

Transcript: Conference Call Following Prime Minister Netanyahu's Speech
at Bar-Ilan University
June 15, 2009

Operator: Good morning, my name is Lynn and I will be your conference operator today. At this time I would like to welcome everyone to the analysis of Prime Minister Netanyahu's speech. All lines have been placed on mute to prevent any background noise. After the speaker's remarks, there will be a question and answer session. If you would like to ask a question during this time, simply press star, then number one on your telephone keypad. If you would like to withdraw your question, press the pound key. Thank you. Ms. Andrea Weinstein, you may begin your conference.

Andrea Weinstein: Thank you Lynn. Good afternoon and welcome everyone. My name is Andrea Weinstein and I am the chair of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, and I have the honor of presiding over JCPA-UJC Israel Advocacy Initiative: Israel prospectus call. I would also like to acknowledge the presence of William Daroff, who is the director of the UJC's Washington office. Today's call will focus on the implication of Prime Minister Netanyahu's policy speech given at Bar-Ilan University yesterday. We are pleased to be joined by Dr. Ken Stein, who will present his prospective, and then we will open the line for Q and A.

Dr. Ken Stein is no stranger to JCPA and UJC calls. He has taught Middle East history, political science, and Israeli studies at Emory University. In Spring, in 2006, he was a visiting professor of political science at Brown University. Professor Stein is the author of numerous books and publications, including "Heroic Diplomacy," "Sadat, Kissinger, Carter, Begin and the Quest for Arab-Israeli Peace," and "Making Peace Among Arabs and Israelis: Lessons from Fifty Years of Negotiating Experience." At Emory, in 2008, he established and remains the director of the first instituted for the study of Israel in the United States. Without further ado, I turn the floor to Dr. Stein.

Dr. Ken Stein: Thank you, Andrea; good afternoon everyone. I'm going to spend a little bit of time providing a little bit of background to the speech by Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu last night. The speech did not cover, in a great way, discussion about Iran, so I'm not sure that's going to be part the reply that I might provide later on. The speech was given less than two weeks after the American president, Barak Obama, spoke in Cairo, also in a university setting. And many people expected last night's speech to be a reply to President Obama. In essence, I don't think it was exactly a reply; I think it touched on some of the small points that Obama presented in his address at Cairo University. I think the speech last night was primarily a speech in which the Prime Minister of Israel tried to outline how he saw the relationship with the Palestinians unfold, his definition of Israel as a Jewish state, what his expectations were for the Palestinians – what he wanted to outline is what he did not think Israel could permit in advance of the creation of a Palestinian state. And it was very much a pragmatic speech; I don't think there was too much ideology involved in it at all. He devoted 90% of his speech to the Palestinian-Israeli issue, whereas President Obama in Cairo used about five or ten percent

of his speech talking about the Arab-Israel conflict, and the other 90% he addressed to the Arab and Muslim world and US relations with the Arab and Muslim world.

Similar in both speeches, neither the President of the United States nor the Prime Minister gave any specific timetable for how they see negotiations to unfold. They didn't outline any particular kind of process, and yet they both outlined a vision and put down some specific markers as what they thought could be possible. I think in the context of Israeli politics, I think it's fair to say that this was not a major speech of the magnitude that one obtained when Prime Minister Ben-Gurion, in the fifties, addressed the whole issue of German reparations and there was a major clash at the Knesset about should Israel or should Israel not receive reparations from Germany. And it was not the same contentiousness that was at the Israeli parliament when Menachem Begin announced that settlements might have to be pulled back and the Knesset would have to decide the Camp David accords of 1978. I don't think it had the same emotional outpouring that one got from Prime Minister Sharon's speech, when he gave one in Herzliya in 2003 and he talked – in fact he spoke about the endorsing of a two-state solution. So this was an important speech as far as Israeli Prime Ministers are concerned, but I don't think it had that resounding magnitude and resonance that the other three, which were really major shifts or major policy statements by a Prime Minister.

