

The Iron Wall Doctrine by Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky and Benjamin Netanyahu's Israeli Regime Stance towards Palestine: A Prolongation of the Zionist Revisionist Ideology

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Abstract

This study discusses the political thoughts of the Revisionist Zionists after the First World War, with a special focus on the Iron Wall Doctrine mooted by its eminent leader, Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky, in 1923. Subsequently, this discourse will examine the extent to which the Iron Wall doctrine and Jabotinsky's political idealism are embodied in the current Israeli government's stance towards Palestine, led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Based on historical methodology analysis, the essay asserts that Netanyahu's government is acting according to the Iron Wall Doctrine constructed by Ze'ev Jabotinsky, particularly in the recent Gaza genocide campaign. The most important historical sources analysed in the study are the writings of Jabotinsky himself - *The Iron Wall* and *The Ethics of the Iron Wall*, published in 1923. In the Iron Wall Doctrine, the revisionist Zionists believe that a Jewish majority state could be achieved and maintained in Palestine through the will of the Zionists and the repression of the indigenous population, in other words, the Palestinians. Currently, the political ideology of the Likud government and Netanyahu can be interpreted as the prolongation of the right-wing *weltanschauung* established by Jabotinsky in the 1920s. The finding of this study concluded that the Iron Wall Doctrine and radical political idealism propagated by Jabotinsky are adhered to and practised by the current Israeli government led by Benjamin Netanyahu in addressing the Palestine uprising.

Keywords: Revisionist, Doctrine, Iron Wall, Israel, Palestine, Zionist.

Introduction

The term 'Zionism' was first used publicly with political connotation by Nathan Birnbaum, founder of the *Kadima* or Zionist Student Association at a discussion meeting in Vienna on the evening of 23 January 1892. According to historian Walter Laqueur, "Birnbaum was a Zionist well before Herzl. Indeed, the movement (Zionist) owes its very name to him."¹ Jess Olson, the prominence Birnbaum's biographer shared the same conclusion that a word Birnbaum coined in 1892, 'Zionism', that came to be the definitive term for Jewish nationalism. According to Olson, the first use of the adjective *zionistische* occurs in the article "um Here und Wohlfart unseres Volk" in the journal *Selbst-Emancipation*, volume 1 which was published on April 1st, 1890; and the noun *Zionismus* appears in "Die Siele der jüdische -nationalen Bestrebung, II" in *Selbst-Emancipation*, volume 4 on May 16, 1890. In dozens of essays written over the course of the 1880s and 1890s, Birnbaum sketched his view of the philosophical foundations of Jewish nationalism, joining his two biggest influences, Peretz Smolenskin and Leon Pinsker.² Despite the term being first conceived politically by Birnbaum, the true Zionist leader and the founder of its well-structured political organisation was Theodor Herzl (1860-1904). As remarked by Nahum Sokolow (1859-1936), a renowned Zionist historian and former President of the World Zionist Organization (1931-1935), "There had been many eminent champions, thinkers and enthusiasts, but no great leader. Theodor Herzl (1860-1904) then came upon the scene — a born leader of men."³ Concisely, the history of the modern political Zionist organisation movement begins with the publication of Theodor Herzl's, the Astro-Hungarian journalist born in Austria in 1860- *Jundestaat* (The Jewish State) four years later and the first Zionist Congress in Basle, Switzerland in 1897.⁴ According to Herzl, in a subtitle of the book, *An Attempt at a Modern Solution to the Jewish Question*, "the Jewish hatred was an ineradicable fact of life." It is neither a social nor a religious question, as argued by Herzl: "antisemitism is a national question, and in order to solve it we must

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¹ Walter Laqueur (2003), *The History of Zionism*, London: I.B Taurist, p. xxv, p. 81.

² Jess Olson (2007), "The Late Zionism of Nathan Birnbaum: The Herzl Controversy Reconsidered," *AJS Review*, Vol. 31, No. 2, p. 243, 247.

³ Nahum Sokolow (1919), *History of Zionism, 1600-1918*, London: Longman, Green & Co., p.263.

⁴ Walter Laqueur, *The History of Zionism*, p. 5; Nahum Sokolow, *History of Zionism*, pp. 263-267.

...transform it into a political world question, to be answered within the councils of civilised people.”⁵ Eventually, the Zionist movement actively organised and engaged in political activities in the early 20th century with the aim to create the Israeli state or *Eretz Israel* for the Jewish people in Palestine.

Undoubtedly, the emergence of the modern political Zionist movement led by Theodor Herzl was a turning point in Zionism’s history. Nonetheless, the modern Zionist idea emerged long before Herzl. To be precise, as remarked by the eminent Jewish historian Arthur Herzberg, the idea emerged between the 1850s and 1860s. It started with the reinterpretation of the basic concept of divine redemption, which became the fundamental idea of Jewish nationalism. The reinterpretation was defined by a group of pious proto-Zionist *rabbis* like Rabbi Yehudah Alkalai (1798-1878) and Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer (1795-1874). The Zionist idea was then prolonged by the secular Zionist intellectuals like Leo Pinsker (1821-1891) in his famous writing ‘Auto-Emancipation’ in 1881, the cultural Zionist Ahad Ha-am (1856-1927), the socialist Moses Hess (1812-1875) who published ‘Rome and Jerusalem’ to defend Jewish nationalism in 1862, and the novelist Perezt Smoloneskin (1842-1885). The Zionist idea that was mooted by these groups of early Zionist pioneers revolved around the aspiration of Jewish diasporas in Europe and Russia to immigrate and establish *Eretz Israel* on Palestine’s soil, which they claim is the Promised Land of God to the Jewish people. The aspiration became smouldering when they encountered unjust treatment and discrimination from European nations and the Russian *pogroms*. Smolenskin, when he wrote his longest autobiographical novel- The Wanderer in Life’s Ways (*Ha-Toeh Be-Dareche Ha Hayim*), symbolises the Zionist idea through the adventures of an orphan who wanders through all contemporary Jewish life, both in Eastern and Western Europe until he dies defending his people in a Russian *pogrom*.⁶

Meanwhile, Pinsker, a passionate scholar who subsequently became one of the leaders of *Hibbat*, a Zion movement in Russia since 1884, and whose intellectual aptitude was acknowledged by historians, issued the first great statement on how the torment of the Jews had driven and asserted his own nationalism. Later, the theme was to recur in Birnbaum and Herzl. As a response to the maltreatment policy against the Jews in Russia, a disheartened Pinsker expressed in his writing that the Jews were being treated like ghosts, beggars or aliens in Europe because they didn’t possess the fatherland. He stressed, “No such equality in rank appears in the intercourse of the nation (Europe) with the Jew.”⁷ As a solution, Pinsker proposed the restoration of a national bond of union and independence through an organised nation for the Jews, which is the fundamental idea of the Zionist doctrine. Pinsker then evoked, “We finally must have a home if not a country of our own.”⁸ Apart from the origin of the Zionist idea’s debate, in the context of the modern Zionist movement, the World Zionist Organization (WZO) founded by Herzl in 1897 was not the first Zionist organisation in Europe. Long before Herzl, there were already groups of Zionist societies across Europe and Russia. Among them were the *Hovevei Zion* or *Hibbat Zion* (Lovers of Zion), founded in 1881-1882. Since its inception, the society had advocated the immigration of European and Russian Jewish diasporas to Palestine for land settlement and agricultural work. Among their early leaders were Moshe Leib Lilienblum (1843-1910), Rabbi Moshe Samuel Mohilever, Yitzhak Ber Levinson, and not to be forgotten, Leo Pinsker himself.⁹ Another earlier movement was the *Bilu* Movement, founded in Kharkiv, then at Odessa in 1882 due to the violent *pogroms* of 1881-1884. Relying upon the belief of ‘return to the promised land of *Eretz Yisrael*’, on 6 July 1882, the first group of *Bilu* pioneers emigrated from Russia and arrived in Ottoman Palestine.¹⁰

The modern Zionist idea did not only revolve in the Jewish community but also among non-Jewish across Europe. In the Christian world, the Zionist idea with the campaign of Jewish restoration in Palestine appeared in the 17th century. It was known as Christian Zionism, which asserted that the emergence of a Jewish state in Palestine was the fulfilment of Biblical prophecy.¹¹ For example, in England, there were

⁵ Howard M. Sachar (2005), *A History of the Jews in the Modern World*, New York: Random House, p.265.

⁶ Arthur Hertzberg (1997), *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader*, New York: Doubleday, p.143.

⁷ Arthur Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea*, p.181.

⁸ Arthur Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea*, p. 193.

⁹ Amir Mashiah (2021), “Redemption, settlement and agriculture in the religious teachings of Hovevei Zion,” *Theological Studies*, Vol. 77, No. 4, pp. 1-2.

¹⁰ Yosef Salmon (1978), “The Ideology and Reality in the Bilu Aliyah,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, Vol. 2, No.4, p.430.

¹¹ Ronald R. Stockton (1987), “Christian Zionism: Prophecy and Public Opinion,” *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 41, No.2, p.1.

renowned figures who constantly called for the restoration of the Jews in Palestine. History shows that the Zionist idea and the continuous renewal of efforts in this direction have been a tradition with the English people for centuries. English Christians taught the undying principles of Jewish nationality. Zionism was thus permanently connected with England. One of the first Englishmen to put forth the view that the Jews should be restored to the land of Israel was a scholar who had taken two degrees from Cambridge, named Francis Kett. In 1585, he published a book entitled *The Glorious and Beautiful Garland of Mans Glorification Containing the Godly Misterie of Heavenly Jerusalem* (one of the shorter titles of the day). While his book primarily dealt with other matters, Kett did have a section in which he mentioned “the notion of Jewish national return to Palestine.”¹² About the same time as Kett, a strict Calvinist, Edmund Bunny (1540–1619) taught the Jewish restoration to Palestine in a couple of books: *The Scepter of Ivdav* (1584) and *The Coronation of David* (1588)¹³ The two great giants of their era were Thomas Brightman (1552–1607) who wrote *Revelation of the Revelation* (1609) and Joseph Mede (1586–1638) who wrote *The Key of the Revelation* (1642). Both writers wrote boldly of a future restoration of Israel in Palestine.¹⁴

In 17th Century England, John Sadler (1615-1674) Town Clerk of London, a friend of the famous English politician, Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658), and probably also of John Milton (1608-1674), the English poet, and John Dury (1596-1680), the Scottish Calvinist Minister, stated that there was an old prophecy which fixed the time of the ‘Restoration’ at the year of 1648. The Puritan and Sectarian Christians in England began to take the greatest interest in Jewish Messianic affairs just before King Charles I (1600- 1649) was executed. Milton expressed as early as 1648 that the whole twelve tribes [of the Jews] would return to Zion. In addition, many English distinguished clergymen promoted the idea of early Zionism among Christians in England. Naming a few of them were The Rev. Thomas Draxe (ob. 1618), Thomas Brightman (1562-1607), a Puritan divine and Bible exegete, The Rev. James Durham (1622-1658) and Thomas Burnet (1635 -1715), the Master of the Charterhouse, a great scholar and celebrated author in English and Latin. Thomas Draxe released in 1608 *The Worldes Resurrection: On the general calling of the Jews, A familiar Commentary upon the eleventh Chapter of Saint Paul to the Romaines, according to the sense of Scripture*. Draxe argued for Israel’s restoration based upon his Calvinism and Covenant.¹⁵ Theologist Thomas Newton (1704-1782) who served as the Bishop of Bristol (1761), a divine figure of great authority, defended the idea of the ‘Restoration of Israel’ in words which no Jewish national enthusiast could excel. The Jews, he believes, will be restored to their native city and country.¹⁶ The support of Zionist ideas also spread among distinguished politicians, thinkers, bureaucrats and armies in England in the 17th Century. Among them were Sir Henry Finch (1558-1625), Roger Williams (1604-1683), John Harrison (fl. 1630), a famous traveller and diplomatist; and Thomas Fuller (1608-1661), the Prebendary of Salisbury.¹⁷ The view held by many Christians, especially in England, was that the Israelitish race, now scattered over the face of the earth, would eventually be brought back to its own land [in Palestine].¹⁸ According to Nahum Sokolow, “As early as the seventeenth-century interest in the restoration of Israel had become deep and general, England providing the earliest stimulus to Zionism.”¹⁹

