

Netanyahu: The Messiah's Donkey

Douglas C. Youvan

doug@youvan.com

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Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's longest-serving prime minister, has been a towering figure in both domestic and international politics. His tenure is characterized by a dual role: a self-driven political tactician and a vehicle for advancing far-right and religious Zionist ideologies. While his pragmatic diplomacy, such as brokering the Abraham Accords, has elevated Israel's global standing, Netanyahu's domestic policies have entrenched divisions, expanded settlements, and marginalized Palestinian statehood aspirations. This duality evokes the metaphor of "the messiah's donkey," a figure drawn from Jewish tradition symbolizing a mundane yet essential tool in fulfilling divine or ideological goals. Netanyahu's governance has carried the weight of a messianic vision promoted by religious and nationalist factions, even as his actions are often rooted in personal and political survival. This article examines how Netanyahu's leadership serves as a bridge between pragmatism and ideology, balancing domestic hardliners with global realities. It explores the societal, regional, and global implications of his policies, positioning Netanyahu as both a transformative and polarizing figure in modern Israeli history.

Keywords: Netanyahu, Israel, messiah's donkey, religious Zionism, far-right ideologies, Abraham Accords, settlements, Palestinian statehood, Jewish nationalism, Israeli politics, Middle East diplomacy, demographic challenges, two-state solution, national identity, religious influence, Benjamin Netanyahu legacy, political pragmatism. 41 pages.

Introduction

The term "**the messiah's donkey**" has deep roots in Jewish religious tradition, originating from Talmudic interpretations and the prophecy in **Zechariah 9:9**, which envisions the messiah arriving humbly, "riding on a donkey." Symbolically, the donkey represents a simple, unassuming vehicle used to carry out a divine mission, reflecting the paradoxical relationship between the mundane and the transcendent. Over time, this imagery has evolved, gaining metaphorical significance in modern discourse. It now often refers to a person or entity that serves as a tool or means to achieve a greater purpose, whether knowingly or unwittingly. In contemporary Israeli politics, this phrase is used to describe figures who advance far-reaching religious or ideological agendas, regardless of their personal motivations.

Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's longest-serving prime minister, stands as a towering figure in modern Israeli history. Over decades, he has skillfully navigated domestic and international politics, consolidating power through a combination of strategic alliances, populist rhetoric, and adept diplomacy. While his critics highlight allegations of corruption and self-serving policies, Netanyahu's supporters praise him as a statesman who has ensured Israel's security and economic growth in an increasingly hostile region. Yet beneath his pragmatic and often polarizing leadership lies a more profound dynamic: his government has become a vehicle for advancing far-right ideological and religious goals, whether by design or circumstance.

This dual role—Netanyahu's personal drive for political survival and his alignment with a broader ideological agenda—positions him as a contemporary manifestation of "the messiah's donkey." While he may not personally subscribe to messianic beliefs or the ultimate religious aspirations of his coalition, his leadership has undeniably served to further their vision for Israel's future. These goals range from territorial annexation to strengthening Jewish national identity, from undermining the two-state solution to fulfilling messianic prophecies through policies that shape Israel's political and cultural landscape.

This paper explores how Netanyahu, intentionally or otherwise, has come to embody this metaphorical role. It examines the ways in which his leadership aligns with and advances the far-right's vision for Israel, highlighting the interplay

between his personal ambitions and the ideological objectives of his allies. Ultimately, while Netanyahu's political actions may be driven by self-preservation, his governance has transformed him into a tool for a far-reaching and often polarizing ideological project.

I. Historical and Political Context

Netanyahu's Rise to Power

Benjamin Netanyahu's political career is one of the most enduring and controversial in Israeli history. Born in 1949 in Tel Aviv and raised partly in the United States, Netanyahu was heavily influenced by his father, Benzion Netanyahu, a historian and ardent Zionist who emphasized the need for Jewish strength and vigilance. This ideological foundation would shape much of Netanyahu's political philosophy, which he later fused with pragmatic, modern political strategies.

Netanyahu first rose to prominence in the 1980s as a diplomat, serving as Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, where he honed his oratory skills and gained a reputation as a staunch defender of Israel on the world stage. He entered Israeli politics in the 1990s as a member of the Likud party, eventually becoming its leader. His first tenure as prime minister began in 1996, following the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin and during a period of heightened tensions over the Oslo Accords. Netanyahu's campaign capitalized on public fears regarding security and skepticism of the peace process, positioning him as a protector of Israel against what he described as existential threats.

Throughout his career, Netanyahu has demonstrated an uncanny ability to reinvent himself and maintain power. He returned to office in 2009, capitalizing on a divided opposition and fears of regional instability following the Second Intifada and conflicts in Gaza. His subsequent tenure, lasting over a decade, was marked by significant achievements in foreign policy, such as the Abraham Accords, which normalized relations with several Arab states. However, his leadership was also characterized by increasingly authoritarian tendencies, including efforts to weaken judicial oversight and allegations of corruption. These moves not only served his personal political survival but also aligned him with far-

right and religious factions who saw an opportunity to advance their agendas under his leadership.

His Alignment with Far-Right and Religious Factions

Netanyahu's alliances with far-right and religious groups have deepened over time, as his political survival increasingly depended on their support. Early in his career, Netanyahu presented himself as a pragmatic leader with a focus on security and economic liberalization. However, as Israel's political landscape became more polarized, he shifted toward a more hardline stance, embracing ideologies that resonated with his coalition partners in the far-right and ultra-Orthodox sectors.

This alignment became particularly evident in his later years in office. Netanyahu formed coalitions with religious Zionist parties and ultra-Orthodox factions, granting them significant influence over policymaking. These groups advocate for policies such as expanding Jewish settlements in the West Bank, annexing disputed territories, and maintaining the religious status quo in Israeli society, including control over marriage, conversion, and other civil matters. Netanyahu's willingness to empower these groups allowed him to consolidate his base, even as it alienated moderate and secular Israelis.

The Far-Right Vision in Israel

The far-right in Israel encompasses a spectrum of ideological goals, many of which are deeply rooted in religious and nationalist narratives. Central to their vision is the belief that the State of Israel is not merely a modern political entity but a fulfillment of biblical prophecy, with a divine mandate to reclaim and control the entirety of the biblical Land of Israel. This ideology prioritizes territorial expansion, the prevention of a Palestinian state, and the establishment of policies that reinforce Jewish identity and sovereignty over non-Jewish populations.

