




COMMENTARY


What to Expect for the Future of EU-Israeli Relations Following the Elections?

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Introduction

Amid a neck in neck Israeli election, the incumbent Prime Minister, Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, will likely garner enough support “to extend his decade-long stretch in power to become the country’s longest-serving [leader].”¹ Albeit a close race, “results showed Mr. Netanyahu would be in a much better position to form a majority governing coalition made up of nationalist, far-right and religious allies.”² The instinctive question to ask is what now? Especially for Europeans, the predicament will be more how to handle ‘King Bibi’, “the controversial figure whom some perceive as Israel’s savior, and others – as a cynical politician who will stop at nothing to retain his power.”³

To put it lightly the relationship between Brussels and Tel Aviv has been less than ideal in the past year. Ironically, one of the reasons being that the EU has persisted in its intransigence of withholding official recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. *The Times of Israel* cited an unnamed EU spokesperson maintaining that “the position of the European Union and its member states on Jerusalem remains unchanged,”⁴ while US President Trump shrugged it off to be “nothing more or less than a recognition of reality.”⁵

Indeed, Jerusalem has thrown a span in the works of EU-Israeli relations, but in the grand scheme of things it constitutes just another item on the bucket list. The infighting has covered a wide range of topics, but for the purpose of this paper I will be examining two prevailing problems – the increasingly assertive Israeli position in the West Bank and Gaza, and the proportionately deteriorating Israeli-Iran line.

Since Mr. Netanyahu hasn’t yet stepped into office, nothing is written in stone. Nevertheless, his election campaign has revealed a sneak preview of what is to come or more broadly what is to be expected of his renewed tenure. The cardinal rule of politics governs that political platforms rarely tell the whole story and instead offer rough guidelines. In essence, “anything that’s said or will be said in the week before the election not only should be taken with a grain of salt, but with at least two full shakers of it.”⁶ Even if sometimes amounting to nothing more than empty populist slogans, electoral manifestos do hold sway over the direction of administrations. That is why this study intends to investigate excerpts of Mr. Netanyahu campaign (concerning Palestine and Iran) and to assess them at face value, as well as to highlight their expected impact on the EU-Israeli relations.

The paper would, thus, appraise Mr. Netanyahu’s projected agenda against European foreign policy objectives vis-à-vis the region. The role of the US will also be dragged into the discussion, in order to additionally delineate the probability for a Brussels – Tel Aviv heightened tensions to cast a cloud over the Transatlantic alliance.

The Palestinian Question

A tale as old as time itself, or so it seems. The UN General Assembly Resolution 181 of 29th November 1947 is widely regarded as the origin point of the Israeli state, setting the boundaries for Jewish and the adjacent Arab sovereign lands. Nicknamed UN Partition Plan for Palestine, the

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/apr/09/israel-election-voters-polls-netanyahu-fifth-term-gatz>

² <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/apr/10/israel-election-netanyahu-appears-on-track-for-victory-despite-tied-result>

³ <https://www.jff.org.il/en/movie/22387>

⁴ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/eu-reiterates-opposition-to-diplomatic-missions-in-jerusalem/>

⁵ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-42259443>

⁶ <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/elections/.premium-netanyahu-talks-west-bank-annexation-after-election-but-thwarted-all-such-efforts-1.7091149>

document laid the foundations for the two-state solution to the Palestinian question. The roots of the project for the creation of state of Israel, however, can be traced the 1917 British Balfour Declaration (deriving its title from the contemporary British Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour), expressing ‘His Majesty’s government’ support for “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.”⁷ By virtue of the complexity of the issue, scholars have gone great lengths to analyse it from all possible angles. Irrespective of their final verdicts, most academics conclude that the deal was innately belated and uncoordinated, leaving it prone to future frictions.⁸

History has proven that instability is the name of the game. Détente periods are not unheard of, but for the most part Palestinians and Israeli have gone tit-for-tat in their confrontation, at times breaking out in all-out wars. Provocations cannot go unanswered with both sides subscribing to the Old Testament’s “an eye for an eye” paradigm. Just last month, March 2019, “a projectile was launched [from Gaza] at Israel [and] in response the Israeli army carried out several airstrikes in the Strip, targeting several Hamas posts.”⁹ The two parties are always nervously scratching their trigger fingers, awaiting an opportunity to set their guns off.