The support for the Jewish restoration idea in Palestine was not restricted to Christians in England but also in other parts of Europe. For instance, in France, one of the earlier promoters of Zionism was French-Huguenot scholar Isaac de La Peyrère (1594-1676) of Bordeaux. He demanded in his writing the restoration of Israel to the Holy Land in an unconverted state, believing that this restoration would lead to the final triumph of Christianity. He expected France to carry out this idea and appealed in this sense to the Royal Dynasty.²⁰ Other renowned figures in France were the French writer Ernest Laharanne (1840-1897), a famous writer and the private secretary to Napoleon III, Charles Netter (1826-1887), the chief promoter of the *Société de Patronage des Ouvriers Juifs de Paris* since 1858, author M. L. Lévy-Bing and famous

¹² Douglas J. Culver (1995), *Albion and Ariel: British Puritanism and the Birth of Political Zionism*, New York: Peter Lang, p. 73.

¹³ Lawrence J. Epstein (1984), *Zion’s Call: Christian Contributions to the Origins and Development of Israel*, Lanham, MD: University Press of America, p. 7.

¹⁴ Thomas, D. Ice (2009), “Lovers of Zion: A History of Christian Zionism,” *Article Archives*, Vol. 29, pp.5-6.

¹⁵ Douglas J. Culver, *Albion and Ariel*, pp. 75–77.

¹⁶ Nahum Sokolow, *History of Zionism*, p. 56.

¹⁷ Nahum Sokolow, *History of Zionism*, p. 49.

¹⁸ Nahum Sokolow, *History of Zionism* p.52.

¹⁹ Nahum Sokolow, *History of Zionism* p.53.

²⁰ Nahum Sokolow, *History of Zionism* pp. 41-43.

playwriter M. Alexandre Dumas (1824-1895). Interestingly, the Zionist idea also spread across the Atlantic. The second President of the United States, John Adams (1797-1801) in a letter addressed to Major Mordecai Manuel (1785-1851), stated; “*I really wish the Jews again in Judea, an independent nation, for, as I believe, the most enlightened men of it have participated in the amelioration of the philosophy of the age.*”²¹

Going back to English history, in early 19th Century England, the Zionist idea based on the doctrine ‘The Restoration of Israel’ continued to flourish among Christians. One of the famous promoters was Thomas Witherby (1760-1820), who wrote *An Attempt to Remove Prejudices Concerning the Jewish Nation*. He was the first English author who dealt with the imaginary incompatibility of Jewish citizenship with Jewish national claims to Palestine. According to his view, the just demand for equality of rights for the Jews does not conflict with the claim of the Jewish nation to a land of its own, in which he decidedly believed.²² Another renowned figure was Dr. Joseph Priestley (1733-1804) who was an eminent English philosopher, theologian, and chemist. Other distinguished Englishmen who supported the Zionist idea were William Whiston (1667-1752), Bishop Robert Lowth (1710-1787) and Dr. Philip Doddridge (1702- 1751).²³ In fact, they supported the idea of a speedy restoration of the Jews in Palestine. Eventually, in 1827, a distinguished centenarian Sir Moses Montefiore (1784-1885) and his wife paid a visit to Palestine. In their diaries, they noted a Zionist element by wishing for the ‘return to Zion with songs’. Already in 1838, Lord Shaftesbury, a famous Tory politician, prepared a memorandum for the Foreign Secretary, Lord Palmerston, about the hope of facilitating the Jews’ return to Palestine.²⁴ On top of that, the British public was also intensely sympathetic to the idea of Palestine for the Jews in this period known as ‘The Palmerston period’ (1837-1852). For example, in *The Times*, dated 9 March 1840, there was a memorandum from the British people which contained a letter by ‘An English Christian’ appealing to the British people to buy Palestine for the Jews.²⁵ In short, before the emergence of the modern political Zionism idea propagated by Herzl, the essential thought of the Zionist idea had escalated among the Christians in Europe. In fact, as a phenomenon, Christian Zionism is older than modern Jewish Zionism.²⁶

Retrogradely, although the term ‘Zionism’ was not explicitly mentioned by Herzl in his speech during the first Zionist Congress, the idea and his political vision of the Zionist organisation to establish *Eretz Israel* had emerged in his thought much earlier, at least since 1895. Unsurprisingly, as indicated in his famous diary written after the conclusion of the first Zionist Congress, “In Basel I have founded the Jewish state.”²⁷ In this context, historian and Herzl’s colleague-biographer, Jacob de Haas in 1927 asserted, “[Herzl] was not even aware, until after he was engulfed in his task, that others had thought of the same idea.”²⁸ Meanwhile Alex Bein’s *Theodor Herzl: A Biography* cites such pre-Herzlian renowned Zionists as Max Bodenheimer, Nathan Birnbaum, Rabbi Isaac Rülff, Moses Hess and Leon Pinsker and then states: “Herzl did not know a single of these names at the time he first put down his ideas.”²⁹ A similar finding was shared by Israel Cohen in 1959: “never did any movement owe more than did political Zionism to the fact that its founders was totally ignorant of his predecessors.”³⁰ Thirty years later, Ernst Pawel wrote: “In discovering Zionism, Herzl in fact reinvented the wheel...he knew nothing about his precursors.”³¹ In fact, not until the summer of 1895, when Herzl was feverishly conceiving what became ‘The Jewish State’, did he begin to learn about Zionism’s rich. It was in Paris during the first days of June 1895 that Theodor Herzl began his famous *Diaries*, their expressed purpose to enable him to explore the Zionist idea that had so forcefully possessed him in late April/early May - he named the idea “The Solution to the Jewish Question.”

²¹ Nahum Sokolow, *History of Zionism*, p. 59.

²² Nahum Sokolow, *History of Zionism*, p.92.

²³ Nahum Sokolow, *History of Zionism*, p.94.

²⁴ British Foreign Office (1919), “Zionism-A Short History from 720BC-1918,” A Handbooks Prepared the British Foreign Office-No.164, prepared for the Peace Conference, February 1919, *File FO 373/7/36*, The National Archive: London.

²⁵ British Foreign Office, p.15.

²⁶ Peter J. Miano (2016), “Mainstream Christian Zionism,” in Peter J. Miano, et al. (eds.), *Prophetic Voices on Middle East Peace: A Jewish, Christian, and Humanist Primer on Colonialism, Zionism, and Nationalism in the Middle East*, Vol. 1, Claremont CA: Claremont Press, p. 164.

²⁷ Avineri Shlomo (1998), “Herzl’s Road to Zionism,” *The American Jews Yearbook* 98, New York: American Jews Committee, pp. 3-15.

²⁸ Jacob de Haas (1927), *Theodor Herzl: A Biographical Study*, Vol. 1, Chicago: The Leonard Company, p. 63.

²⁹ Alex Bein (1962), *Theodor Herzl: A Biography*, New York: The Jewish Publication Society, pp. 181-182.

³⁰ Israel Cohen (1959), *Theodor Herzl: Founder of Political Zionism*, New York: Thomas Yoseloff, p. 90.

³¹ Ernst Pawel (1989), *The Labyrinth of Exile: A Life of Theodor Herzl*, New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, pp. 214-215.

On the contrary, historians like Phillip Earl Steele and Avineri Shlomo asserted that the idea of Zionism that possessed Herzl did not instantly occur when he was in Paris; it began during his time as a student at the University of Vienna. They re-emphasised that the canonical narrative that Herzl's conversion into Zionism began with the discrimination tragedy of the Jewish military officer in Paris, Alfred Dreyfus, known as the Dreyfus Affair in 1894, is mistaken. Conversely, the perusal of Herzl's diaries, covering hundreds of pages from 1895 to 1904 fails to come up with more than a couple of mentions of Dreyfus's name. In fact, Dreyfus's Jewishness is hardly mentioned by Herzl. Alternately, Shlomo argued that it was the development of politics and culture in Herzl's native Austro-Hungarian ambience, rather than French Affairs, that left an indelible mark on his assessment of European politics and the future of the Jews. Hence, Herzl acknowledged over and over in his diaries and correspondence, "I will fight anti-Semitism in the place it originated – in Germany and Austria."³² Echoing the same view, Philip Steele concluded that Theodor Herzl had been aware of a wide range of Zionist thought and efforts over the 13 years prior to his conversion [into Zionism] in the spring of 1895.³³ Nonetheless, besides the debate among modern historians, the 200 delegates in the first Zionist congress agreed to adopt the term and framework of Zionism which was proclaimed on the final day of the Congress with the aim that Zionism is to create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine secured by public law. The term 'Zionist' adopted in the congress was a collective resolution by the delegates and was greatly influenced by prominent thinkers in the event like Dr. Max Nordau, Professor Hermann Schapira and Professor Max Mandelstamm. Concurrently, based on his leadership quality, Theodor Herzl was then elected President of the Congress and Dr. Max Nordau, Dr. Salz and M. Samuel Pineles, first, second and third Vice-Presidents respectively. The Executive Central Committee elected by the First Congress consisted of: — Vienna: Dr. Theodor Herzl, Dr. Schnirer, Dr. Oser Kokesch, Dr. Miintz, Julius M. Kremenezky. Austria (other than Galicia): Dr. Sigmund Kornfeld. Galicia: Dr. Salz, Dr. Korkis. Bukovina: Dr. Meyer Ebner. France: M. Bernard Lazare. Germany: Rabbi Dr. Isaac J. Riilf, Dr. Bodenheimer. Russia: Rabbi Samuel Mohilewer, Prof. Max Mandelstamm, Dr. Jacob Kohan-Bernstein, Isidor Jasinowski. Roumania: Dr. Karl Lippe, Samuel Pineles. Bulgaria and Servia: Prof. Gregor Belkovsky. Orient: Jacques Bahar.³⁴

Eventually, beginning in 1882, the Zionists embarked on the implementation of the ideology through mass immigration (*Aliyah*) of the Jewish diasporas mainly from Eastern Europe and Russia to Palestine. The first *Aliyah* was the beginning of the five consecutive waves of Jewish immigration to Palestine to establish the state of Israel. The *Aliyah* comprised small groups and individuals including *Hibat Zion* and *Bilu* Movement. The first *Aliyah* took place in 1882, and it ended with the fifth *Aliyah* that took place between 1929 and 1936. Each wave comprised thousands of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe and Russia. For example, in 1903, more than 25,000 immigrants landed in Palestine soil and established 28 agricultural settlements with nearly 90,000 acres of land purchased from the Arab landlords.³⁵ The mass immigration was a result of the continuous discrimination, repressions and series of violent attacks faced by the Jews like the *pogroms* in Eastern Europe and Russia. *Pogroms* were attacks by mobs composed preponderantly of peasants and urban workers who committed pillage as punishment on the Jews for whatever were supposed to be their historic, economic, or recent political misdeeds. Other than in Russia and Eastern Europe, *pogroms* also occurred in many countries across Europe. For example, in Germany, the *pogroms* against the Jews began during the Crusades era in 1096, 1146 and 1309 which witnessed the killings of Jews in towns along the Rhine. Later in the late thirteenth century, the so-called *Rindfleisch pogroms* in Bavaria and Franconia destroyed many Jewish communities. In the same category are the *Guter Werner* attacks (1287) in the mid-Rhine area and the *Armleder pogroms* (1336) in Franconia and Saxony. Many of the pogroms began when the Jews were accused of ritual murder, well poisoning or desecration of the host.³⁶ Back to Russia and Eastern Europe, the first series of *pogroms* occurred in Elizavetgrad, in the Kherson *guberniya* (governorate) on 15 April 1881.