In a different kind of context, I think it's fair to say that last night's speech was, in fact, another opportunity, another effort, on the part of an Israeli Prime Minister to talk about how the Palestinians and Israelis would live alongside one another. This goes back to Menachem Begin in '78, when he outlined autonomy. And I think the keyword here – if anyone needs to walk away with a phrase – I think the keyword here is that there have been about six Israeli Prime Ministers who have tried to figure out: how do they disengage from the lives of the Palestinians, provide the Palestinians with either a measure of self government, self rule, self determination, autonomy – whatever the term that's used. Rabin – in 1993 was the Oslo Accords, and he tried to say “well this is how we're going to share the land west of the Jordan.” Ehud Barak's attempt in July 2000 to negotiate with Arafat – to reach a conclusion on what the rights should be for a Palestinian state and Arafat said it was insufficient, it's not enough. And then at the Herzliya conference that I just alluded to earlier, Sharon, in 2003, said that Israel might unilaterally disengage, as Israel did in 2005 from Gaza. Ehud Olmert also spoke in 2006 about the need to not rule the Palestinian people, and I think last night, BB Netanyahu did similar.

So that's the general context. It wasn't a blockbuster speech, but it was a lot of continuity in terms of how Israeli Prime Ministers have tried to fashion their responses on how the Palestinians would live alongside Israelis down some time into the future. I think BB Netanyahu was clear; I think he was honest, and the point he made, no less than seven times, is that Israel is a nation state for the Jewish people and it will remain that way. Now if anyone wants to take a look at the speech, I'll drive you to go to our website, www.israeled.org - that's www.israeled.org - and on the right-hand side of the page you'll get Netanyahu's speech with the pagination in it. And if you want for the next five

or ten minutes, and if you have a chance and you want to take a look at the speech as I go through it, please feel free to do so.

Netanyahu's speech was one that was very well crafted; the phraseology was very well intended. There are things that he left out, which I'm not surprised. There was one part of the speech he said he wants to talk about the economic crisis, but he never really told us what that economic crisis was. He basically mentioned Iran for about the first three or four minutes of the speech, and then he spent the next 25 minutes talking about the Israeli-Palestinian relationship. He invoked history. He invoked Zionist history. He talked about Sadat and Begin and Herzl and David Ben-Gurion and King Hussein and those who had made peace. He spoke about *eretz avotaynu*, the land of our fathers. And he spoke about the place that Israel plays in Jewish identity. And I think his point here was, or the thesis of the speech was, that Israel is going to stay a Jewish state; Israel will remain a Jewish state. Israel will – whatever its future borders will be – Israel will not solve the Palestinian question by allowing Palestinians to live inside the Jewish state. Israel will remain a demographically Jewish state, and he said that no less than seven or eight times in the speech. The reason for saying that is that there is the Arab peace initiative, which is on the table, which speaks about the resolution of the refugee issue according to UN resolutions. And that is the euphemism, of course, for UN resolution 194, which is a UN statement, a general assembly statement, speaking about Palestinians and/or to receive compensation. And I think the clarity that BB Netanyahu was trying to make last night is: look, if we're going to talk about the final outcome, if we're going to talk about a final settlement, if we're going to talk about peace between us two peoples, let me be clear, let me tell you what I, the Prime Minister of Israel, see as my mandate. My mandate is to be sure that there is a Jewish state, that it's a majority Jewish state, that it remains that way, and that there's nothing that I will do in the future that will jeopardize that prospect. Naturally, of course, that did not go down very well in many Arab quarters, because the thought has been all along that the Palestinian refugees should be returned to what is present day Israel, be it Ashkelon or Haifa or Tel Aviv or any parts of the Galilee. And I think Netanyahu was saying: look, let's be honest, let's be candid, let's be real. Let's reach a conclusion, but let's only do it in the context of what the Jewish state should be. He was interrupted about ten times, maybe a dozen times, in the 30-minute address.

He spoke about the Israeli identity, and he spoke Israel's history and attachment to the land of Israel. And then he spoke very – I think sincerely, about what he wanted from the Palestinians. And again, I don't think the Palestinians who listened to that speech last night were terribly pleased by it, because they would have liked him to say, "we're going to withdraw to the '67 borders, establish an independent Palestinian state, and then we'll start negotiation," and that's not what he said, of course, last night. He said that he understands that the Palestinians want a state, he understands that they need a state, he understands that they need to have their own flag, their own national anthem, their own government, and neither of these two entities are going to threaten the security or survival of the other. He started off his plea to the Palestinians by saying "let's make economic peace between us," and then he was very careful to immediately insert, "but economic

peace is not a substitute for political peace,” because he knows that economic wellbeing will not satisfy Palestinian aspirations for self determination.