How does Mr. Netanyahu add to this equation? For one, he has neither been a strong proponent of reconciliation, nor of the two-state solution. Quite the contrary, in terms of rhetoric the PM has toughened his stance towards the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, indicating that “a Palestinian state will endanger [Israeli] existence.”¹⁰ Commentators extrapolate that “[Mr.] Netanyahu has slowly become more emboldened to make strong right-wing statements about the possible contours of a resolution to the conflict.”¹¹ Hitherto as acting defence minister, the PM championed security above everything else. His campaign certainly reflected the insatiable craving for safety, illustrating that the acrimony between Hamas and Israel was nothing short of being existential:

It is impossible to do a real deal with Hamas. They want to destroy us. There is nothing to agree about. What will we agree on – on how to commit suicide? Therefore, we are obligated to deliver blows against them from time to time. Since Operation Protective Edge [in 2014], not a single Israeli civilian was killed [in the Gaza-border region].¹²

Mr. Netanyahu has framed all military undertaking to be fundamentally of defensive character because he exposes the logic that Israel is ultimately protecting itself against external threat. Depending on the occasion, the Cabinet is ‘obligated’ to either act pre-emptively to deter transgressions or to retaliate against abrupt jabs, but it’s always in the name of security.

Generally, Brussels and Tel Aviv (and the US for the matter) are on the same page regarding Hamas. Denoted as a terrorist organisation¹³, Hamas has been jointly condemned “for repeatedly firing rockets into Israel and for inciting violence, thereby putting civilians at risk.”¹⁴ On the other hand, the EU hasn’t eschewed from denouncing (dis)proportional Israeli response, and it has reiterated that “while having the right to defend itself, Israel is expected to continue to exercise restraint and do

⁷ <http://www.balfourproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/extract.pdf>

⁸ See for more info https://www.iemed.org/observatori/arees-danalisi/arxius-adjunts/anuari/med.2017/previews/IEMed_Medyearbook2017_Palestine_Question_Arabs_1917_2017_Khader_EN.pdf

⁹ <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/rocket-alerts-blare-in-tel-aviv-1.7022326>

¹⁰ <https://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Did-Netanyahu-just-renounce-his-support-for-a-Palestinian-state-581577>

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² <https://www.israelhayom.com/2019/04/09/deciphering-the-security-policies-put-forth-by-gantz-netanyahu/>

¹³ Hamas still features on the EU terrorist list, see <https://www.timesofisrael.com/eu-court-rejects-hamas-appeal-over-terror-listing/> and <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/fight-against-terrorism/terrorist-list/>

¹⁴ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/europe-agrees-to-back-un-resolution-condemning-hamas/>

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everything to avoid civilian casualties in Gaza.”¹⁵ Mr. Netanyahu’s manifesto doesn’t signal any meaningful deviation from its current attitude on Hamas; therefore, as long as the PM “exercise[s] [relative] restraint” towards his neighboring adversary, the EU capitals wouldn’t take a stab at his government. Yet, if hypothetically - becomes too lively, authorizing military operation (bordering war), the EU might settle on less-friendly course.

Whilst Gaza appears to be a rather straightforward affair, the West Bank catches the eye as the apple of discord. The latest *Six Month Report on the Israeli Settlements in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem*, provided by the Office of the European Union Representative for UNRWA, recorded that “the total advancement of settlement units in 2018 (January-December) amounted to more than 15,800 units (9,400 units in the West Bank and 6,400 units in East Jerusalem).”¹⁶

The document further deduced that “the figures show a sharp spike in planning for future construction,” which practically endangered “two-state solution, with Jerusalem as the future capital of both states.”¹⁷ Despite not making a specific reference to the Israeli administration, the document clearly aims to echo the simple fact that “settlements are illegal under international law as reaffirmed by UN Security Council Resolution 2334 (2016),”¹⁸ prompting Tel Aviv to act accordingly and impose the agreed-upon accords.