1. Territorial Expansion:

- Many far-right groups view the West Bank (referred to as Judea and Samaria) as an inseparable part of Israel's biblical inheritance. They

advocate for the annexation of these territories and the expansion of Jewish settlements, often at the expense of Palestinian communities.

2. **Opposition to a Palestinian State:**

- The far-right sees the establishment of a Palestinian state as an existential threat to Israel's security and Jewish identity. Instead, they support policies aimed at weakening Palestinian governance and territorial claims.

3. **Strengthening Jewish National Identity:**

- Far-right factions emphasize the importance of defining Israel as a Jewish state, often through legislative measures that prioritize Jewish culture, religion, and demography. This includes laws like the **Nation-State Law**, which enshrines the Jewish character of the state while sidelining minority rights.

4. **Messianic and Religious Aspirations:**

- Some far-right religious Zionists see current political developments as paving the way for the eventual arrival of the messiah, advocating for actions that align with their interpretation of biblical prophecy, such as rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem.

How Netanyahu Embodies or Serves These Purposes

Netanyahu's ability to embody or serve the far-right's purposes lies in his political pragmatism and survival instincts. While he has not explicitly embraced the most radical elements of their vision, his policies and alliances have created fertile ground for their goals to advance. For example:

- His governments have overseen significant settlement expansion in the West Bank, effectively undermining the possibility of a two-state solution.
- Netanyahu has consistently opposed international efforts to recognize Palestinian statehood, framing such moves as threats to Israel's security.

- His alliances with ultra-Orthodox parties have reinforced religious control over key aspects of Israeli society, from education to civil law, aligning with the far-right's vision of a Jewish state.

Netanyahu's rhetoric often straddles the line between pragmatism and ideology, allowing him to appeal to both his far-right allies and a broader, more centrist electorate. This balancing act has enabled him to maintain power, but it has also entrenched divisions within Israeli society and drawn criticism from international observers.

By aligning himself with these factions, Netanyahu has become a vehicle for their vision, even if his motivations are primarily rooted in self-preservation. This dynamic positions him as a modern "messiah's donkey," carrying the burden of a far-reaching ideological agenda while navigating the complexities of domestic and international politics.

II. Territorial Expansion

Annexation of the West Bank

The West Bank, often referred to by its biblical names **Judea and Samaria**, holds deep historical and religious significance for many Jewish Israelis. These territories are considered the heartland of ancient Israel, with connections to patriarchs, prophets, and key events in Jewish history. For religious Zionists and far-right nationalists, controlling these areas is not only a matter of national security but also a fulfillment of biblical prophecy and a divine mandate. This perspective fuels the ideological drive for annexation and settlement expansion.

Netanyahu's governments have played a pivotal role in advancing settlement construction in the West Bank. Under his leadership:

1. Expansion of Settlements:

- Netanyahu has overseen significant growth in Jewish settlements, which now house over half a million Israelis. These settlements, often established with government support, are viewed as a strategic and ideological move to assert permanent Israeli control over the territory.

2. Legal and Administrative Support:

- Policies have included legalizing previously unauthorized settlements, expanding infrastructure (such as roads and utilities), and designating areas for future development. These actions entrench Israeli presence in the West Bank, making the prospect of a contiguous Palestinian state increasingly unviable.

3. De Facto Annexation Efforts:

- Netanyahu has publicly supported plans to annex large portions of the West Bank, particularly the Jordan Valley, which is strategically important for Israel's security. Although formal annexation has been delayed due to international pressure, incremental measures continue to erode Palestinian territorial claims.

International Backlash and Domestic Support Netanyahu's policies in the West Bank have faced widespread international condemnation:

- **United Nations and European Union:**

- Both have repeatedly denounced settlement expansion as a violation of international law, emphasizing that it undermines the possibility of a two-state solution.

- **United States:**

- While some U.S. administrations have criticized settlements, the Trump administration took a more permissive stance, recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital and endorsing Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights, emboldening Netanyahu's annexation rhetoric.

- **Arab States:**

- While some Arab nations have normalized relations with Israel through the Abraham Accords, many continue to view settlement expansion as a barrier to peace.

Domestically, Netanyahu's policies enjoy significant support among his right-wing base, particularly among settlers and religious Zionists who see annexation as essential to Israel's future. However, these policies have also deepened divisions

within Israeli society, with left-wing and centrist groups warning of the long-term costs of abandoning the two-state solution.

Rejection of Palestinian Sovereignty

Netanyahu's government has consistently opposed efforts to establish a Palestinian state, framing such initiatives as threats to Israel's security and Jewish identity. His rhetoric and policies reflect a belief that Palestinian sovereignty would destabilize the region and empower hostile actors.

1. Blocking Palestinian Statehood:

- Netanyahu has leveraged diplomatic influence to prevent the recognition of Palestinian statehood in international forums. He has argued that the Palestinians lack the institutional stability and willingness to negotiate in good faith, often pointing to divisions between the Palestinian Authority (in the West Bank) and Hamas (in Gaza).
- His administration has also demanded stringent conditions for negotiations, such as recognizing Israel as a Jewish state, which Palestinian leaders have rejected as a precondition.

2. Strategic Use of Conflicts:

- Netanyahu has used recurring conflicts with Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon to delay diplomatic resolutions. By framing Israel as under constant threat from these groups, his government has justified aggressive military actions and heightened security measures that preclude substantive peace talks.
- These conflicts also serve to shift public attention away from domestic controversies, such as corruption charges and judicial reforms, allowing Netanyahu to consolidate his political base.

Consequences of Rejection The rejection of Palestinian sovereignty has profound implications:

- **Humanitarian Impact:**
 - Policies restricting Palestinian movement, access to resources, and economic development have exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in the West Bank and Gaza, fueling resentment and instability.
- **Regional and Global Perception:**
 - Critics argue that Netanyahu's hardline stance undermines Israel's moral standing and alienates potential allies. Conversely, his supporters contend that his policies are necessary to ensure Israel's survival in a hostile region.

By advancing settlement expansion and blocking Palestinian sovereignty, Netanyahu has not only solidified his domestic political base but also served the broader ideological goals of the far-right, aligning his leadership with their vision of a Greater Israel. These actions, however, come at a significant cost to regional stability and the prospect of lasting peace.

III. The Third Temple and Religious Symbolism

The notion of rebuilding the Third Temple on the Temple Mount is one of the most contentious and potent symbols in both Israeli and global politics. For religious Zionists and ultra-Orthodox groups, the Temple represents the ultimate fulfillment of Jewish messianic prophecy, marking the beginning of the Messianic Era. However, the geopolitical and religious sensitivity surrounding the Temple Mount, which is also home to the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock, makes it one of the most explosive issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Under Netanyahu's leadership, this symbolism has gained renewed prominence, reflecting a delicate balancing act between appeasing far-right religious factions and maintaining international and regional stability.

