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## Research Article

# Behavior Analysis of Benjamin Netanyahu in 1999 and 2017: What has Changed?

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- Personality disorders
- Benjamin Netanyahu

## Abstract

The current study presents a behavioral analysis of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and compares his behavior patterns at present with a previous study conducted in 1999. The analysis is based on the identification of recurring patterns of behavior (across time and situations) which emerge from the diverse material available to us: Netanyahu's statements, interviews, testimonies and interviews with various people who have worked with him. The salient results indicated the following: Netanyahu continues to see himself as superior to others and as a gifted politician; he loves the good life that status and power afford him such as luxurious hotels, high-class restaurants and fine food; Netanyahu uses manipulation to advance his goals and above all, to ensure his political survival; Netanyahu's suspiciousness and sense of victimhood, according to which everyone is against him, continues; a salient point is his marked difficulty in making important decisions regarding the fundamental questions of the future of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; his ambition has been manifested by the will to stay at the top at any cost; he continues to perform as an articulate speaker with an outstanding ability to deliver messages. Netanyahu's long-lasting term as prime minister has resulted in "fatigue", expressed in part as an increase in suspicion, difficulty in standing up to the pressure, and problematic decision-making, with all that entails. Overall, the present study indicates that the patterns of behavior identified in the first study have been highly stable and that some of these patterns have been radicalized.

## BACKGROUND

The present study attempts to sketch a portrait of Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister, using behavioral analysis. The study is one of a wide range of studies evaluating the personality of political leaders. These studies have aroused many years of debate among various scientific disciplines focusing on, inter alia, two main issues: (a) The essential question of the extent a leader shapes the history, or is merely an instrument of history or the spirit of the time; (b) What the preferred methodology is for sketching a psychological portrait from a distance, as the researcher usually cannot have direct contact with the leader and cannot use the usual psychological personality assessment tools. Thus, it is no wonder that different approaches have been adopted to investigate the psychological portrait of political leaders. These approaches differ with respect to the theoretical background and the methodology behind them [1].

A profile of a political leader (or, as sometimes termed, a psychological profile) from a distance (without direct contact with the leader) raises ethical dilemmas between two basic

values: the right to privacy [2] and the public's right to know [3]. According to researchers, in the case of political leaders, the public's right to know overrides the principle of privacy [4]. It seems that the main debate revolves around the determination of a mental health diagnosis [5]. In this paper, we do not suggest a psychological diagnosis but try to point out repeated pattern of behavior.

A literature review indicates that many political leaders, including many US presidents throughout history, have served as research subjects for psychological portraits aimed at analyzing a variety of issues: distinctive features, traits, type of personality, leadership style, worldview, values, ability to negotiate, and readiness to compromise, as well as the ways these characteristics are expressed and how they affect the political behavior of the leader.

The current study presents a behavioral analysis of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and compares his behavior patterns at present with a previous study conducted in 1999 and published [6] in a book of psychological profiles of political

leaders from different countries [7]. The main objective of the present study is to examine the predictive validity of the first study and to try to evaluate changes/stable patterns of behavior after about 18 years. Both studies are based on the methodology of behavioral analysis. These studies fall into the fields of qualitative and applied research, involving systematic investigation and practical application of scientific methods.

Similarly, the purpose of our study was to identify recurring patterns (across time and situations) which emerge from the diverse material available to us: Netanyahu's statements, interviews, testimonies and interviews with various people who have worked with him and journalists who have interviewed him. As much as possible, we have tried not to rely on general conclusions and evaluations of others, but on the identification of specific behaviors [8].

## METHODOLOGY

Behavior analysis of a political leader is a systematic analysis of the wide-ranging and varied aspects of his behavior, including actions, thoughts, and feelings that have been reported publicly. At first, we collected a variety of materials published in various media (including Netanyahu's Facebook page). Each written text which included a relevant aspect of Netanyahu's behavior was marked as a unit of information. A unit of information is a description of a leader's behavior in a defined situation at a certain time. The description of such behavior could entail one paragraph or a few, or even a full chapter. In the second step, following a review of all units of information and their key words, each unit was then classified according to one or two content categories. The categorization was in line with that of the previous study in 1999 [6]. The classification of the information units into content categories was done independently by two researchers and a research assistant. High congruence was found among the three staff classifications. In the third step, we integrated each of the content categories into a cohesive text which summarized this category. In the results section, we present a summary of the first study immediately followed by the pattern of behavior for the recent investigation.

## RESULTS

### Benjamin Netanyahu prominent patterns of behavior

**Egocentricity and sense of grandeur:** 1999: Netanyahu sees himself as more perceptive than anyone else. Accordingly, those who disagree with him do not understand historical/political processes correctly. His basic perception is that he views and understands these processes correctly and those who think differently are wrong. His personal success is more important to him than ideology. His behavior towards members of his staff include exploitation and focusing on himself. Netanyahu links the nation's fate to his personal fate.

**2017:** Netanyahu continues to see himself as superior to others and as a gifted politician. He describes himself as the "best strategist in the country". He continues to link the fate of Israel with his personal fate. In all of his statements there is no mention or hint of an attempt to see things from a different perspective. As in the past, Netanyahu continues to arrive late for meetings and lets others wait for him, no matter what their rank and role.

