

The Likud Party's Enduring Role in Shaping the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Executive Summary

The Likud Party, Israel's dominant right-wing political force since its founding in 1973, has played an indelible and central role in shaping the trajectory of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Rooted in a staunch Revisionist Zionist ideology, Likud has consistently adhered to a vision of "Greater Israel," which inherently opposes Palestinian statehood and actively champions the expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. Under the prolonged leadership of Benjamin Netanyahu, these foundational policies have become deeply entrenched, leading to intensified settlement activity, significant military engagements, and a severe humanitarian crisis in Gaza following the October 2023 Hamas attack. This report details how Likud's policies have not only profoundly impacted the lives of Palestinians but have also led to escalating international condemnation and growing domestic discontent within Israel. The party now faces mounting pressures to reassess its long-standing approach amidst calls for a more sustainable path towards lasting peace and security in the region.

1. Introduction: Likud's Enduring Influence on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

The Likud Party was formally established in September 1973, emerging as a formidable right-wing political force poised to challenge the long-standing dominance of the Israel Labour Party, which had governed the country since its independence in 1948.¹ Likud's ascent to power in 1977, with Menachem Begin as Prime Minister, marked a pivotal moment in Israeli political history, fundamentally shifting the country's leadership towards a more nationalist and conservative agenda.¹ This transition from Labour's long-term governance to a right-wing coalition represented a significant political transformation in Israel's early history. Labour Zionism, while instrumental in establishing the state, generally held a more pragmatic, though still Zionist, approach to territorial issues, often focusing on security and sometimes engaging in land-for-peace discussions. Likud's rise, however, rooted deeply in Revisionist Zionism, introduced a fundamentally different ideological framework to governance.

From its very inception, Likud has maintained a steadfast ideological commitment to the concept of "Greater Israel," also known as Eretz Israel, which encompasses the West Bank (consistently referred to as "Judea and Samaria") and the Gaza Strip. This core belief has consistently translated into policies that reject the establishment of an independent Palestinian state and actively promote the expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories. The party views these settlements not merely as strategic outposts but as a fundamental "realisation of Zionist values" and a vital asset for Israel's security and national interests.³ This trajectory, initiated in 1977, laid the groundwork for the prolonged occupation

and settlement expansion that has defined the conflict for decades, inherently limiting the viability of a two-state solution and contributing to the current stalemate. The party's explicit platform of "only Israeli sovereignty" between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea³ and its rejection of "foreign administration" over the West Bank and Gaza marked a profound departure from previous, albeit limited, flexibility in Israeli policy. This ideological shift, institutionalized through Likud's governance, fundamentally altered the parameters of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

2. Historical and Ideological Foundations of Likud

Likud's ideological origins are deeply embedded in Revisionist Zionism, a movement championed by Ze'ev Jabotinsky in the 1920s. This particular strain of Zionism advocated for the establishment of a Jewish majority and sovereignty over the entirety of "Eretz Yisrael" (Land of Israel), explicitly including territories on both sides of the Jordan River (Mandatory Palestine and Transjordan).⁷ It distinguished itself from other Zionist currents by emphasizing a more assertive, often militaristic, approach to achieving these territorial and political goals. Menachem Begin, a foundational figure for Likud and its first Prime Minister, was notably the leader of the Irgun Zvai Leumi, a Revisionist Zionist paramilitary organization active before Israel's independence.¹

The foundational 1977 Likud party platform, formulated under Menachem Begin's leadership, unequivocally articulated the party's vision for "Greater Israel." It asserted that "only Israeli sovereignty" should prevail across the entire landmass situated "between the [Mediterranean] Sea and the Jordan".³ This document proclaimed the "Jewish right" to the land of historical Palestine, referred to as Eretz Israel, as "eternal and indisputable".³ Crucially, it stated that "Judea and Samaria will not be handed to any foreign administration," thereby rejecting any external control over the West Bank and Gaza.³