Here, Mr. Netanyahu and the EU heads are miles apart. The West Bank has featured regularly on the incumbent PM’s electoral campaign. Rather than sanctioning caution, Premier Netanyahu has inexplicitly welcomed an upsurge of settlements, pledging to “extend sovereignty [over the Hebrew settlements in the West Bank]” citing “each [of them to be] Israeli [as opposed to Palestinian or mixed].”¹⁹ He overruled any other arrangement because “[he would] not hand [Israelis] over to Palestinian sovereignty.”²⁰ Still, the PM stopped short of “giv[ing] the green light to unlimited settlement expansion.”²¹

For all his talk, Mr. Netanyahu has continued to cooperate with the Palestinian Authority throughout his leadership. However, the Likud party “really wants him to [absorb the territory]” and in a more right-leaning coalition “he could take steps towards doing [just] that,”²² due to inter-cabinet pressure. If this were to happen, “European and non-aligned states would also be certain to oppose annexation as a dangerous violation of international law and UN resolutions.”²³ Effectively, Tel Aviv will be sliding down a slippery slope bringing it at odds with Brussels. Stripping it down to the basics, the Israeli administration will be pulling the rug out under the EU’s commitment to “advance the goal of a two-state solution, including in Gaza which, together with the West Bank, is an integral part of a

¹⁵ https://eeas.europa.eu/diplomatic-network/middle-east-peace-process/49322/statement-latest-escalation-violence-between-gaza-and-israel_en

¹⁶ https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/palestine-occupied-palestinian-territory-west-bank-and-gaza-strip/57606/six-month-report-israeli-settlements-occupied-west-bank-including-east-jerusalem-reporting_en

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/elections/netanyahu-says-will-annex-west-bank-in-next-term-1.7089387>

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ <https://www.israelhayom.com/2019/04/09/deciphering-the-security-policies-put-forth-by-gantz-netanyahu/>

²² <https://www.npr.org/2019/04/08/710953464/israels-netanyahu-makes-dramatic-campaign-pledge-ahead-of-election?t=1554849269819&t=1554984576658>

²³ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/apr/07/benjamin-netanyahus-proposal-would-bury-the-two-state-solution>

future Palestinian state.”²⁴ The parties would be increasingly finding themselves distanced; unable to compromise.

The US will have an instrumental role in any future relationship. The Whitehouse under President Trump has sought to reinstate the traditionally strong US-Israeli connection. Mr. Trump’s string of révérences towards Mr. Netanyahu have progressively amplified during the former’s reign. The apex was reached recently with American recognition of “Israel’s illegal annexation of occupied East Jerusalem, as well as the Golan Heights.”²⁵ The US President altered “[the]status quo, whereby [the International Community] ignore[d] Israel’s occupation while quietly batting away its attempts to seek recognition.”²⁶

Barring the intrinsic standalone importance of the decision, it has set out an alarming precedent for the West Bank. If Tel Aviv receives a US *carte blanche* of sorts with respect to its immediate neighborhood, right wing parties will probably pile on the pressure on Mr. Netanyahu to extend Israeli patronage to large chunk of the West Bank, particularly to Area C. His electoral rhetoric shouldn’t be completely dismissed because it has played into the Zionist nationalistic aspiration.

Thus, the cabinet junior partners might demand that the PM keeps true to and delivers on his promises. A lack of US sanctions or even outright support for such a narrative can be the stimulus for Mr. Netanyahu to drop his reservations. The EU has been extremely vocal in rebuking any such thinking “in line with the international law and UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 497,” making crystal clear that the “European Union does not recognize Israeli sovereignty over the occupied Golan Heights.”²⁷ Hence, offensive military operations into the West Bank, would run counter to EU objectives, placing Brussels and Tel Aviv at loggerheads. Moreover, US’ support would further aggravate the Transatlantic Alliance.