On the issue of the settlements, BB said, “we have no intention of building new settlements or of expropriating additional land for existing settlements. Natural settlement growth will continue.” And by that he means that if there’s a building that has two stories it’ll have three stories, but he said explicitly, “we have no intention of building new settlements or of expropriating additional land for existing settlements.” And I was quite surprised today to read on the front page of New York Times, below the fold, that the reporter said that Netanyahu made no real concessions on settlements last night, which is totally incorrect. I don’t – either the editor who did the New York Times article this morning or the person who initially wrote the article or copy edited just didn’t get it right, because, in fact, he said, “we have no intention of building new settlements or expropriating additional land.” Now by the way, that’s not new for an Israeli Prime Minister. Ariel Sharon said the same thing in his Knesset speech in 2004, when he talked about unilateral disengagement. So this is not new for a person of either the center or center-right. Sharon, of course, at the time was at Likud; Olmert was later on a part of the Kadima party, and now we have BB Netanyahu, who’s saying virtually the same thing. So again, I want to go back to what I said earlier: there is a measure of continuity on the part of Israeli Prime Ministers who say they don’t want to expand the settlements. Now, saying they won’t expand the settlements and then actually implementing that are two different things, and that’s an entirely different issue.

He spoke very specifically last night about what he wanted a Palestinian state to look like. And he was quite clear, emphatically so, that the prospects for a demilitarized Palestinian state was going to be something that was the only possible outcome of any negotiated settlement. And here he was very specific, and he said that the Palestinians will not be able to control the air rights, that there’ll have to be very careful monitoring of the borders, not like the monitoring that goes on in Gaza. And he said something that was intriguing; he said that the Palestinians will not have an army, they won’t control their airspace, and that effective security measures to prevent smuggling will have to be implemented. And here he said, “We look towards the United States and the international community.” Now by that, the implication is that there is already discussion with the United States and with others that there will be some monitoring regime that will be placed in this area that will become a Palestinian entity or ultimately a Palestinian state. There was no detail given about the extent of that regime, what the observer status would be, what their rules of engagement might be, but it was hung out there as a real possibility.

And let me finish by making a general remark about what he did not include. He said, as I said earlier, very little about Iran, and I think part of that is that he wanted to focus pretty much on the Palestinian-Israeli issue by also reaching out to Arab states and saying the Arab states should play a very significant role in supporting the Palestinians, and this is, of course, what President Obama also asked and requested in his Cairo speech. Netanyahu, second, didn’t give us any detail about how the negotiating process would unfold – neither did President Obama, and the assumption here, of course, is that it’ll be

left to Senator Mitchell and the American envoy – *the* American envoy to move the negotiating process forward. He never called the Palestinians a nation; he called – he called for a Palestinian state. He never mentioned Sharon by name, the Likud or Herut party by name. He didn't mention Jabotinsky, but he did mention Herzl. He did not call for peace with Arab states, but he called for reconciliation, which when translated into the Arabic is "*sokh*," which is a concept more deep and broad to the prospects of ending conflict with an adversary, rather than maybe a temporary peace. He didn't mention Syria or Lebanon, per say, but he did mention that he'd go to Beirut and Damascus or Riyadh in order to meet with his Arab neighbors.

If one had – let me conclude with this – if one had looked at BB Netanyahu's remarks given when he was in Washington when he visited President Obama in May, if one had listened to his remarks given via television at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee meeting, the AIPAC meeting in early May, and if one had taken a look at what BB Netanyahu's remarks had been in other press conferences, you would not have been surprised by what he said last night. What he said last night was amplification, or deepening, of what he had said previously, but he put it all together in one package. And with that, Andrea, I'll leave it to you and to those who might want to ask some questions.

Weinstein: Thank you so much for a very definitive discussion of the speech, and I'm sure that there are questions awaiting. Lynn, do we have some in line?

Operator: At this time, if you would like to ask a question, please press star then the number one on your telephone keypad. We'll pause for a moment to compile the Q and A roster.

Weinstein: Thank you.

Operator: Your first question comes from Lynn Liss in St. Louis.

