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## **Between neo-revisionist neoclassical realism and pragmatism. The foreign policy of the Likud party under Benjamin Netanyahu**

*Neo-revisionism* is a term proposed by Ilan Peleg and Paul Shaum for the philosophy originated by Menachem Begin in 1977 and kept by Yitzhak Shamir and Benjamin Netanyahu. It invokes Vladimir Jabotinski's revisionism with a strong emphasis on state-centrism, bilateral alliances, power and territory. The foreign policy of the Likud leaders showed that a postulated ideological hard-line stand is far from political reality and is closer to a pragmatic interpretation of state's surrounding. The author will try to examine the relation between ideology and pragmatism in the Likud's policy. It will also be shown in the light of neoclassical realism – close to neo-revisionism – by the examples of power, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, non-state representatives but also in the light of pragmatism. The overview of the Likud's policy is divided between ideologised aspects of securing the self-interest of the state, Israeli *raison d'état*, acting against Arab states' ambitions and securing the territory as a strategic depth and between pragmatic decisions like Begin's peace treaty with Egypt and returning the Sinai, Ariel Sharon's withdrawal of the settlements from the Gaza Strip or the freezing of settlement by Benjamin Netanyahu.

**Keywords:** Israel, international relations, neoclassical realism, Likud, UNESCO, Palestine

## **Między neorewizjonistycznym realizmem neoklasycznym a pragmatyzmem. Polityka zagraniczna Likudu pod przywództwem Benjamina Netanjahu**

*Neorewizjonizm* to termin zaproponowany przez Ilana Pelega i Paula Shauma na określenie ideologii zapoczątkowanej przez Menachema Begina i kontynuowanej przez Icchaka Szamira oraz Benjamina Netanjahu. Odwołuje się ona do rewizjonizmu Włodzimierza Żabotyńskiego z naciskiem na państwo jako głównego aktora w stosunkach międzynarodowych, siłę, terytorium i sojusze dwustronne. Polityka zagraniczna prowadzona latami przez premierów z Likudu wskazuje, że postulowana ideologiczna bezkompromisowość jest daleka od rzeczywistości, a realne działania często są bliższe podejściu pragmatycznemu. Autor podjął próbę zbadania relacji pomiędzy ideologią a pragmatyzmem w polityce zagranicznej Likudu na przykładzie stosunku tej partii do Palestyńczyków i UNESCO. Kwestie konfliktu izraelsko-palestyńskiego, organizacji pozarządowych czy użycia siły zbrojnej analizowano przez pryzmat realizmu neoklasycznego (podobnego w charakterystyce do neorewizjonizmu), a także pragmatyzmu.

Z jednej strony polityka zagraniczna Likudu jawi się jako kierowana zideologizowanymi czynnikami, jak racja stanu, interes własny Izraela czy działanie przeciw ambicjom państw arabskich, z drugiej jednak zdarzają się decyzje czysto pragmatyczne, jak podpisany przez Begina traktat pokojowy z Egiptem i zwrot półwyspu Synaj, decyzja Ariela Szarona o wycofaniu osiedli żydowskich ze Strefy Gazy czy zamrożenie osadnictwa przez Benjamina Netanjahu.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Izrael, stosunki międzynarodowe, realizm neoklasycyzy, Likud, UNESCO, Palestyna

## Introduction

Israel is a relatively young state which has faced many military conflicts and diplomatic tensions during its existence. The Arab states' attitude towards the state of Israel is mainly negative, in some cases even hostile. Thus, foreign policy is an important instrument for Israeli politicians. Its source lies in the Zionist movement which used international relations to promote its own ideas, statements and to build international support for the Jewish state. The same situation existed after 1948 when Israel was seeking endorsement for its interests, defence policy or future vision of the Middle East. The direction and character of relations depended on left-wing, right-wing governments and Israeli-Palestinian relations but each government treated foreign policy as a strategic instrument for the state's existence and its security. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs not only deals with diplomatic tensions but searches for support among the international community. It can be assumed that the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is dominated politically by the Likud (the party formed governments in 1996–1999, 2001–2005, 2009–2019<sup>1</sup>). This party won elections shortly after the Oslo Accords, so it had an impact on the course of the peace process. Thus, Israel's international relations were shaped by a right-wing government with its orthodox and national-religious allies.

Israeli foreign policy is a subject of wide academic research. Scientists examined Israel's challenges in chosen periods of time,<sup>2</sup> the impact of the Jewish culture or an ideology on foreign relations and policy<sup>3</sup> and

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1 It is still unknown who will finally create the government after Israeli elections in September 2019.

2 D. Ayalon, *Challenges to Israeli foreign policy*, "The Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs" 2010, No. 1, p. 7–14; M. Brecher, *Israel's foreign policy. Challenges of the 1970s*, "International Journal" 1973, vol. 28, No. 4, p. 748–765.

