

**ПОЛИТИКА**

**Innovations in the Middle East Strategy  
Of the Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel,  
2009-2013**

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**Իսրայելի վարչապետ Բենյամին Նեթանյահույի նորարարությունները  
մերձավորարևելյան ռազմավարությունում**

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**Ամփոփում՝** Հոդվածում քննարկվում է Մերձավորարևելյան տարածաշրջանում Իսրայել պետության քաղաքականության ռազմավարության հիմնական ուղղությունները 2009-2013 թթ. ժամանակաշրջանում: Հետազոտված են Բ. Նեթանյահույի կառավարության ռազմավարության նորարարական մոտեցումները՝ կապված Թել-Ավիվի էներգետիկ քաղաքականության, անօրինական ներգաղթի հիմնախնդրի լուծման ու երկրի կիբերնետիկ անվտանգության ապահովման հետ: Վերլուծված է Բ. Նեթանյահույի դիրքորոշումը պաղեստինա-իսրայելական հակամարտության կարգավորման վերաբերյալ: Կատարված է եզրակացություն Իսրայել պետությունը ուժի միջազգային նոր բևեռի վերածման հեռանկարի մասին:

**Վճռորոշ բաներ՝** մերձավորարևելյան ռազմավարություն, պաղեստինա-իսրայելական կարգավորում, նորարարություններ, Իսրայելի էներգետիկ քաղաքականություն, կիբերնետիկ անվտանգություն

**Инновации в ближневосточной стратегии  
премьер-министра Израиля Биньямина Нетаньяху (2009-2013 гг.)**

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**Резюме:** В статье рассматриваются основные направления стратегии политики Государства Израиль в ближневосточном регионе в период с 2009 по 2013 г. Изучаются инновационные подходы стратегии правительства Б. Нетаньяху, связанные с энергетической политикой Тель-Авива, решением проблемы нелегальной иммиграции и обеспечением кибернетической безопасности страны. Анализируется позиция Б. Нетаньяху в отношении урегулирования палестино-израильского конфликта. Делается вывод о перспективах превращения Государства Израиль в новый международный полюс силы.

**Ключевые слова:** ближневосточная стратегия, израильско-палестинское урегулирование, инновации, энергетическая политика Израиля, кибернетическая безопасность.

Contemporary Middle East has experienced major shifts and dramatic upheavals contributing to the increasing turbulence of international relations. The State of Israel's leadership as well as Israeli

think-tanks tend to react to the changes taking place in the strategic environment. Reaction of the Jewish State has taken place simultaneously in strategy and tactics of foreign policy and preparedness of the

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Israel's Defence Forces. It should be noted that Israel has traditionally interconnected spheres of foreign policy and national security in one conceptual notion which in Hebrew means *huts va-bitahon* (security and international affairs).

In 2009-2013, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel, a politician with many years of decision-making process, building government coalition and anti-terrorism expertise behind, a patron of think-tanks and researchers forums proposed an impressive amount of innovative ideas related to the foreign and security policy strategy.

### Three important national decisions

In 2010, Israeli Cabinet of Ministers adopted three very important decisions which are of strategic nature. They pretended to drive the Israeli society modernization and were addressed, at least two of them, to the Middle East area in general. The first decision proposed to construct a gigantic barrier consisting of a fence and other devices of warning along the Israeli-Egyptian border. The project was designed to prevent crime like hostile terrorist activity, drug smuggling, the smuggling of goods from the South-West, massive illegal infiltrations and human trafficking. One of the purposes of the barrier plan was to prevent increase of the non-Jewish residents and to preserve Jewish character of the state.

The national plan to bring the best brains to Israel became the second decision of 2010 in Israel. The idea was to invite and to assist outstanding Jewish researchers, scientists and technicians from overseas to create high-tech products in Israel. The plan would considerably improve the situation in the Israeli institutions of higher education, increase the number of skilful workers in the economy and help the country to become a center for excellence in the world. As Prime Minister Netanyahu noted,

"We have an opportunity to bring in scientists and technicians due to the relatively good situation of the State of Israel and the less beneficial situation in other places. This is an important core of know-how for growth and advancement in Israel..."<sup>1</sup>

The third decision of the Cabinet approved a new draft law for planning and construction procedures in Israel. This reformist decision was to simplify bureaucratic process that the Israeli contractors usually overcome<sup>2</sup>.