Lynn Liss: Ken, I have a question. I recently read that whether, in fact, the demanding the recognition of a Jewish state was just possibly an aside, because, in fact, Israel is a Jewish state and do the Palestinians really need to recognize it as such?

Stein: Nice to hear from you, Lynn, and thank you for the question.

Liss: Sure.

Stein: When Israel was in the midst of negotiations, or reached negotiations, a high point in negotiations, ultimately treaty between Egypt and Israel and between the Israelis and the Jordanians, there was no question about Israel's legitimacy on its – or its existence. There is a different issue with the Palestinians, because the Palestinian ideology or the Palestinian history or the PLO charter or even Hamas charter and even things that we read today in the Palestinian/Arab press indicate that there is the belief that all the land west of the Jordan River belongs to the Palestinians, or does not belong to the Zionists – does not belong to a Jewish state. So I think what Netanyahu was saying last night was

that this state was essentially created for Jews to reconstitute their Jewish homeland. And the very basis for doing so, on which the Zionist basis was established and the Zionist saga unfolded, would be something that he would nurture and protect as the Prime Minister of the State of Israel, and he would not, at least under his watch, see Israel become anything less than a Jewish majority. And he points that out very explicitly to the Palestinians, because I believe it is in his view that the Palestinians, many of them, have the belief that this does not have to be a Jewish state, it could be a bi-national state, or we could have one state together, west of the Jordan river. And this is not something that the great majority of Israelis endorse, nor is it something that Prime Minister BB Netanyahu is willing to assent to.

Liss: Thank you.

Weinstein: Our next question, operator.

Operator: Your next question comes from Richard Mautner in Atlanta, Georgia.

Richard Mautner: Hi Ken, thanks a lot for the speech. My problem and what I don't understand is this: out of the 120 or so settlements that there are existent today, from my understanding there are five large blocks of settlements and there are 25 settlements that are greater than 1200; all the rest are apparently very small settlements. Why – I mean what would happen if these settlements stay? Would there be police? Would there be IDF forces around these settlements, all through the territories? Or how could they resolve this and bring some of these smaller settlements into the larger blocks?

Stein: Good question, Richard. I think there are several answer to the question, and I don't necessarily – my answer is the one that we'll negotiate is we ultimately rely upon. The first is that you readjust the borders to absorb those settlement blocks and those settlement areas that are close to the 1967 border, and you engage in some land swaps with the Palestinians adjacent to Gaza or adjacent to the area that will, perhaps, be a corridor that might link the West Bank ultimately with the Gaza strip. The second option, of course, is that the settlers stay in the large settlement blocks and become engulfed or encased by a Palestinian entity that's a contiguous geographic entity. Or, that the settlements stay where they are and become part of a Palestinian entity, but maybe the Israelis who live there have some sort of rights still inside the state of Israel. I'm reminded of the issue of settlements and how it was resolved by prior history as the guide for my current comment. And that is, Menachem Begin, when he returned from Camp David in 1978, did not want to be responsible for withdrawing settlements from Sinai, and we weren't talking about a great many of them. But, Begin's view was that unless he reached an agreement on the settlements that he would not get, ultimately, a treaty with Egypt. And for him, the treaty with Egypt was so much more important than retaining the settlements. So what was the answer to Begin's dilemma? Begin's dilemma was answered by requesting the issue to be put forth before the Israeli Knesset. And the Israeli parliament decided that the withdrawal from the settlements was necessary for the good of the State of Israel. So he took it out of his hands; he put it into the hands of the elected leaders of the State of Israel, for them to make that decision. Now that may still happen.

It could still happen that a decision on settlements might boil down to a whole issue of: how will the Israeli parliament decide? Which ones should be included? How should the map be drawn? And what should be the disposition of those settlers, ultimately? And if they're to be withdrawn, should they – or what amounts would they receive in terms of compensation? – much like the settlers who left Gaza in 2005 received compensation. All those issues, Richard, I think remain outstanding to be decided by the Israeli people and by the Israeli parliament, and I wouldn't be surprised if an issue of that magnitude weren't turned over to the Israeli parliament and then wouldn't just rest on the shoulders of one individual, be it defense minister or the Prime Minister.

Mautner: Thank you.

Operator: Next question comes from Eliot Cohen in Atlanta.