³² Avineri Shlomo, *Herzl's Road to Zionism*, p. 10.

³³ Philip E. Steele (2023), *On Theodor Herzl's Encounters with Zionist Thought and Efforts Prior to His Conversion in The Spring of 1895*, Berlin: Centre for Historical Research, Polish Academy of Sciences, p. 61.

³⁴ Nahum Sokolow, *History of Zionism*, p. 268-270.

³⁵ Kenneth Stein (2019), *Forming A Nucleus for the Jews State, 1882-1947*. Atlanta: Centre for Israel Education, pp. 6-16.

³⁶ Nico Voigtländer and Hans- Joachim Voth (2012), "Persecution perpetuated: The Medieval Origins of Anti-Semitic Violence in Nazi Germany," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 127, No.3, p. 1346.

By the end of the year, at least 200 Jewish communities in southern and southwestern Russia had suffered some form of violent attack. One striking feature of the scene was the incidence of *pogroms* in the year 1881-1884 being confined to the seven provinces of southern Russia and Ukraine. In December 1881, there were attacks in Warsaw, Bessarabia, Belorussia and Lithuania, all heavily populated by Jews. The great wave of *pogroms* in Russia was not, after all, entirely without precedent. There had been a serious *pogrom* in Odessa ten years earlier, one in Bessarabia in 1865 that afterwards spread to Bohemia and Moravia in 1899.³⁷ Following this, the number of Jewish immigrants increased tremendously after the First World War when Palestine was administrated by the British government through the mandate system adopted by the League of Nations in July 1922. Ahead of the British complete withdrawal in August 1948, with the adoption of the 1947's UN resolution for the Palestine Partition, David Ben Gurion, the Zionist leader in Palestine at the time unilaterally proclaimed the establishment of the State of Israel in May 1948. Since then, Israel's politics has been dominated by the Labor movement represented by the Mapai Party. Under Ben Gurion's leadership, who became the first Prime Minister of Israel, Israeli politics remained unchanged until the Left Zionists led by Labor lost dramatically to the Right Zionists of the Likud Party in the Israel general election of 1977.³⁸

On 18 May 1977, after the initial results of the elections for the Ninth *Knesset* had become known, Menachem Begin, the Prime Minister-designate indicated the results of the election were a turning point in the history of the Zionist movement based on the proposed resolution by Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky in the 17th Zionist Congress of 1931. The election result was a historic victory of the Zionist 'right-wing', the Likud Party over the long-enduring hegemony of the left, i.e. the Labor Party or the Mapai Party. Like Jabotinsky, Begin was a territorial maximalist with a long record of opposition to the partition of Palestine. Retrospectively, since the beginning of the Zionist movement, the left-wing or the Socialist Zionist or Labor Zionist dominated the Jewish politics either in Palestine or in the diaspora communities. Socialist Zionism had the greatest influence in the Jewish world because it united the most powerful systems of the first half of the 20th century. The emergence of socialist Zionism should be related to the second wave of emigration to Palestine, the so-called 'Second Alia (1904-1914)'.³⁹

Nonetheless, the dominance of the left was challenged by the right-wing Zionist movement which emerged in Zionists' politics in the 1920s under the leadership of their founding father, Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky. Revisionist Zionism, as envisioned by its founder Jabotinsky, held an alternative view of how Zionism was to create a 'home' in Palestine, different from those championed by its internationally recognised leaders. In short, the difference between the Labor Zionists and the Revisionists lies in how they aim to obtain their objectives and their vision for what the Jewish state was to become. The Labor was interested in collectivism and a form of Marxist socialism, and the Jewish state was to be built through labour and social policies. In contrast, Jabotinsky and the Revisionists saw the new state as being built on the sword and through 'bourgeois urban development' with an understanding that Zionism could never survive as a minority in Palestine.⁴⁰

It is important to reemphasise that the aim of the discourse in this study is neither to describe the split of Jewish political fractions nor to re-narrate the history of the Zionist movement. Instead, the objective of the article is to meticulously analyse Jabotinsky's political ideology as expounded in the Iron Wall Doctrine, subsequently assessing its similarity with Benjamin Netanyahu's political creeds and his government's stance towards Palestine. In addressing the Israel-Palestine conflict like the recent Gaza massacre, a study of Jabotinsky's doctrine demonstrated in Netanyahu's government's stance is fundamentally pivotal, and foreseeably contributed to a better understanding and a broadened knowledge of the present Palestine-Israel conflict. The motivation for this research is aptly captured in the following quote from Sun Tzu (544-496 B.C), the legendary Chinese military strategist, "If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles."⁴¹

³⁷ David Vital (2001), *A People Apart: A Political History of the Jews in Europe 1789-1939*, London: Oxford University Press, pp. 283-286.

³⁸ Colin Shindler (2008), *A History of Modern Israel*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 145-146.

³⁹ Leslie Stein (2009), *The Making of Modern Israel*, Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 5.

⁴⁰ Joseph Heller (1995), *The Stern Gang: Ideology, Politics and Terror 1940-1949*, London: Frank Cass, pp. 1-3.

⁴¹ Sun Tzu. (2005), *The Art of War*, Trans.by Thomas Cleary. New York: Harper Press, p.36.

Jabotinsky, The Zionist Right and the Revisionist Party: An Origins and Ideology Overview

Born as Vladimir Jabotinsky on 17 October 1880 in Odessa, Russia, Jabotinsky later like many Zionists changed his name from his Russian birth name to a Hebrew name, Ze'ev. He went abroad in his last year of high school as a foreign correspondent. After studying for three years at the University of Rome, he joined the staff of another Odessa daily, and in 1901 was recalled to join its editorial staff. Jabotinsky joined the Zionist movement in the winter of 1902, just before the Kishinev *Pogrom*, in response to threats of violence in Odessa.⁴² In 1903, he helped organise a Jewish Defence Corps in Odessa and subsequently became a Zionist propagandist.⁴³ Jabotinsky was immersed in the Zionist idea and began to make a name for himself early in the twentieth century. In 1904, Jabotinsky decided to leave his home in Odessa for St. Petersburg, where he had been invited to join the editorial board of the new newspaper *Evreiskaia Zhizn'* [*Jewish Life*], the first Zionist newspaper published in the Russian language. In St. Petersburg, Jabotinsky grew close to the intellectuals who contributed to *Jewish Life*. He became active in Russian politics and fought for the rights of Jews as a minority in Russia.⁴⁴ Between 1905 and 1906, he was a representative on behalf of Zionism in the League for the Attainment of Full Rights among the Jews of Russia (*Soiuz dlia dostizheniia polnopraviiia evreiskogo naroda v Rossii*).⁴⁵ He was also elected to the Sixth Zionist Congress held that same year in 1903, which was also the final appearance of Theodor Herzl. Jabotinsky eventually demanded a Jewish Legion in the British Army to fight in Palestine and led that unit himself in 1917. Yet, after the war, Jabotinsky became sceptical of British support for Jewish interests, and during the Arab riots of 1920, he organised a military corps in Jerusalem.⁴⁶ Jabotinsky died in August 1940 but his aspiration in the Iron Wall Doctrine, and a vision of building a strong Jewish army to protect the Zionist ambition and the creation of the Israeli State remains imperishable. His devotees like Menachem Begin who led the *Irgun Zeva'I Le'umi* (IZL), Avraham Tehomi who replaced Jabotinsky as the commander of the *Irgun* and Avraham Stern who formed the *Stern Gang* continued assuming Jabotinsky's strategy to occupy Palestine's soil by military force, although they employed different approaches, such as through underground terrorism activities. Despite these paramilitary underground groups being labelled as terrorists, they still adored the fundamental ideology of Jabotinsky.

Concurrently, in Jewish tradition, the term 'right' has a positive meaning of power and salvation. According to the eminent Israeli historian Yaacov Shavit, 'Right' is not only an operative ideology aimed at declared goals or a political system but a political tradition and *weltanschauung*, which together create a solid framework of political and cultural tradition.⁴⁷ It was the Zionist Right who struggled for Jewish national self-expression through the establishment of a Jewish state in *Eretz Yisrael*. The Right was the Zionist party that undertook the large-scale immigration (*Aliyah*) of Jews rather than a selective *Aliyah* based on social or ideological considerations. Geographically, the intellectual cradle of the Zionist Right stood in pre-revolutionary Russia of 1917; its broad demographic base was located in Poland and the Baltic States after these states regained independence. From the chronological point of view, the history of the Zionist-Israeli Right is divided into two main periods: the first period, 1925-1948, covers the history of the Revisionist movement headed by Vladimir Jabotinsky, and the development of the two underground organisations in Israel- the *Irgun Zeva'I Le'umi* (IZL) and *Lohamei Herut Israel* (Lehi). The second period (1948 onwards) covers the history of the Right in the State of Israel, mainly that of the Herut Party founded by Menachem Begin in 1948, and its development from an isolated opposition (until 1965) into a central and subsequently a ruling party after the general election of 1977. In Israel, Labor and Herut have long presented themselves and have been perceived as being dramatically different. The Labor Party has donned the mantle of socialism; Herut and its forebears in the Revisionist Movement have worn the garb of the right wing. From the 1930s, Labor controlled the political organisation of the Jewish *Yishuv* (settlement) in Mandate Palestine and then dominated the Israeli State until 1977.

⁴² Brian Horowitz (2021), "A Leap Over History: Vladimir Jabotinsky's Political Paradigms, 1916-1940," *Israel Studies Review*, Vol. 36, No. 1, p.111.

⁴³ Dan Cohn-Sherbok (2012), *Introduction to Zionism and Israel*. London: Continuum Group, p.14

⁴⁴ Vladimir Jabotinsky (2016), *Story of My Life*. Edited by Brian Horowitz and Leonid Katsis (eds.), Detroit: Wayne State University Press, p. 73.

⁴⁵ Brian Horowitz (2017), "Vladimir Jabotinsky: A Zionist Activist on the Rise, 1905-1906," *Studia Judaica*, Vol.1, No. 39, p. 110.

⁴⁶ Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Introduction to Zionism*, p. 14.

⁴⁷ Yaacov Shavit (1988), *Jabotinsky and the Revisionist Movement, 1925-1948*, London: Frank Cass, p.7.