In 2011 the National Internet Defense Taskforce was created by the decision of the Israeli Cabinet. "The main responsibility of the taskforce will be to expand the state's ability to defend vital infrastructure networks against cybernetic terrorist attacks perpetrated by foreign countries and terrorist elements," Prime Minister's Office said in the statement<sup>3</sup>. Doing so, the Taskforce was to cooperate with both state and private companies in order to defend cyber space of the country from the hackers attacks and, that is more important, to help Israel to stand as a cyber-power of the world.

On 9 June of the same year Prime Minister Netanyahu delivered a very important speech at Tel Aviv University devoted to the cyber space world competition. He openly told of the Israel's ambition to become a global cyber power:

"We must become a significant force in the global cyber arena. We must do this not only because it is important for our security – which is the subject of today's discussion – but because it is important for positioning Israel as a leading country in the 21st century. That is why we are making plans, although this field is not a precise one, one might even call it very conceptual. However, we must enter this field in a very clear manner. At first, we must allow for changes, which will happen, but we must become a global cyber power"<sup>4</sup>.

The Government of Israel defined the three main areas in the cyber action. The first is security; the second is industry in the private sector; and the third is academia, specifically science. In the first area the country meets with a problem of detecting a source, time and place of cyber attack on the vital infrastructure. Cyber threat probably remained the most difficult thing to be dealt with. In the industry area Israel will foster private companies to produce effective and adaptive systems of cyber-defense. Addressing academic area the Israeli state assisted to advance the higher education system to the world best standards of knowledge and science. It also supported the most talented researchers from the best universities of the world to come to Israel and to lead the country to a new era of development.

Two years passed and in 2013 when the next Netanyahu-led coalition was in power, the Cabinet

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[www.pmo.gov.il/English/MediaCenter/Spokesman/Pages/spokehistoric140310.aspx](http://www.pmo.gov.il/English/MediaCenter/Spokesman/Pages/spokehistoric140310.aspx) (Date of access: 16.12.2019)

<sup>3</sup> Y. Lappin. Prime Minister announces new cyber defense taskforce// The Jerusalem Post. 05/18/2011.

<sup>4</sup> Divrei rosh ha-memshalah ba-kenes lokhemet cyber ba-universitet tel'-aviv.09.06.2011/ Misrad rosh ha-memshala// URL:

[www.pmo.gov.il/MediaCenter/Speeches/Pages/speechcyber090611.aspx](http://www.pmo.gov.il/MediaCenter/Speeches/Pages/speechcyber090611.aspx) (Date of access: 18.12.2019)

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<sup>1</sup> Cabinet Approves National Plan to "Bring Minds" to Israel. 14.03.2010/ Prime Minister's Office// URL: [www.pmo.gov.il/English/MediaCenter/Spokesman/Pages/spokebrain140310.aspx](http://www.pmo.gov.il/English/MediaCenter/Spokesman/Pages/spokebrain140310.aspx) (Date of access: 17.12.2019)

<sup>2</sup> Cabinet Approves Three Important Decisions for the Future of the State of Israel 14.03.2010/ Prime Minister's Office// URL:

returned to the idea of speedy development in the cyber field. Speaking at the Yuval Ne'eman Workshop for Science, Technology and Security on 9 June 2013<sup>5</sup>, Prime Minister declared of the success his country moved forward in the cyber competition.

According to Netanyahu, cyber is an international problem and national solution cannot do the job. Israel is open to solve the issue internationally. Secondly, Israel is a global power in cyber, Premier said. Israel is among the first five cyber global powers in the world. It is because of some factors which are, among the others, abundant innovation, technological capabilities, entrepreneurship, optimal cooperation of business and state. And, what can be interesting to the Middle Eastern countries and beyond, Israel wants to export its cyber capabilities. There are limitations, limitation on security grounds and property rights, but Israel is being preparing to become a world center of the cyber products export. The ambition of Israel to join world's best Cyber Powers ranks seemed to be obvious.

### **Natural Gas as a Source of Israel's International Power**

Prime Minister and his team of experts also prepared strategic decisions on energy aimed to build a modern economy and to conquer a stable position in the changing Middle East. The first step in this direction was made in 2010 when the cabinet decided to form an inter-ministerial team to work out a long-term plan to reduce Israel's dependence on petroleum<sup>6</sup>. The team headed by National Economic Council Chairman Prof. Eugene Kandel included directors-general of the involved ministries and would cooperate with a committee of the Israeli professors formed especially to this end by the Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities President Prof. Menachem Yaari. The team was asked to consider such incentives to private business and academia which could spur investment in developing alternatives to petroleum. To discover alternatives for petroleum means for Israel to become a country independent of petroleum supplying countries including some countries of the area as well as of oil prices in the world markets.