Messianic Prophecies and the Temple Mount

1. The Religious Significance of the Temple Mount:

- The Temple Mount, known in Hebrew as Har HaBayit, is the holiest site in Judaism. It is believed to be the location of the First and Second Temples, the center of ancient Jewish worship.
- Messianic prophecies envision the rebuilding of the Third Temple as a prerequisite for the arrival of the Jewish messiah and the establishment of divine order on Earth. For many religious Zionists, regaining full control of the Temple Mount is essential to fulfilling these prophecies.

2. Geopolitical Sensitivity:

- The Temple Mount is also one of Islam's holiest sites, housing the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock. Any perceived threat to its status quo has historically provoked violent confrontations and international condemnation.
- Palestinians and much of the Arab world see the Temple Mount as a symbol of their national and religious identity, making any actions to alter its status a flashpoint for conflict.

3. Netanyahu's Balancing Act:

- Netanyahu has faced pressure from far-right religious groups advocating for greater Jewish access to the Temple Mount, including calls to rebuild the Temple. However, he has avoided publicly endorsing these goals to prevent diplomatic fallout and regional escalation.
- His government has occasionally allowed symbolic actions, such as increased Jewish visits to the site, while maintaining a public commitment to the status quo, which restricts Jewish prayer on the Mount.

Far-Right Religious Influence

Religious Zionist and ultra-Orthodox factions within Netanyahu's coalition have increasingly pushed for policies that reflect their radical religious agendas, including greater control over the Temple Mount and other measures tied to messianic aspirations.

1. Coalition Partners Advocating Radical Policies:

- Figures like Itamar Ben-Gvir, leader of the far-right Otzma Yehudit party, and Bezalel Smotrich, a prominent Religious Zionist Party leader, openly advocate for changing the status quo on the Temple Mount.
- These leaders see Jewish sovereignty over the site as non-negotiable and support measures such as increased Jewish prayer rights, archaeological excavations, and eventual plans to prepare for the construction of the Third Temple.
- Policies like settlement expansion and legal frameworks to annex parts of the West Bank are seen as stepping stones toward fulfilling the broader messianic vision.

2. Netanyahu's Tacit Support and Appeasement:

- While Netanyahu has not explicitly endorsed plans to rebuild the Temple, his government's actions have often emboldened far-right groups. For example:
 - He has appointed figures like Ben-Gvir and Smotrich to key ministerial positions, granting them influence over national policy and control of sensitive areas like the Temple Mount.
 - His government has facilitated greater Jewish access to the site and permitted symbolic provocations, such as flag marches and demonstrations, which resonate with religious Zionists.
- By doing so, Netanyahu walks a fine line: satisfying his coalition partners while maintaining plausible deniability in the face of international criticism.

3. Challenges to Regional Alliances:

- Netanyahu's tacit support for far-right religious agendas poses risks to Israel's regional alliances. Arab states that normalized relations with Israel under the Abraham Accords, such as the UAE and Bahrain, have expressed concern over provocations on the Temple Mount.
- Balancing the demands of his domestic coalition with the need to preserve these alliances underscores Netanyahu's pragmatism, even as his actions align with messianic aspirations.

Implications for Israel's Future

The growing influence of far-right religious factions and their focus on the Temple Mount highlights the increasing tension between Israel's democratic principles and its religious-nationalist identity. Netanyahu's leadership has amplified this tension by granting legitimacy to messianic aspirations while avoiding direct confrontation with global and regional powers. This delicate balancing act has significant implications:

- Domestically, it deepens divisions within Israeli society, particularly between secular and religious Jews.
- Regionally, it risks destabilizing fragile peace agreements and inciting further conflict with Palestinians and the broader Muslim world.
- Globally, it undermines Israel's image as a stable democracy, raising questions about the long-term consequences of intertwining religious ideology with state policy.

Netanyahu's actions on the Temple Mount reflect his role as a conduit for messianic symbolism, even if his personal motivations remain rooted in political survival. Whether intentionally or not, his governance has brought the dream of the Third Temple closer to mainstream discourse, with profound and unpredictable consequences for Israel and the region.

IV. Permanent Prevention of a Palestinian State

The prevention of a Palestinian state has been a cornerstone of Netanyahu's long-term strategy, aligned closely with the far-right vision of maintaining Israeli sovereignty over the entirety of the historic Land of Israel. Through a combination of settlement expansion, legislative and military strategies, and deft international diplomacy, Netanyahu's government has systematically undermined the feasibility of a two-state solution, while exacerbating the challenges faced by Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza.

Strategies to Undermine the Two-State Solution

1. Expansion of Settlements:

- Under Netanyahu's leadership, settlement construction in the West Bank has accelerated, with new neighborhoods, infrastructure, and outposts designed to create "facts on the ground." These settlements fragment Palestinian territory, making it geographically and politically impossible to form a contiguous Palestinian state.
- Efforts to legalize previously unauthorized settlements have further entrenched Israeli control, with legislation such as the 2017 **Regularization Law**, which retroactively legalized settlements built on privately owned Palestinian land.

2. Legal and Administrative Frameworks:

- Netanyahu's government has implemented policies to extend Israeli law and administrative authority over settlements, blurring the distinction between Israel and the occupied territories.
- Plans for de facto annexation of key areas, including the Jordan Valley, reinforce Israeli sovereignty and signal to the international community that a two-state solution is no longer viable.

3. Military Strategies:

- Frequent military operations in Gaza and the West Bank are framed as necessary for security but also serve to disrupt Palestinian

governance and infrastructure. Military checkpoints, raids, and restrictions on movement fragment Palestinian society and undermine their capacity to govern effectively.

Impact on Palestinian Livelihoods

Netanyahu's policies have had profound consequences for Palestinian communities, particularly in terms of economic development, social cohesion, and overall quality of life.

1. Economic Strangulation:

- Restrictions on movement and trade, such as the blockade on Gaza, have devastated the Palestinian economy. Gaza faces extreme unemployment and poverty, with limited access to essential resources like electricity, clean water, and medical supplies.
- In the West Bank, checkpoints, road closures, and settlement expansions disrupt Palestinian commerce and agriculture, making economic sustainability increasingly difficult.

2. Displacement and Home Demolitions:

- Israeli authorities frequently demolish Palestinian homes and infrastructure, citing lack of permits, which are nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain. These demolitions, often carried out in conjunction with settlement expansion, displace families and deepen the humanitarian crisis.