“The Iran deal is defective at its core”²⁸

The phrase uttered by US President Donald Trump in the wake of American pull-out of the Iran Nuclear Deal enshrines regional consideration for Iran. Israeli politics has been engulfed in discussions about Tehran’s encroaching power in the Middle East. Mr. Khamenei’s administration has steadily increased its local influence, from supporting the Houthi rebels in Yemen to assisting Assad’s fight against IS(IS) in Syria. With the bottom line of all election campaigns being security, it is no wonder that Iran evolved to be the accentuated issue.

The most preposterous episode of the elections centered on the alleged hijacking of Mr. Gantz’s (the main opponent of the incumbent PM) phone by Iranian special intelligence. The rumor had it “that a sex tape was among the embarrassing material extracted from [his] personal device.”²⁹ The accusation levied on Mr. Gantz was that he was susceptible to foreign extortion, opening up the door to external interference in Israeli domestic affairs. Mr. Netanyahu leapt to the occasion, ridiculing his rival of being incompetent through the question: “if Gantz can’t protect his phone, how will he protect the

²⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/47765/eu-consults-israel-and-palestinian-authority-its-engagement-support-two-state-solution_en For more information on the nature of Israeli occupation and the dangers of recognition, see <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/02/05/israels-occupation-of-the-golan-heights-is-illegal-and-dangerous/>

²⁵ <https://theintercept.com/2019/04/08/netanyahu-thanks-trump-sanctioning-iran-request-eve-israeli-election/>

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/eu-countries-all-say-no-to-recognition-of-israeli-golan-heights/>

²⁸ <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/key-trump-quotes-on-us-withdrawal-from-iran-nuclear-deal-1849334>

²⁹ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/israel-elections-netanyahu-sex-tape-iran-phone-hack-benny-gantz-a8825331.html>

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country?”³⁰ Interestingly enough, the remarks were followed by a self-boast by the PM, underlining that “Gantz [had] supported the dangerous nuclear deal with Iran, the deal that [Mr. Netanyahu had] fought,” managing to “convince the president of the US to leave and to renew sanctions on Iran.”³¹ The incumbent effectively juxtaposed his strength with his competitor’s weakness vis-à-vis Iran. Though it’s hard to single out the news story’s impact on the eventual ballot results, it highlighted Israeli security concern over the perceived threat from Tehran.

During his campaign, Mr. Netanyahu made sure to exploit his anti-Iranian program to the fullest. Tapping into the diplomatic row between the two states, he showed unrelenting resolve towards Iranian threats, saying that “if the [Tehran] regime makes a mistake and tries to destroy Tel Aviv and Haifa, it will be the last day the revolution will be celebrated”³² – a statement that was delivered on the eve of the 40th anniversary of the Islamic Republic. Malignant chants of “Death to Israel, Death to America” have instilled fear into the civilian population. According to the Guardian’s Israeli Correspondent, Oliver Holmes, voters counted on “a leader who could keep the country safe.”³³

Corruption charges took a backseat, with Mr. Netanyahu playing into his strong suit of portraying himself as ‘Mr. Security.’³⁴ The PM has validated his commitment to contain the regional rival by notably “block[ing] [the latter’s] military entrenchment in Syria.”³⁵ In January, the Israeli leader publicly acknowledged airstrikes against Iranian targets near Damascus.³⁶ Similar bombing raids were common in 2018, when Iran dared to instigate provocation of its own.

Strangely enough, back then Brussels adopted a more conciliatory stance towards Tel Aviv and in a rare show of support, asserted that “Israel ha[d] the right to defend itself.”³⁷ Upholding its function of a peace facilitator, the EU has usually advocated restraint and de-escalation; however, individual cases of bombing are judged contextually. Opinion have been situated throughout the spectrum, with Member States sometimes partially absolving Israel from the guilt and putting the onus on 3rd parties like Russia, the US, etc. Consequentially, despite inciting a short-lived ruckus, Israeli involvement in Syria hasn’t quite affected the diplomatic line between Tel Aviv and Brussels.