3 E. Inbar, *Jews, Jewishness and Israel's foreign policy*, "Jewish Political Studies Review" 1990, vol. 2, p. 165–183; A. Shlaim, A. Yaniv, *Domestic politics and foreign policy in Israel*, "International Affairs" 1980, vol. 56, No. 2, p. 242–262.

relations between Israel and other states (e.g. the USA, the Gulf States, Turkey).<sup>4</sup> There are also efforts and research to describe Israeli foreign policy in the prism of theories of international relations. For example, Ofira Seliktar in her book claims that until 1977 Israel adapted pragmatism in relations with the world but after Menachem Begin's election Israel became Clausewitzian. Begin's government redefined the way of using military power to realise national interests in the region of the Middle East. Seliktar wrote that the Likud party never admitted that American help is linked with Israeli readiness to follow the will of the USA.<sup>5</sup> It shows the realist approach in analysing Israel's foreign policy in the Likud government. One of the best known publications, by John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel lobby and U.S. foreign policy* also applied realist theory in analysing American foreign policy towards Israel and vicariously Israeli towards the USA.<sup>6</sup> Daniel Bosley also analysed Israeli-American relations in the prism of realist and neorealist approaches but at the end of his research concluded that these relations could not be fully described by the theories mentioned.<sup>7</sup>

This research will be an attempt to confront the foreign policy of the Likud party under Benjamin Netanyahu's rule with neoclassical realism and neo-revisionism to present the impact of domestic variables and determinants on the actions of Israel and to present relations between ideology and pragmatism. It also helps to show how international threats are interpreted at a state level. Because of domestic policy importance, it should be taken into account that states do not react always in the same way in every case.<sup>8</sup> What is important, is that most neoclassical realists and research perceive this theory as the theory of foreign policy analysis, not as the theory of international politics.<sup>9</sup> Thus, neoclassical realism will help to examine the aspects of the international relations conducted by the Likud party. Of course, the spectrum

4 Y. Guzansky, *Tacit allies. Israel and the Arab Gulf States*, "The Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs" 2011, vol. 5, No. 1, p. 9–17; E. Gilboa, *Obama in Israel. Fixing American-Israeli relations*, "The Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs" 2013, vol. 7, No. 2, p. 19–28.

5 O. Seliktar, *New Zionism and the foreign policy system of Israel*, Routledge, London 1986, p. 223–224, 226.

6 J.J. Mearsheimer, S.M. Walt, *The Israel lobby and U.S. foreign policy*, "Middle East Policy" 2006, vol. 13, No. 3, p. 29–87.

7 D. Bosley, *The United States and Israel: A (neo) realist relationship*, "In-Spire Journal of Law, Politics and Societies" 2008, vol. 3, No. 2, p. 33–52.

8 J. Czaputowicz, *Bezpieczeństwo międzynarodowe. Współczesne koncepcje*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2012, p. 124–125.

9 M. Kozub-Karkut, *Realizm neoklasycyzy – główne założenia i możliwości*, [in:] *Teoria realizmu w nauce o stosunkach międzynarodowych. Założenia i zastosowania badawcze*, red. E. Halizak, J. Czaputowicz, Rambler, Warszawa 2014, p. 45.

of Israel's foreign policy is wide and contains many components relating to Africa, Asia, USA, Europe, economy, security cooperation, human rights, etc. For the needs of this article, the analysed aspects of the foreign policy of Likud under Netanyahu's rule will be reduced to the attitude towards Palestinian statehood at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and UNESCO's position towards it. On this basis the following research questions are:

– How the Likud government perceives and reacts to messages from UNESCO on the level of international system?

– What the importance of Israeli domestic policy is in the case of the Likud's response to Palestinian statehood?

The hypothesis that this article should verify is that smart power and territorial issues are still important for the Likud, so its governments will not agree with Palestinian's full independence in the Gaza Strip and Judea and Samaria as it is seen as a threat to the state. Another hypothesis is that the Judea and Samaria with its political geography are important for the Likud's internal policy so the government will be very critical of UNESCO decisions about Palestinians which are unfavourable for Israel.

### **Neo-revisionism – characteristics**

The Likud party was created by Menachem Begin and Ariel Sharon in 1973. It is the successor to Begin's Herut party – the first right-wing party in Israel. Thus, the Likud has a long tradition in Israeli politics which refers also to the Irgun, Lehi, and Betar movements and Vladimir Jabotinski's revisionist Zionism.<sup>10</sup> Ilan Peleg and Paul Shaum described the characteristics of the internal and foreign policies represented by the politicians mentioned. Some aspects are a continuation of revisionist ideas, e.g. presented by the nationalist Jewish press in interwar Poland, some of them were strengthened by Begin or Netanyahu.<sup>11</sup>

The first element mentioned by Peleg and Shaum is Begin's legacy of military Zionism and the neo-revisionists' militarism. Researchers claim that the Likud under Begin's leadership started to use military forces not only to defend the country but also as an instrument to influence the region. Israel's military superiority and policy of reprisal, in the Likud's opinion,

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10 I. Peleg, P. Shaum, *Israeli neo-revisionism and American neoconservatism. The unexplored parallels*, "Middle East Journal" 2007, vol. 61, No. 1, p. 74–75.