3. Psychological and Social Impact:

- Constant military presence and periodic escalations in violence create a climate of fear and instability, particularly for Palestinian children. Access to education, healthcare, and other basic services is severely restricted, perpetuating cycles of poverty and disenfranchisement.
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International Diplomacy

Netanyahu has skillfully leveraged international alliances to shield Israel from global pressures advocating for a two-state solution. His diplomatic approach combines building relationships with key allies, exploiting divisions in the international community, and reframing the Palestinian issue to focus on broader regional threats.

1. Strengthening Alliances with the United States:

- Netanyahu has cultivated close ties with successive U.S. administrations, particularly under Donald Trump. The Trump administration's policies, including recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital and endorsing Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, emboldened Netanyahu's government to pursue settlement expansion without fear of significant repercussions.

2. Reframing the Conflict:

- Netanyahu has effectively shifted the narrative of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by framing it as part of a broader struggle against terrorism and regional instability. By emphasizing threats from Iran, Hamas, and Hezbollah, Netanyahu has deflected attention from the Palestinian issue, securing support from Western and Arab allies.

3. Exploiting Divisions in the Arab World:

- Through agreements like the **Abraham Accords**, Netanyahu has normalized relations with several Arab states, including the UAE and Bahrain, without requiring concessions on the Palestinian issue. This represents a significant diplomatic victory, weakening Arab solidarity with the Palestinian cause and further isolating Palestinian leadership.

4. Engaging Global Forums:

- Netanyahu's government has used its diplomatic influence to block or undermine resolutions in international bodies like the United

Nations that criticize Israeli policies. By leveraging alliances and economic partnerships, Israel has mitigated global condemnation of its actions in the occupied territories.

Netanyahu's strategies to prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state have cemented his legacy as a leader who prioritized Israel's security and territorial control over international consensus and the prospect of peace. While these policies resonate with his right-wing base and far-right allies, they have drawn widespread criticism for perpetuating humanitarian suffering and eroding the foundations of a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Ultimately, Netanyahu's approach exemplifies a calculated effort to align personal political survival with the broader ideological goal of a Greater Israel, permanently sidelining the two-state solution.

V. Strengthening Jewish National Identity

Under Benjamin Netanyahu's leadership, the emphasis on Jewish national identity has been a defining feature of Israeli policy and rhetoric. By enacting legislation and supporting policies that prioritize the Jewish character of the state, Netanyahu has sought to solidify Israel's position as a Jewish homeland. However, this approach has far-reaching implications for non-Jewish citizens, societal cohesion, and the broader political landscape. Moreover, it underscores Netanyahu's strategy of leveraging Jewish nationalism as a tool to maintain political power and assert Israel's sovereignty in a volatile region.

Legislative Measures

Netanyahu's government has spearheaded or supported legislation that reinforces Israel's identity as a Jewish state, often at the expense of inclusivity for its non-Jewish citizens. One of the most notable examples is the **Nation-State Law**, passed in 2018.

1. The Nation-State Law:

- This controversial Basic Law declares Israel as the “nation-state of the Jewish people” and enshrines Jewish self-determination as a unique right exclusive to Jews.
- The law downgrades Arabic from an official language to a language with “special status,” reinforcing the primacy of Hebrew.
- It prioritizes Jewish settlement as a national value, encouraging expansion in the West Bank and other contested areas.

2. Impact of the Nation-State Law:

- Critics argue that the law institutionalizes inequality, marginalizing Israel’s Arab minority, which constitutes about 20% of the population.
- Proponents, including Netanyahu, defend it as a necessary affirmation of Israel’s Jewish identity in the face of internal and external challenges.

3. Other Legislative Efforts:

- Laws and policies restricting non-Jewish access to certain lands, limiting their representation in government, or making it harder for Arab parties to contest elections reflect a broader trend of prioritizing Jewish citizens in the legal framework.

Social and Cultural Impact

Netanyahu’s policies and rhetoric have had significant effects on the social and cultural fabric of Israel, particularly in terms of how non-Jewish citizens are perceived and treated.

1. Impact on Non-Jewish Citizens:

- Arab citizens of Israel, including Christians, Muslims, and Druze, often feel alienated by policies that prioritize Jewish identity.

- The Nation-State Law and related measures exacerbate existing inequalities in housing, education, and employment, deepening divisions between Jewish and non-Jewish communities.
- While non-Jewish citizens technically enjoy equal rights under Israeli law, the emphasis on Jewish identity reinforces systemic disparities.

2. Polarization in Israeli Society:

- Netanyahu's focus on Jewish nationalism has contributed to increasing polarization within Israel, with secular and liberal Jews often opposing the erosion of democratic values in favor of ethnic and religious identity.
- Tensions between ultra-Orthodox, nationalist, and secular communities have also intensified, as each group has differing visions of what it means to be a "Jewish state."

3. Cultural Reinforcement of Jewish Identity:

- Through education, media, and public discourse, Netanyahu's government has promoted narratives emphasizing Jewish historical and religious ties to the land, often downplaying or delegitimizing Palestinian claims.

The Political Utility of National Identity

For Netanyahu, Jewish nationalism serves not only as a guiding principle but also as a powerful political tool to consolidate power and navigate complex domestic and international challenges.

1. Framing Jewish Nationalism as Essential to Security:

- Netanyahu frequently links Jewish identity to Israel's security and survival, arguing that the preservation of a Jewish state is crucial in a region marked by hostility and instability.
- This framing resonates deeply with many Israelis, particularly those who see external threats like Iran, Hamas, and Hezbollah as existential challenges.

2. Leveraging Jewish Nationalism to Consolidate Power:

- By aligning himself with religious Zionist and ultra-Orthodox parties, Netanyahu has built a stable political base that views him as a defender of Jewish identity.
- His rhetoric often positions opponents of his policies as threats to Israel's Jewish character, effectively polarizing the electorate and consolidating right-wing support.

3. Jewish Identity in International Diplomacy:

- Netanyahu uses the narrative of Israel as a Jewish homeland to garner support from diaspora Jewish communities and pro-Israel groups worldwide, particularly in the United States.
- This narrative also helps justify controversial policies, such as settlement expansion and the rejection of Palestinian statehood, on the grounds that they are necessary to protect Israel's Jewish nature.

4. Suppressing Criticism:

- Critics, both domestic and international, who oppose policies favoring Jewish nationalism are often labeled as anti-Israel or anti-Semitic. This tactic silences dissent and deflects attention from the negative consequences of these policies.