In direct contrast, during the long years of Labor dominance, the Revisionists and *Herutniks* were political amateurs tied by an ideological commitment to their nationalist principles and loyalty to their leaders- first Vladimir Jabotinsky and then Menachem Begin. During the first two decades of Israeli statehood, the revisionist Party, Herut, remained in opposition. In an effort to change this situation and gain political power, Herut slowly began to revise its ideology. While Begin maintained the Revisionist claim to Jewish sovereignty over all of *Eretz Yisrael*, from the late 1950s onward, control over the East Bank of the Jordan ceased to be an operative element within Revisionist ideology.⁴⁸ In 1961, Herut failed to gain a single additional mandate despite a major rift within the Labor or Mapai Party. The Herut leader, Menachem Begin invited the Liberal Party (*Miflaga Libralit Yisraelit*) to join forces and set up a powerful opposition as Gahal Bloc. Meanwhile, Mapai formed an alliance with Ahdut Ha'avoda Party as a new bloc called the Alignment Bloc (*HaMa'arakh*). In 1973, the Rafi Party group, a splinter of the Mapai Party and Labor Movement for Unified Israel, crossed from the Alignment Bloc lines and joined the Gahal Bloc. The newcomers retained their party structures, and the enlarged Gahal is now renamed the Likud Party⁴⁹. Subsequently, under Begin's leadership, the Gahal Bloc won the Israeli general election in 1977 and formed the first revisionist government.

Historically, the Revisionist movement first appeared during the middle of the 1920s out of a meeting between a well-known Zionist leader, Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky and two Zionist activist circles, the veteran Zionist journalists who published *Razsvet*, a Zionist journal written in Russian, and a group of Jewish student activists of the National Student Union in the Latvian capital, Riga. Subsequently, in 1925, Jabotinsky and a group of veteran Zionist leaders called itself *Berit Ha-Zohar* (the Union of Zionist Revisionists) founded the right-wing political party known as the Revisionist Party in Paris. Revisionist Zionism is the founding ideology of the non-religious right in Israel, represented primarily by the Likud Party today, led by Benjamin Netanyahu. Originally developed by Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky in the first half of the twentieth century, Revisionism was the chief ideological competitor to the dominant Labor Zionism. The party then delegated representatives to the Zionist Congress. Side by side with the party as such, the years 1924-1927 saw the establishment of the *Betar* (the acronym of *Berit Trumpeldor*), the youth organisation. In line with mainstream Zionism, a principal value of Revisionism was the establishment of a Jewish state in the Jews' historical homeland. Revisionism was primarily distinguished from other varieties of Zionism by its territorial maximalism, insisting upon the Jewish right to sovereignty over the whole territory of *Eretz Yisrael* (encompassing mandatory Palestine and Transjordan).⁵⁰

The goals declared by the revisionist ideology included the application of constant pressure on Britain, including petitions and mass demonstrations for a Jewish state on both sides of Jordan; immigration control to return exclusively to the Jewish politicians and not the British authorities; the reestablishment of Jewish regiments and introducing the military training for young people. Precisely, this high tendency to militarisation and ultranationalist ideology placed Revisionist Zionism in the right political trends. The background history of the right-wing Zionists or the Revisionists, which originated from Eastern Europe and Poland, influenced the radicalism of the movement, even labelled as a terrorist movement during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. The violent discrimination of anti-Semitic policy, especially through the *pogroms* in Eastern Europe in the late 19th Century such as the Easter *pogrom* of 1903 in Kishinev, Russia, strongly affected the political ideology of Jabotinsky and the Revisionist Zionists. Throughout 1919-1920, not a single Jewish city, town, or neighbourhood escaped *pogroms* and mass pillage.⁵¹ Compared to Labor Zionist leaders, Jabotinsky and the Right had more experiences with violence and discrimination in Eastern Europe. For instance, David Ben Gurion, the prominent leader of Labor Zionist who emigrated to Palestine in 1906 and later became the first Prime Minister of Israel, admitted in his memoirs that "antisemitic feeling had little to do with [his] dedication [to Zionism]" and he "personally never suffered antisemitic persecution."⁵²

⁴⁸ Alan Zuckerman, et al. (1992), "The Political Bases of Activism in the Israeli Labour and Herut Parties," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 107, No. 2, pp. 303-23.

⁴⁹ Jonathan Mendilow (1983), "Party Clustering in Multiparty Systems: The Example of Israel 1965-1981," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 27, No. 1, pp. 68-74.

⁵⁰ Jonathan Rynhold and Dov Waxman (2008), "Ideological Change and Israel's Disengagement from Gaza," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 123, No. 1, p. 14.

⁵¹ Howard Sachar, *A History of the Jews*, p. 320.

⁵² David Ben-Gurion (1970), *Memoirs*, Cleveland: World Publishing Company, p.36.

Jabotinsky's political thought and The Iron Wall Doctrine

From 1925 to 1940, both the Zionist Labor movement and the Revisionists were convinced of the necessity for a continuation of the British Mandate over Palestine, and both assumed that the creation of a Jewish majority in Palestine would be a result of a gradual process, rather than of a single dramatic or miraculous event. The basic differences between the policies of Labor and Revisionists lay first and foremost in their judgement of the priorities and their evaluation of the desirable and possible. The Revisionists regarded the 'National Home' as a framework and instrument for the realisation of a Jewish demographic majority in Palestine. In terms of the location, the Revisionist group insisted that the Israel state should be established on both sides of Jordan as a single geo-historical entity and therefore it regarded Transjordan as an integral part of the Jewish homeland. In the summer of 1921, Jabotinsky for the first time used the expression 'the Iron Wall' which subsequently formed the central motive of his attitude towards the Arab question. In 1923, Jabotinsky wrote his Revisionist Zionist manifesto, 'The Iron Wall' and this was the founding document of what became the 'Iron Wall Doctrine'. The concept of the Iron Wall is a perpetual state of war. According to Jabotinsky during a discussion in the Zionist Executive on 12 July 1921, the Arabs were unable to accept the idea that over time, the Jews might constitute a majority in Palestine, and it is unrealistic to expect that they would take such a situation lying down. As a result, he argued that the Arabs would not approve of Zionism, nor can Zionism expect to buy their approval. This led Jabotinsky to the unequivocal conclusion that the Zionist effort could only be brought to fruition behind an 'Iron Wall' to be built by the Zionists in cooperation with Britain. By 'Iron Wall' Jabotinsky meant the imposition – either by a show of force or, if necessary, by actual physical force. For Jabotinsky, the realisation of the national goal of Zionism could not be made dependent upon Arab consent.⁵³ He envisaged two stages: stage one was to build the Iron Wall that would compel the Arabs to abandon any hope of destroying the Jewish state. The resulting shift towards moderation and realism on the Arab side was to be followed by stage two: negotiations with the Palestinian Arabs about their status and national rights in Palestine.⁵⁴

Nevertheless, Jabotinsky admitted that the Zionist policy of establishing the state in Palestine is a part of modern colonialism. Furthermore, Jabotinsky stressed that "we cannot offer any adequate compensation to the Palestinian Arabs in return for Palestine. And therefore, there is no likelihood of any voluntary agreement being reached" and "Zionist colonisation must either stop or else proceed regardless of the native population. This means that it can proceed and develop only under the protection of a power that is independent of the native population – behind an iron wall, which the native population cannot breach."⁵⁵ Based on the Iron Wall doctrine, Jabotinsky refused the suggestion of establishing any discussion or peace talk with the Palestinians. He further criticised those who propose any attempt at peace talk with the Palestinians which he described as an 'empty rhetoric'.⁵⁶ In addition, as believed by Jabotinsky, the only way to achieve peace and establish a Jewish state in the land of Palestine, he argued, would be for Jews to first create a strong Jewish state, which would eventually lead the Arabs to "drop their extremist leaders whose slogan is 'never' and hand over leadership to moderate groups who will come to us with the proposal that we both agree to mutual concessions." A character of 'a strong Jewish State' is when the Jews form a majority in the country. Time and again, Jabotinsky and his movement stressed that "peace will prevail in Israel only when the Jews constitute the majority, and when the Arabs are convinced that this solution is 'necessary and inescapable'. Until such a time, Zionism must act by totally abandoning any attempts to come to an agreement in the present."⁵⁷

Looking back at the Palestinian riot towards the Zionist invasion in 1929, Jabotinsky admitted Palestine nationalism was a genuine nationalism. In his writing of 'The Iron Wall' and 'The Ethics of the Iron Wall' in 1923, Jabotinsky stated unequivocally that the Arabs of Palestine were a distinct nationality and that they possessed an inborn national feeling and consciousness and were not merely an inseparable part of another

⁵³ Yaacov Shavit, *Jabotinsky*, p. 254.

⁵⁴ Avi Shlaim (2012), "The Iron Wall Revisited," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 2, p. 83.

⁵⁵ Vladimir Jabotinsky (1923), "The Iron Wall", Text original in Russian, *Razsviet*, 4.11.1923. In <https://en.jabotinsky.org/media/9747/the-iron-wall.pdf> Retrieved 5 May 2024.

⁵⁶ Vladimir Jabotinsky (1923), "The Iron Wall", Text original in Russian, *Razsviet*, 4.11.1923. In <https://en.jabotinsky.org/media/9747/the-iron-wall.pdf> Retrieved 5 May 2024.

⁵⁷ Yaacov Shavit, *Jabotinsky*, p. 268.

national entity. Neither do they lack a national identity or a consciousness of historical continuity, unity or destiny. Their national consciousness was not that of some local rabble; it was local patriotism based on a local feeling (nativism). It might be primitive, but it was nevertheless strong and full of authentic emotions.⁵⁸ This patriotism was gathering all its strength to prevent Palestine from being turned into *Eretz Israel*. It was precisely the existence of an Arab nationality in Palestine that made the 'Iron Wall' policy and morality necessary. Hence, Jabotinsky, in 1923, wrote, "For the Arabs of Palestine, it would still be not some far away district, but their homeland, the centre and the backbone of their independent national existence."⁵⁹ Although Jabotinsky admitted the genuineness of Palestinians' nationalism, he justified the need to colonise the native soil. For him, the colonisation of Palestinian land by the Zionists is morally justified. In 'The Ethics of the Iron Wall', Jabotinsky wrote, "The soil does not belong to those who possess land in excess but to those who do not possess any."⁶⁰ Jabotinsky's ideas of the Iron Wall triggered criticism within the Zionist circle, especially from the Labor Zionists as an immoral approach. Thus, he refuted the critics by indicating that from the Zionist moral perspective, the colonisation of Palestinian soil and the erection of the Zionist state is morally right based on the principle of Jewish self-determination.⁶¹

Another point of view by Jabotinsky was about increasing the Jewish illegal settlements through territorial expansion and colonisation process in Palestine. Writing in the *New Evening Post* (later republished in Canadian Jewish Chronicle under the title *-The Justice of the Jewish Claim*), Jabotinsky refuted the Zionist critics like British prominent politician- Lord Northcliffe (1865-1922) that Palestine could not support an increase in its 700,000 population of Jewish settlements from Europe. Jabotinsky argued that 85 per cent of Palestine's soil could be cultivated and that Belgium, a country the same size as Palestine, supported a considerably larger population of 7 million.⁶² Later in his book published in 1942, *The War and The Jews*, he went on to explain that the population density of France, Germany, and other European countries could fit millions, while in 1940 there were only approximately 1.5 million in Palestine, which included Jews, Arabs, Transjordanians. He felt there to be "margin enough left for Palestine to absorb the better part of East-Central Europe's (Jewish) ghetto."⁶³ For Jabotinsky, his focus was the mass immigration of Eastern European Jewry, especially after the Ukraine pogrom in 1908-1920 into the land of Palestine.⁶⁴ Defending such settlements, Jabotinsky wrote that colonisation was just as 'sacred' as self-determination and that the two concepts did not contradict each other.⁶⁵

In addition to occupying Palestine's soil, Jabotinsky imagination of 'Greater Israel' was the Israel state shall be comprised of not just the Palestinian soil like in Gaza and the West Bank but also the eastern part of the Jordan River which is where the Jordan kingdom is located now. This is one of the main differences between Jabotinsky and his competitors from the Labor Party. Concerning territory claims, Zionist Labor leaders like David Ben-Gurion wanted a Jewish state on one bank of the Jordan River but Jabotinsky wanted it on both banks, within the original borders of the Palestine Mandate. Yet, both knew that the desired goal could be achieved only by force.⁶⁶ In the article entitled 'A Precondition to the Ten-Year Plan' which appeared in April 1938 in the Yiddish newspaper *Unser Welt*, Jabotinsky wrote in very specific terms, "The Jews problem can only be solved if Transjordan is included in the Jewish State."⁶⁷

⁵⁸ Vladimir Jabotinsky (1923), "The Ethics of the Iron Wall," Text original in Russian, *Razsviet*, 11.11.1923. In <https://david-collier.com/ethics-iron-wall-zeev-jabotinsky/> Retrieved 10 May 2024.