**Comparison:** It appears that this pattern of behavior has strengthened over the years, apparently linked to the length of time Netanyahu has continued to head the government. The testimonies of the people who have worked in close proximity reinforce egocentrism as a central feature of Netanyahu's personality.

### Leisure life and entitlement:

**1999:** Netanyahu loves the good life that status and power afford him: luxurious hotels, high-class restaurants, fine food, connoisseur wine, high-quality cigars, and personal hair styling and makeup before every public appearance or important meeting. As part of this style, he tends to let others to pay for him.

**2017:** Netanyahu's hedonism or luxurious life style is not new and has been subject of police investigations in the past. Despite the high-profile nature of this issue and the fact that he has barely avoided the legal difficulties involved in such investigations, apparently his leisure lifestyle and his penchant for receiving gifts are stronger, with all that entails. Moreover, this lifestyle is always at the expense of the state or wealthy benefactors and never at his own expense: He cannot bring himself to refuse gifts. Based on several testimonies of people who have known the couple, Netanyahu and his wife, Sara view gifts as something they deserve and they feel that this is perfectly natural and not unusual: they deserve entitlement. At the same time, the couple has for many years demonstrated extreme parsimony. There is quite a lot of testimony regarding this pattern of behavior.

**Comparison:** One gets the impression that this pattern of behavior has grown stronger over the years. Even if Sara is dominant regarding this style, her husband fully cooperates.

### Aggression and manipulation in politics:

**1999:** Netanyahu sees the game of politics as governed by the "laws of the jungle," where the strong survive and the weak fall by the wayside. To him, achievement of the goal justifies any political means. Conscience and values of everyday life are irrelevant to political life. When this behavior is later criticized, he justifies his actions and avoids taking responsibility: "I did not see, I did not mean, I was not understood."

**2017:** Netanyahu uses manipulation to advance his goals and above all, to ensure his political survival. One of his most prominent political tactics is posing enemies (internal and external) who can be blamed for almost everything. In addition, he uses a version of "divide and conquer" among different sectors of Israeli society. For example, his appearances on TV on the morning of the last election, warning, "Arabs are flocking to the polls," or his statement to Rabbi Kaduri, "Leftists have forgotten what it means to be Jewish". Netanyahu is ruthless against enemies who threaten his position as prime minister and want to "illegally" (according to him, not through the elective process) dislodge him from power. This pattern of attack and guilt attribution without sufficient basis is a repeated pattern characterizing Netanyahu throughout his years in power. In some cases, when there is no basis for his charges, he simply "drops them" and never mentions them again. Another characteristic political behavior is "stealing" credit from his ministers. He takes care to step in and arranges to be invited to ceremonies associated with the work of another

minister in order to get positive exposure in the media. In addition, he does not have any problem in changing his attitudes (even if he has expressed them publicly) if these changes serve him well.

Comparison: It seems that this pattern of aggressive and manipulative politics has strengthened over the years: In politics, all means to achieve the objective are justified: truth, values and conscience have no place in political life.

#### **Unreliability and lies:**

1999: Netanyahu's credibility is one of the subjects that is often raised by rivals, political allies, local and international leaders and the media who have accused him of unreliability since he was elected Prime Minister. This criticism has been repeated again and again, according to which Netanyahu breaks his promises. The impression is that Netanyahu believes that this behavior is acceptable and agreed to by everyone in politics: Everyone lies to everyone, and this conventional behavior.

2017: Netanyahu's unreliability continues to characterize his behavior and has been noted in his relations with foreign leaders such as Obama and Sarkozy. One receives the impression that he has no difficulty in lying and at the same time, accusing all of his opponents of lying: the left, the left-wing press, journalists, and all those connected to the investigations in which he and his wife are involved. For example, in a few interviews he stated that, at many cabinet meetings before the last war in Gaza, he had presented the existence of Hamas tunnels under the border and into Israel. However, according to the state comptroller who examined the transcript of cabinet meetings, this claim was inaccurate.

Comparison: This behavior pattern continues even more intensely. There is evidence of lack of credibility and the use of lies as part of his political behavior (Table 1).

#### **Suspicion and victims: the media is the main enemy:**

1999: One of Netanyahu's salient features is his suspiciousness. He seems to feel that "the whole world is against me", accompanied by the constant perception of "being a victim". When he is under attack, he feels "at home". In other words, feelings of victimization raise his sense of internal resources to fight and succeed, and encourage him to "show his opponents", and in these situations, it feels right.