Eliot Cohen: Ken, my question to you is two-fold. First, since the US talks in terms of two states and since two accoutrements of state sovereignty are the right to an army and the right to control your airspace, how do you project that Mitchell and Obama will ultimately react to the terms Netanyahu laid down?

Stein: I suspect, Eliot, that BB Netanyahu and Ehud Barak and the Israeli establishment have conveyed these ideas already to Senator Mitchell and to President Obama; I don't think this is the first time he heard that these were on the minds of the Israeli Prime Minister or the minds of the Israeli government. The notion of a demilitarized Palestinian state is something that's been part of discussions and talks that have gone on between Israelis and Palestinians for well over six or seven years. I think what happened last night is BB Netanyahu put it way out – put it out there on the table and said this is what we can't allow: we can't allow the Palestinians to create pacts with other countries; we can't allow Palestinians to have control of the airspace. And what we realize is that we are now looking at a time frame of the immediate. The evolution, over time, of different attitudes can always change demilitarization into something else, and I think it has to be seen as a first stage in another disengagement plan offered by another Prime Minister of the State of Israel. This engagement happens in stages and phases not only geographically, but in terms of prerogatives – and those prerogatives can change. Menachem Begin came to Washington in 1977 and he wanted to be sure that there would never be any discussion about the future of the West Bank and Gaza, but he knew that if there were no discussion about the future of the West Bank and Gaza he knew he could never get a treaty with Egypt. So he came to Washington and he Jimmy Carter privately. He said, "Mr. President, I have no intention to annex the territories. I have no intention to declare sovereignty of the territories, but I'm not going to let these territories to fall under foreign control as long as I am Prime Minister." And so I add to my – my conclusion here is that time and performance can change out looks and ideas, as well as conclusions. And I think that is very likely to happen if we begin to unfold the process of negotiations that leads ultimately to a demilitarized Palestinian state. But it's performance based. It means that the Israelis have to agree not to build settlements, as Prim Minister Netanyahu said, that they're not going to expand existing settlements, they're going to allow for natural growth, and I think, at the very same time, the Prime Minister of Israel and the Israeli

people are saying, “well then the Palestinian people have to be assured that we are assured that our security can be sustained.”

Ever since 1937, ever since the British decided for the first partition of Palestine, when the British were running Palestine back in the inner-war period, the solution to these two peoples living in this area together is for them to separate, to get out of each other’s lives. Once again, we have another suggestion to do that. How those details unfold, over time we’ll know. No one would have expected that an Arik Sharon would’ve called for a two-state solution. No one would have expected that a Menachem Begin would’ve allowed settlements to be withdrawn, even if it was a decision by the Knesset. So over time, we’re already seeing shifts, and we may see the similar shift amongst the Palestinians as well.

Cohen: Thank you, Ken.

Operator: Our next question comes from Maudie Rieber in Kansas.

Maudie Rieber: Thank you. What I think the big – what seemed to be the major difference between BB’s speech and previous, similar speeches by Olmert and Sharon was a missing sense of urgency regarding the governing of Israel, the occupation – the governing of Israel over the Palestinian population. You know, he mentions “we don’t want to rule over the Palestinians,” he did not mention the word “occupation,” which was considered significant when Sharon had said it. There was a sense of urgency – when Sharon and Olmert were saying it, they were saying that we cannot rule over this population and retain Israel’s Jewish and democratic nature. And from BB, it was more like we don’t want to rule over them, it’s not in our interest to rule over them, but no sense of – I didn’t get a sense of urgency or the idea that there was a demographic issue or that there was some, further down the road, that Israel’s very nature as a Jewish and Democratic state would be endangered by continuing occupation.