Netanyahu's focus on strengthening Jewish national identity is central to his legacy. While it has fortified his political position and resonated with a significant portion of the electorate, it has also deepened societal divisions, alienated non-Jewish citizens, and drawn international criticism. By framing Jewish nationalism as essential to Israel's survival and leveraging it as a tool for political dominance, Netanyahu has reshaped the nation's identity in ways that will have lasting implications for its democratic character and future stability.

VI. Preparing for the Messianic Era

The concept of preparing for the **Messianic Era** holds a significant place in the ideologies of ultra-Orthodox and religious Zionist factions in Israel. These groups believe that their political and religious efforts are paving the way for the arrival of the Jewish messiah and the fulfillment of biblical prophecy. In this framework, Benjamin Netanyahu is often perceived as a temporary but indispensable instrument—a flawed yet necessary leader whose actions align with their messianic goals, even if his personal motivations may not. This section explores the growing influence of these factions on Israeli politics and how Netanyahu has become a vehicle for advancing their vision.

Messianic Movements in Israeli Politics

Religious Zionist and ultra-Orthodox groups have increasingly influenced Israeli politics, particularly under Netanyahu's leadership. These factions hold differing interpretations of what constitutes the Messianic Era, but they share key objectives: the reclamation of the biblical Land of Israel, the strengthening of Jewish sovereignty, and the eventual rebuilding of the Third Temple.

1. Religious Zionists:

- Religious Zionists blend traditional Jewish religious beliefs with modern political Zionism. They see the State of Israel as the beginning of the divine redemption process and view the reclamation of the West Bank (Judea and Samaria) as a critical step toward fulfilling God's promise to the Jewish people.
- Leaders within this movement advocate for the annexation of the West Bank, the expansion of Jewish settlements, and policies that prioritize Jewish identity over democratic inclusivity.
- Many religious Zionists consider current events—such as the return of Jews to their ancestral homeland and the political control of Jerusalem—as signs that the Messianic Era is approaching.

2. Ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) Influence:

- Unlike religious Zionists, many ultra-Orthodox Jews historically refrained from endorsing modern political Zionism, viewing the establishment of a Jewish state as premature without divine intervention. However, in recent decades, ultra-Orthodox leaders have increasingly engaged in Israeli politics to ensure their communities' interests are protected.
- Haredi parties such as **Shas** and **United Torah Judaism** often focus on religious education, funding for their communities, and preserving the religious status quo. However, they align with religious Zionists on rejecting concessions to Palestinians and supporting policies that strengthen Jewish control over the land.

3. Shared Messianic Goals:

- Both factions see the Messianic Era as a time when Jewish sovereignty over the Land of Israel will be complete and the Jewish people will serve as a spiritual light to the world.
- The rebuilding of the Third Temple on the Temple Mount, considered the holiest site in Judaism, is central to this vision. While politically sensitive, the movement to reclaim the Temple Mount has gained momentum among fringe groups, with tacit support from some religious Zionist leaders.

Netanyahu as a Temporary Tool

In the eyes of these messianic movements, Netanyahu is viewed as an imperfect yet vital figure—a political leader whose governance serves as a bridge to their ultimate religious goals. Despite his secular inclinations and reputation for pragmatism, Netanyahu's actions and alliances have aligned closely with their messianic vision.

1. A Flawed but Necessary Leader:

- Netanyahu's personal motivations—such as political survival and consolidating power—may not align with the religious fervor of his coalition partners. However, his policies have advanced their agenda, making him a valuable asset.
- His governments have facilitated the expansion of settlements, supported legislation that strengthens Jewish identity, and resisted international pressure for a two-state solution—all actions that resonate with religious Zionists and ultra-Orthodox groups.

2. Carrying the Messianic Agenda:

- Netanyahu's alliance with far-right leaders such as **Itamar Ben-Gvir** and **Bezalel Smotrich** has strengthened the influence of messianic ideologies in Israeli politics. These figures openly advocate for annexing the West Bank and altering the status quo on the Temple Mount, viewing such steps as critical to advancing the redemption process.
- By providing these factions with political legitimacy and a platform, Netanyahu has effectively enabled their messianic vision to take root in mainstream policy discussions.

3. The Messiah's Donkey Metaphor:

- Within the messianic framework, Netanyahu is often likened to “the messiah's donkey”—a mundane and imperfect vehicle used to carry out a divine mission. His governance is seen as a means to an end, a temporary but essential phase in the broader process of divine redemption.
- This perspective allows messianic groups to overlook Netanyahu's personal flaws or lack of religious conviction, focusing instead on the outcomes of his leadership.

4. Balancing Pragmatism and Ideology:

- While Netanyahu has embraced policies that align with messianic goals, he has also exercised caution to avoid alienating moderate voters and international allies. For example, his public support for annexation was tempered by his decision to delay formal implementation, citing U.S. and global opposition.
 - This balancing act reinforces his role as a transitional figure—someone who advances the agenda without fully committing to its most radical elements.
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Challenges and Implications

1. Rising Tensions with Secular Israelis:

- Netanyahu's alliances with messianic factions have deepened divisions within Israeli society, particularly between secular and religious communities. Many secular Israelis view the growing influence of these groups as a threat to the nation's democratic and pluralistic character.

2. International Criticism:

- Policies driven by messianic ideologies—such as settlement expansion and restrictions on Palestinian access to holy sites—have drawn widespread condemnation from the international community. Netanyahu's role in enabling these policies complicates Israel's diplomatic relationships, particularly with Western democracies.

3. Uncertainty in the Post-Netanyahu Era:

- As messianic movements gain traction within Israeli politics, questions arise about the future leadership of the country. If Netanyahu is ultimately replaced by more ideologically driven figures, such as Ben-Gvir or Smotrich, the balance between pragmatism and religious zeal may shift, with profound consequences for Israel's domestic and international standing.

In summary, Netanyahu's tenure has positioned him as a critical figure in advancing the messianic vision of Israel, even if his personal motivations remain secular and pragmatic. By aligning himself with ultra-Orthodox and religious Zionist factions, he has enabled their goals while maintaining his grip on power. This dynamic underscores the tension between Netanyahu's role as a political strategist and his function as a tool for a broader, messianic agenda. Whether intentionally or not, Netanyahu has become a modern embodiment of "the messiah's donkey," carrying the weight of a vision that transcends his own leadership.

VII. Demographic Concerns and Policy Responses

Demographic trends have played a central role in shaping Israeli policy under Benjamin Netanyahu's leadership. The balance between maintaining a Jewish majority within Israel and managing the region's complex political dynamics has profound implications for national identity, security, and international diplomacy. Netanyahu's strategies to address these challenges reflect his broader political goals and alignment with far-right and religious factions.