11 *Ibidem*, p. 73–75.

creates stable and safe surroundings which allows Israel to achieve its national goals.<sup>12</sup> Similar arguments were propounded by radicalised revisionist youth and earlier in the revisionist interwar press in Poland. The weekly newspaper “Jerozolima Wyzwolona” claimed that only strong Jewish forces would ensure the Jewish state on both sides of the Jordan river. Moreover, Jews in Palestine should not follow Haganah’s restraint policy which could create another Jewish ghetto. Jews should only follow the way of the use of force.<sup>13</sup> In the monthly periodical “Chad Ness” there were articles exhorting that Jewish independence in Eretz Israel can be achieved only by a military struggle. The newspaper also promoted the need to spread the ideals of militarism among Jewish youth.<sup>14</sup> It shows that belief in the power of military force is deeply rooted inside Likud by people who were connected with Jewish military organisations before 1948 (e.g. PM Begin in Irgun and PM Shamir in Lehi).

Another factor is unilateralism based on the Israeli sense of relying only on itself. Thus, some actions are taken without consultation with other states or international organisations.<sup>15</sup> It refers to the principle of limited trust and reflects Israeli suspicion towards surrounding Arab states. The First Lebanon War (1982) or the strike on the Osirak reactor (1981) can be treated as unilateral actions at an international level. There could also be distinguished examples from internal policy like settlement activity, the Jerusalem Law (1980) or policy towards the Judea and Samaria.

Territorialism was also mentioned by Peleg and Shaum. They claim that territory was a significant part of the revisionist (the Jewish state on both sides of the Jordan river) and neo-revisionist ideology (mainly the Judea and Samaria). Both movements represent opposition to territorial concessions.<sup>16</sup> Seliktar additionally claims that the Likud party, shortly after it first won elections in 1977, presented an organised and well-planned policy of settlement development in the Judea and Samaria, and legislative annexation of the Golan Heights and Eastern Jerusalem.<sup>17</sup> Territorial issues were visible

12 Ibidem, p. 80, 84–86.

13 *Przegląd wojskowy – Narodowa Organizacja Zbrojna, Irgun Cwai Leumi*, “Jerozolima Wyzwolona”, 25 XI 1938, p. 6–8; *Proklamacja Komendanta Naczelnego Irgun Cwai Leumi do Jiszuwu*, “Jerozolima Wyzwolona”, 4 VIII 1939, p. 1–4.

14 T. Hatagli, *Kłamstwo o hawladze i prawda o wojnie*, “Chad Ness”, 1 VIII 1938, p. 1–3; J. Haber, *Na straży*, “Chad Ness”, 1 XII 1937, p. 9–10.

15 I. Peleg, P. Shaum, *Israeli neo-revisionism...*, p. 88.

16 Ibidem, p. 83.

17 O. Seliktar, *New Zionism...*, p. 227.

in the newspapers mentioned. Revisionists claimed that Palestine as territorial unity was possible to gather all Jews. Some articles even claimed that the Transjordan or Eastern Palestine are artificial and the only that had previously existed there had been Jewish.<sup>18</sup> This confirms the importance of political geography inside both movements. Each defended their own self-defined territorial integrity. In this way, the land became not only an issue of policy but also the issue of the identity, defence and future of the country. It also shows that Israeli foreign policy under the neo-revisionist course linked realism with domestic factors, and depended strongly on the leader's decisions and interpretations. From this, it can be seen that neo-revisionism is close to the characteristics of neoclassical realism.

### **Neoclassical realism and foreign policy – theoretical background**

A foreign policy, according to neoclassical realism, is constructed by international stimuli and domestic factors. Both are important but neoclassical realists claim that the level of the international system cannot be overestimated. This theory agrees that the nature of politics is conflictual and the relative power of states plays a major role.<sup>19</sup> But the domestic level of policy, decision makers' interpretation capacities and leaders are also important, if not more significant. Finally, foreign policy is created by intervening variables, i.e. the political leaders and the administration responsible for international relations. Thus, their perception of relations in the region or in the world will have an impact on the implementation of politics and the response to external factors.<sup>20</sup> Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro and Steven E. Lobell claim that foreign policy constructed by the state is influenced by several factors, e.g. decision processes, the state's individual character, internal constraints, unique traditions. Scholars call it the "bringing the state back in" analysis of realist theories.<sup>21</sup> It shows that not only the level of the international

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18 *Zdolności absorpcyjne Palestyny*, "Jerozolima Wyzwolona", 25 XII 1938, p. 2–3; *Tajemnica Wschodniej Palestyny*, "Jerozolima Wyzwolona", 19 II 1939, p. 6–8; *Prawo czy inne argumenty*, "Jerozolima Wyzwolona", 3 III 1939, p. 2–4.