⁵⁹ Vladimir Jabotinsky (1923), "The Ethics of the Iron Wall," Text original in Russian, *Razsviet*, 11.11.1923. In <https://david-collier.com/ethics-iron-wall-zeev-jabotinsky/> Retrieved 10 May 2024.

⁶⁰ Vladimir Jabotinsky (1923), "The Ethics of the Iron Wall," Text original in Russian, *Razsviet*, 11.11.1923. In <https://david-collier.com/ethics-iron-wall-zeev-jabotinsky/> Retrieved 10 May 2024.

⁶¹ Vladimir Jabotinsky (1923), "The Ethics of the Iron Wall," Text original in Russian, *Razsviet*, 11.11.1923. In <https://david-collier.com/ethics-iron-wall-zeev-jabotinsky/> Retrieved 10 May 2024.

⁶² Vladimir Jabotinsky (1923), "The Iron Wall", Text original in Russian, *Razsviet*, 4.11.1923. In <https://en.jabotinsky.org/media/9747/the-iron-wall.pdf> Retrieved 5 May 2024.

⁶³ Vladimir Jabotinsky (1942), *The War and the Jews*. New York: The Dial Press p.211.

⁶⁴ Joseph Schechtman (1955), "The Jabotinsky-Slavinsky Agreement: A Chapter in Ukrainian-Jewish Relations," *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 17, pp.294-296.

⁶⁵ Louis Gordon (1997), "The Unknown Essays of Vladimir Jabotinsky," *Jewish Political Studies Review*, Vol. 9, No. 1-2, p. 98.

⁶⁶ Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, p.84.

⁶⁷ Yaacov Shavit, *Jabotinsky*, p.198.

On top of that, in the Iron Wall Doctrine, Jabotinsky stressed the use of military means and forces to achieve the Zionist dream of establishing the Israeli state in Palestine. He concluded that the Jews would need to erect 'The Iron Wall' – his metaphor for iron-clad defence. Hostile Arab populations would need to learn, he posited, that this wall was impenetrable. Indeed, he argued that peace would only be possible if the surrounding Arabs saw the utter futility of violence or war. A prominent Middle East historian, Rashid Khalidi concluded in his study that Jabotinsky eschewed such circumlocution and diplomatic double-talk and argued explicitly and publicly from the beginning that “overwhelming force would be necessary to impose the Zionist program, of making Palestine a Jewish state in the face of what he expected would be fierce and understandable Arab opposition.”⁶⁸ Sharing the same analysis, renowned Jewish historian, Avi Shlaim, concluded that the crux of Jabotinsky’s strategy, then, was to deal with the Arabs from a position of ‘unassailable military strength’.⁶⁹ Jabotinsky stated openly that there was no alternative to military power and pressed for an immediate declaration of statehood. Nonetheless, the strategy of building the Jewish army would not be successful without the role played by the British government to facilitate the construction of the Jewish army. Subsequently, on the eve of the 1948 War, the Jewish fighting force stood at around 50,000 well-trained troops against a 7,000 poorly equipped army of Palestinians. On the margins of the main Jewish military power (together with a special commando Unit – The *Palmach* founded in 1941), there were three more extreme groups, inspired by Jabotinsky’s doctrine- the *Irgun* (*Etsel* in Hebrew), the Stern Gang (*Lehi*) and the *Haganah*.⁷⁰ The military operation of the Jewish troops began with terrorising and occupying the Palestinian villages in the rural areas, like Deir Ayyub, Beit Affa, Khisas, Nai’ma and Jahula at Galilee in December 1947, before the Zionist army moved their operations to the city. For instance, from the morning after the UN Partition Resolution of 1947 was adopted, 75,000 Palestinians in the Haifa city were subjected to a campaign of terror jointly instigated by the *Irgun* and the *Haganah*.⁷¹ Concerning occupying Palestine’s soil by force, Jabotinsky explained that taking land from the natives was enacting justice on the order of humanitarian considerations. He traced “the root of the evil to [the fact] that we are seeking to colonise a country against the wishes of its population, in other words, by force.” Once again, Jabotinsky in no way hid from the fact that the Zionist mission was a forceful colonisation of a native-populated land. Choosing another land to inhabit was out of the question. Jabotinsky’s principle rested on the fact that all places were inhabited.⁷²

Benjamin Netanyahu and the Prolongation of the Iron Wall Doctrine

Based on a study by Meyer, every Likud prime minister in Israel has been an avowed promoter of the policies of Vladimir Jabotinsky. For instance, the difference in policies between Menachem Begin and his successor from 1983 to 1992, Yitzhak Shamir was not great. Both were disciples of Jabotinsky; both were dedicated to the Greater Israel project, and both were suspicious of outside powers. In some ways, Shamir was the more intransigent. He had abstained in the *Knesset* vote on the peace treaty with Egypt in 1979. Yitzhak Shamir, who became leader of the Likud after Begin and served as Prime Minister from 1983 to 1984 and 1986 to 1992, adopted an approach similar to Begin. Like Begin, Shamir was prepared to compromise on the other areas captured in 1967 that were not considered part of *Eretz Yisrael*. He was, therefore, willing to compromise with Syria on the Golan Heights in order to circumvent pressure for territorial compromise in the West Bank. When Ariel Sharon won the election in 2021 and replaced Shamir as the Likud’s leader, he was also not much different from his Likud predecessors. Ariel Sharon’s victory marked a full-blown return to stage one of the Iron Wall strategy at its starkest: deployment of overwhelming military force to crush Arab resistance beyond all hope. Underlying Sharon’s “war on terror” was the Likud’s Greater Israel program as illustrated in Jabotinsky’s vision.

Like Begin, Shamir and Sharon, Benjamin Netanyahu, who was first appointed as the Prime Minister in 1996, was a self-proclaimed disciple of Jabotinsky, but his version of the Iron Wall did not see Jewish military power as a means to an end, but sometimes as a means to achieving security and sometimes as an

⁶⁸ Rashid Khalidi (2009), *The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood*, Oxford: One World Publication, p. 187.

⁶⁹ Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, p. 83.

⁷⁰ Ilan Pappé. (2006), *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, Oxford: One World Publications, pp. 44-45.

⁷¹ Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing*, p. 58.

⁷² Vladimir Jabotinsky (1923), “The Iron Wall”, Text original in Russian, *Razsviet*, 4.11.1923. In <https://en.jabotinsky.org/media/9747/the-iron-wall.pdf> Retrieved 5 May 2024.

end in itself. Netanyahu had denounced the Oslo Accords as incompatible with the Jewish people's historic rights and a mortal danger to Israel's security⁷³. Some of Likud's leaders were personal protégés and other extremist leaders within his movement. The Likud prime ministers are considered an elite grouping. Overall, the Likud policies, for example, when Israel was ruled under the premiership of [Menachem] Begin and [Yitzhak] Shamir, were consistently guided by an ideological commitment to *Eretz Yisrael* as mooted by Jabotinsky. Not to be excluded are Ariel Sharon and, at present, Benjamin Netanyahu.⁷⁴ They are often referred to as Jabotinsky's princes, and to this day, Jabotinsky is omnipresent within the Jewish right wing.⁷⁵ The current Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has been elected Prime Minister of Israel four times since 1996. Yet, he is no exception as he, too, is Jabotinsky's devotee. As a matter of fact, since 2005, under the premiership of Netanyahu, Israel has commemorated a Memorial Day to honour Jabotinsky (Tammuz 29, the day of his death on 4 August 1940, according to the Hebrew calendar). At the 2017 celebration, Netanyahu said: "I have Jabotinsky's works on my shelf, and I read them often." He also highlighted that he keeps the Zionist leader's sword in his office. As reported by Bernát Veszprémy in 2023, the Israeli Prime Minister reminded that the essence of Jabotinsky's philosophy was national self-defence and the strengthening of Jewish culture.⁷⁶ Hence, by analysing Netanyahu's thoughts and attitude, we could see the similarity of political credo with Ze'ev Jabotinsky. Presumably, his progenitors may have influenced the attitude of Benjamin Netanyahu today. His father, Benzion Netanyahu, was Ze'ev Jabotinsky's disciple, follower, and personal secretary. According to Gil Samsonov from The Begin-Sadat Centre for Strategic Studies, Bar-Ilan University, Benjamin Netanyahu is the ideological son of Benzion Netanyahu and the ideological grandson of Jabotinsky.⁷⁷ On many occasions, Netanyahu expressed his admiration towards Jabotinsky and the Iron Wall Doctrine openly. For example, during the state memorial ceremony for Ze'ev Jabotinsky at Mt. Herzl in Jerusalem on 18 July 2023, Benjamin Netanyahu demonstrated his adoration by stating:

One hundred years after the 'Iron Wall' was stamped in Jabotinsky's writings we are continuing to successfully implement these principles. I say 'continuing' because the need to stand as a powerful iron wall against our enemies has been adopted by every Government of Israel, from the right and the left. We are developing defensive and offensive tools against those who seek to harm us, and I can tell you with certainty that they do not distinguish between this or that camp among us.⁷⁸

As mentioned in the earlier discussion of this essay, to Jabotinsky, the Arabs of Palestine, like any native population throughout history, would never accept other people's national aspirations in their own homeland. Jabotinsky believed that Zionism, as a Jewish national movement, would have to combat the Arab national movement for control of the land. Zionism's sole focus should be on developing the Jewish military force, a metaphorical Iron Wall, that would compel the Arabs to accept a Jewish state on their native land. Hence, in this context, Netanyahu shares a similar thought to Jabotinsky. Benjamin Netanyahu never believed in any kind of peace negotiation like the Labor leaders did. For instance, the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin agreed to negotiate with the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, for a peace agreement, the 1992 Oslo Accord. For Netanyahu, he saw the Oslo Accords with the Palestinians as a sort of territorial compromise Jabotinsky had warned about. Thus, he has continued to say there can be no territorial compromise with the Palestinians. Netanyahu had denounced the Oslo Accords as incompatible with the Jewish people's historic rights and a mortal danger to Israel's security: for him, the very conclusion of the agreement with the PLO at Oslo was proof that terrorism pays.⁷⁹ According to Eran Kaplan,

⁷³ Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, pp. 87-94.