Demographic Challenges

The demographic composition of Israel, including the territories it controls, poses significant political and social challenges. Maintaining a Jewish majority is considered essential by many Israeli leaders, including Netanyahu, to preserve the state's identity as a Jewish and democratic nation.

1. Fears of Losing a Jewish Majority:

- As of recent estimates, approximately 21% of Israel's citizens are Arab, primarily Palestinian Muslims and Christians. In the territories of the West Bank and Gaza, the Palestinian population is estimated to be around 5 million, nearly equaling the number of Jews in Israel and the settlements combined.

- High birth rates among Palestinians, particularly in Gaza and the West Bank, contrast with declining or stable birth rates among secular Jewish Israelis. This demographic trend raises fears of a future where Arabs could outnumber Jews in the territory controlled by Israel, fundamentally altering the political and cultural landscape.
- Netanyahu and his allies often frame this demographic reality as an existential threat, emphasizing the need for policies to preserve a Jewish majority.

2. The "One-State Solution" Concern:

- If Israel were to formally annex the West Bank without granting Palestinians full citizenship, it would face accusations of apartheid. Conversely, granting citizenship could result in a Jewish minority, undermining the nation's Jewish character.
- Netanyahu's government has sought to avoid both scenarios, pursuing strategies that maintain control over the land while limiting Palestinian political influence.

Immigration and Population Policies

Netanyahu's policies have aimed to address these demographic challenges by encouraging Jewish immigration, incentivizing higher Jewish birth rates, and marginalizing Palestinian population growth in strategic areas.

1. Encouraging Jewish Immigration (Aliyah):

- Netanyahu's governments have supported initiatives to encourage Jewish immigration to Israel from around the world, particularly from countries facing rising anti-Semitism.
- Programs offering financial incentives, housing assistance, and social integration services have been implemented to attract Jews from the diaspora, particularly from Russia, Ukraine, France, and the United States.

- These efforts serve the dual purpose of increasing the Jewish population and reinforcing Israel's global image as a haven for Jews.

2. Incentivizing Jewish Birth Rates:

- Policies such as child allowances, tax breaks for large families, and subsidies for childcare disproportionately benefit ultra-Orthodox and religious Zionist communities, which already have high birth rates.
- While these measures strengthen the Jewish demographic, they also deepen social and economic divides between ultra-Orthodox and secular Israelis, as the former rely heavily on state support while often remaining outside the workforce.

3. Restricting Palestinian Growth:

- In the West Bank, restrictions on building permits and land access limit Palestinian population expansion. These policies are particularly evident in Area C, where Israeli authorities control land use and planning.
- In East Jerusalem, similar restrictions and home demolitions have been employed to reduce the Palestinian presence and ensure a Jewish majority in the city.

Impact on Regional Politics

Demographic concerns are not confined to Israel's internal policies; they also heavily influence regional politics, particularly settlement expansion and peace negotiations.

1. Demographics and Settlement Expansion:

- Expanding Jewish settlements in the West Bank serves a dual purpose: asserting sovereignty over contested territories and diluting the Palestinian population's presence in strategically important areas.

- Netanyahu's government has prioritized settlement construction in areas with relatively low Palestinian populations to avoid direct demographic confrontation while entrenching Israeli control.

2. The Role of Demographics in Peace Negotiations:

- Demographic realities complicate the viability of a two-state solution. Israeli leaders, including Netanyahu, argue that the high Palestinian birth rate in Gaza and the West Bank undermines the stability of any future Palestinian state.
- Conversely, international advocates for peace stress that addressing demographic disparities is crucial to achieving a lasting resolution. Netanyahu's reluctance to engage in meaningful negotiations reflects his focus on maintaining demographic and territorial advantages.

3. Impact on Relations with Arab States:

- While demographic concerns primarily affect Israeli-Palestinian relations, they also influence Israel's broader regional strategy. The normalization agreements under the Abraham Accords, for example, allow Netanyahu to sidestep Palestinian statehood demands by forging alliances based on shared security interests against Iran.
- However, these agreements have not eliminated demographic concerns, as Arab populations within Israel and the territories continue to challenge the state's identity as both Jewish and democratic.

Challenges and Criticism

Netanyahu's demographic strategies have drawn criticism both domestically and internationally:

- **Domestic Divisions:**

- Policies favoring ultra-Orthodox and religious communities exacerbate tensions with secular Israelis, who often bear the economic burden of supporting these groups.

- Arab citizens of Israel face systemic inequalities, leading to feelings of alienation and resentment.
 - **International Criticism:**
 - Demographic policies, particularly those affecting Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, are widely condemned as discriminatory and contrary to international law.
 - Critics argue that these measures undermine Israel's democratic values and tarnish its global reputation.
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By prioritizing the preservation of a Jewish majority, Netanyahu's policies reflect a deep-seated concern about the nation's demographic future. While these strategies align with far-right and religious Zionist goals, they come at a cost: deepening divisions within Israeli society, perpetuating the Palestinian humanitarian crisis, and straining Israel's international relationships. Netanyahu's ability to navigate these challenges has cemented his political legacy, but it has also entrenched a status quo that many fear is unsustainable in the long term.

VIII. Delegitimization of Opposing Narratives

A central aspect of Benjamin Netanyahu's political strategy has been the systematic delegitimization of opposing narratives, particularly those supporting Palestinian history, identity, and statehood aspirations. Through legal, rhetorical, and media strategies, Netanyahu has not only reinforced his domestic political position but also shaped global perceptions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These efforts, however, have deepened societal divisions within Israel and drawn criticism from international observers.

Undermining Palestinian Claims

Netanyahu's governments have actively worked to delegitimize Palestinian historical claims to the land and their aspirations for statehood. These efforts rely on a combination of historical revisionism, legal measures, and strategic rhetoric.

1. Challenging Palestinian History:

- Netanyahu and his allies have frequently questioned the historical legitimacy of Palestinian national identity, portraying it as a modern political construct rather than an organic, historical development. This framing serves to undermine the Palestinian claim to self-determination and their connection to the land.
- Statements such as Netanyahu's 2019 comment that "the Palestinians were not a distinct people before the 20th century" reflect a broader effort to diminish their historical narrative.

2. Delegitimizing Statehood Aspirations:

- By emphasizing the failure of Palestinian leadership to unify or govern effectively—citing divisions between the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza—Netanyahu portrays the Palestinians as incapable of establishing a viable state.
- His government has also pointed to incitement in Palestinian educational materials and media as evidence that Palestinian statehood would perpetuate conflict rather than resolve it.