19 J.W. Taliaferro, S.E. Lobell, N.M. Ripsman, *Introduction. Neoclassical realism, the state, and foreign policy*, [in:] *Neoclassical realism, the state, and foreign policy*, ed. S.E. Lobell, N.M. Ripsman, J.W. Taliaferro, Cambridge University Press, New York 2009, p. 19.

20 G. Rose, *Neoclassical realism and theories of foreign policy*, "World Politics" 1998, vol. 51, No. 1, p. 146–147, 154; N.M. Ripsman, J.W. Taliaferro, S.E. Lobell, *Neoclassical realist theory of international politics*, Oxford University Press, New York 2016, p. 31.

21 *Ibidem*, p. 31–32.

system conditions the state's response but the decisive element in foreign policy construction is at a domestic level.

Another important thing for neoclassical realists, and in the case of this article, is ideology. That means doctrines are equal to the use of material power in creating a foreign policy. It cannot be said that one is more significant or more fundamental in understanding international relations than another. However, ideas are unique for each group, party or individual. So, the power of doctrine is variable and it depends on the leader who holds it. Ideas often construct a strategic culture and in this way, they guide the reactions of states to changes in the international system.<sup>22</sup> In the case of the power of ideas, Nicholas Kitchen quoted Daniel Philpott who wrote that the power of ideas lies in "the ability of believers in ideas to alter the costs and benefits facing those who are in a position to promote or hinder the policies that the ideas demand", thus when formulating foreign policy the most effective ideas will dominate.<sup>23</sup> In the light of what was mentioned above, an important question for neoclassical realism's analysis is who is the leader. Because the leader represents ideas and worldview, the responses and process of making decisions will differ. In the case of Israel, it could be questioned if not Yitzhak Rabin, then who else from the Labour Party (heb. Ha-Avoda) party could lead Israel during the Oslo Accords. Or another question: who of the right-wing politicians during his tenure would allow such negotiations and agreements at all? Benjamin Netanyahu's interpretation and perception of the results of the Oslo Accords differed from Rabin's vision. It shows that left-wing politicians in Israel emphasise totally different postulates in the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks than right-wing or national-religious ones.

Neoclassical realists put the power of ideas alongside the power. The latter is the instrument states use to achieve national goals and interests. Power is constructed by industry, military force, demography and the desire to conduct conflict. The bigger the state's power is, the more the state engages directly in foreign policy. It allows control of external processes and of the impact to their surroundings.<sup>24</sup> It shows that power in neoclassical realism is connected with abilities, resources and perception. In this way, states' actions and responses will differ. Some states will prefer the *status quo* in their surroundings, on the contrary other states will aim for expansion.

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22 N. Kitchen, *Systemic pressures and domestic ideas. A neoclassical realist model of grand strategy formation*, "Review of International Studies" 2010, vol. 36, issue 1, p. 127, 130–133.

23 Ibidem, p. 132.

24 J. Czaputowicz, *Bezpieczeństwo...*, p. 123–125.

### The Likud under Netanyahu's rule

The Likud party undertook the Madrid Conference (1991), the Hebron Agreement (1997) and the Wye River Memorandum (1998) or unilateral disengagement from the Gaza Strip (2005). However, nowadays PM Benjamin Netanyahu and other party politicians are reluctant for full Palestinian independence, disregarding international pressure to achieve peace. The Likud party, as the main right-wing party in 90s, was against the Oslo Accords (1993, 1995). The Likud party was against any territorial concessions and ceding parts of Israel to the Palestinians. Netanyahu claimed that any agreement with the Palestinians will lead to the acceptance of terrorist activity inside Israel. Eli Hazan claims that the Likud party did not annul agreements made by the left-wing government, although nowadays they are immaterial.<sup>25</sup> PM Netanyahu's attitude towards the possibility of the creation of a Palestinian state in the Judea and Samaria was described in his book *A place among the nations. Israel and the world* from 1993. In the case of peace between the state of Israel and Arab states he wrote about the peace of deterrence. Its meaning is that the stronger Israel is (by military means), the more likely Arab states will be to settle the conflict. The safer the state is, the more assured is peace.<sup>26</sup> Netanyahu equated peace with security. He claimed that deterrence and a strong army is the only way to achieve a stable situation in the region. Netanyahu also referred to the Palestinian state in the Judea and Samaria. He stated that it would be a threat to Israel because shortly after independence it would turn into a country ruled by terrorist organisations. Thus, it will destroy the idea of a demilitarised Palestinian state. He advocated that in the international scene there is no place for such a thing as a demilitarised sovereign state. There is also no demilitarisation without control. Palestinian independence means no Israeli control which would lead, according to Netanyahu, to weapon smuggling. He also denied any international supervision as ineffectual and unsure.<sup>27</sup>

Netanyahu wrote in his book that the Judea and Samaria region creates not only crucial strategic depth (by military means) for the state of Israel, but also provides water reserves and space for Israelis. The Jordan Valley and

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25 Paweł Pokrzywiński's interview with Eli Hazan: *Czas Obamy był zły dla świata*, "Uniwersal" 2017, No. 22, p. 40.