⁷⁴ Jonathan Rynhold and Dov Waxman, *Ideological Change*, p. 17.

⁷⁵ Steven Meyer (2009), "How British Imperialists Created the Fascist Jabotinsky," *EIR*, Vol. 36, No. 3, pp. 36-53.

⁷⁶ László B. Veszprémy (2023), "Jabotinsky — The Intellectual Giant Behind Likud Policies," *Hungarian Conservative*, https://www.hungarianconservative.com/articles/culture_society/jabotinsky_right-wing-zionism_netanyahu_political-thinking/. Retrieved 9 May 2024.

⁷⁷ Gil Samsonov (2019), "Netanyahu: More a Jabotinsky than a Begin or a Ben-Gurion," BESA Centre Perspectives Paper No. 1,258, August 18, 2019. In <https://besacenter.org/netanyahu-jabotinsky-begin-ben-gurion/> Retrieved 9 May 2024.

⁷⁸ Israel Prime Minister's Office (2023), Excerpt from PM Netanyahu's Remarks at the State Memorial Ceremony for Ze'ev Jabotinsky, 18 July 2023. In <https://www.gov.il/en/pages/event-ceremony180723> Retrieved 9 May 2024.

⁷⁹ Benjamin Netanyahu (1996), *Fighting Terrorism: How the Democracies Can Defeat Domestic and International Terrorists*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, p. 111.

Netanyahu believes that only through strength would the Palestinians accept Israel, a process that would be aided if more and more Arab states normalised relations with Israel, establishing diplomatic and other ties.⁸⁰ That normalisation reached new heights with the 2020 Abraham Accords, the bilateral agreements signed between Israel and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and between Israel and Bahrain.⁸¹ These agreements were the ultimate vindication of Netanyahu's regional vision. Indeed, as further emphasised by Kaplan, the recent conflict with Hamas allowed Netanyahu to reassert Israel's – and Jabotinsky's – Iron Wall.⁸² The massive and wantonly destructive war that Netanyahu has led against Hamas and Gaza since that date is the Iron Wall in its most elemental manifestation: unleashing overwhelming force as a signal that no territorial compromise with the Arabs over historical Palestine is possible. The values that Netanyahu believes in and that guide him in this current war are largely inspired by Jabotinsky—and this may explain why his responses to Palestinian resistance show a strong nationalist, militant streak and why his worldview has little to do with today's liberalism.⁸³

The harsh and violent stance demonstrated in Netanyahu and the Likud government's policy towards Palestine, particularly in Gaza since October 2023, is also aligned with the main argument of Jabotinsky's doctrine. As mentioned in the earlier paragraphs, Jabotinsky suggested that Israel should be a strong nation so that eventually, the Arabs will sideline the extremist nation (which is apparently for Netanyahu is the Hamas government) with more moderate Arab nations and leadership like the Palestine Authority (PA) government and its leader, President Mahmoud Abbas. Analogous to Jabotinsky's proposition, for Netanyahu, a moderate Palestine must be preserved, but at the same time, any idea of establishing a Palestinian sovereign state must be eliminated. In this kind of approach, another strategy adopted by Netanyahu and the Likud government is to embark on a 'normalisation' process with moderate Arab countries like Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain and Morocco. This strategy was highlighted by Netanyahu in his speech at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2023. According to Netanyahu, peace between Saudi Arabia and Israel "will truly create a new Middle East", and subsequently, "It will enhance the prospects of peace with the Palestinians. It will encourage a broader reconciliation between Judaism and Islam, between Jerusalem and Makkah."⁸⁴ Earlier in 2020, Israel forged diplomatic ties with the UAE, Bahrain and Morocco, marking its initial normalisation efforts with the Arab world in decades, following earlier peace agreements with neighbouring Egypt and Jordan. Thus, the normalisation process with the moderate Arabs initiated by Netanyahu is clearly another pivotal colonialism strategy as mooted by Jabotinsky in the Iron Wall Doctrine.

As disclosed earlier, Jabotinsky believed in increasing of Jewish population in Palestine through illegal settlements as stressed in his writing "Palestine and Zionist: A Reply to Northcliffe." The same belief and policy are shared by Netanyahu and his Likud predecessors since the appointment of the first Revisionist Prime Minister, Menachem Begin in 1977 when addressing the issue of Jewish illegal immigrants and settlement. Begin, having served as prime minister from 1977 to 1983, oversaw the largest expansion of Zionist settlements.⁸⁵ Retrospectively, when Begin finally came to power in the 1977 election, his overriding concern as Prime Minister (1977-1983) was to maintain Israeli control over the West Bank and Gaza, as he declared to a group of Jewish settlers at Ariel of West Bank in 1981: "I, Menachem, the son of Ze'ev and Hasia Begin, do solemnly swear that as long as I serve the nation as Prime Minister we will not leave any part of Judea, Samaria, [or] the Gaza Strip."⁸⁶ One of the main mechanisms for accomplishing this objective was the

⁸⁰ Eran Kaplan (2024), Israel's 'Iron Wall': A brief history of the ideology guiding Benjamin Netanyahu, 25 March 2024. The Conversation. In <https://theconversation.com/israels-iron-wall-a-brief-history-of-the-ideology-guiding-benjamin-netanyahu-225936> Retrieved 9 May 2024.

⁸¹ Ainul Asyraf Lokman and Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor (2024), "Navigating Peace: Al-Qaradawi's Critique of Arab-Israeli Relations in the Trump Era," *International Journal of Islamic Thought*, Vol. 25, p. 1.

⁸² Eran Kaplan (2024), "Israel's 'Iron Wall': A brief history of the ideology guiding Benjamin Netanyahu," 25 March 2024. The Conversation. In <https://theconversation.com/israels-iron-wall-a-brief-history-of-the-ideology-guiding-benjamin-netanyahu-225936> Retrieved 9 May 2024.

⁸³ László B. Veszprémy (2023), "Jabotinsky — The Intellectual Giant Behind Likud Policies," *Hungarian Conservative*, https://www.hungarianconservative.com/articles/culture_society/jabotinsky_right-wing-zionism_netanyahu_political-thinking/. Retrieved 9 May 2024.

⁸⁴ Adla Massoud (2023), "No veto for Palestinians on Arab peace treaties, Netanyahu tells UNGA," *The National News*. In <https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/2023/09/22/no-veto-for-palestinians-on-arab-peace-treaties-netanyahu-tells-unga/> Retrieved 9 May 2024.

⁸⁵ Eric Silver (1984), *Begin: The Haunted Prophet*. New York: Random House, p. 254.

⁸⁶ United Nations (1983), Verbatim record of the 38 UN General Assembly, Document A/SPC/ 38/SR. 37., 28 November 1983, in <https://unispal.un.org/pdfs/asp38pv37corr1.pdf>. Retrieved 26 October 2024.

establishment of Jewish settlements. From 1967 to 1977, under Labor governments, the Jewish population of the Territories reached 3,200. Labor's limited settlement activity was predicated upon making a future territorial compromise when the majority of the territory would be returned to Arab control. By contrast, the Likud's settlement plan aimed to settle 750,000 Jews all over the territories in order to prevent a territorial compromise. As a result, by 1984, there were about 44,000 settlers.⁸⁷ Menachem Begin's successor, Yitzhak Shamir oversaw the expansion of the settler populations in the West Bank to over 110,000 by 1993.⁸⁸ At present, under the premiership of Netanyahu, the expansion policy as implemented by the former Likud's Prime Ministers is continuing. Under Netanyahu, many more illegal Jewish settlements were built as a part of Zionist territorial expansionist policy. In the West Bank for instance, by the end of 2022, the Israeli regime has constructed dozens of new Jewish settlements home to around 500,000 illegal settlers alongside around 2.5 million Palestinians.⁸⁹ In fact, Netanyahu spent the two and a half years of what turned out to be his first prime ministership in a largely successful effort to freeze, undermine, and subvert the Oslo Accords while ramping up settlement expansion in the West Bank. He also launched a major housing project in annexed East Jerusalem, proclaiming that "the battle for Jerusalem has begun." The main thrust of its policy was the expansion of Jewish settlements on the West Bank and the accelerated Judaization of East Jerusalem.⁹⁰

As a part of the Iron Wall doctrine, Jabotinsky proposed the mobilisation of military force to counter Palestine's resistance, like the Hamas group, which is now practised by the Likud government. For Jabotinsky and Zionist leaders, including those from the Labor Party, it was not going to be possible to establish a state with a Jewish majority in predominantly Arab Palestine simply through Jewish immigration and Palestine's acquiescence. Despite different political ideologies, Ben Gurion, in his secret memo titled '*Lines for Zionist Policy*' in 1941, shared the same thoughts as Jabotinsky. He wrote, "It is impossible to imagine general evacuation [of the Arab population] without compulsion and brutal compulsion."⁹¹ Echoing the same argument, historians like Rashid Khalidi deduced that "Jabotinsky, therefore, is right about the need to use force", and most Zionist leaders eventually came to understand that "the only means to create a state of Palestine with an institution whose nature would be determined, and fully controlled by a Jewish majority was to engage in what today is called 'ethnic cleansing'".⁹² In 2017, Netanyahu, then the second-longest ruling prime minister in Israel's history (after Ben-Gurion), began to express a desire to personally produce a national security strategy, with the assistance of his top advisors and close staff. The document drafted by Netanyahu notes that force can and should be deployed to counter any existential threat.⁹³ Hence, it is vividly obvious that the top priority of approaches for Netanyahu to counter the Arabs and Palestinian resistance is through military means, identical to Jabotinsky's thought, and not via peace negotiation, indeed. Based on this military strategy document, Netanyahu launched several offensive wars towards the Palestinians. As he inherited the military doctrine which emphasised that "Israel must take the fight to the enemy territory", Netanyahu is unhesitating to inaugurate vicious military attacks on Palestinian soil like in Gaza recently.⁹⁴ The military means applied by Netanyahu is in accordance with Jabotinsky's Iron Wall Doctrine and no different from Menachem Begin's leadership style. Indeed, when Begin was appointed as the first Prime Minister from Likud in 1977, Begin openly declared.

The Iron Wall meant that one could not realize Zionism unless force separates us from the Arabs. The Arabs would try to prevent their bloodshed. Although Jabotinsky professed a policy of justice, we discovered that justice had to be defended. It was however the justice of minority states in a minimalist Jewish slate with no prospect of Arab sovereignty on either bank of the Jordan.⁹⁵

⁸⁷ Efraim Karsh (1994), *Peace in the Middle East: The Challenge for Israel*, London: Frank Cass, pp.135-144.

⁸⁸ Yitzhak Shamir (1994), *Summing Up: An Autobiography*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, p.151.

⁸⁹ Ilan Ben-Zion (2022lok), Netanyahu government: West Bank settlement top priority. Associate Press, 29 December 2022. <https://apnews.com/article/west-bank-benjamin-netanyahu-israel-government-e36ed7260e0398406d9a8ba319b0b741> Retrieved 11 May 2022.

⁹⁰ Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, p. 91.

⁹¹ Nur Masalha (1992), *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of "Transfer" in Zionist Political Thought, 1882-1948*, Washington D.C.: Institute for Palestine Study, p.128.