Stein: Yeah, I think that’s a very astute observation. There was no time clock in BB Netanyahu’s mind, and at least not one that he articulated or that we saw or in any of the speeches or press conference releases he’s given since he’s become Prime Minister. I think you’re entirely correct there. I don’t know how to gauge it; I don’t know how to gauge the urgency. I think for him and for the State of Israel, the pressing sense of urgency now is what happens to his east. And that’s not to say that the Palestinian is not of critical nature, but even last night, if I were just to take what he said last night, I couldn’t even make that conclusion because he said very little about the urgency of Iran, though there is discussion and he has said on numerous occasions that there is an urgency for the international community act vis-à-vis Iran. I don’t know where his time clock is. I don’t know if he’s working according to a clock or according to a calendar. I think he’s waiting for demonstrated performance from the Palestinians, and I don’t know what those criteria are for him to say, “Okay, now we’re going to begin a process that’s going to see us move to stage-two or stage-three.” What is frustrating to me, as an observer, is that I don’t know what the next shoe is going to be; I don’t know where it’s going to drop from. I don’t know whether its going to be a plan where Senator Mitchell announces that there are going to be public talks or there’s going to be a public meeting or there are going to

be regular public talks or the ten committees that were established under the Annapolis Conference in November 2007 are going to develop into public ten committees of talks. We do know that they've been talking. We do know that they've reached agreements on many issues, what we don't know is what are the stumbling blocks and where are they? And at what point does the United States come in to try and take these two individuals – if I can call them individuals – by the arm and grab them by the wrist and take them where the place where they know they need to go but won't go by themselves. Therein we don't know whether it's an urgency of running or it's an urgency of walking.

I think you make a very good point and I think it's an astute observation.

Rieber: Thank you.

Operator: Our next question comes from Samuel Horowitz with UJC.

Samuel Horowitz: Yes, I had a question about the role of Hamas. I know that the Palestinian authorities negotiating on the part of the Palestinians, but how does the Obama team look at the divisions in the Palestinian community and how these can be viable negotiations when one party is not part of the negotiations? And again, how does the Prime Minister look at negotiating with one partner of a two part Palestinian community?

Stein: I think President Obama made his case in Cairo, when he said violence would not be permitted and the state – Israel as a state would need to be recognized. And I think he said that – he didn't say it exactly in Cairo; he certainly has said it at his press conferences in Washington on previous occasions. I think that there is, to go back to the last speaker, I don't want to say that there's a sense of impatience, but I think there is a recognition on the part of both President Obama and his administration and a recognition on the part of the Israeli government, led by the Prime Minister Netanyahu, that they are not going to allow the naysayers to have veto over progress or an evolution of a process. And they are going to keep pushing forward. Now, is that a viable solution to reach an understanding, or understandings, with the Palestinians, or some of the Palestinians anyway, in the West Bank and Gaza and East Jerusalem, without bringing into account what happens with Hamas? Both the Israelis and the Americans face the prospect of a new Palestinian president within six months; there'll be Palestinian elections. And, my sense is that both the Americans and the Israelis would like to move forward with a process in which there's a buy-in by Palestinians who are currently running the Palestinian authority. What that means for Hamas ultimately – is Hamas about to have an epiphany and be come *ba'al teshuvah* and say, you know, we give up our charter? I don't think so. But we don't know if they're going to feel so marginalized that they want at least to play a role in a new Palestinian government. Internal politics is going to have a lot to say on how the Palestinians react to BB's speech over the next six or eight months.

Weinstein: Operator.

Operator: Your next question comes from Jeffery Canarick.

Jeffery Canarick: Morning. It seems to me that there was very little new information in Prime Minister Netanyahu's speech, although there was a great deal if build up to it. And aside from renouncing the expansion of the settlements, which, as you said, even the New York Times sort of missed, I'm wondering if you were disappointed with the speech and where you see the optimism, because, to me, there wasn't all that much new.

Stein: I don't know about optimism; I think it was a realistic speech. I think he sort of tossed aside the idea that he would never accept two states for two peoples. Now he never actually said two states in those terms, but he spoke about two anthems, he spoke about two governments, he spoke about the people not getting involved in each other's affairs, and he did ultimately then talk about a demilitarized Palestinian state. So I think he took that one off the table, as BB is never going to endorse a Palestinian... – a two state solution.