26 B. Netanyahu, *A place among the nations. Israel and the World*, Bantam Books, New York 1993, p. 253–254.

27 Ibidem, p. 279–281.



the ridge of the Samarian mountains creates a defence buffer. It is the place for potential manoeuvres and defence frontiers for the Israel Defense Forces. Without it, Israel itself would be reduced to the defenceless coastal strip. Netanyahu claimed that even left-wing governments saw the strategic meaning of the Judea and Samaria region. In that case, he evoked UN Security Council Resolution 242. It expressed the international community's will that Israel should withdraw from the territories gained after the Six Day War (1967). The Likud's leader stated that only Israel made concessions, i.e. returning the Sinai to Egypt (1979), and will not make any more under pressure from the international system. He wrote that the Arab states should also limit their territorial ambitions in favour of peace in the Middle East. Only by securing Israeli defensible borders can peace be achieved.<sup>28</sup> A similar statement was visible in the Likud's political platform from the 2006 elections. It was also the answer to the unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. Strategic depth was, again, underlined to show the importance of the Judea and Samaria for the rest of the country. The platform claimed that Israel had made enough diplomatic and international concessions in the case of the Oslo Accords, the Wye River Agreement or the Hebron Memorandum. These only strengthened non-state Palestinian terrorist organisations and weakened Israel as a state. The only answer is strengthening the core of Israel, meaning Greater Jerusalem, the Jerusalem – Modi'in – Tel Aviv road and Ben-Gurion Airport. Thus, Israel has to consolidate its presence in the Judea and Samaria and ensure the existence of settlements. Securing the Judea and Samaria by Israel would help to eliminate Palestinian terror which will lead to a stabilised region.<sup>29</sup> Both statements show that the Likud perceives any Israeli setback as Palestinian success. Both also claim that there will be no more Israeli concessions and no withdrawal to the pre-1967 borders. It shows that the Likud recognises the state as the only political and sovereign actor which can make decisions about its interests and internal policy.

The settlements are also important in the case of the Judea and Samaria. PM Netanyahu is said to be more pragmatic about this than ideological like PM Begin or PM Shamir. It seems that in Netanyahu's policy, settlements are an instrument for strengthening the Jewish presence. Population growth and construction starts are not so spectacular as in 1980s or 1990s but the statistics are

28 Ibidem, p. 287–293.

29 *Gvulot bitahon le-shalom*, Likud, available at: <<https://en.idi.org.il/media/5991/likud-17.doc>> [accessed: 7 V 2018].

stable. For example, during Netanyahu's first term of office, population growth reached over 8% (1996) and there were over 4,000 construction starts (1998). On the contrary, during his second term, annual population growth was over 4% and the highest number of construction starts was about 3,000 in 2013. Dani Dayan, the former chairman of the settler Yesha Council, claims that the settlements are the tool of the policy rather than a principle of the Likud's policy. However, he stated that Netanyahu is in favour of developing the settlements.<sup>30</sup> In August 2017, the Israeli Prime Minister stated that he will never evacuate any Jewish settlement. This statement was made after the meeting with the American delegation on the peace process with the Palestinians.<sup>31</sup> It is important to underline that during Barack Obama's presidency, the USA was condemning construction of the new settlements in the Judea and Samaria and in the Eastern Jerusalem neighbourhoods. During this time PM Netanyahu suspended expansion of construction. But shortly after Donald Trump's swearing-in, PM Netanyahu created the special committee for advancing the building of settlements and developing existing units.<sup>32</sup> The impact of Trump's presidency and his pro-Israeli administration is visible inside the Likud party. Politicians and ministers strengthened their statements about the Israeli presence in the Judea and Samaria. It can also be seen as pressure on PM Netanyahu. For example, in December 2017, the Likud Central Committee (the party's highest decision-making body) passed a resolution which insisted on the government annexing major parts of the Judea and Samaria and to allow unlimited construction in this region.<sup>33</sup> In November 2017, the Likud's Minister of Jerusalem Affairs and Minister of Environmental Protection – Ze'ev Elkin – stated that Jewish

30 J. Rudoren, J. Ashkenas, *Netanyahu and the settlements*, "The New York Times" [online], 18 III 2015 [accessed: 8 V 2018], available at: <<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/03/12/world/middleeast/netanyahu-west-bank-settlements-israel-election.html>>.

31 J. Magid, *Netanyahu vows he will never evacuate another settlement*, "The Times of Israel" [online], 28 VIII 2017 [accessed: 8 V 2018], available at: <<https://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-vows-he-will-never-evacuate-another-settlement/>>.

32 H. Keinon, T. Lazaroff, *Netanyahu announces plans for first new West Bank settlement in 25 years*, "The Jerusalem Post" [online], 2 II 2017 [accessed: 8 V 2018], available at: <<https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Politics-And-Diplomacy/Netanyahu-announces-creation-of-new-settlement-480296#article=6024MUY5M0UxQjJFRUJCRDI5N0U3RjIBODgzQ0ZCRDNGREU=>>>.