2017: Netanyahu's suspiciousness and sense of victimhood, according to which everyone is against him, continues. In fact, one gets the impression that this characteristic has recently been strengthened following the initiation of the police investigations into the behavior of the prime minister (e.g., <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2017/01/02/israeli-police-prime-minister-benjamin-netanyahu/96080432/>). It seems every election, even if he initiated them, perceived by him as illegal attempt to overthrow him. At the same time, as in the past, this "persecution" only reinforces and does not deter him in continuing on his way and staying in power. Netanyahu perceives of the media as the "main enemy" which seeks to topple him. In recent years, he has used extreme demonization in his fight against the media. He has used rhetoric such as "we and they" (e.g., the media is controlled by the left) which plays well to his voters, who see themselves as disadvantaged and inferior to "the real

elite". This feeling continues to dominate although Netanyahu has been prime minister longer than any other). During critical times (e.g., the last election in Israel, the recent police investigation regarding his receipt of expensive gifts), he uses expressions like "... There is a world conspiracy, backed by the US, against me, the Bolshevik leftist media has mobilized, using methods of hunting, brainwashing and character assassination against me and my family.... The left controls the media.... There has been nothing like this in the history of Israel ...". Such statements give the impression that his suspiciousness has become paranoia.

Comparison: The pattern of blaming his enemies and the leftist media are not new but it seems that this pattern has become much stronger and more frequently used, reaching the level of paranoia [9].

#### **Leadership style:**

1999: Netanyahu is a centralist administrator who tends to work alone and to compartmentalize others. His administrative style is aggressive and it is important for him to be at the top, to influence, to dominate. He loves to play the commander in the "war room." His aides must be disciplined and loyal to him personally. He often makes decisions impulsively and without consulting. Even if he consults and listens, he eventually decides to make the decisions alone. He requires full dedication from his team, but is not loyal to them: He tends to abandon people who have lost their importance for him. He surrounds himself with people who think and agree with his views and detaches people who express different theses and disagree with him.

2017: Analyzing Netanyahu's leadership style displays some salient features:

**a. Team work** - Netanyahu continues to emphasize complete personal loyalty to the people whom he appoints to senior positions. For example, he asked the candidate for the head of the Mosad security agency "Will you be loyal to me?" According to people who have worked closely with Netanyahu, loyalty is more important to him than skills. His former assistant has pointed out that this style has importantly contributed to the many unsuccessful appointments and lack of a close team that works throughout the year and acquires experience.

**b. Does not take responsibility**- Equally important is the lack of accountability on Netanyahu's part. According to the late head of the Mosad, Gen. (reserve) Meir Dagan: "I never saw Netanyahu take responsibility for anything. The only thing that interested him during Operation Protective Edge (summer 2014) was being photographed against the background of maps... his policy is destructive for the future and for the security of the State of Israel.... He is the worst manager I have known... His personal interests overcome national interests." In this context, we may mention Netanyahu's words after the publication of the Commission of Inquiry of the Second Lebanon War (summer 2006). He called for the resignation of the Prime Minister (Ehud Olmert) and accused Olmert of not taking responsibility. This exemplified that what is said when in the opposition does not apply when Netanyahu is the Prime Minister and must respond to the State Comptroller's report regarding Operation Protective Edge.

**Table 1:** Sources for behavior analysis in Hebrew.

	No.	Name / Source	Date
1		<b>Egocentricity and sense of grandeur</b>	
	7	Netanyahu's Facebook page, The North economic program launch	27.12.16
	8	"Ovda" show with Ilana Dayan, channel 2, testimony of Avi Gabay	26.12.16
	11	Yossi Verter, Haaretz,	27.12.16
	18	Ynet	25.12.16
	159	Yossi Verter, Haaretz,	25.12.16
2		<b>Leisure life and entitlement</b>	
	36	Eli Senyor, Ynet	8.1.17
	47	NissimMishal radio show, 103fm, Maariv	25.5.16
	53	GidiWeitz, Haaretz	16.9.16
	66	NissimMishal radio show, 103fm, Maariv	25.5.16
	71	AmnonAbramovich, Mako	20.1.17
	117	ItamarEichner& Eli Senyor, YediotAharonot	9.2.17
	158	TovaTzimoki&ItamarEichner, Ynet	14.2.17
3		<b>Aggression and manipulation in politics</b>	
	3	Personal testimony of a close person	
	11	Netanyahu's Facebook page	14.2.16
	12	Netanyahu's Facebook page	17.12.16
	13	Netanyahu's Facebook page	17.2.16
	15	Netanyahu's Facebook page	25.12.16
	24	Netanyahu's Facebook page,	17.3.15
	18	Elisheva Ben-Kimon, Ynet,	21.12.16
	42	Channel 2 News, Mako,	21.10.11
	41	Noa Price, Walla news	8.1.17
	92	YardenMichaeli, Haaretz,	30.1.17
	99	YoavEtiel, The seven eye	27.1.17
	146	Barak Ravid, Haaretz	11.12.16
	151	RotemDanon, Liberal	8.8.16
	162	GidiWeitz, Haaretz,	31.11.16
	163	Elior Levy, ItamarEichner, Roy Yanovsky&Raanan Ben-Tzur, Ynet	24.11.16
	179	Amit Segal, The Marker	1.5.14
	181	SimaKadmon, YediotAharonot, page	4, 10.3.17
4		<b>Unreliability and lies</b>	
	8	"Ovda" show with Ilana Dayan, channel 2, testimony of AviGabay	26.12.16
	13	Netanyahu's Facebook page	17.12.16
	15	Netanyahu's Facebook page	25.12.16
	129	Dana Spektor& Ran Sarig radio show, 103fm, An interview with YoavItzhak	13.2.17
	110	Yshai Cohen, KikarHashabt	5.10.14
	174	SimaKadmon, YediotAharonot	3.3.17
	177	SimaKadmon, YediotAharonot	19.3.17
5		<b>Suspicion and victims: the media is the main enemy</b>	
	15	Netanyahu's Facebook page	25.12.16
	23	Netanyahu's Facebook page,	2.1.17
	35	Moran Azulay& Roy Yanovsky, Ynet,	8.1.17
	32	Netanyahu's Face book page	30.11.16
	59	Netanyahu's Face book page	15.1.17
	86	Netanyahu's Face book page	28.1.17
	88	Netanyahu's Face book page	30.1.17
	53	GidiWeitz, Haaretz	16.9.16
	94	Eli Senyor, Ynet	26.1.17
		<b>Leadership style</b>	
6		<b>Team work</b>	
	20	"Ovda" show with Ilana Dayan, channel 2	7.11.16
	150	Sara Leibovich-Dar, Liberal,	8.8.16