Likud's consistent nomenclature for the West Bank as "Judea and Samaria" is a deliberate ideological choice, emphasizing the deep historical and religious ties of Jews to these biblical lands.³ This framing serves to reinforce the narrative of Jewish indigeneity and rightful claim to the territory, implicitly denying or diminishing Palestinian claims to statehood. The 1977 charter explicitly stated, "The Government of Israel flatly rejects the establishment of a Palestinian Arab state west of the Jordan River".³ Instead, it proposed an "autonomous status" for Palestinians under Israeli control, where their self-rule would be severely limited in matters of foreign affairs, security, immigration, and ecology, all subject to Israel's "existence, security and national needs".³ This position fundamentally negates the possibility of a truly independent and sovereign Palestinian state.

The core ideological tenets articulated in 1977 have remained remarkably consistent and central to the party's identity, despite the passage of decades, changes in global geopolitical landscapes, and even instances of Likud-led governments engaging in peace processes. This suggests that Likud's policies are not merely reactive to external pressures or security concerns, but are deeply rooted in a long-term, pre-determined vision of "Greater Israel." The internal schism caused by Ariel Sharon's Gaza disengagement in 2005, which saw many Likud

members oppose the policy and Sharon leave to form the centrist Kadima party¹, further underscores how deeply ingrained the territorial maximalism is within the party's DNA. This deep-seated ideological commitment means that any fundamental shift in Israeli policy towards a genuine two-state solution, involving significant territorial concessions and recognition of full Palestinian sovereignty, is highly improbable under Likud leadership. This ideological rigidity contributes significantly to the protracted nature of the conflict, as it creates an inherent barrier to compromise and fosters Palestinian distrust, perceiving Israeli actions as part of a long-term annexationist agenda rather than negotiable positions. Furthermore, the consistent use of "Judea and Samaria" is more than just a naming preference; it is a powerful rhetorical and political tool. By invoking biblical names and emphasizing historical and religious significance, Likud frames Israeli presence in these territories as a return to ancestral lands, thereby legitimizing settlement expansion and denying the concept of "occupation." This narrative directly challenges and seeks to delegitimize Palestinian claims to self-determination, which are primarily based on modern international law and their continuous presence in the land. This linguistic and conceptual framing profoundly impacts both domestic and international perceptions of the conflict. Internally, it rallies a nationalist and religious base, making any concession on "Judea and Samaria" politically untenable for Likud. Externally, it shifts the discourse from a political conflict over disputed territory to a historical and religious imperative, making it harder for international actors to push for a resolution based on traditional land-for-peace formulas. This contributes to the "intense polarization of Israeli society and politics"¹⁰ and the perception of intractability.

3. Likud's Stance on Peace Processes and Territorial Concessions

Despite its deeply ingrained hardline ideology, Likud-led governments have, at times, participated in significant peace processes. Menachem Begin, as Israel's first Likud Prime Minister, engaged in the landmark Camp David Accords with Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in 1978. These negotiations culminated in the 1979 Egypt-Israel peace treaty, marking the first peace agreement between Israel and an Arab nation.² Later, under Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, Israel participated in the 1991 Madrid Conference, an unprecedented event that brought Israeli leaders into direct negotiations with delegations from Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, and, crucially, Palestinians for the first time.²

While engaging in these high-profile peace initiatives, Likud generally maintained its core opposition to ceding major portions of land to Palestinian control and dismantling Israeli settlements.¹ The Camp David Accords, though returning the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt, notably excluded the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) from the talks and offered minimal concessions regarding the West Bank.¹¹ Yitzhak Shamir's participation in Madrid was largely a result of intense international pressure, and his government resisted U.S. demands concerning settlement building.¹⁴ Furthermore, when Ariel Sharon, a prominent Likud leader, oversaw a unilateral disengagement from the Gaza Strip in 2005, this policy decision provoked a severe

internal crisis within the party, leading to significant opposition from many Likud members and ultimately Sharon's departure to form the centrist Kadima party.¹ This internal dissent vividly illustrates the profound resistance within Likud to any significant territorial concessions, especially those involving the removal of Israeli settlements.