33 J. Magid, *Likud top body votes to urge annexing parts of the West Bank*, "The Times of Israel" [online], 31 XII 2017 [accessed: 8 V 2018], available at: <<https://www.timesofisrael.com/likud-top-body-votes-to-annex-parts-of-the-west-bank/>>; M. Szydysz, *Sekurytyzacja jako narzędzie polityki zagranicznej Izraela w świetle teorii regionalnych kompleksów bezpieczeństwa*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa 2019, p. 55–56.

presence in the Judea and Samaria is assured and Israel has to prepare this region for over one million settlers in next 10 or 20 years. He also said that between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea there is only one state – Israel.<sup>34</sup> During the 15<sup>th</sup> annual Jerusalem Conference of the Besheva Media Group, Elkin and other members of the government urged PM Netanyahu to ignore the USA statements and push forward Israeli efforts to establish a permanent Jewish presence in the Judea and Samaria.<sup>35</sup> However, it is hard to believe that PM Netanyahu will accept those demands and avoid consulting with the USA about new construction starts. Except for the Prime Minister's realist worldview in the case of international relations, he does not want to disturb relations with the USA. This was visible in Netanyahu's decision to block a settlement annexation bill proposed by Yoav Kish (Likud) and Bezalel Smotrich (Jewish Home). The bill was about making the Judea and Samaria an inseparable part of Israel. The Prime Minister claimed that he wants to coordinate it with Trump's administration<sup>36</sup>.

### Israel and UNESCO

In the case of Israeli relations with the UN and its specialised agency – UNESCO – the author chose the organisation's decisions about Jerusalem and Hebron since 2017 as the most known and which had serious results. In 2016, the World Heritage Committee passed the decision proposed by Jordan on the Old City of Jerusalem and the Wall. The document evoked Israeli occupation of the Old City and the damage caused by Israeli security forces inside Al-Aqsa Mosque / Al-Haram Al-Sharif. This place was also only called a holy site of Islam. It did not mention Judaism and its name for the place – Har HaBayit (the Temple Mount).<sup>37</sup> The next year UNESCO passed the resolution

34 T. Lazaroff, *Elkin: Start preparing for one million settlers in the West Bank*, "The Jerusalem Post" [online], 14 XI 2017 [accessed: 8 V 2018], available at: <<https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Elkin-Start-preparing-for-one-million-settlers-in-the-West-Bank-514251>>.

35 Idem, *Right wing leaders: Israel should ignore Trump on settlement annexation*, "The Jerusalem Post" [online], 13 II 2018 [accessed: 8 V 2018], available at: <<https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Right-wing-leaders-Israel-should-ignore-Trump-on-settlement-annexation-542491>>.

36 J. Magid, *PM blocks settlement annexation bill from coming to vote*, "The Times of Israel" [online], 8 II 2018 [accessed: 8 V 2018], available at: <<https://www.timesofisrael.com/pm-blocks-settlement-annexation-bill-from-coming-to-vote/>>.

37 *Decision: 40 COM 7A.13 Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls (site proposed by Jordan) (C 148 rev)*, "UNESCO World Heritage Centre" [online, accessed: 9 V 2018], available at: <<http://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/6818/>>.

on Occupied Palestine. This document stated again that Israel is the occupying power whose actions are affecting the status of Jerusalem, including the Jerusalem Law which is “null and void and must be rescinded forthwith”.<sup>38</sup> In response, PM Netanyahu criticised the decision for ignoring the Jewish character of the city. He stated that Judaism has stronger roots in Jerusalem than other religions. The Prime Minister claimed that this city will remain Israel’s capital and the heart of Judaism. Israel’s Ambassador to the UN, Danny Danon, claimed that the state of Israel will not change its attitude towards the city. He said that the government will not become silent in the face of this “shameful resolution”.<sup>39</sup> Then Deputy Foreign Minister Tzipi Hotovely said: “We, as Israelis, don’t need UNESCO’s approval of our history in our land [...]” and claimed that UNESCO became a Palestinian propaganda instrument against Israel.<sup>40</sup> Another decision on Jerusalem and its Old City was made in July 2017. The World Heritage Committee claimed that all actions of the Israeli occupying authorities in Eastern Jerusalem and in the Old City are illegal and should be ceased. The decision remained that all legislative and government actions in the case of Jerusalem are null.<sup>41</sup> The Israeli response was similar to earlier. Danon called the decision disgraceful, the Foreign Ministry as bizarre and irrelevant.<sup>42</sup> Elkin said UNESCO is detached from reality and stated that the Israeli government will not stop any activity in Jerusalem and in its Old City.<sup>43</sup>

38 *Decision on Item 30: Occupied Palestine, 201 EX/PX/DR.30.1*, “UNESCO Digital Library” [online, accessed: 9 V 2018], available at: <<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002481/248139e.pdf>>.