	164	"Ovda" show with Ilana Dayan, Mako	18.3.13
7		<b>Does not take responsibility</b>	
	145	Amit Segal, Mako	9.6.11
	112	Nissim Mishal, Dror Refael&SefiOvadia radio show, 103fm, An interview with Ben Caspit	8.2.17
	53	GidiWeitz, Haaretz	16.9.16
	155	Sara Leibovich-Dar, Liberal	9.5.16
8		<b>Difficulty in making decisions</b>	
	20	"Ovda" show with Ilana Dayan, channel 2	7.11.16
	143	Ruvik Rosenthal, NRG	15.12.13
	150	Sara Leibovich-Dar, Liberal	8.8.16
	151	RotemDanon, Liberal	8.8.16
	165	Moran Azulay, Ynet	28.2.17
	156	YoavZeitoun, Ynet	21.2.17
9		<b>Survival above all</b>	
	8	"Ovda" show with Ilana Dayan, channel 2, testimony of AviGabay	26.12.16
	171	Moti Bassok, The Marker	8.2.16
	172	Moran Azulay, Ynet	3.5.16
	173	NaamaSikuler, Calcalist	22.5.16
10		<b>Finger to the wind leadership</b>	
	8	"Ovda" show with Ilana Dayan, channel 2, testimony of AviGabay	26.12.16
	28	Netanyahu's Facebook page	4.1.17
	33	33Newscast, Channel 10	5.1.17
11		<b>No mistakes and never apologizing</b>	
	73	Netanyahu's Facebook page	25.9.16
	74	Netanyahu's Facebook page	23.3.15
	172	Moran Azulay, Ynet	3.5.16
		<b>Irreplaceable leader</b>	
	182	Yossi Verter, Haaretz	10.2.17
12		<b>Interpersonal relations: a limited capacity for empathy</b>	
	10	Yossi Verter, Haaretz, p. 3	30.12.16
	47	NissimMishal radio show, 103fm, Maariv	25.5.16
	78	Eli Senyor, Ynet	23.1.17
	147	Sara Leibovich-Dar, Liberal	18.5.15
	159	17Yossi Verter, Haaretz	25.2.15
13		<b>Ambitious and determination to stay on power</b>	
	20	"Ovda" show with Ilana Dayan, channel 2	7.11.16
	60	Netanyahu's Facebook page	16.1.17
	83	Netanyahu's Facebook page	25.1.17
	86	Netanyahu's Facebook page	28.1.17
	130	Yossi Verter, Haaretz	17.2.17
	171	Moti Bassok, The Marker	8.2.16
14		<b>Nondemocratic nature</b>	
	8	"Ovda" show with Ilana Dayan, channel 2, testimony of AviGabay	26.12.16
	60	Netanyahu's Facebook page	16.1.17
15		<b>Functioning under stress</b>	
	1	ItamarEichner& Yael Fridson, Ynet	25.12.16
	5	ItamarEichner&Elior Levy, Ynet	26.12.1
	178	Ran Edelist, Liberal	1.5.14
16		<b>Complex and unseparated couple Relations</b>	
	20	Netanyahu's Facebook page	16.1.17
	47	NissimMishal radio show, 103fm, Maariv	25.5.16
	111	Nati Tucker & Yasmin Guetta, The Marker	3.5.16
	112	NissimMishal, Dror Refael&SefiOvadia radio show, 103fm, An interview with Ben Caspit	8.2.17
	117	ItamarEichner& Eli Senyor, YediotAharonot	9.2.1
	127	YoavItzhak, News1	13.2.17
	129	Dana Spektor& Ran Sarig radio show, 103fm, An interview with YoavItzhak	13.2.17