Likud's involvement in peace processes appears to be primarily a strategic or pragmatic decision, driven by specific national interests, such as securing peace with a powerful neighbor like Egypt or responding to international diplomatic pressure¹¹, rather than a fundamental ideological shift towards a two-state solution. The severe internal backlash against Sharon's disengagement policy demonstrates that territorial concessions, particularly those involving the dismantling of settlements, remain deeply antithetical to the party's core identity and its "Greater Israel" vision. These engagements were designed to achieve limited, specific objectives while largely preserving the party's maximalist stance on Palestinian territories. This pattern suggests that any future Likud-led engagement in peace negotiations is likely to be characterized by stringent conditions and minimal, if any, territorial concessions regarding the West Bank. This approach significantly hinders the prospects for a comprehensive and equitable resolution based on a two-state framework, contributing to the perception of intractability and perpetuating the conflict by consistently prioritizing Israeli control over Palestinian sovereignty.

4. Benjamin Netanyahu's Leadership and Policy Entrenchment

Upon becoming Likud leader in 2005 and Prime Minister in 2009², Benjamin Netanyahu delivered his notable Bar-Ilan speech in June 2009. In this address, he publicly articulated a willingness to accept a "demilitarized Palestinian state alongside Israel".¹⁵ However, this concession was accompanied by highly restrictive conditions: the Palestinian state would possess no military capabilities, it would be required to recognize Israel as a Jewish state, and Jerusalem would remain an undivided city under Israeli control.¹⁵ Critics widely contend that these stringent conditions effectively undermine the practical feasibility and sovereignty of a truly independent Palestinian state. The conditions attached to Netanyahu's endorsement—a demilitarized state, recognition of Israel as a Jewish state, and an undivided Jerusalem under Israeli control—are so prohibitive that they effectively strip any potential Palestinian entity of genuine sovereignty, viability, and national dignity. This suggests that the speech was less a genuine embrace of a two-state solution and more a strategic diplomatic maneuver, likely aimed at appeasing international pressure (e.g., from the Obama administration) while upholding Likud's core ideological opposition to a truly independent Palestinian state. It allowed Netanyahu to appear flexible without making substantive concessions. This approach has contributed to profound Palestinian distrust and international skepticism regarding Israel's commitment to a viable two-state solution. It fuels the perception that Israeli offers are designed to fail or to create a subservient entity rather than a sovereign state, thereby perpetuating the cycle of conflict and undermining genuine diplomatic efforts. It also highlights a pattern of rhetorical flexibility masking underlying ideological rigidity.

Under Benjamin Netanyahu's successive governments, there has been a consistent and significant expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank. This expansion is frequently justified by citing paramount security concerns, aligning with Likud's long-standing policy that views the strengthening and development of communities in "Judea and Samaria" as an "important asset in the defense of the vital interests of the State of Israel".³ The strategic placement and growth of these settlements are explicitly aimed at disrupting the contiguity of Palestinian communities and preventing the establishment of a viable Palestinian state.⁵ Commissioned during Netanyahu's premiership, the 2012 Levy Report, officially titled "Report on the Legal Status of Building in Judea and Samaria," concluded that Israel's presence in the West Bank does not constitute an occupation under classical international law. Furthermore, it asserted that Israeli settlements are legal under international law.¹⁷ This report provided a controversial legal framework that has been used to justify continued settlement expansion and the legalization of unauthorized Jewish outposts. Although the Levy Report was never officially adopted by the Israeli government, its recommendations have reportedly been "covertly carried out" ¹⁷, leading to a noticeable increase in the retroactive authorization of outposts, often built entirely or partly on privately owned Palestinian land.¹⁸ This effectively allows the government to circumvent its duties under international law regarding occupied territories.¹⁸ The Levy Report is not merely a legal opinion but a powerful political and ideological instrument. By re-interpreting international law to deny occupation status, it provides a "legal basis" for what amounts to de facto annexation, allowing Israel to expand its footprint and control without formally annexing the territory, which would carry significant international and demographic consequences.¹⁸ The "covert" implementation of its recommendations, including the retroactive authorization of settlements often built on private Palestinian land, demonstrates a deliberate strategy to solidify Israeli control and presence, making a future Palestinian state geographically fragmented and non-viable.⁵ This legal-ideological framework directly contributes to the ongoing fragmentation of Palestinian territory and the erosion of the two-state solution's feasibility. It exacerbates tensions, undermines the international legal order, and fuels the perception of an irreversible, long-term Israeli presence, intensifying the conflict and drawing increased international criticism.¹⁸ It represents a strategic move to normalize and legalize actions that are widely considered illegal under international law, creating a significant point of contention in global diplomacy.