Ever since 2015, Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), known as the Iran Nuclear Deal, has established itself to be the substantive bone of contention, precluding a spring thawing of the accumulated winter frost along the Mediterranean channel. Opening up a short parenthesis, the international agreement between Iran and “P5+1 group of world powers”³⁸ basically consolidates a *quid pro quo* status, lifting the previously economic sanction on the Islamic republic in exchange for relinquishment of Tehran’s nuclear programme - involving strict compliance with international requirements and transparency (inspections). The accord has extrapolated concessions from Islamic republic, laying down severe restrictions and concrete targets, with corresponding deadline dates. It is not up to this paper to judge if the endeavour has been a resounding success (or any success for the matter). The spotlight is instead to be shifted westward all the way to Washington, shining brightly on the Trump administration views on the JCPOA:

³⁰ <https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Netanyahu-If-Gantz-cant-protect-his-phone-how-will-he-protect-the-country-583832>

³¹ Ibid.

³² <https://www.jpost.com/Breaking-News/Netanyahu-I-dont-ignore-Iranian-threats-but-Im-not-impressed-by-them-580354>

³³ Guardian Podcast

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-confirms-israeli-weekend-strike-on-iranian-weapons-caches-in-syria/>

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ <https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Rare-EU-backing-of-Israeli-strike-against-Iran-in-Syria-556160>

³⁸ The P5+1 powers are the US, UK, France, China, Russia and Germany, see <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-33521655>

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“Since the deal was reached, Iran’s aggression has only increased. The regime has used the windfall of newly accessible funds it received under the JCPOA to build nuclear-capable missiles, fund terrorism, and fuel conflict across the Middle East and beyond.”³⁹

The above cited reasons underscore President Trump’s regret over his predecessor’s unfruitful negotiation. The current White House perceives the Iran Nuclear Deal as seriously flawed, running against its purpose. Mr. Trump has voiced his criticism on more than one occasion, sending incessant shots to Mr. Khamenei. Needless to say, Mr. Netanyahu has strongly lobbied against the JCPOA, whose financial relaxations have allowed Iran to expand its regional influence. “Reimposing the sanctions” has been “long advocated by Israel.”⁴⁰

Moreover, “the Israeli premier has also been eager to convince European countries to exert more pressure on Iran.” Mr. Netanyahu’s efforts haven’t yielded a noticeable response, with the EU capitals exhibiting “[their] strong political commitment to the nuclear deal.”⁴¹ Brussels has responded to Israeli allegations of Iranian non-compliance through a reassurance that “the JCPOA is not based on assumptions of good faith or trust - it is based on concrete commitments, verification mechanisms and a very strict monitoring of facts.”⁴²

Returning to Mr. Netanyahu’s electoral statements, it would appear as though he has been instrumental in “convince[ing] the president of the US to leave [the Iran Nuclear Deal] and to renew sanctions on Iran.”⁴³ “On the eve of Israel’s elections” the incumbent PM even claimed responsibility for the latest US decision to label the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, a powerful branch of Iran’s official army, as a terrorist organisation.⁴⁴ In a tweet, the Israeli Premier thanked President Trump for “answering another one of [Mr. Netanyahu’s] important requests.”⁴⁵

The fact that only the Hebrew version of the tweet contained the above phrase, has conjured doubt over the authenticity of the acknowledgement, because it came out to be more of a publicity stunt, intended for domestic consumption.⁴⁶ While Israel certainly occupies a central spot in American Middle East policy, it would be ludicrous to imagine Mr. Netanyahu ordering Mr. Trump around, providing him with a check-list of demands. Tel Aviv holds sway over Washington, but its influence shouldn’t be overstated.

Mr. Netanyahu’s insistence on Iranian containment, however, does contradict the EU’s regional policy. The approaches are rather dichotomous – Brussels is offering the carrot, whereas Israel (and the US) is relying on the stick. In general, the techniques don’t necessarily nullify each other; decision-makers will tend to oscillate between them in negotiations.

Nevertheless, in the case of Iran, the US-Israel coalition is essentially pulling the plug on the EU’s initiative. Without Washington support, the future of the JCPOA is at stake. No element in Mr. Netanyahu’s electoral campaign has suggested course adjustment towards Iran. If anything, the reconvened Tel Aviv government might take a harder turn to the right, intensifying its pressure on Tehran. This will definitely not bode well with Brussels.