	153	RotemDanon, Liberal	9.5.16
	164	"Ovda" show with Ilana Dayan, Mako	18.3.13
17		<b>Political world view</b>	
	6	AchiaRabad, Ynet	26.12.16
	8	"Ovda" show with Ilana Dayan, channel 2, testimony of AviGabay	26.12.16
	20	Netanyahu's Facebook page	16.1.17
	30	Netanyahu's Facebook page	12.12.16
	33	Newscast, Channel 10	5.1.17
	173	NaamaSikuler, Calcalist	22.5.16
18		<b>The media: 'Hasbara' (publicity) is the policy itself</b>	
	169	Ben Caspit, Maariv online	14.8.16
	92	YardenMichaeli, Haaretz,	30.1.17
	176	AmitayZiv&Nati Tucker, The seven eye,	29.8.16
19		<b>Netanyahu's latest visit to the US after Trump's election</b>	
	84	Tal Shalev, Walla news	31.1.17
	88	Netanyahu's Facebook page	30.1.17
	91	Netanyahu's Facebook page	31.1.17

**c. Difficulty in making decisions-** Reviewing Netanyahu's years as prime minister, a salient point is his marked difficulty in making important decisions regarding the fundamental questions of the future of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For example, he has announced support for a two state solution, but, contrary to that promises, his political behavior is leading to a binational state. In addition, monitoring his decision-making process indicates considerable difficulty, much hesitation and delaying important decisions until the last minute. Notable are the endless difficulties in decisions regarding appointments and foreign policy. Some examples are the election of the Chairperson of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the Knesset, selecting the governor of the Bank of Israel, and the Gilad Shalit deal with the Hamas (the release of many Hamas prisoners in exchange for held Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit). In some cases, he hesitates and finally avoids making the decision at the end of long process.

**d. Survival above all** - One gets the impression that above all, the most important principle for Netanyahu is his survival as prime minister. This prevents him from taking risks. This may explain, in part, his avoidance of strategic and crucial decision making regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict if the decision might jeopardize his survival as prime minister. Netanyahu is willing to "bend" rules and procedures in order to ensure his survival.

**e. Finger to the wind leadership**—Another characteristic of Netanyahu's leadership style is known as "finger to the wind leadership". Netanyahu determines his moves largely in light of public opinion among his base of supporters (even when he stands up against the establishment, or condemns attacks on the Supreme Court) and in light of his political battles with Naftali Bennett for right-wing leadership. Netanyahu attaches great importance to public opinion polls which he reads carefully and understands at a high level. His goal is first and foremost to hit the target opinion of his right-wing supporters. An example is his contradictory statements regarding the El-or Azaria affair (first denouncing the killing of a wounded terrorist and then expressing support to appease right-wing public opinion). Netanyahu's moves are often targeted only toward media appearances but not beyond, such as his condemnation of the murder of the Dawabsheh family from

the Palestinian Duma village by Jewish settlers at the beginning of a government meeting but immediately after, having left the meeting, no further discussion whatsoever took place regarding this issue.

**f. No mistakes and never apologizing** - Another characteristic of Netanyahu's leadership is never acknowledging a mistake or making an apology following a mistake or use of offensive language. Expressing regret (I did not mean ... Sorry if I offended ... I was misunderstood ...) is aimed at answering his critics.

**g. Irreplaceable leader** - Throughout the years Netanyahu has headed the Likud party, he has done everything possible to prevent and/or to belittle and attack everyone who tries, hints or announces his intention to run for this position. This occurs even if the candidate has declared his intention to do so in the distant future rather than to compete with Netanyahu in the next Likud election.

Comparison: It appears that this pattern of behavior has strengthened over the years. There is a more notable absence of decision-making with regard to the conflict in the region despite the passage of time: against annexation of the West Bank and against a binational state on the one hand, Jewish construction and announcements in the opposite direction on the other. Almost no one knows where he is going. What is his real vision for the future? What are his ideas regarding 2.5 million Palestinians living in the West Bank?

#### **Interpersonal relations: a limited capacity for empathy:**

1999: Netanyahu's interpersonal relationships tend to be instrumental. He is not a good social mixer, nor is he a man who forms deep bonds with people. In general, he is closed and withdrawn, with very limited ability to empathize. Most of the people with whom he has social relationships are those he needs or who assist him. When these people cease to be of use to him, he terminates the relationship with relative ease. Netanyahu is attracted to wealthy people who donate money or help him in forging ties with important and influential people.

2017: Netanyahu's interpersonal relationships continue to

be instrumental. One gets the impression that Netanyahu's social relations are based on ties to international wealthy people who pamper him with gifts (some of these gifts have been requested, as indicated by the reports of recent police investigations) and finance expensive accommodations. Among others, this style of limited ability for interpersonal relationships may explain the endless turnover of his close staff in the prime minister's office (in addition to the difficulty of working with his wife, Sara). Netanyahu continues to use people for as long as he needs them and then ends the relationship or ignores them, as indicated by people who have worked with him as well as people who were close to the couple. But on the other hand, he is often used by people who see him as a springboard for advancement and financial gain. At the same time, there are a few examples of friendly relations, such as the couple's relationship with their family doctor, but these are rare. More prominent is the large number of former people who have worked with Netanyahu or have been close to the couple and who have found themselves betrayed and rejected by Netanyahu and consequently have chosen to expose his behavior and that of his family. This pattern is another indicator of his inability to empathize and his problematic interpersonal and egocentric behavior.

Comparison: Netanyahu's interpersonal relationships remain similar to those in the past including his continuous search for proximity to wealthy people. At the same time, there is an increasing pattern of "chasing gifts", which appears to be uncontrolled and is backed by the rationalization "that it is acceptable" and "I deserve it", as well as the use of people for his personal benefit, abandoning them when appropriate.