5. Likud's Role in Recent Conflicts and Humanitarian Impact (Post-October 7, 2023)

On October 7, 2023, Hamas launched an unprecedented coordinated land, sea, and air assault on Israel, resulting in approximately 1,200 Israeli deaths and the abduction of around 240 hostages.¹ In response, the Likud-led government under Prime Minister Netanyahu initiated extensive military operations in the Gaza Strip.¹ This marked the full onset of the Israel-Hamas War, with a significant ground invasion commencing weeks later.¹ Israel's military operations in Gaza have precipitated a catastrophic humanitarian situation,

characterized by widespread devastation, mass displacement, and an immense loss of life.²⁰ According to the Ministry of Health (MoH) in Gaza, between October 7, 2023, and May 21, 2025, at least 53,655 Palestinians were killed and 121,950 were injured.²² These figures include a disproportionately high number of children (15,613) and women (8,304) as of March 22, 2025.²³ The conflict has led to the displacement of over 1.9 million people, approximately 90% of Gaza's population, with many experiencing repeated displacement.²³ Critical civilian infrastructure, essential for services like electricity and water, has been severely impacted, and Gaza's healthcare system is on the verge of collapse due to extensive destruction of medical facilities and acute shortages of vital supplies.²⁰ Humanitarian aid operations have faced significant challenges, including deliberate obstruction.²¹

The sheer scale of death, injury, and displacement, coupled with the systemic destruction of life-sustaining infrastructure and the near-total collapse of essential services, creates a deeply traumatized and desperate population. This level of devastation goes beyond immediate conflict consequences; it fosters immense grievances, potentially leading to long-term instability, radicalization, and a perpetuation of violence. The deliberate obstruction of aid ²¹ exacerbates the crisis, creating conditions of famine and disease, further deepening the humanitarian catastrophe. This catastrophic human cost not only fuels international criticism and legal scrutiny but also profoundly entrenches the conflict. It makes future reconciliation or peace agreements significantly more challenging, as the collective trauma and deep-seated resentment will persist for generations. The "systematic dismantling of Palestinian life" ²¹ implies a long-term strategy that will have profound and lasting demographic, social, and political consequences for Gaza, potentially creating a permanent humanitarian dependency and a breeding ground for future cycles of armed resistance. The following table provides a summary of the humanitarian impact in Gaza during the specified period:

Table 1: Gaza Conflict Humanitarian Impact (October 2023 - May 2025)

Metric	Data (as of May 21, 2025, unless specified)	Source Snippets
Total Palestinian deaths (MoH Gaza)	At least 53,655	²²
Total Palestinian injuries (MoH Gaza)	At least 121,950	²²
Children killed (as of March 22, 2025)	15,613	²³
Women killed (as of March 22, 2025)	8,304	²³
Total displaced persons	Over 1.9 million (approx. 90% of population)	²³
Aid workers killed	At least 430 (including 305 UN staff)	²¹

Healthcare workers killed	More than 1,400	²¹
Health facilities affected	122	²¹
Ambulances affected	180	²¹
Aid access challenges (denied/impeded)	43 denied, 4 impeded (out of 63 planned, Apr 30-May 6, 2025)	²³