<sup>5</sup> Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Remarks at Yuval Ne'eman Workshop for Science, Technology and Security. 6.9.2013/ Prime Minister's Office// URL: [www.pmo.gov.il/English/MediaCenter/Speeches/Pages/speechcyber090613.aspx](http://www.pmo.gov.il/English/MediaCenter/Speeches/Pages/speechcyber090613.aspx) (Date of access: 16.12.2019)

<sup>6</sup>Reducing Israeli Dependence on Petroleum-Based Fuels in Transportation/ Prime Minister's Office// URL: [www.pmo.gov.il/English/PrimeMinistersOffice/DivisionsAndAuthorities/OilFree/Documents/GovernmentResolution5327.pdf](http://www.pmo.gov.il/English/PrimeMinistersOffice/DivisionsAndAuthorities/OilFree/Documents/GovernmentResolution5327.pdf) (Date of access: 15.12.2019)

Such independence would give Israel a considerable amount of diplomatic and economic maneuver in the Middle East and elsewhere.

February of 2012 showed another event in changing energy policy of Israel. The committee on advancing the natural gas sector in Israel was appointed by Prime Minister after confirmed reports of major offshore gas discovery in Israel<sup>7</sup>. The decision reflected the policy vision of Netanyahu government to export gas to the Asian countries and to promote beneficial ties with various countries of the area and around the world. No doubt, this policy also went in accordance with the strategy of reducing petroleum dependence. The decision on the gas sector development was followed by visit of Prime Minister Netanyahu to the Cyprus, the first visit of the Israeli Premier to the Greek Cyprus, to hold negotiations on cooperation in the field of natural gas and joint exploitation of resources. After that there were reports of the IDF plans to adapt its naval doctrine and preparedness to protect the Israeli offshore gas platforms in the Mediterranean Sea<sup>8</sup>.

### **The 2009 Bar-Ilan Speech as Starting Point of the Netanyahu's Road to Peace**

The Arab-Israeli conflict has still served as a barrier to a successful development of the Middle East. Israel is not an exclusion of the rule in this sense. That is why every Prime Minister of the Jewish state has proposed his own version of the Israeli approach to the conflict resolution. Netanyahu who experienced 1996-1999 periods of hard negotiations and failures with the Palestinians and with the U.S. Administration of Bill Clinton had very many experts to talk to, various options of the conflict solution to study and interesting thoughts to discuss with his analytical team. As a result, the famous Bar-Ilan speech of 2009 emerged. On 14 June 2009 Prime Minister delivered a foreign policy speech at the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies of Bar-Ilan University, Israel<sup>9</sup>. This

<sup>7</sup> PM Netanyahu Appoints Committee to Advance the Natural Gas Sector in Israel. 19.02.2012/ Prime Minister's Office// URL:

[www.pmo.gov.il/English/MediaCenter/Spokesman/Pages/spokeGas190212.aspx](http://www.pmo.gov.il/English/MediaCenter/Spokesman/Pages/spokeGas190212.aspx) (Date of access: 15.12.2019)

<sup>8</sup> PM Netanyahu to Meet with Cyprus President Christofias in Nicosia. 15.02.2012/ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs// URL: [www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2012/Pages/PM\\_Netanyahu\\_Nicosia\\_15-Feb-2012.aspx](http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2012/Pages/PM_Netanyahu_Nicosia_15-Feb-2012.aspx) (Date of access: 19.12.2019); Navy charged with protecting gas fields from attacks. By Reuters/ The Jerusalem Post. 04/01/2013// URL: [www.jpost.com/Defense/Navy-charged-with-protecting-gas-fields-from-attacks-308331](http://www.jpost.com/Defense/Navy-charged-with-protecting-gas-fields-from-attacks-308331) (Date of access: 15.12.2019); Israel, Cyprus gas finds spur Mediterranean race. By BLOOMBERG// The Jerusalem Post. 04/19/2012.

