

It's All About Me: Netanyahu Rejects Palestinian Statehood

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Israel has been given enormous license to control the security narrative in the Middle East for decades. This is not to say it is always in control of it – the attacks of October 7 by Hamas show that such control is rickety and bound, at stages, to come undone. What matters for Israeli security is that certain neighbours always understand that they are never to do certain things, lest they risk existential oblivion.

For instance, no Middle Eastern state will be permitted to acquire nuclear weapons on the Jewish State's watch. Nuclear reactors and facilities will be struck, infected, or pulverised altogether ([Osirak](#) at Tuwaitha, Iraq; the Natanz site in Iran), with, or without knowledge, approval or participation of the United States.

This is a signature mark of Israeli foreign and defence policy: the nuclear option remains the greatest, single affirmation of sovereignty in international relations. To possess it, precisely because of its destructive and shielding potential, is to proclaim to the community of nation states that you have lethal insurance against invasion and regime change. Best, then, to make sure others do not possess it.

Israel, on the other hand, will be permitted to develop its own cataclysmic inventory of weapons, platforms, and doomsday options, all the while claiming strategic ambiguity about the whole matter. In that strangulating way, Israeli policy resembles the thornily disingenuous former US President Bill Clinton's approach to taking drugs and oral sex: he did not inhale, and oral pleasuring by one by another is simply not sex.

The latest remarks from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on January 18 suggest that the license also extends to ensuring that Palestinians will never be permitted a sovereign homeland, that they will be, in a perverse biblical echo, kept in a form of

bondage, downtrodden, oppressed and, given what happened on October 7 last year, suppressed. This is to ensure that, whatever the grievance, that they never err, never threaten, and never cause grief to the Israeli State. To that end, it is axiomatic that their political authorities are kept incipient, inchoate, corrupt and permanently on life support, the tolerated beggars and charity seekers of the Middle East.

At the press conference in question, held at the Kirya military base in Tel Aviv, Netanyahu [claimed](#) that,

“Whoever is talking about the ‘day after Netanyahu’ is essentially talking about the establishment of the Palestinian state with the Palestinian Authority.”

(How very like the Israeli PM to make it all about *him*.) The Israel-Palestinian conflict, he wanted to clarify, was “not about the absence of a state, a Palestinian state, but rather about the existence of a state, a Jewish state.”

With monumental gall, he complained that “All territory we evacuate, we get terror, terrible terror against us”. His examples, enumerated much like sins at a confessional, were instances where Israel, as an occupying force, had left or reduced their presence: Gaza, southern Lebanon, parts of Judea and Samaria (the West Bank). It followed that “any future arrangement, or in the absence of any future arrangement,” Israel would continue to maintain “security control” of all lands west of the Jordan River. “That is a vital condition.”

As such lands comprise Israeli territory, Gaza and the West Bank, Palestinian sovereignty can be assuredly ignored as a tenable outcome in Netanyahu’s policed paradise. He even went so far as to acknowledge that this “contradicts the idea of sovereignty” as far as the Palestinians are concerned. “What can you do? I tell this truth to our American friends.”

As to sceptical mutterings in the Israeli press about the country’s prospects of defeating Hamas decisively, Netanyahu was all foamy with indignation. “We will continue to fight at full strength until we achieve our goals: the return of all our hostages – and I say again, only military pressure will lead to their release; the elimination of Hamas; the certainty that Gaza will never again represent a threat to Israel. There won’t be any party that educates for terror, funds terror, sends terrorists against us.”

This hairbrained policy of ethno-religious lunacy masquerading as sane military strategy ensures that permanent war nourished by the poison of blood-rich hatred and revenge will continue unabated. In keeping such a powder keg stocked, there is always the risk that other powers and antagonists willing to have a say through bombs, rockets and drones will light it. Should this or that state be permitted to exist or come into being? The answer is bound to be convulsively violent.

It is of minor interest that officials in the United States found Netanyahu’s comments a touch off-putting. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken had, it is [reported](#), dangled a proposal before the Israeli PM that would see Saudi Arabia normalise relations with Israel in exchange for an agreement to facilitate the pathway to Palestinian statehood. Netanyahu did not bite, insisting that he would not be a party to any agreement that would see the creation of a Palestinian state.

Blinken, if one is to rely on the veracity of the account, suggested that the removal of Hamas could never be achieved in purely military terms; a failure on the part of Israel’s

leadership to recognise that fact would lead to a continuation of violence and history repeating itself.

In Washington, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller [stated in the daily press briefing](#) that “Israel faces some very difficult choices in the months ahead.” The conflict in Gaza would eventually end; reconstruction would follow; agreement from various countries in the region to aid in that effort had been secured – all on the proviso that a “tangible path to the establishment of a Palestinian state” could be agreed upon.

For decades, administrations in Washington have fantasised about castles in the skies, the outlandish notion that Palestinians and Israelis might exist in cosy accord upon lands stolen and manured by brutal death. Washington, playing the Hegemonic Father, could then perch above the fray, gaze paternally upon the scrapping disputants, and suggest what was best for both. But the two-state solution was always encumbered and heavily conditioned to take place on Israeli terms, leaving all mediation and interventions by outsiders flitting gestures lacking substance.

Now, no one can claim otherwise that Palestinian statehood is anything other than spectral, fantastic, and doomed – at least under the current warring regime. Netanyahu’s own political survival, profanely linked to Israel’s own existence, depends on not just stifling pregnancies in Gaza but preventing the birth of a nationally recognised Palestinian state.

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