39 R. Ahren, A. Fulbright, *On Independence Day, UNESCO okays resolution denying Israeli claims to Jerusalem*, “The Times of Israel” [online], 2 V 2017 [accessed: 9 V 2018], available at: <<https://www.timesofisrael.com/on-independence-day-unesco-okays-resolution-ignoring-jewish-links-to-jerusalem/>>.

40 T. Lazaroff, *Israel to UNESCO: Reject fake history on Jerusalem*, “The Jerusalem Post” [online], 1 V 2017 [accessed: 9 V 2018], available at: <<https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Politics-And-Diplomacy/Israel-to-UNESCO-Reject-fake-history-on-Jerusalem-489500>>.

41 *Decision: 41 COM 7A.36 Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls (site proposed by Jordan) (C 148 rev)*, “UNESCO World Heritage Centre” [online, accessed: 9 V 2018], available at: <<http://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/6982>>.

42 R. Ahren, *UNESCO panel okays softened text blasting Israel over Jerusalem activity*, “The Times of Israel” [online], 4 VII 2017 [accessed: 9 V 2018], available at: <<https://www.timesofisrael.com/unesco-panel-okays-softened-text-blasting-israel-over-jerusalem-activity/>>.

43 *Israel fumes over 'sad, pathetic' UNESCO decision on Jerusalem*, “The Times of Israel” [online], 4 VII 2017 [accessed: 9 V 2018], available at: <<https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-fumes-over-sad-pathetic-unesco-decision-on-jerusalem/>>.

UNESCO also voted on a statement about Hebron. The Al-Haram Al-Ibrahim / Tomb of the Patriarchs was called a Palestinian site and an integral part of Occupied Palestinian Territory. Additionally, Hebron Old Town was listed as an endangered site.<sup>44</sup> PM Netanyahu released a statement on UNESCO's Hebron decision, in which he stated that the city is deeply rooted inside Judaism and its traditions. He also ensured that in Hebron, like in other cities in Israel, freedom of religion is secured.<sup>45</sup> PM Netanyahu also stated he would cut Israeli payments to the UN. Israel will pay only \$1.7 million to the UN budget. Since December 2016, cut-backs reached \$10 million. The Likud's leader promised that all money will be transferred to build The Museum of the Heritage of the Jewish People in Kiryat Arba and Hebron.<sup>46</sup> The President of Israel, Reuven Rivlin, said that UNESCO is spreading anti-Jewish lies, the Education Minister, Naftali Bennett, called for rejection of the resolution, and PM Netanyahu promised that Israel will continue to protect the Tomb of the Patriarchs.<sup>47</sup> As a response to the UNESCO and UN decisions, PM Netanyahu instructed Israeli representatives in UNESCO to submit a letter announcing that Israel will leave UNESCO at the end of 2018. The head of the Israeli government welcomed America's President Trump's decision to leave the UN's cultural agency.<sup>48</sup> The Likud's government do not want to leave Eastern Jerusalem. Hazan claims that the potential ceding of that part of the city to the Palestinians will

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- 44 *Decision on Item 30...; Decision: 41 COM 8C.1 Update of the List of World Heritage in Danger (Inscribed Properties)*, "UNESCO World Heritage Centre" [online, accessed: 9 V 2018], available at: <<http://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/6925/>>.
- 45 *PM Netanyahu's statement on UNESCO Hebron decision*, "Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs" [online], 7 VII 2017 [accessed: 9 V 2018], available at: <<http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2017/Pages/PM-Netanyahu-statement-on-UNESCO-Hebron-decision-7-July-2017.aspx>>.
- 46 *Netanyahu cuts \$1 million more from UN budget after UNESCO Hebron vote*, "The Times of Israel" [online], 7 VII 2017 [accessed: 9 V 2018], available at: <<http://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-cuts-1-million-more-from-un-budget-following-unesco-hebron-vote/>>; *PM Netanyahu decides to further reduce Israel's UN dues*, "Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs" [online], 7 VII 2017 [accessed: 9 V 2018], available at: <<http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2017/Pages/PM-Netanyahu-decides-to-further-reduce-Israel%E2%80%99s-UN-dues-7-July-2017.aspx>>.
- 47 R. Ahren, *Israel reacts with disgust and disdain to UNESCO Hebron decision*, "The Times of Israel" [online], 7 VII 2017 [accessed: 9 V 2018], available at: <<https://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-reacts-with-disgust-and-disdain-to-unesco-hebron-decision/>>.
- 48 *Israel 'to prepare' for UNESCO withdrawal alongside US, says Netanyahu*, "The Times of Israel" [online], 12 X 2017 [accessed: 9 V 2018], available at: <<https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-to-prepare-for-withdrawal-from-unesco-alongside-us-says-netanyahu/>>.