#### **Ambitious and determined to stay on power:**

1999: Ambition and determination are considered Netanyahu's salient qualities. Netanyahu's ambition involves the desire to be most successful, to be first, to overcome others and to reach the heights. This ambition also means indicating in advance the most challenging and difficult targets and not accepting partial success. His determination is expressed by his ability to pursue a goal and never desist until it is completed in the best way possible as far as he is concerned.

2017: Netanyahu has served longer than any other prime minister of Israel. During these years, his ambition has been manifested by the will to stay at the top at any cost and not to let his competitors reach any position that might jeopardize him, even at the price of extreme changes in policy declarations or stands on the issues at hand. It appears to be no coincidence that the only acceptable assertion among the Likud party members today is that no one can take his place, and at the moment, no one poses any threat to his leadership. An indication of Netanyahu's ambition as well as his sense of entitlement is his statement "When I want something I get it". People who speak to Netanyahu are surprised at his ambition to remain at his post even if he is indicted. This would be legal but obviously unacceptable. Netanyahu's determination to continue as prime minister is not just a tactical position but is deeply imbued in his character.

Comparison: There are no major changes in this behavioral trait through the years.

#### **Nondemocratic nature:**

1999: Having a democratic nature involves assimilating democratic values, internally identifying with them and behaving in accord. Observations of Netanyahu's behavior and his statements reveal his nondemocratic nature. He has been accused of using manipulation and aggressiveness in order to control decisions within the Likud party. He does not consult with anyone and uses agents to work for him behind the scenes without the need for him to be involved. He feels free to break promises and, if necessary, acts in secret to undermine them. He tends to initiate aggressive pressure which may be conducted by his allies.

2017: Netanyahu has reservations about the rules of liberal democracy and advocates democracy in an authoritarian presidential regime, which could be considered "limited democracy". He continues to display this quality in his behavior and in his statements. He frequently refers to democracy in the media, accusing his opponents of breaking the rules of democracy. He considers criticism of him in the media as equal to subversion, and accuses his political rivals and the media of attempts to avoid elections, bolshevism, false propaganda and pressure intended to sabotage the democratically elected government. According to Netanyahu, criticism and attacks against him (including police investigations) are a reflection of anti-democracy. An example of Netanyahu's undemocratic behavior has been noted by Avi Gabai, former Environment Minister, who accused the government of failing to publicly reveal important information regarding the development of the Mediterranean off-shore gas field. Furthermore, Netanyahu attempts to weaken and even to make the media redundant. He has also objected to a bill limiting the number of terms a prime minister can serve.

Comparison: No major changes have been found in this behavior pattern. However, it seems that since Netanyahu and his wife have been investigated by the police, there has been an increase in the levels of their accusations. This raises concern about suspicious tendencies in Netanyahu's behavior and the sense that he is signaling that 'whole world is against me', He appears to be on the edge of persecutory paranoia.

#### **Functioning under stress:**

1999: An observation of Netanyahu's conduct in times of stress reveals different reactions to two types of stressful situations:

A) The first type of reaction occurs when the cause of stress is known and can be predicted. In these situations he feels in control. In preparation for these events he does his homework and arrives well prepared, leaving minimum space for improvisations. He makes sure that there is a backup plan or an alternative option. In these situations, he demonstrates confidence, does not admit weakness and does not break down.

B) The second type of reaction occurs when the crisis comes as a surprise and he does not feel in control. In these situations, he becomes stressed and frightened; he does not think in an organized way and tends to become distraught. In addition, he is willing to promise anything or to sign any paper. He gives in to whoever puts pressure on him. It seems that in these situations, anyone who manages to frighten him can prevail.



2017: Netanyahu's conduct may be examined in light of recent stressful situations:

A) Netanyahu's actions after the UN denunciation of Israel: His immediate responses (probably without prior consultation) were impulsive and he took actions that were unacceptable in the diplomatic world. Shortly after that, he forbade his ministers to hold talks with representative of the countries that voted against Israel. However, he himself met with Great Britain's Prime Minister.

B) The Amona evacuation (e.g., <http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Live-Security-forces-enter-Amona-outpost-set-to-begin-evacuation-480209>): He hesitated and didn't make a decision until the last minute, promising things that there was no guarantee that he could provide. He produced a large number of public statements but found it hard to make a practical decision.

C) Netanyahu's response to the Operation Protective Edge report: He dismissed the findings and the head of the committee that produced them, and did not take responsibility for the actions and the criticism.

D) The Carmel fire (December 2010) is an example of an acute and unexpected crisis, which required immediate action. According to testimony, Netanyahu could hardly cope with the crisis; there was a frantic and uncalculated reaction and later, he took all of the credit for getting the fire under control.

Comparison: There is no substantial change in this respect, but it is worth noting Netanyahu's conduct during the latest clashes with Hamas, when he reacted in a moderate way and did not get carried away into military adventures whose outcome was unknown. This however is considered by some of his critics as an example of the reaction of a weak leader who does not dare to eliminate Hamas.