³⁹ <https://www.defensenews.com/global/2018/08/06/trump-brings-back-iran-sanctions-after-exiting-nuclear-deal/>

⁴⁰ <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/netanyahu-lashes-at-hostile-eu-but-finds-friends-on-bulgaria-trip/>

⁴¹ https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_why_iran_nuclear_deal_still_matters_for_europe_jcpoa

⁴² https://ec.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/43768/response-hrvp-mogherini-regarding-israeli-prime-minister-netanyahu%E2%80%99s-presentation-iran_en

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ <https://theintercept.com/2019/04/08/netanyahu-thanks-trump-sanctioning-iran-request-eve-israeli-election/>

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

Conclusion

The April Israeli elections have solidified Mr. Netanyahu's behemoth standing within Israeli politics. Love him or hate him, the EU must recognise the PM as a reality and modify its policy accordingly. Inevitably, this will be easier said than done. In his political acrobatics, the forthcoming administration will have to juggle between various right-wing demands, which might force it to surrender to "more extreme far-right voices."⁴⁷ A tougher stance towards Iran and unlawful extension of Israeli jurisdiction into the West Bank will surely be a hard to swallow pill for the EU leaders, leaving them with a bitter after-taste.

Washington's ever-closer alignment with Tel Aviv has further increased the prospects for regional turmoil. The White House has progressively abstained from condemning Israeli aspiration to the West Bank.⁴⁸ Moreover, Mr. Trump's 'the deal of the century' for Palestine might drift away from the EU-backed two-state solution. Mr. Pompeo's initial round of congressional committees has "suggested the initiative would not propose the creation of a Palestinian state."⁴⁹ The absence of any official reference to statehood has been alarming.⁵⁰ Considering the prevalence of US concessions to Israel, the new coalition might feel emboldened to chase after adventurous nationalistic dreams.

Mr. Netanyahu will have to keep the more extremely elements in his government under control, if he is to establish a *modus operandi* with the EU. Despite his expediting rhetoric, the Israeli PM has exhibited restraint in his previous stints in government. "In practice, he [has] actively thwarted all legislative initiatives in [the] direction [of annexation]" resisting the backdrop of ultra-nationalistic demands.⁵¹ In spite of the huff and puff, the Premier hasn't dared to categorically break off the two-state solution and to instigate zealous enlargement campaigns. This doesn't completely rule out such a scenario, but if past experience is the example to submit to developments of these sort are unlikely.

The issue with Iran is still to persist, and in the foreseeable future Tel Aviv and Brussels will surely bud heads over the Nuclear Deal. Albeit being an influential actor in the Middle East, Israeli importance will be overshadowed by the US, which can ultimately decide the fate of the JCPOA. The EU capitals will be much more concerned with Mr. Trump's policy direction on the matter.

The Europeans and Israel can work through their difference on Iran, but it will require a sufficient desire for compromise on both sides. To that end, in his upcoming term Mr. Netanyahu should re-evaluate his shadow diplomacy of "embrac[ing] many nationalist populist leaders around the world, [especially in Europe]."⁵² Israeli overtures to Hungary, Poland, Romania, etc. can extract minor diplomatic gains, nevertheless, bypassing the EU through bilateral channels will not improve Euro-Israeli relations in the long term.

⁴⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/apr/08/israelis-prepare-to-go-to-the-polls-heres-what-we-know>

⁴⁸ The Oval office has previously denounced Israeli claims to the West Bank, see <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/elections/.premium-netanyahu-talks-west-bank-annexation-after-election-but-thwarted-all-such-efforts-1.7091149>

⁴⁹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-47913544>

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/elections/.premium-netanyahu-talks-west-bank-annexation-after-election-but-thwarted-all-such-efforts-1.7091149>

⁵² <https://www.npr.org/2019/04/08/710953464/israels-netanyahu-makes-dramatic-campaign-pledge-ahead-of-election?t=1554849269819>

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