be risky and there will be no certainty that Mahmud Abbas' government will respect religious freedom. Another threat to Israel and the region would be strengthening Hamas power in Jerusalem. Such a situation could be a reflection of Hamas discriminating policy in the Gaza Strip.<sup>49</sup> On 1 January 2019, Israel, with the USA, officially left UNESCO which was called by both as an organisation with anti-Israel bias.<sup>50</sup> Israel leaving UNESCO will not harm the agency but it is a symbolic action to show the disagreement and objection towards statements on Palestine and the holy places of the two religions. It was also easier for Israel to make such a move side by side with the USA. Such a situation supported the Israeli message about UNESCO as a pro-Palestinian body. The critical attitude of Israel towards the United Nations was emphasised by Marcin Szydzisz. He wrote that from 2007 Israel started to perceive the UN course as anti-Israeli and undermining the security of the state. Szydzisz mentioned that Netanyahu's governments perceived the international organisation as pro-Palestinian since the 1990s.<sup>51</sup>

### Results and conclusions

The examination presented above of the Likud's statements under Netanyahu's tenures, opinions and political platforms show how the response to external factors is constructed. The Oslo Accords, agreements and the UNESCO decisions are mentioned as international stimuli. All of them were interpreted by Prime Minister Netanyahu and the Likud's government. This interpretation is accomplished by Israel's right-wing ideology. Thereafter, it has an impact on the responses and foreign policy.

In the light of neoclassical realism, it is seen that political geography, Jewish tradition, history and military power have a big impact on the Likud's foreign policy. The party perceives territory as crucial to the security and interests of the state. Ceding it to the Palestinians would create a threat for Israel and the region. Netanyahu claims that the Judea and Samaria without an Israeli presence and military control would turn into a new hub for

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49 E. Hazan, *Why a united Jerusalem is a must*, "Washington Examiner" [online], 13 XII 2017 [accessed: 9 V 2018], available at: <<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/why-a-united-jerusalem-is-a-must>>.

50 *U.S. and Israel officially leave UNESCO, citing anti-Israel bias*, "Haaretz" [online], 2 I 2019 [accessed: 30 X 2019], available at: <<https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/u-s-and-israel-officially-leave-unesco-citing-anti-israel-bias-1.6805062>>.

51 M. Szydzisz, *Sekurytyzacja...*, p. 70–74.

terrorists. Thus, Jewish settlements, military response and deterrence are important instruments in creating internal and foreign policy. All of them allow the Likud's political aims to be realised.

The case of UNESCO affirms unilateralism and Israeli distrust towards international institutions. The Likud's government claims that such organisations became pro-Palestinian lobby and interfere with Israel's crucial interests. All the mentioned decisions were unfavourable for Israel and dealt with important Israeli places. Thus, the party does not respect the UNESCO statements and decisions. Netanyahu was able to announce leaving UNESCO as a final response to the organisation's votes.

Above research showed the importance of tradition, revisionist heritage, history and military power in Netanyahu's foreign policy. The party's attitude towards Palestinian statehood is negative and presents it as a threat not only for Israel but also for the region. Thus, Israeli presence in the Judea and Samaria is indisputable. The Likud claims that the international community is not legitimated to force sovereign states to disadvantageous actions (e.g. annulling the Jerusalem Law, withdrawing from Eastern Jerusalem, stopping all archaeological works). In that way, Israelis the only state that can decide about Jerusalem, Hebron, the Judea and Samaria. All of these places are treated as internal issues of the state of Israel. It shows that the Likud perceives sovereign states as the only international actors with the privilege of using military force. Thus, there is no place for demilitarised entities.

The research also showed that Israel only prefers alliances with selected states. It does not have trust in international collective organisations. Their actions are perceived as illegitimate and that they take sides. The Likud, at the most, consults with the USA, as an ally, but does so less often with the international community. The Likud's foreign policy is focused on short-term or long-term implementation of the state's defined priorities.

The analysis also showed that except for ideological elements, Netanyahu's foreign policy is strongly impacted by pragmatism. Netanyahu interpreted reality in a way which allows him to show himself and the Likud as the only guarantors of security. Firm objection towards Oslo and Palestinian statehood creates the image of a party which is in opposition to Rabin's legacy and an alternative to the left-wing parties. The potential creation of the Palestinian state is presented as a vital threat. Netanyahu's period showed that Israel was able to moderate internal and foreign policy in order to keep good relations with Israel's ally – the USA. It shows that Netanyahu's leadership was often controversial but above all was focused on not harming the state's security interests.

It is the result of Israeli internal politics which are oriented towards defence. Not only was Netanyahu's policy ideological in theory, but in practice it was pragmatic. Begin or Sharon should be mentioned. Both sacrificed ideology in favour of peace, ensuring secure borders. The first signed the peace treaty with Egypt and returned the Sinai, the latter, against his own party, decided to withdraw the Jewish settlements from the Gaza Strip and Northern Samaria. It shows that strict interpretation of Israeli foreign policy under Netanyahu's rule in the light of ideology or hard line realism is not sufficient.

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