#### Complex marital relations:

1999: Netanyahu's relationship with his wife is not a relevant topic for this paper, except as it relates to Netanyahu's personality. The impression is that Netanyahu deals quite patiently and in a forgiving way with his wife's odd behavior (obsessive cleaning, angry outbursts, and paranoid behavior towards women in his surroundings) in terms of accepting the situation.

2017: Netanyahu is controlled by his wife and cooperates with Sara in a most inexplicable way: She is involved in making decisions and appointments, and participates in secret consultations in which she is not supposed to take part, and she is a partner in important political decisions (such as the release of Gilad Shalit). Every publication that relates to these matters exposes itself to an external reaction against the journalist or the source of the news (liar, leftist, among others). One of the repeated reactions to the criticism directed towards the couple is presenting the criticism as an attack on Netanyahu's family due to the inability to harm him. Furthermore, it appears that there is an entire system dedicated to hiding and preventing publicity about Sara's outbursts and misbehavior. There is extensive evidence indicating Netanyahu's real fear of his wife and the sense that she is becoming even more powerful. According to testimony by people who have worked with Netanyahu, her involvement in matters of state (mainly appointing people) is immense. As a close

associate has stated "Anyone Sara doesn't want, loses his job". Moreover, Netanyahu maintains her as an ally and appreciates her opinion. It seems that Netanyahu gives in to her caprices in a way that is difficult to explain rationally. Quite a few reports have claimed that following Netanyahu's betrayal of his wife (1992), the couple signed an agreement according to which Netanyahu is not allowed to travel abroad, even for a political meeting, without the accompaniment of his wife, and that she has the right of veto for those joining the Prime Minister's plane.

Comparison: There is a substantial change in this pattern towards Sara's further involvement in diverse matters. Netanyahu allows Sara to interfere on almost every issue, and in fact she is an important part of the decision making process. Regarding the gifts as well as constant feelings of persecution, it is possible to refer to shared irrational behavior in which each side enhances the other's pattern of behavior. This relationship can be identified as unusual in every respect.

#### Political world view:

1999: Netanyahu's political view regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict can be presented (along with typical quotes), as expressed in his speeches, books and interviews:

A) The return of the Jews to their country is their historical right and absolute historical justice. The land of Israel belongs to the Jews. Quote: Referring to Judea and Samaria: "In this desert land, characterized by its emptiness as described by Mark Twain and Arthur Stanley over a hundred years ago, Israel is now instilling life"

B) Israel, in spite of its just claims, has failed in the publicity area while Arab propaganda is doing very well and is succeeding in presenting the conflict both in Israel and in the whole world in a twisted way.

C) The Arab countries around us are not democracies and therefore peace with them can only be based on a balance of terror and on Israel's ability to defend itself. The Arab hostility will not disappear in this generation.

D) Arabs cannot be trusted. Their sole intent is to eliminate Israel. There is no substantial difference between Fatah and Hamas.

E) By being strong and persistent, Israel will be able to compel the Arabs to make peace with us in the future.

2017: Netanyahu's statements and decisions in recent years show stability in his main political views, and even radicalization. It is not completely clear whether he is influenced by his followers or whether he takes the initiative. At times it seems that he is leading his followers to the radical right using threats. In addition, it appears that he has decided not to make any major decision and not to initiate any major political move that might endanger his position. Testimonies of those who have worked with him closely suggest that this "not to decide position" is a result of his election defeat in 1999 following the Wye River Agreement with the Palestinians.

Comparison: No significant change can be seen in Netanyahu's political point of view compared to the past. However, in contrast to the past, when quite a few scholars claimed that his political

views were only temporary, it seems that these views present a permanent pattern that is not going to change any time soon.

### **The media: 'Hasbara' (publicity) is the policy itself:**

1999: Netanyahu's career cannot be described without reference to the media. Early on he understood the importance of the media in modern Western society and paved his way in politics by taking advantage of media exposure. Media appearance fits Netanyahu's character. He has what it takes to be a television star. He has a way with words, a positive appearance, articulateness, self-esteem, fluent English, intelligence and rationality. These allow him to hold his own against any interviewer or opponent. He knows how to exploit topics that are easy to agree on, such as the Holocaust and terrorism, and he is very good at manipulating the discussion in any direction he wants, and not necessarily where the interviewer or his opponent had planned.

2017: Netanyahu continues to perform as an articulate speaker with an outstanding ability to deliver messages. He continues to take advantage of the media for his own interests and insists on appearing in the media and delivering his doctrine in every channel possible, including the American Congress and his numerous appearances in countries around the world. The main difference compared to the past is his extensive use of Facebook and Twitter as a way of delivering direct messages to his audience without the intervention of the media. One example of his media control is his behavior during a meeting with a Channel 2 reporter. The heads of the Mossad and Shabbak intelligence organizations were waiting outside and Netanyahu publicly stated that they could just wait. Other evidence by close associates point out that as minister of communications, he has invested an extensive amount of time at meetings regarding the broadcasts and much less time in ministry affairs and meetings with directors

Comparison: The media continue to play a substantial role in Netanyahu's perceptions and political attitudes and it is his main tool as a leader, standing at the top of the pyramid. But nevertheless the media must also be weakened in order to be submissive to him and to avoid as much criticism of Netanyahu as possible. One more difference is, of course, the establishment of the newspaper 'Israel Today' that serves primarily as Netanyahu's own publication.