3. Legal and Administrative Measures:

- Netanyahu's policies in the West Bank, such as settlement expansion and restrictions on Palestinian construction, effectively redraw boundaries in ways that diminish the territorial basis for a future Palestinian state.
 - By maintaining control over East Jerusalem and denying Palestinians access to key religious and cultural sites, his government reinforces the perception that Palestinian claims are secondary to Israeli sovereignty.
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Media Control and Propaganda

Netanyahu has been accused of leveraging media narratives to shape public opinion and consolidate his political power. These efforts include direct influence over media outlets, strategic use of propaganda, and attacks on dissenting voices.

1. Influence over Media Narratives:

- Allegations against Netanyahu, such as those in the **Case 4000 corruption trial**, suggest that he provided regulatory benefits to telecommunications mogul Shaul Elovitch in exchange for favorable coverage on the popular news site Walla. This reflects a broader pattern of attempts to manipulate media narratives to support his political agenda.
- Netanyahu's government has also sought to sideline critical media outlets, accusing them of bias and undermining their credibility with the public.

2. Propaganda Campaigns:

- Netanyahu's rhetoric often focuses on framing himself as a protector of Israel against existential threats, using Palestinian groups like Hamas and Hezbollah as focal points. This messaging downplays the legitimacy of Palestinian grievances while emphasizing Israeli victimhood and resilience.
- Social media platforms have become key tools for Netanyahu's propaganda, allowing his government to directly target Israeli and international audiences with curated messages that reinforce his narratives.

3. Silencing Dissent:

- Journalists, activists, and academics who challenge Netanyahu's policies or narratives often face public vilification and accusations of anti-Semitism or anti-Israel bias. These tactics discourage critical discourse and polarize public opinion.

Polarization Within Israel

Netanyahu's strategies have significantly deepened societal divisions within Israel, exacerbating tensions between different political, religious, and ethnic groups.

1. Divisions Among Jewish Israelis:

- By aligning with far-right and religious factions, Netanyahu has alienated secular and centrist Israelis who view his policies as undermining Israel's democratic values.
- His focus on Jewish nationalism and settlement expansion appeals to his base but fosters resentment among those who prioritize peace and coexistence.

2. Marginalization of Arab Citizens:

- Arab citizens of Israel, who make up approximately 20% of the population, often feel excluded from Netanyahu's vision of a Jewish state. Policies like the **Nation-State Law**, combined with rhetoric that portrays Arabs as a demographic threat, reinforce feelings of alienation and second-class citizenship.
- Netanyahu's infamous 2015 warning that "Arab voters are coming out in droves" exemplifies how his rhetoric has contributed to polarization and mistrust between Jewish and Arab communities.

3. Impact on Political Discourse:

- Netanyahu's tactics have polarized political discourse in Israel, reducing space for nuanced debate or compromise. Opponents are often labeled as traitors or enemies of the state, while Netanyahu's supporters are portrayed as the true guardians of Israel's future.
- This polarization extends to discussions about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, where advocating for negotiations or concessions is increasingly seen as a betrayal of Jewish sovereignty.

Consequences of Delegitimization

Netanyahu's approach to delegitimizing opposing narratives has both short- and long-term consequences:

- **Domestically:**
 - These tactics have entrenched divisions within Israeli society, making it harder to achieve unity or consensus on key issues. The marginalization of Arab citizens and dissenting voices weakens Israel's democratic fabric and fosters internal resentment.
- **Internationally:**
 - Efforts to delegitimize Palestinian claims have strained Israel's relationships with allies who support a two-state solution. Netanyahu's rhetoric and policies are often cited as obstacles to peace, damaging Israel's global reputation.
- **For the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict:**
 - By undermining Palestinian history and aspirations, Netanyahu's government has further entrenched the status quo, making a peaceful resolution to the conflict increasingly difficult. These strategies also perpetuate cycles of violence and mistrust.

In delegitimizing opposing narratives, Netanyahu has reinforced his political position and aligned himself with far-right and religious factions. However, these tactics come at a significant cost, deepening societal divisions within Israel, alienating Arab citizens, and complicating efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. By shaping public opinion through rhetoric, media influence, and legal measures, Netanyahu has created an environment where dissenting voices are marginalized, and polarization is the norm, leaving little room for reconciliation or compromise.

IX. Normalization and Global Influence

Benjamin Netanyahu's tenure as Israel's longest-serving prime minister is marked by significant achievements in strengthening Israel's global position. Through strategic alliances, deft diplomacy, and the landmark **Abraham Accords**, Netanyahu has expanded Israel's international influence while balancing the demands of his domestic far-right and religious allies. His ability to navigate these often conflicting priorities demonstrates a calculated pragmatism that has cemented his legacy as a global statesman and a polarizing domestic figure.

International Alliances

Netanyahu's approach to international relations has been rooted in securing Israel's position as a dominant regional power while fostering alliances that align with its security, economic, and political interests.

1. Strengthening Ties with the United States:

- Netanyahu's relationship with the U.S. has been a cornerstone of his foreign policy. During his tenure, he cultivated strong ties with successive American administrations, particularly under Donald Trump, who adopted policies that significantly favored Israel:
 - **Recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's Capital (2017):** Trump's decision to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem was a major diplomatic victory for Netanyahu, reinforcing Israel's claim to the city as its undivided capital.
 - **Recognition of Israeli Sovereignty Over the Golan Heights (2019):** Another significant milestone, this decision solidified U.S. support for Israel's territorial claims in a contested region.
 - **Support for Annexation Plans:** While Trump's administration stopped short of endorsing formal annexation of the West Bank, the tacit approval of settlement expansion emboldened Netanyahu's policies.

- Netanyahu's rapport with U.S. lawmakers has not been without controversy. His 2015 speech to Congress opposing the Obama administration's Iran nuclear deal strained relations with the Democratic Party, emphasizing Netanyahu's preference for aligning with Republican leadership.

2. The Abraham Accords:

- One of Netanyahu's most significant achievements in international diplomacy is the **Abraham Accords**, brokered with the assistance of the Trump administration. These agreements normalized relations between Israel and several Arab states, including the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan.
- The accords represent a historic shift in Middle Eastern politics, breaking with decades of Arab solidarity with the Palestinian cause. Netanyahu skillfully leveraged shared concerns about Iran's regional ambitions to forge these alliances.
- By prioritizing economic and security cooperation over Palestinian statehood, the Abraham Accords underscored Netanyahu's strategy of bypassing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in favor of regional integration.