⁹² Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage*, p. 188.

⁹³ Jacob Nagel and Jonathan Schanzer (2019), *From Ben-Gurion to Netanyahu: The Evolution of Israel's National Security Strategy*, Washington D.C.: Foundation for Defence of Democracies, p.4.

⁹⁴ Jacob Nagel and Jonathan Schanzer, *From Ben-Gurion to Netanyahu*, p.6.

⁹⁵ Yaacov Shavit, *Jabotinsky*, p. 21.

Meanwhile, Jabotinsky, in the Iron Wall Doctrine, clearly stated that there would be no 'volunteer agreement' with the Palestinians. The same principle is practised by Netanyahu today, through which he will make sure the Palestinian resistance groups like Hamas will lose hope of getting rid of the Israelis before they conclude any coercive agreement. For instance, in his first term in office (1996–99) – initially characterised by an attempt to slow down the process and to ignore Yasser Arafat, PLO Chairman and Palestine Authority (PA) President – continued with the Hebron Agreement (1997) and ended with the Wye River Agreement (1998) and the transfer of additional territories to the PA. In the case of the Oslo Peace Agreement, for instance, Netanyahu and Likud's regime accepted the Oslo Accords as an irreversible *fait accompli* but with little enthusiasm. A study by Peter in 1996 indicated that while Netanyahu may have accepted, in principle, the implementations of the Oslo process, he made little secret of his disdain for the agreements reached with the Palestinians, stating during the election campaign that, unlike Rabin and Peres, he would not commit himself to meet with Yasser Arafat.⁹⁶ With the emergence of a Likud-dominated government under Benjamin Netanyahu in March 2009, the prospects of a negotiated settlement virtually vanished. Thus, having returned to the prime minister's office in 2009 for a 12-year stint, Netanyahu conducted three rounds of fighting against Hamas, two attempts to advance the peace process with Mahmoud Abbas's PA under the auspices of the Obama administration (2009–14), and another attempt during the Trump administration that culminated in the 'Deal of the Century' (2020). In October 2023, Netanyahu launched a military campaign against Hamas in Gaza and at the time the article was written, more than 43,000 Palestinians were killed in the massacre. The main objective of the campaign is, as before, to weaken the Hamas and Palestinians' colonialism resistance capability before any sort of negotiation could be discussed for an 'involuntary' agreement with a 'moderate Arab'.

Indistinguishable from Jabotinsky, Netanyahu also emphasises strengthening the Jewish culture and identity in Palestine, for instance, through the establishment of the Jewish self-determination bill. In 2018, Netanyahu and his revisionist government passed the controversial law reserving Jewish National Self-Determination. The controversial bill defines the country as the homeland of the Jews — asserting Jerusalem as the capital, Hebrew as the official language and that the right of national self-determination is "unique to the Jewish people."⁹⁷ Yet, Netanyahu, like Jabotinsky, justified his action and is morally accepted. Unlike the policy of Jewish Self-Determination, Netanyahu, much like Jabotinsky who supported the scheme of territory acquisition by force, firmly dismissed any idea of Palestine's Self-Determination.⁹⁸ Accordingly, one of the clear examples of rejecting Palestine's self-determination exercised by Netanyahu's government was when they voted against the United Nations resolution draft of Palestine's Self-Determination in the Sixty-fourth session of the United Nations General Assembly meeting in 2009.⁹⁹

Chronologically, Benjamin Netanyahu was first elected as the Prime Minister in the Israeli general election of 1996 before losing his premiership to Ehud Barak of the Labour Party in the 1999 general election. However, Netanyahu and his Likud Party regained power after the 2013 and 2015 Israeli legislative elections and resumed the prime minister's post. In the November 2022 election, Netanyahu was re-elected as the Israeli prime minister until today. As mentioned earlier, Netanyahu and his Likud Party, since the era of Menachem Begin, are ardent followers of Jabotinsky's doctrine. Hence, his political ideology and the Likud government's policy are not much different from his predecessors or his earlier premiership terms. Suffice it to mention that although Jabotinsky's revisionist ideology is fundamentally secular and ultra-nationalistic compared to the socialistic Labor, Likud shares many similar thoughts on several aspects with the religious parties in Israel. One of the similarities is their common perspective on maximalising Jewish land through illegal settlement schemes. Likud, since Begin and now Netanyahu, has had a 'symbiotic

⁹⁶ Joel Peters (1996), *Israel Under Netanyahu*. Paper presented at The Halki International Seminars, 7-14 September 1996. In <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/23271/Israel%20under%20Netanyahu.pdf>. Retrieved 11 May 2024.

⁹⁷ Scott Neuman (2018), "Israel Passes Controversial Law Reserving National Self-Determination For Jews," In *NPR* <https://www.npr.org/2018/07/19/630368973/israel-passes-controversial-law-reserving-national-self-determination-for-jews> Retrieved 10 May 2024.

⁹⁸ Haaretz Service and Natasha Mozgovaya (2010), "Netanyahu: Only When Palestinians Recognize Israel As a Jewish State Will They Be Ready for Peace," *HAARETZ* (Oct. 22, 2010), <https://www.haaretz.com/2010-10-22/ty-article/netanyahu-only-when-palestinians-recognize-israel-as-a-jewish-state-will-they-be-ready-for-peace/0000017f-da79-d494-a17f-de7bfd70000>. Retrieved 11 May 2024.

⁹⁹ United Nations Document A/C.3/64/L.56. (2009), Draft Resolution "Right of the Palestinian people to self-determination", General Assembly GA/SHC/3966 New York: United Nations. In <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-198141/> Accessed on 11 May 2024. Retrieved 9 November 2024

relationship' with extremist religious parties like *Gush Emunim* from 1974 until today. A study by Ian Lustick in 1988 deduced that Gush settlers provided the Begin government of 1977 and 1981 'with indispensable resources' of settlers, which neither the Herut nor the Liberal Party (components of Likud) possessed.¹⁰⁰ The politically convenient 'relationship' facilitated the establishment of more than 130 settlements in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights since 1967.¹⁰¹

Similar to Begin, Netanyahu resumed his office in 2022 with the backup of religious parties strengthening Likud's tradition of close cooperation with the religious Zionists. For instance, Netanyahu has agreed to deal with the founder of *Regavim* (Jewish settlers organisation) and the far-right ultra-nationalist religious Zionism Party's leader - Bezalel Smotrich, who was later appointed as the finance minister, together with other religious Zionist politicians like Ofir Sofer, Orit Strock dan Simcha Rothman to legalise and enlarge the Jewish illegal settlements in the West Bank, or what the religious Zionists and the Likud party call as 'Judea and Samaria'.¹⁰² Through the deal, Netanyahu's government will legalise some 70 unauthorised settlements with approximately 25,00 residents.¹⁰³ In this context, Netanyahu and his Likud's government basic policy has been unchanged since his first term, with or without the religious Zionist leaders in the cabinet. In fact, in 1996, despite the pressure from the United States and international communities to freeze the Jewish settler's program, the Likud government continuously allowed the unauthorised settler's outposts in Palestine's occupied territories. Subsequently, Netanyahu, on 13 February 2012, formed the Committee of the Legal Status of Building in Judea and Samaria (also known as the Outpost Committee) headed by Israel's Supreme Court judge, Edmund Levy, who was famous for his extreme view and unrelenting support to the settlers to study the legal aspect of settler's policy in the West Bank. The Levy's Report then legalises the settler's program in the West Bank, which they interpreted as 'disputed territories' instead of the 'occupied territories' as classified under international law.¹⁰⁴

Unsurprisingly, over the decades, the religious parties and groups in Israel supported the Likud rather than the Labour in Israel's politics and during the general elections. A study by Michal Shamir and Arian Asher in 1999 on Israel's election voters' preference trend since 1981, specifically during the general election of 1996, found that religious Sephardim, the less educated and lower-status workers, have voted for the right-wing Likud and religious parties, whereas the Left (Labor and Meretz) has had a disproportionate share of secular, upper-class Ashkenazim voters. The finding reinforces the interpretation that Labor is increasingly seen as an anticlerical party, while Likud plays to the traditionalist Jewish sympathies of much of its voting base, even though the origins and ideology of Likud as a political party are clearly secular.¹⁰⁵ Meanwhile, the analysis by Kenneth Wald and Shye Samuel in 1995 found that since the 1970s, the Likud party under Menachem Begin represented a 'synthesis between nationalist politics and Jewish religion'.¹⁰⁶ Similar conclusion was proposed in the analysis by Menachem Friedman, who concluded that "when sophisticated religious voters decided they no longer needed the narrow defensive shield erected by religious parties, they embraced the Likud (or its right-wing allies) as a means to assert a religious ethos with broad social implications."¹⁰⁷ Like the domestic policy, the foreign relations and policy of Likud and Netanyahu are closely tied to the 'right-wing' ideological government and religious extremist groups. For example, Likud's leaders since Begin have a close tie with the Republican and the Christian 'right' like the Evangelical Christian Zionist movement in the United States. Likud constituencies utilised the Biblical

¹⁰⁰ Ian Lustick (1988), *For the Land and the Lord: Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel*, New York: Council on Foreign Relations, pp. 8-9.

¹⁰¹ Ian Lustick, *For the Land and the Lord*, p. 10.

¹⁰² United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Report (2024), Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan, Document A/HRC/55/72, New York: United Nations p. 3. In <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g24/008/94/pdf/g2400894.pdf>. Retrieved 19 October 2024.

¹⁰³ Jeremy Sharon (2022), "Religious Zionism deal: West Bank sovereignty, settlement growth, discrimination law", *The Times of Israel*, 28 December 2022. In <https://www.timesofisrael.com/religious-zionism-coalition-deal-settlement-growth-changes-to-discrimination-laws/>. Retrieved 19 October 2024.

¹⁰⁴ Arab Centre for Research and Policy Studies (2012), Policy Analysis Series – A New Wave of Settlement Building in The West bank: Israel's Settlers' Government Seizes Palestinian Land, Doha: Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, pp. 3-6.

¹⁰⁵ Michal Shamir and Asher Arian (1999), "Collective Identity and Electoral Competition in Israel," *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 93, No. 2, pp. 266, 270.

¹⁰⁶ Kenneth Wald and Shye Samuel (1995), "Religious Influence in Electoral Behavior: The Role of Institutional and Social Forces in Israel." *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 57, No. 2, p.499.