### **Netanyahu's latest visit to the US after Trump's election:**

After eight 'difficult' years of dealing with President Obama, Netanyahu, on his recent visit to the US to meet with President Trump, expressed his satisfaction and went out of his way to praise Trump with overstated declarations, insisting that Trump is "the state of Israel and the Jewish people's best friend", or the twitter message he sent supporting the construction of the US wall along the Mexican border, and causing a crisis with Mexico. These statements show Netanyahu's complete disregard of the Jews in the United States, as well as those in the other Western countries, many of whom probably don't accept Trump's policy. These statements also reflect disregard of the need to maintain a good relationship with both political parties in the United States as has always been the policy of every Israeli prime minister since the establishment of the state. Furthermore, it seems as though Netanyahu is adopting some of Trump's habits

(attacking the media, using phrases like 'fake news', or 'Bolshevik hunting spree', 'they won't succeed; we won't let them' among others). One gets the impression that after so many years of disagreements with Obama, Netanyahu's behavior regarding the relationship with Trump goes beyond the realm of rational policy with long-term thinking.

## **DISCUSSION**

The attempt to draw a portrait of a political leader from a distance is a complex process and raises quite a few questions. Accordingly, there is broad agreement among scientists that human behavior is influenced by many different factors which can be separated into biological, environmental and interactive elements. It is no wonder therefore that the predictability of human behavior is "extremely problematic" to say the least. However, the efforts to create portraits of political leaders have been very common for many years and include different approaches and diverse disciplines, from analysis of historical leaders (for example, the image of the Roman emperors) to contemporary political leaders. Constructing a portrait of a political leader involves a broad range of research frameworks: academic, biography, journalism as well as information provided by intelligence organizations.

The uniqueness of this study is based on the fact that it has been done for the second time, eighteen years after the first study. (For many of these years, Netanyahu has served as prime minister and/or senior minister.) Overall, the comparison of the two studies shows that some of Netanyahu's patterns of behavior reflect high stability while some show an increase in intensity and even radicalization. In addition, unlike some approaches to drawing a portrait of a leader, our behavior analysis does not attempt to examine the developmental aspects and to look for explanations and possible causes for Netanyahu's behavior. The discussions regarding developmental issues are out of the scope of this paper.

Like every research, the current one has its limitations. The first is that our study is based in part on second-hand information (reports of people who have written or talked about their experiences with Netanyahu) and not on direct observation of his behavior. The second limitation derives from the distribution of information into unit content categories that require judgment and may be subject to possible bias on the part of researchers. A third limitation is related to various areas of behavior that may be "out of sight" and do not appear in our study due to lack of information. Finally, the content categories are not mutually exclusive, which makes the analysis more difficult and leaves the door open to different interpretations.

However, the study is based on diversified information available to other researchers and allows review and reconstruction. The current study is based on information representing a broad spectrum of varied and diverse sources and thus, there is little danger of bias. In addition, the study is based on a second assessment, eighteen years later, and thus represents patterns of behavior which appear to be stable over different situations and time.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This study points to the importance of political survival as

Netanyahu's leading priority. However, given the long duration of his term, it is possible to identify that there is growing impatience on the part of his opponents and critics. It also seems that Netanyahu's long-lasting term as prime minister has resulted in "fatigue", expressed in part as an increase in suspicion, difficulty in standing up to the pressure, and decision-making, with all that entails. From this analysis it can be suggested, with all due caution, that Netanyahu's patterns of behavior seem to be reminiscent of the behavior patterns characterized by narcissistic, paranoid elements, including feelings of excessive self-importance; attributing to himself greater talents and capabilities than others; a high need for attention; self-centeredness and low ability for intimate interpersonal relationships and lack of empathy; highly suspicious and exhibiting difficulties in accepting criticism, accompanied by great anger and aggression. In addition, it appears that Netanyahu maintains a sense of entitlement and has a tendency to exploit others. To these overall characteristics, it is possible to add a tendency toward authoritarianism, use of manipulation and political non-credibility as well as the desire for a presidential system. This analysis also suggested that Netanyahu finds it difficult to function in unexpected stress situations and can be blackmailed by others who may significantly threaten him.

### Looking ahead

Despite all of the difficulties inherent in predicting future behavior, in light of the above analysis it seems that the chances that Netanyahu will take significant political steps to change the situation in the Middle East is very small. We believe that the main reason is that deep inside, he has decided not to take fundamental strategic decisions that might endanger his political survival. Nonetheless, it should be added that if he is under serious pressure, whether internal, such as serious indictment,

or external, such as uncompromising pressure from Trump administration, Netanyahu will do everything possible in order not to jeopardize his political survival, even at the cost of changing attitudes at the strategic level, such as a possible diplomatic agreement. At the same time, there is a small possibility that, if the police investigations seem to be leading to prosecution and Netanyahu's political survival is seen as coming to an end, he will primarily consider his personal interests and will resign as prime minister.

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