6. Domestic Implications and Shifting Israeli Public Opinion

The prolonged conflict in Gaza and the Likud-led government's management of it have ignited significant domestic criticism within Israel. Prominent opposition figures, such as Yair Golan, a former general and leader of the left-leaning Democrats party, have voiced harsh condemnations of the government's wartime conduct. Golan has explicitly highlighted the devastating toll on Palestinian civilians, accusing the government of acting "like a Hamas spokesman" by celebrating "the death and starvation of children".²⁴ He has also warned that Israel is on a path to becoming a "pariah state" if it does not return to acting as a "sane country".²⁴ Former Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, who previously led a coalition that ousted Netanyahu, has also re-entered the political arena by registering a new party. Bennett has been highly critical of Netanyahu, particularly regarding the government's failure to conscript significant numbers of ultra-Orthodox individuals into military service during the war.²⁷

There are discernible shifts in Israeli public opinion regarding the ongoing conflict. Recent polls indicate that a substantial majority of Israelis, approximately 70%, now favor ending the war in exchange for the release of hostages held by Hamas.²⁹ This sentiment is notable even among coalition voters, with 54% expressing support for such a deal.²⁹ This public stance stands in contrast to the government's official position, which maintains that the fighting can only cease once Hamas is completely dismantled.²⁹ This divergence suggests that the initial national consensus and singular focus on retribution post-October 7 is eroding. The prolonged duration of the conflict, the mounting human cost (both Palestinian and Israeli soldiers), and the failure to secure the release of all hostages are leading to public fatigue, despair, and a re-evaluation of priorities. The public's willingness to prioritize hostage release over absolute military victory indicates a shift towards a more pragmatic, humanitarian-driven outcome, potentially at odds with the government's maximalist military and ideological objectives. This growing gap creates immense domestic political pressure on Netanyahu's government, potentially leading to increased public protests, further political instability, and a weakening of the ruling coalition. If the government continues to pursue a strategy that contradicts the evolving public sentiment, it risks further eroding public trust and deepening internal societal divisions, which could ultimately force a re-evaluation of its war aims or even lead to a collapse of the government, opening avenues for new elections and leadership. The prolonged conflict has exacerbated existing political fragmentation within Israel, leading to increased instability.¹⁰ Prime Minister Netanyahu continues to face ongoing corruption

cases, and his political survival is intertwined with the prolongation of the war, which serves as a "public distraction" and a means to "delay legal proceedings".³⁰ His dependence on far-right coalition partners, such as Bezalel Smotrich and Itamar Ben-Gvir, has significantly influenced his policy decisions, often pushing for maximalist goals in Gaza.³⁰ This reveals a critical causal link where a major military conflict's duration and nature are not solely determined by national security imperatives or a unified public consensus, but also by the leader's personal political vulnerabilities. This dynamic suggests that the conflict's trajectory is being shaped, in part, by internal political calculations rather than purely strategic ones. This prolongs the humanitarian crisis, exacerbates international tensions, and makes a resolution more elusive, as the government may prioritize its internal political survival over broader peace efforts. It also contributes to the "intense polarization of Israeli society and politics" ¹⁰ as different factions perceive the war's purpose and its conduct through the lens of political maneuvering. While efforts to form a cohesive opposition have been challenged by ideological divisions, figures like Naftali Bennett and Yair Golan are emerging as potential challengers, with some polls suggesting that a hypothetical Bennett party could garner more seats than Likud.²⁷

