the USA comprise approximately 70 million, including 50 million who identify with Zionism. In this report, evangelicalism and Christian Zionism are used depending on the context.
- 2 In his address to the Christians United for Israel Conference on 17 July 2017, Pence said: "To look at Israel is to see that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob keeps his promises. "Like all of you, my passion for Israel springs from my Christian faith. The songs of the land and the people of Israel were the anthems of my youth. As for me and my house, we pray for the peace of Jerusalem and all who call her home. It's really the greatest privilege of my life to serve as Vice President to a President who cares so deeply for our most cherished ally." For more information, see Emily Jones, 2017, "Mike Pence to CUFI: I Support Israel Because I Am a Christian", CBN News, 17 July 2018, available at: <https://www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/world/2017/july/mike-pence-to-cufi-i-support-israel-because-i-am-a-christian-nbsp> (Last accessed: 27 February 2018).
- 3 On 8 November 1995, the Congress unanimously passed an act on relocation of the US embassy to Jerusalem, recognising Jerusalem as the unified capital of Israel. The full text of the act is available at: <https://www.congress.gov/104/plaws/publ45/PLAW-104publ45.pdf> (Last accessed: 25 February 2018).
- 4 Trump's tweet, 2 January 2018, available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/948322497602220032?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ynet.co.il%2Farticles%2F02%2FC73402%2CL-50662052%2C00.html (Last accessed: 27 February 2018).
- 5 Bismuth, Boaz, 2018. "US President Trump in an Exclusive Interview: 'Jerusalem Declaration - The Climax of My First Year'". *Israel Hayom*, 9 February 2018, available at: <http://www.israelhayom.co.il/article/534663> (in Hebrew) (Last accessed: 25 February 2018).
- 6 Tzena, Shlomo, 2017. "The Two-State Solution: The End". *Israel Hayom*, 16 February 2017, available at: <http://www.israelhayom.co.il/article/452933> (in Hebrew) (Last accessed: 25 February 2018).
- 7 Boaz Bismuth, 2018, "Trump Forces the Palestinians to Understand that the Rules have Changed". *Israel Hayom*, 25 February 2018, available at: <http://www.israelhayom.co.il/article/538111> (in Hebrew) (Last accessed: 25 February 2018).
- 8 Ravid, Barak, 2017. "Netanyahu in the Likud Ministerial Session: The Thing I'm Ready to Give is a State Minus", *Haaretz*, 22 January 2017, available at: <https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/1.3426287> (in Hebrew) (Last accessed: 25 February 2018).
- 9 Hersh, Nathan, 2017. "Trump won't make progress on a two-state solution while Netanyahu is in power", *The Washington Post*, 20 September 2017, available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/posteverything/wp/2017/20/09/trump-wont-make-progress-on-a-two-state-solution-while-netanyahu-is-in-power/?utm_term=.b1431fcccd7 (Last accessed: 22 February 2018).
- 10 See Tzena, Shlomo, 2017. op. cit.
- 11 Eichner, Itamar, Karni, Yuval and Levy, Elinor, 2018. "A Celebration in the Right Wing: End of the Two-State Solution", *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 16 February 2017, available at: <https://www.yediot.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4923232,00.html> (in Hebrew) (Last accessed: 22 February 2018).
- 12 Levinson, Chaim, 2017. "The Likud Centre Unanimously Adopts a Bill Obliging Party Members to Annex the West Bank", *Haaretz*, 31 December 2017, available at: <https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politi/.premium-1.5535275> (in Hebrew) (Last accessed: 22 February 2018).
- 13 Segal, Amit, 2017. "Gabbay's Statements do not Reflect the Zionist Camp's Position", *Mako*, 16 October 2017, available at: www.mako.co.il/news-military/politics-q4_2017/Article-7472e3b7e962f51004.htm (in Hebrew) (Last accessed: 23 February 2018).
- 14 Maarive Online, 2018. "Gabbay on the Plan of Disengagement from Judea and Samaria: Who Said Settlements Should be Evacuated", 4 February 2018, available at: <http://www.maariv.co.il/news/politics/Article-620621> (in Hebrew) (Last accessed: 3 January 2018).
- 15 See Jaraysi, Barhoum *The Legal Monitor*, Palestinian Forum for Israeli Studies (MADAR), available at: <https://www.madarceneter.org/en/legal-monitor>
- 16 Tal Schneider, "The White House Addressed Netanyahu's Talk about Annexation: A Lie", *Globes*, 12 February 2018, available at: <https://www.globes.co.il/news/article.aspx?did=1001223543>.
- 17 Pew, 2018. *Republicans and Democrats Grow Even Further Apart in Views of Israel, Palestinians*, 23 January 2018, available at: <http://www.people-press.org/2018/23/01/republicans-and-democrats-grow-even-further-apart-in-views-of-israel-palestinians/> (Last accessed: 20 February 2018).
- 18 See Harel, Amos, 2018. "The Army Estimates that the Palestinian Front is the Most Potentially Volatile", *Haaretz*, 26 January 2018, available at: <https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/.premium-1.5766825> (Last accessed: 6 February 2018).
- 19 According to Israel's claim, this incident involved an Iranian drone crossing Israel's airspace. Having destroyed the drone, Israel launched a counter attack on Syrian sites, resulting in the shooting down of an Israeli F-16 fighter jet. Israel also launched intensified airstrikes deep inside the Syrian territory. For more information, see Shulhut, Antoine, 2018. "The One-Day War", *Situation Assessment*, 14 February 2018, MADAR, available at: <https://www.madarceneter.org/en/reports/position-papers/7607-situation-assessment-%EF%80%AD-synopsis-the-one-day-war-on-syria-continuity-or-a-new-stage> (Last accessed: 28 February 2018).
- 20 The survey results were presented at the Annual Conference of the Israeli Sociology Society at Ben-Gurion University, Beer Sheva, 29 January 2018.
- 21 For more information on the changes that have affected the Judicial Authority, see Shulhut, Antoine, 2018. "Israeli High Court in a new face - more right wing and more conservative!", *Special Report*: 27 February 2018, MADAR, available at: <https://www.madarceneter.org/en/reports/special-reports/7627-israeli-high-court-in-a-new-face-%EF%80%AD-more-right-wing-and-more-conservative> (Last accessed: 28 February 2018).

