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## Has Netanyahu closed the door on peace?

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<https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/commentaryanalysis/555893-has-netanyahu-closed-the-d...> [1]

## Did Netanyahu close the door on peace?

Was the Israeli PM posturing last Friday or is his outlook as bleak as it seems?

As the latest round of violence and attacks between Israel and Palestinian militants in Gaza was raging, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu seemingly ruled out any real prospect that he would ever

support a two-state solution. As [reported by David Horowitz](#) [2] of the *Times of Israel*, Netanyahu told a press

conference last Friday: "I think the Israeli people understand now what I always say: that there cannot be a situation, under any agreement, in which we relinquish security control of the territory west of the River Jordan."

In effect, this means "no" to any sovereign, viable Palestinian state. It seems to vindicate those who never

believed Netanyahu was sincere in his June 2009 [Bar-Ilan speech](#) [3] and subsequent declarations that he

now supports peace based on a Palestinian state after years of opposing it. Such critics recall that in a

put an end to the Oslo Accords.”

So, is Netanyahu, the consummate political survivor and deal-maker, posturing again? Are his comments from last week, which are so devastating to all Palestinians, Israelis and others committed to a viable Israeli-Palestinian peace, to be read in the light of the passions of the moment, of the conflict that contextualized them?

Or are they, as so many will both fear and with the deepest reluctance finally conclude, a sincere and solid commitment to the Israeli public that, under his watch, Israel will never accept a genuinely independent Palestinian state no matter what Netanyahu has said or hinted in the past?

The deep history of the man himself, his politics, and those of his country at the moment are not encouraging. They all militate towards the second, dark and depressing reading.

But Netanyahu did not offer any vision of the future beyond this statement that Israel would never relinquish security control in the West Bank. Indeed, does he have a vision at all? It seems not, unless it's simply the indefinite continuation of the status quo.

If that is what he has in mind, at least for the remainder of his own political career, then his statement can be understood in an instrumental sense. The conflict with Hamas has given the Islamist group momentum in Palestinian political life, at least in the present instant, despite the devastation being wrought on the long-suffering and innocent people of Gaza. In this light, Netanyahu's comments deal yet another body blow to the Palestinian Authority (PA) and Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and indeed to all those committed to peace based on two states.

As such, the logic of those who argue that Netanyahu's approach is to damage, but not overthrow, Hamas in Gaza; marginalize and emasculate the PA in Ramallah; and bamboozle the United States with false

pledges of interest in peace seems to be greatly vindicated by recent events and statements. Indeed, [Amir](#)

[Oren of Haaretz](#) <sup>[5]</sup> goes as far as to argue that Netanyahu now seeks three states for two peoples: Israel,

and two disempowered Palestinian mini-states; one in Gaza and the other in Area A of the West Bank. That's certainly what is emerging now, and of the three, the PA – which seems to be the only one with a clear commitment to peace – is the most politically weakened, disempowered and vulnerable.

But what does Netanyahu's statement about security control imply? Only one of two things: either Israel will end up incorporating a vast number of new Palestinian citizens, to the point that it is no longer a Jewish state even in theory; or Israel will take the temporary "separate and unequal" arrangement it oversees in the occupied Palestinian territories and make it permanent. The Statute of Rome provides a clear definition of such a permanent arrangement, as opposed, for example, to a temporary occupation. It's called the "crime of apartheid."

So Netanyahu wants security control, which means ruling land, which means no Palestinian state. But neither he nor any other Israeli has been able to propose any formula other than two states that would end the conflict and allow Israel to remain either Jewish or democratic, let alone both. So, his answer is, in the long run, no answer at all.

It's possible that Netanyahu was either pandering to the public at a time of war, or was staking out a strong position that can be negotiated down. Everyone with any hope for a better future must fervently wish this to be the case, and the door should never be closed to that reading. Calculations and positions, after all, change as circumstances do.

But, unfortunately, it's also possible that last Friday Netanyahu really did openly announce that he cannot imagine a real peace agreement, at least for now. While neither he nor anyone else has any viable alternative, peace based on two states remains the only solution to further conflict such as currently on gruesome display in Gaza and beyond.

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