7. International Repercussions and Legal Scrutiny

International criticism against Israel's conduct in Gaza has intensified dramatically since October 2023. Key Western allies, including the United States, United Kingdom, France, and Canada, have expressed profound concern over the escalating humanitarian crisis and the "intolerable" level of human suffering in Gaza.³¹ France, the UK, and Canada issued a joint statement condemning the "wholly disproportionate" nature of Israel's escalation, calling for an immediate ceasefire and warning of "further concrete steps" if Israel does not cease its military offensive and lift restrictions on humanitarian aid.³¹ The UK has notably paused trade deal negotiations with Israel, and the European Union is reviewing its existing agreements, signaling growing Western discontent.¹⁹ Immediately after October 7, many Western allies expressed strong solidarity with Israel and supported its right to self-defense.³¹ However, their language has significantly hardened, with joint statements condemning the "wholly disproportionate" escalation and the "intolerable" human suffering, even threatening "concrete steps".³¹ This shift indicates that the scale, intensity, and perceived indiscriminate nature of Israel's military response in Gaza, particularly the severe humanitarian impact ²⁰ and the alleged obstruction of aid ¹⁹, have exceeded the boundaries of what even its closest allies consider legitimate "self-defense" under international humanitarian law. The narrative of proportionality and civilian protection is now paramount for these allies, overriding initial expressions of solidarity and sympathy for the October 7 attacks. This erosion of support among key allies signifies a profound diplomatic setback for Israel. It could lead to tangible consequences, such as reduced military aid, increased diplomatic isolation, and a more challenging international environment for Israel's security and economic interests. It forces Israel to confront a growing global consensus that its actions are crossing a critical line, potentially impacting its long-term strategic alliances and its standing as a responsible actor in the international community.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) has issued an arrest warrant for Benjamin Netanyahu, along with former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, on allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Gaza.³¹ Specifically, the warrant charges them with "intentionally and knowingly deprived the civilian population in Gaza of objects indispensable to their survival, including food, water, and medicine and medical supplies, as well as fuel and electricity".³⁴ While Israel and the United States do not recognize the ICC's jurisdiction, the issuance of this warrant creates significant diplomatic complications, as ICC member states are theoretically obligated to arrest Netanyahu if he enters their territory.³⁴ While Israel and the U.S. reject the ICC's jurisdiction, the warrant fundamentally alters Netanyahu's (and Gallant's) international mobility and diplomatic interactions. It forces ICC member states to confront their legal obligations under the Rome Statute³⁴, creating a direct legal and political challenge to Israel's leadership on the global stage. This move elevates the conflict from a purely political dispute to a matter of international criminal justice, intensifying the scrutiny on Israel's conduct and potentially setting a precedent for accountability for leaders of states that are not parties to the Rome Statute, particularly concerning alleged violations of international humanitarian law. The ICC warrant deepens Israel's international isolation, particularly from European nations that are ICC members, who may be compelled to act on the warrant. It complicates diplomatic engagements, as leaders may be hesitant to host Netanyahu. This legal pressure, combined with widespread political condemnation, creates a multi-pronged challenge to Israel's legitimacy and conduct, potentially forcing a re-evaluation of its policies to mitigate further legal repercussions and diplomatic ostracization. It underscores a growing global trend towards holding state actors, including high-ranking officials, accountable for actions in conflict zones.

Likud's hardline policies and the extensive military operations in Gaza have severely strained Israel's international relations. Beyond key Western allies, numerous countries, particularly from the Muslim world, have vocally condemned Israel's actions. Some nations, including Belize, Bolivia, Colombia, and Nicaragua, have severed diplomatic relations, while others, such as Bahrain, Chad, Chile, Honduras, Jordan, South Africa, and Turkey, have recalled their ambassadors from Israel.³² Incidents like the shooting of Israeli embassy staffers in Washington, D.C., have been linked to rising global hostility stemming from Israel's actions in Gaza. Netanyahu's perceived "disregard for Israel's standing in the world" and his dismissal of concerns from even close allies have been noted as contributing factors to this diplomatic isolation.³⁰

8. Conclusion: Future Trajectories and Calls for Reassessment

The Likud Party's foundational ideology, rooted in Revisionist Zionism and an unwavering commitment to the concept of "Greater Israel," has consistently served as the primary driver of its policies since its inception in 1973. This has manifested in a steadfast opposition to Palestinian statehood and an aggressive expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories. Under Benjamin Netanyahu's extended leadership, these policies became further

entrenched and institutionalized, leading to heightened settlement activity and a more hardline stance on any potential peace processes.

The recent escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, particularly the extensive military operations in Gaza post-October 7, 2023, has significantly intensified both domestic and international pressures on the Likud-led government. Domestically, there is a palpable and growing public desire for an end to the war, primarily in exchange for the release of hostages, alongside increasing criticism from prominent opposition figures regarding the government's handling of the conflict. Internationally, Israel faces unprecedented levels of condemnation from key allies and severe legal scrutiny from the International Criminal Court, leading to a deepening sense of diplomatic isolation.