¹⁰⁷ Menachem Friedman (1984), "The NRP in Transition-Behind the Party's Electoral Decline," in Dan Caspi, Abraham Diskin, and Emmanuel Guttman (eds.), *The Roots of Begin 's Success*, London: Croom Helm, p.499.

names for the West Bank, 'Judea and Samaria' and employed the 'divine' argument to justify its confiscation of Arab land for settlement. Hence, the Christian 'right' welcomed the Likud leaders and the two bonded at the political and theological levels. Since 1996, Netanyahu had learned from his Likud mentors, Begin and Shamir, that the Christian 'right' represented the largest potential political base for Israel and an untapped reservoir for financial support. Foreseeably, within a few months of Netanyahu winning the Israel General Election in 1996, the Israeli government convened the Israel Christian Advocacy Council in conjunction with the Israeli Ministry of Tourism. Seventeen American Evangelical and fundamentalist leaders were flown to Israel for an October 1996 tour of the Holy Land, plus a conference at which they pledged support for what was essentially a Likud agenda.¹⁰⁸ Suffice it to mention, after the election in 2009, Netanyahu formed a coalition government and the only religious party in his coalition was the Shas Party, which won eleven seats in the *Knesset* and held four cabinet posts. However, Netanyahu's government which was dominated by Likud was described by political analysts like Avi Shlaim as "among the most aggressively right-wing, chauvinistic, and racist governments in Israel's history" and it was no different from the current regime.¹⁰⁹

Needless to say, although the Likud policy is fundamentally based on the Iron Wall doctrine mooted by Jabotinsky, yet under certain circumstances, they are flexible to modify the strategy to suit the current situation. For instance, as mentioned earlier, the concept of 'Greater Israel' imagined by Jabotinsky was that the Israel state shall be comprised of not just the Palestinian soil like in Gaza and the West Bank but also the eastern part of the Jordan River (at present is the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan). The aim will be achieved by maximising Israel's territories and increasing the Jewish population and identity. Thus, the earlier Revisionists like Begin firmly rejected the idea of the UN partition plan in 1947, which meant they must surrender part of the land of united *Eretz Yisrael* to the Arabs. However, this approach was modified by the later leaders like Ariel Sharon and Benjamin Netanyahu. On becoming Prime Minister in 2001, Ariel Sharon publicly accepted the eventual creation of a Palestinian state and was in favour of the territory's disengagement, like in Gaza and the West Bank. One of the reasons justified by Sharon in his disengagement policy, which was heavily criticised by many of Jabotinsky's politicians within Likud, was based on the demographic logic of disengagement. By retaining those areas occupied since 1967, the Jews in future would be a minority and outnumbered by the bigger 3.5 million population of Palestinians. For example, there were approximately 1,375,000 Palestinians and only 8,000 Jewish settlers in Gaza. Withdrawing from Gaza would, therefore, automatically ameliorate Israel's demographic situation. For Sharon, the abandonment of the Revisionist commitment to the value of maintaining Jewish control over *Eretz Yisrael* meant that other core values, notably maintaining Israel's identity as a Jewish and democratic state, along with security concerns, could be protected. Logically, with a majority of non-Jews under its control, Israel could be Jewish or democratic, but not both. Without a withdrawal from densely populated Palestinian areas, Israel was in danger of one day being turned into a single, binational state if the Palestinian majority chose to demand the right to vote in Israel rather than to have their own state. The necessity of maintaining a large Jewish majority in order to safeguard Israel's long-term future as a Jewish and democratic state led many influential Likud members to support the disengagement plan, even those who were sceptical that the Palestinians would actually outnumber Jews in the next 20 years.¹¹⁰ But while he accepted partition in theory, in practice, Sharon ruled out dismantling any settlement during his first term as Prime Minister. Publicly, he continued to argue that even the isolated settlement of Netzarim in Gaza was vital to Israeli security.

Like Sharon, Netanyahu in his first term also took the flexible approach by altering the original version of Jabotinsky's doctrine. The alteration was aimed at protecting already-existing core values in response to a practical problem. A decisive break from the value of Jabotinsky's *Eretz Yisrael* principle came in January 1997, when Prime Minister Netanyahu signed the Hebron Accord, in which he agreed to transfer control of the West Bank city of Hebron to the Palestinian Authority while keeping 20 per cent of it (in which 400 Jewish settlers lived among 130,000 Palestinians) under Israeli occupation. Netanyahu's agreement to

¹⁰⁸ Donald Wagner (1998), "Reagan and Begin, Bibi and Jerry: The Theopolitical Alliance of the Likud Party with the American Christian 'Right'," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 20, No. 4, pp. 42-45.

¹⁰⁹ Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, p.95.

¹¹⁰ Jonathan Rynhold and Dov Waxman, *Ideological change*, pp. 24-25.

partially withdraw from Hebron, whose biblical and modern history gave it a particular significance to nationalist and religious Jews, was condemned by many of his right-wing supporters. For the first time, a leader of the Likud was officially handing 'Jewish land' over to the Palestinians. Under Netanyahu, the Likud's traditional opposition to the partition of *Eretz Yisrael* was irrevocably undermined. As a result, three Likud Members of the *Knesset*, (Benny Begin, Michael Kleiner, and David Re'em) left the Party and re-formed *Herut* as an independent right-wing party, and several other Likud politicians joined a lobby of *Knesset* members called the 'Land of Israel Front' in opposition to Netanyahu.¹¹¹ Nonetheless, Netanyahu's modification of the Iron Wall doctrine was influenced by many considerations like the demographical factors, the present political scenario, the security of the state, the defending of the Jewish identity and the future of Israel as a nation.

Also on the list is the international community's political pressure, particularly from Israel's greatest allies, the United States. One of the classic examples was under strong U.S. pressure, Netanyahu signed two agreements with the PLO: the Hebron Protocol of 15 January 1997 and the Wye River Memorandum of 23 October 1998. In the latter, he undertook to withdraw Israeli troops from a further 13 per cent of the West Bank in three redeployments, but he suspended the memorandum after a single redeployment to appease his right-wing coalition partners. His murky manoeuvres eventually brought down his government. This was probably inevitable because of the basic contradiction between the government's declared objective of seeking peace and its ideological makeup, which militated against trading land for peace.¹¹² Grounded on to all those considerations, the disengagement from occupied Palestine territories by Netanyahu is comparable with the abandonment of Jabotinsky's original Iron Wall's idea to include Transjordan as a part of *Eretz Yisrael* in the 1950s. Certainly, in most cases like the disengagement policy from occupied Palestinian territories by Sharon and Netanyahu, it was not a betrayal of Jabotinsky's doctrine but it was a modification of the strategy to balance and adjust the core principle of Jabotinsky with the practical approach for the future of the nation. Another example of the Iron Wall doctrine's revision by Netanyahu was in the case of expanding Jews' settlements in the West Bank, Palestine. On 25 November 2009, ascribing to the pressure from the US government, Netanyahu in his famous proclamation announced a 10-month freeze on West Bank construction activities. However, Netanyahu asserted the stipulation that construction in Jerusalem would continue as usual. Consequently, the peace talks with President Mahmoud Abbas and the US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton which resumed in 2010 were unable to reach an agreement. Anticipatedly, President Barack Obama viewed Netanyahu as the real culprit for the crisis due to his refusal to extend the construction freeze.¹¹³

Conclusion

The finding of this study draws the inference that the current Israeli government under Benjamin Netanyahu is adapting the Iron Wall Doctrine as propounded by Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky in 1923. As a right-wing government, the ideology of the Revisionist Party founded by Jabotinsky in the 1920s was perpetuated by Netanyahu with his fresh interpretation and embraced a few amendments. Netanyahu's strategic vision is derived from the concept of the 'Iron Wall', which he developed and perfected as a third edition of the original Jabotinsky vision. Netanyahu's Iron Wall concept comprises a combination of three types of power – military power, economic-technological power, and political power – that will secure Israel's position as a prominent regional actor and end the century-long violent Palestinian rejection of the idea of Jewish statehood.¹¹⁴ It is like the former Likud Party's premiers- from the first right Prime Minister Menachem Begin in 1977, followed by Yitzhak Shamir in 1983 and Ariel Sharon from 2001. Likewise, Netanyahu is adopting an uncompromising stance towards Palestinian independence fighters as he considers them - the arch-enemy of the Zionist State and aspiration. Netanyahu is sharing and practising a huge part of Jabotinsky's ideology and approaches in addressing Palestinian's cause. One of the resemblances of both figures is the vision to establish a superior Israeli state at the expense of the native outcries. The vision was

¹¹¹ Jonathan Mendilow (2002), "The Likud's Campaign and the Headwaters of Defeat" in Asher Arian and Michal Shamir (eds.), *The Elections in Israel 1999*, Albany: State University of New York Press, p. 201.

¹¹² Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, p. 91.

¹¹³ Michael Kobi and Ori Wertman (2023), "The Last 'Mapainik' and the 'Iron Wall': Benjamin Netanyahu and the Palestinian issue 2009-21," *Israel Affairs*, Vol. 29, No. 6, p.4.

¹¹⁴ Michael Kobi and Ori Wertman, *The Last 'Mapainik'*, p. 14.

achieved by various means, yet stringent and merciless. One of these is the expedient to create a country with a strong Jewish identity through illegal mass immigration into Palestine's colonised land. In the bargain, both figures have a strong faith in utilising massive military mechanisms to execute their Zionist dream, typically to the extent of inhumane schemes like when Netanyahu brutally razed and massacred the native Palestinians in the Gaza territory since October 2023. As a devotee of Jabotinsky's doctrine, Netanyahu also does not believe in a peace dialogue with his Arab opponents and has shown little enthusiasm for a peace agreement with the Palestinians. Like his worshipped idol, Netanyahu is insisting that there will be no peace agreement with the Palestinians until the enemy becomes helpless and hopeless. In short, pertaining to the analysis of this discourse, it is hard to refute the verdict by Steven Mayer that "the Fascist Jabotinsky is Netanyahu's Godfather."¹¹⁵

Perhaps the only difference between Jabotinsky and Netanyahu is the former, in the Iron Wall Doctrine, openly admitted that the Zionists are the colonialists who are occupying the Palestinian lands, whom he considered as the real natives. Contrary to Jabotinsky's conclusion on Palestine's nationalism in the Iron Wall doctrine, Netanyahu never admits that the Israeli is an occupier regime who colonised the Palestinians' lands. In fact, as indicated in his memoir, Netanyahu contended that the Jews are the real natives of Palestine, claiming the Jews were the sons of the soil who were expelled by the Arab invaders in the seventh century — a claim that, according to many historians like David Wasserstein, is 'an abuse of history, propaganda and has no basis in known fact'¹¹⁶. Certainly, Netanyahu rejected any notion of recognising the Palestinians who are fighting against the regime as real nationalists, defending their lands and rights. Instead, like his allies in the US and Europe, the colonised indigenous are being labelled as terrorists, subsequently moralising Netanyahu's vicious and inhuman approach towards the Palestinians. Considering the differences, the study is inclined to equate Netanyahu's ferocious policy towards the Palestinians, especially in Gaza, closer to the Zionist underground terrorist group, the *Stern Gang* tactics, rather than the original military approach of the *Irgun* by Jabotinsky. Netanyahu is more similar to Avraham Stern - the founder of the *Stern Gang* terrorist group, adopting a military strategy in countering Palestinian resistance, although the militaristic doctrine originated from the fundamental thought of Jabotinsky in the Iron Wall. By the same token, the finding of this study has proven the conclusion made by some researchers, such as Dr. Gil Samsonov from the Begin-Sadat Centre for Strategic Studies that "Netanyahu like Jabotinsky is believing, and in favour of political approach rather than the military option in the Palestine-Israeli conflict" is questionable.¹¹⁷ In this context, the recent genocide of Gaza further establishes beyond any reasonable doubt that Dr. Samsonov's interpretation of Netanyahu is controverted and rebutted. Convincingly, this study concluded in the context of ideology, stance, and strategy, Jabotinsky and Netanyahu are no different than two peas in a pod.

Acknowledgment

This research is sponsored by Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia under the Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS) –FRGS/1/2024/SSI06/USM/02/2. Insightful ideas were also contributed by research's collaborator NGO- HALUAN (Northern region's branch).

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¹¹⁷ Gil Samsonov, *Netanyahu: More a Jabotinsky*, p.1

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