



In his address to Congress, the prime minister noted that "the vast majority of the 650,000 Israelis who live beyond the 1967 lines reside in neighborhoods and suburbs of Jerusalem and Greater Tel Aviv."

He declared that "under any realistic peace agreement, these areas, as well as other places of critical strategic and national importance, will be incorporated into the final borders of Israel." "Strategic and national importance" is the giveaway phrase. It shows how Netanyahu smuggles moral claims into his security arguments.

The security arguments are well-founded in Israel's geographic vulnerability and in a history of Palestinian and Arab violence against the Jewish state, including three wars that threatened to annihilate it. But items of "national importance," such as protruding West Bank settlements, have no such justification. If you move people into disputed territory and then claim that territory as an "Israeli population center," good luck selling that argument. The U.S. won't stand behind you.

"In Judea and Samaria, the Jewish people are not foreign occupiers," Netanyahu reminded Congress. "This is the land of our forefathers." But that's also true of the Palestinians. The historical record makes a strong case that Israel, compared to its neighbors, has earned greater respect for its security fears and commitments. The historical record makes no such case for unilateral religious or nationality-based claims to the West Bank.

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