3. Outreach to Emerging Powers:

- Beyond traditional allies, Netanyahu has expanded Israel's relations with emerging powers such as India, China, and African nations. These partnerships focus on technology, defense, and economic cooperation, positioning Israel as a global leader in innovation and security.

Balancing Pragmatism and Ideology

Netanyahu's ability to cater to both domestic hardliners and international expectations highlights his skill in balancing pragmatism with ideological commitments.

1. Catering to Religious Hardliners:

- Domestically, Netanyahu has aligned himself with far-right and religious Zionist factions, who demand policies such as settlement expansion, rejection of Palestinian sovereignty, and the strengthening of Jewish national identity.
- To appease these groups, Netanyahu has pursued aggressive settlement policies and legislation like the **Nation-State Law**, while resisting pressure for concessions to the Palestinians.

2. Pragmatic Diplomacy:

- While catering to domestic hardliners, Netanyahu has presented a more pragmatic face to the international community. For example:
 - **Delaying Formal Annexation:** Despite publicly supporting annexation of parts of the West Bank, Netanyahu postponed these plans in favor of securing the Abraham Accords, recognizing that formal annexation would alienate key allies and destabilize the region.
 - **Managing the Iran Threat:** Netanyahu has consistently prioritized countering Iran's nuclear ambitions, framing it as a shared threat to Israel and Sunni Arab states. This focus has strengthened Israel's ties with Gulf nations and aligned it with broader Western security interests.

3. Rhetoric vs. Reality:

- Netanyahu's public rhetoric often reflects the hardline positions of his domestic base, while his actions are tempered by the realities of international diplomacy. This dual approach allows him to maintain support among religious and nationalist voters while avoiding significant fallout on the global stage.
- For instance, Netanyahu has fiercely opposed Palestinian statehood in domestic forums but has avoided outright rejection in international settings to preserve Israel's relationships with Western allies.

Challenges and Criticism

Netanyahu's strategies, while successful in expanding Israel's global influence, have faced criticism:

- **Erosion of Bipartisan U.S. Support:**
 - Netanyahu's close alignment with Republican leaders, particularly Trump, has strained relations with the Democratic Party and alienated progressive Jewish communities in the U.S. This polarization risks weakening the traditionally bipartisan nature of U.S.-Israel relations.
- **Marginalization of the Palestinian Issue:**
 - By sidelining the Palestinian question in favor of regional alliances, Netanyahu has exacerbated tensions in the West Bank and Gaza, perpetuating cycles of violence and undermining prospects for peace.
- **Concerns Over Authoritarian Tendencies:**
 - Critics argue that Netanyahu's domestic policies, such as judicial reforms and attacks on media independence, are inconsistent with the democratic values Israel promotes in its international partnerships.

Legacy

Netanyahu's ability to strengthen Israel's international alliances while navigating domestic pressures underscores his dual role as a pragmatic diplomat and an ideological standard-bearer. The **Abraham Accords** and closer ties with the U.S. highlight his success in reshaping Israel's global position, but his alignment with far-right factions and sidelining of the Palestinian issue have deepened regional and domestic divisions. Whether his strategies lead to long-term stability or further polarization will define Netanyahu's legacy on the world stage.

Conclusion

Benjamin Netanyahu's legacy is a paradoxical blend of personal ambition and broader ideological utility. As a self-interested politician, he has demonstrated an unparalleled ability to maintain power, skillfully navigating a complex political landscape through alliances, diplomacy, and pragmatism. Simultaneously, his leadership has made him a critical tool for advancing the far-right and religious Zionist agenda, even as he claims to prioritize pragmatism and security. This duality positions Netanyahu as both a political mastermind and an unwitting vehicle for ideological forces that seek to reshape Israel's identity and future.

Recap of Netanyahu's Dual Role

Throughout his career, Netanyahu has cultivated a persona that balances domestic political maneuvering with international statesmanship. On one hand, he has embraced the far-right's messianic vision by supporting settlement expansion, passing legislation that reinforces Jewish identity, and resisting concessions to the Palestinians. These actions align with religious and nationalist aspirations for a Greater Israel, furthering a vision that transcends his own political survival. On the other hand, Netanyahu has demonstrated a pragmatic streak, delaying annexation plans to secure the Abraham Accords and navigating global diplomacy to strengthen Israel's alliances and economy.

This dual role underscores a central tension in Netanyahu's leadership: his personal motives for political survival often align with, but are not necessarily driven by, the messianic and far-right ideologies that his policies enable. For his allies, this makes Netanyahu a critical, if imperfect, figure—someone who can advance their agenda while shouldering the burden of compromise and criticism on the global stage.

Reflection on the Implications of His Leadership

Netanyahu's tenure has profoundly shaped Israel's domestic and international trajectory, with lasting implications:

- **Domestically**, his policies have deepened divisions within Israeli society. His alignment with religious and far-right factions has alienated secular Israelis and marginalized Arab citizens, exacerbating tensions and raising questions about Israel's democratic character.

- **Regionally**, his sidelining of the Palestinian issue has entrenched the status quo, perpetuating cycles of violence and making a two-state solution increasingly unviable. Settlement expansion and demographic policies further complicate prospects for peace.
- **Globally**, Netanyahu's diplomacy has elevated Israel's status as a regional power, exemplified by the Abraham Accords. However, his polarizing approach—favoring right-wing allies like Donald Trump—has strained Israel's relationships with progressive and centrist voices in the international community.

These outcomes reflect the complexity of Netanyahu's legacy: while he has undoubtedly bolstered Israel's security and global influence, his strategies have also deepened societal and regional divides, leaving unresolved challenges for his successors.

Final Thoughts

Whether Benjamin Netanyahu views himself as a tool for ideological goals or solely as a political tactician, his actions have undeniably advanced a vision that aligns with far-right and messianic ideologies. He has become, in many ways, a modern embodiment of **“the messiah's donkey”**—a figure who, knowingly or not, carries the weight of a transformative agenda. While Netanyahu may not see himself in this role, his policies and alliances have positioned him as a central figure in a broader historical and religious narrative.

As Israel continues to grapple with questions of identity, democracy, and security, Netanyahu's legacy will remain a contentious and defining chapter in its history. His ability to simultaneously serve his own interests and those of ideological movements has reshaped the nation, for better or worse, leaving a lasting imprint on its future. Whether this path leads to redemption or deeper conflict depends on how Israel navigates the divisions and challenges that Netanyahu's leadership has amplified.

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