The cumulative effect of the severe humanitarian crisis, the erosion of international goodwill (even among key allies), the legal challenges from the ICC, and the increasing domestic public fatigue and dissent suggests that Likud's long-standing maximalist approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is becoming increasingly unsustainable. The "paradoxes of this conflict" are intensifying, as Israel cannot indefinitely sustain a multi-front war or continuously defend thousands of miles of borders¹⁰ while facing such widespread opposition. The current policies are generating more problems (isolation, humanitarian crisis, internal division) than they are solving (security, peace), creating a self-perpetuating cycle of violence and diplomatic ostracization. This confluence of profound pressures will likely force Israel, and potentially the Likud party itself, to confront the limitations and long-term costs of its current strategy. While a radical ideological shift within Likud is inherently difficult given its foundational principles, the mounting costs could lead to internal re-evaluations, a weakening of its political dominance, or ultimately a change in political leadership. Without a fundamental reassessment of its approach to Palestinian statehood and the future of settlements, Likud's policies risk further entrenching Israel's international "pariah state" status²⁴ and perpetuating an intractable conflict, ultimately undermining Israel's long-term security, democratic character, and regional stability.

Works cited

1. Likud | Party, Policy, History, Members, Meaning, & Facts - Britannica, accessed on May 22, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Likud>
2. Likud - parties - The Israel Democracy Institute, accessed on May 22, 2025, <https://en.idi.org.il/israeli-elections-and-parties/parties/likud-party/>
3. Explained: Likud ideology is based on Israeli occupation of West Bank, Gaza, accessed on May 22, 2025, <https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/explained-likud-ideology-is-based-on-israeli-occupation-of-west-bank-gaza-18206457>
4. How Israel's Likud Party played the long game toward annexation of the West Bank, accessed on May 22, 2025, <https://responsiblestatecraft.org/2020/05/18/how-israels-likud-party-played-the-long-game-toward-annexation-of-the-west-bank/>
5. West Bank Settlements Explained - Israel Policy Forum, accessed on May 22, 2025, <https://israelpolicyforum.org/west-bank-settlements-explained/>

6. Political Status of Palestinian Territories under Israeli Likud Government - Applied Research Institute - Jerusalem (ARIJ), accessed on May 22, 2025, <https://www.arij.org/atlas40/chapter2.3.html>
7. Revisionist Zionism - Wikipedia, accessed on May 22, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revisionist_Zionism
8. Revisionist Zionism - Just Vision, accessed on May 22, 2025, <https://justvision.org/glossary/revisionist-zionism>
9. History & Overview of the Likud Party - Jewish Virtual Library, accessed on May 22, 2025, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/history-and-overview-of-the-likud-party>
10. Obstacles and Opportunities in the Pursuit of Israeli-Palestinian Peace | Baker Institute, accessed on May 22, 2025, <https://www.bakerinstitute.org/research/obstacles-and-opportunities-pursuit-israeli-palestinian-peace>
11. Camp David Accords - Wikipedia, accessed on May 22, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camp_David_Accords
12. Camp David Accords signed | September 17, 1978 - History.com, accessed on May 22, 2025, <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/september-17/camp-david-accords-signed>
13. The 1991 Madrid Peace Conference - Association for Diplomatic Studies & Training, accessed on May 22, 2025, <https://adst.org/2015/10/the-1991-madrid-peace-conference/>
14. The Madrid Conference, 1991 - Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations - Office of the Historian, accessed on May 22, 2025, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1989-1992/madrid-conference>
15. Economic Cooperation Foundation: Israeli PM Netanyahu's Bar-Ilan Speech (2009) - ECF, accessed on May 22, 2025, <https://ecf.org.il/issues/issue/70>
16. Bar Ilan Speech - Geneva Initiative, accessed on May 22, 2025, https://geneva-accord.org/cool_timeline/bar-ilan-speech/
17. Levy Report - Wikipedia, accessed on May 22, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Levy_Report
18. From Occupation to Annexation: the silent adoption of the Levy report on retroactive authorization of illegal construction in the West Bank - Yesh Din, accessed on May 22, 2025, <https://www.yesh-din.org/en/from-occupation-to-annexation-the-silent-adoption-of-the-levy-report-on-retroactive-authorization-of-illegal-construction-in-the-west-bank/>
19. Updates: Israel defiant as global pressure mounts over 'monstrous' Gaza war - Al Jazeera, accessed on May 22, 2025, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/liveblog/2025/5/20/live-israeli-allies-say-they-will-take-concrete-actions-over-gaza-siege>
20. What's happening in Gaza? A desperate humanitarian crisis - Red Cross, accessed on May 22, 2025, <https://www.redcross.org.uk/stories/disasters-and-emergencies/world/whats-hap>