<sup>9</sup> Neum rosh ha-memshalah ba-merkaz begin-sadat ba-universitet bar-ilan. 14.06.2009/ Misrad rosh ha-memshalah//

presentation became the position of right-center Netanyahu government on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Netanyahu defined three main challenges of international relations Israel met with. The Iranian threat was called the first challenge as, according to Premier, this Islamic Republic tried to acquire atomic bomb while its President Ahmadinejad openly spoke of threats to annihilate the Jewish state. The global economic crisis stood on the second place of challenge and the Israeli government did all the best to stabilize the economy. However, the third challenge, advancement of peace, gained a considerable attention in the region.

Addressing to the Arab states Netanyahu proposed the idea of “economic peace” that meant concluding and accomplishment of beneficial economic agreements. Economy would come first and would be followed by an intensive political dialogue, negotiations and peace accords. Regarding a peace with the Palestinians, Netanyahu rolled out five principles, if not conditions, of future co-existing with the Palestinian Autonomy having to become a Palestinian state.

1. The PA must recognize the State of Israel as the national state of Jewish people. The PLO and other partners usually recognized Israel de facto as a reality of the Middle East. Netanyahu at the Bar-Ilan University demanded the recognition for many years, if not centuries, to come. In 2018, following this initiative Knesset of Israel adopted *Basic Law: Israel - the Nation State of the Jewish People*. The Law that sparked angry protests among the Arab population of the country and in the Middle East determined, in particular: “that the Land of Israel is the historical homeland of the Jewish people; the State of Israel is the nation state of the Jewish People”<sup>10</sup>.

2. Future Palestinian state will be demilitarized. “In order to achieve peace, we must ensure that Palestinians will not be able to import missiles into their territory, to field an army, to close their airspace to us, or to make pacts with the likes of Hezbollah and Iran. On this point as well, there is wide consensus within Israel”, Prime Minister said. No military alliances, no arms smuggling to the Palestinian territories, political neutrality in the area.

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[www.pmo.gov.il/MediaCenter/Speeches/Pages/speechbarilan140609.aspx](http://www.pmo.gov.il/MediaCenter/Speeches/Pages/speechbarilan140609.aspx) (Date of access: 20.12.2019)

<sup>10</sup> Basic Law: The State Budget for the Years 2017 and 2018 (Special Provisions) (Temporary Provision)/ The Knesset/ URL:

<https://main.knesset.gov.il/EN/activity/Pages/BasicLaws.aspx> (Date of access: 08.01.2020)

In other words, Israel proposed a very limited sovereignty to a Palestinian state. And explanation of this condition can be found in that the matter of security has been perceived by the Israelis so critical that all the other issues are of the second priority.

3. Jerusalem remains the united capital of the State of Israel with religious freedom for all faiths. Also, this is a traditional requirement of Israeli governments and diplomacy in negotiations with Palestinian and Arab delegations. We’ve seen how much U.S President Trump helped Israel when he recognized Jerusalem as capital of the State of Israel in 2017.

4. Existing Jewish settlements in the West Bank of Jordan River remain to be. They will not be uprooted. Israel has no plans to build new settlements or to expropriate additional land for existing settlements. Settlers are citizens of Israel, an integral part of Israeli society. That was what Prime Minister Netanyahu said and what was greeted in the Jewish settlements.

5. Problem of the Palestinian refugees must be solved outside Israel’s borders. Netanyahu believed that international investment and goodwill could assist to solve the issue permanently. Note that this principle is connected with the first one. Any massive influx of the Palestinian refugees would change Jewish character of the State of Israel. That is why it was and it is today extremely important for Netanyahu government an unconditional Palestinian recognition of Israel as the national home and state for Jews.

In October, 2013 Prime Minister delivered his second Bar-Ilan speech<sup>11</sup> so that some observers started to speak of Bar-Ilan speech 1 and Bar-Ilan speech 2<sup>12</sup>. The new Bar-Ilan speech was not about strategy. It repeated some principles Premier clarified in 2009 but it also addressed a thaw process in the U.S.-Iranian relations. He insisted to require Iran to refuse of any effort in direction to a nuclear weapons production. After Iran, Netanyahu concentrated on two points. First, he hinted that it were the Palestinians who were responsible for a slow pace of negotiations. They did not recognize

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<sup>11</sup> Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Remarks at the Israel Towards 2020 Conference at the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies. October 6, 2013/ Prime Minister's Office// URL:

[www.pmo.gov.il/English/MediaCenter/Speeches/Pages/speechbegin061013.aspx](http://www.pmo.gov.il/English/MediaCenter/Speeches/Pages/speechbegin061013.aspx) (Date of access: 22.12.2019)

<sup>12</sup> See, for example: L. Harkov. Labor pans Netanyahu speech: PM leaves no hope for peace/ The Jerusalem Post. 10/07/2013/ URL: [www.jpost.com/Diplomacy-and-Politics/Labor-pans-Netanyahu-speech-PM-leaves-no-hope-for-peace-328071](http://www.jpost.com/Diplomacy-and-Politics/Labor-pans-Netanyahu-speech-PM-leaves-no-hope-for-peace-328071) (Date of access: 23.12.2019); Raphael Ahren. PM gets angry with the Palestinians — in tone, not policy/ The Times of Israel. October 7, 2013// URL: [www.timesofisrael.com/pm-gets-angry-with-the-palestinians-in-tone-not-policy](http://www.timesofisrael.com/pm-gets-angry-with-the-palestinians-in-tone-not-policy) (Date of access: 22.12.2019)

Israel as Jewish state. Second, Premier got angry with the Palestinians in the West Bank who did not control security situation: terror attacks against the Israelis were on rise and that could suspend or even stop the Palestinian-Israeli talks on peace started in summer of 2013.

### Conclusion

Nevertheless, the above-mentioned strategic proposals of the Israeli government in 2009-2013 witnessed a profound discussion among the Israeli political elite and think-tanks. The Middle Eastern strategy of Israel acquired its innovative dimension. But experts of the country continued to debate over possible territorial exchanges with Egypt, Jordan and divided rule over the West Bank. A quite new national security concept of Israel which to take tremendous shifts in the strategic landscape of the area into consideration was discussed among the military and the politicians<sup>13</sup>.

The strategic thought of changing Israel can be measured if we consider a trend of international relations for a multi-polarity. In the format of multi-polarity the State of Israel has all things to become an influential center or a pole of power. This center is opened for energy cooperation with Greece, Cyprus, Turkey and the Russian Federation. Israel has pretended to be a global power in cyber and in high-tech production. However, peace in reach of Israel still does not exist. Israel lacked a multi-faceted cooperation and involvement in economic and financial processes of the Middle East. It is for these reasons Prime Minister Netanyahu agreed in 2014-2017 to discuss the “two states” in Palestine

formula and proposed a variety of initiatives to integrate with the Middle Eastern countries. However, an absolutely new period of Israeli diplomacy and regional politics came after Donald Trump was inaugurated as U.S. President in 2017.

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<sup>13</sup>See: D. Dannon. Misplaced Priorities/ The Jerusalem Post. 05/25/2013// URL: [www.jpost.com/Opinion/Op-Ed-Contributors/Misplaced-priorities-314348](http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Op-Ed-Contributors/Misplaced-priorities-314348) (Date of access: 24.12.2019); D. Weinberg. Time for New Strategic Thinking/ The Jerusalem Post// URL: 05/02/2013 [www.jpost.com/Opinion/Op-Ed-Contributors/Time-for-new-strategic-thinking-311898](http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Op-Ed-Contributors/Time-for-new-strategic-thinking-311898) (Date of access: 25.12.2019); H. Keinon. Uzi Arad: It behooves allies to listen to each other/ The Jerusalem Post. 03/14/2013// URL: [www.jpost.com/Features/FrontLines/Article.aspx?id=306511](http://www.jpost.com/Features/FrontLines/Article.aspx?id=306511) (Date of access: 23.12.2019); U. Savir. Savir's Corner: National Security/ The Jerusalem Post. 04/18/2013// URL: [www.jpost.com/Opinion/Columnists/Savirs-Corner-National-security-310302](http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Columnists/Savirs-Corner-National-security-310302) (Date of access: 24.12.2019); Y. Carmeli. Chief of Staff: IDF faces interconnected threats. 22.05.2013/ Israel Defence Forces// URL: [www.idf.il/1283-19022-en/Dover.aspx](http://www.idf.il/1283-19022-en/Dover.aspx) (Date of access: 25.12.2019); Y. Lappin. Gantz: Future war could begin with missile on IDF General Staff headquarters/ The Jerusalem Post. 10/08/13// URL: [www.jpost.com/Defense/Gantz-Future-war-could-begin-with-missile-on-IDF-General-Staff-headquarters-328152](http://www.jpost.com/Defense/Gantz-Future-war-could-begin-with-missile-on-IDF-General-Staff-headquarters-328152) (Date of access: 23.12.2019); A. Klieman. The Sorry State of Israeli Statecraft// The Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs, 2013. 7(2): P. 9-18.