[pening-in-gaza-humanitarian-crisis-grows](#)

21. Humanitarian Situation Update #288 | Gaza Strip | United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - Occupied Palestinian Territory - OCHA oPt, accessed on May 22, 2025,
<https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-situation-update-288-gaza-strip>
22. Humanitarian Situation Update #290 | Gaza Strip | United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - Occupied Palestinian Territory - OCHA oPt, accessed on May 22, 2025,
<https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-situation-update-290-gaza-strip>
23. UNRWA Situation Report #170 on the Humanitarian Crisis in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, accessed on May 22, 2025,
<https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-170-situation-gaza-strip-and-west-bank-including-east-jerusalem>
24. Israeli politician critiques the Gaza war's toll on Palestinians and sparks an outcry | AP News, accessed on May 22, 2025,
<https://apnews.com/article/israel-gaza-war-criticism-netanyahu-af22ee826be05daa37a73cac737f4e0c>
25. Yair Golan says his charge that Israel 'killing babies as a hobby' was criticism of 'failed' government, not IDF | The Times of Israel, accessed on May 22, 2025,
https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/yair-golan-defends-charge-israel-killing-babies-as-a-hobby-as-criticism-against-failed-government-not-idf/
26. 'The mood is changing': Israeli anger grows at conduct of war - BBC, accessed on May 22, 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cj422k1zzd9o>
27. Bennett's new party aims to 'restore security to Israel,' draft ultra-Orthodox, accessed on May 22, 2025,
<https://www.timesofisrael.com/bennetts-new-party-aims-to-restore-security-to-israel-draft-ultra-orthodox/>
28. Former PM Naftali Bennett registers new political party ahead of 2026 elections, accessed on May 22, 2025,
<https://www.timesofisrael.com/former-pm-naftali-bennett-registers-new-political-party-ahead-of-2026-elections/>
29. Poll: 70% of Israelis don't trust government, including a third of coalition voters, accessed on May 22, 2025,
<https://www.timesofisrael.com/poll-70-of-israelis-dont-trust-government-including-almost-half-of-coalition-voters/>
30. A Calculus of Conflict: Netanyahu's Political Survival Through Extended War, accessed on May 22, 2025,
<https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/a-calculus-of-conflict-netanyahus-political-survival-through-extended-war/>
31. Jeremy Bowen: Goodwill running out as UK, France and Canada demand Israel end Gaza offensive - BBC, accessed on May 22, 2025,
<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cn9j1052p2yo>
32. Why Israel's New Gaza Operation Is Different - Newsweek, accessed on May 22, 2025,
<https://www.newsweek.com/why-israels-new-gaza-operation-different-2075452>

33. International reactions to the Gaza war - Wikipedia, accessed on May 22, 2025,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_reactions_to_the_Gaza_war
34. Israel's Netanyahu heads to Hungary in defiance of ICC arrest warrant - Al Jazeera, accessed on May 22, 2025,
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/4/2/israels-netanyahu-heads-to-hungary-in-defiance-of-icc-arrest-warrant>
35. Mapping State Reactions to the ICC Arrest Warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant, accessed on May 22, 2025,
<https://www.justsecurity.org/105064/arrest-warrants-state-reactions-icc/>