I think an important phrase last night was – and I think it's new, at least for BB was: Israel is obligated by its international commitments and expects all parties to keep their commitments. In other words, the notion had been earlier that once he took office that he would not stay with those international commitments. Well I think he said that last night, that he would stay with those international commitments vis-à-vis the Palestinians at least, because he wants all the Palestinians to do the same, and that includes what the quartet has requested of Hamas, namely to observe previous international commitments that have been achieved or written or signed with the Israelis. And I *do* think it is new when he announces that there have to be – security measures are going to have to be put in place, because by implication that means the United States or the international community will have to be engaged in that. Now these are phrases; these are not detailed statements about what exactly these phrases mean. One would expect that sometime in the next two to six months, or two to three months, whatever, that these are the kinds of phrases that will become expounded upon; we'll get to know more detail. And I think it's relevant for BB Netanyahu, who has an image of being too much of a politician and not a man of substance, willing to waver and weave, bob inside the political fighters ring, when he talks about two peoples living freely, side-by-side, in amity and mutual respect. That's not normally words that I would've expected from BB Netanyahu last night. Now again, it has to do with the context of what would you expect from BB Netanyahu? This man was – and if you don't mind me for the moment – this man was Prime Minister from 1996 to 1999. And when he was Prime Minister in 1996 to 1999, there was a different reality in the Middle East, and I think last night, BB Netanyahu reflected that he was a different person than he was when he was Prime Minister 15 years ago. You know, Arafat was head of the Palestinian national movement, Iran was not a nuclear threat, Israel had not yet gone into Lebanon, 9/11 had not yet occurred. There was no quartet, there was no roadmap, there was no Arab initiative. The Oslo Accord was still on the table and the Clinton administration was frosty, at best, toward BB's behavior after his first visit in July of 1996. It's a very different environment today, and one of the things that we watch for as observers of politics is: what is our own expectations? And what is the context of how the particular political actor acts within that environment? BB Netanyahu last night, I doubt sincerely, could've come close to giving the speech that he

did last night – giving that speech in that speech in 1996, 97, 98, or 99. It would not have happened. It *absolutely* would not have happened. And I think in that sense it's – you know in 15 years you can say, “well, gee, that's not a lot of change.” Well it is, in the turgid nature of Arab-Israeli diplomacy; it's a – you know I'd call it a major shift. Those who watch it on a day-to-day basis say it's not, but in the mind of a BB Netanyahu, comparing his first term as Prime Minister and his second term, yeah I think there was a lot of difference last night than what there would've been in 96/99.

Weinstein: Operator.

Operator: Again to... Again to ask a question, please press star then the number one on your telephone keypad.

Your next question comes from Jan Javen-Elan in Atlanta.

Jan Javen-Elan: Hi Ken. I wondered if you could speak to the possibility of some kind of crisis between the Israeli and US governments.

Stein: Well, will you be around for *shacharit* tomorrow morning? I don't know about crisis, I think both the Obama administration and the Netanyahu administration both recognize that they've come into office at about the same time, and both are probably going to serve close to four years, unless something untoward happens that we can't describe today or know about. I don't think either one of them is out to really wrench the other on the issue of Arab-Israeli negotiations. I think there is a considerable amount of need on the part of the Israeli part to stay very close to the Americans as the issue of the Iranian nuclear potential unfolds. And I don't think there's any interest on the part of Israel to somehow be seen as a John Wayne going in alone. Israel may have to do that, ultimately, in terms of it's national interest, however that decision is made, but in terms of that crisis, I think there's a greater degree of compatibility than there might be difference. Probably the Israelis see the threat a lot faster, a lot quicker, a lot sooner, and certainly existential; it's not something that the Americans see. The other side the Americans don't necessarily see: the Arab-Israeli conflict is absolutely critical on the American agenda. The absolutely most critical issue on the American agenda today is the economy and all of the attributes that flow from it, and there's the issue of the nuclear issue – the nuclear issue both with North Korea and Iran. And then you have to deal with, you know, what do you do with Iraq and what do you do with Afghanistan; I mean there's a lot on this administration's agenda.

I think there are a lot more circuit breakers in place to prevent a breach, as might have occurred between Carter and Begin or between Prime Minister Shamir and the Bush-Baker administration. I don't think we'll go back down that path too soon. In the evolution of US-Israeli relations over 60 years it's gone from where Israel was a burden in the '48 to 1960 period, there was a relationship in which it was ambivalence, to a point after '92 there's a – I guess you would call it an embrace. The embrace doesn't have to be hugging. You can dance the Virginia reel and still hold each other at arms distance; you know, like 11- and 12-year-olds at a Bar Mitzvah do when they dance. And I think – I don't think there's a crisis looming. I think the fact that the two gentlemen have spoken

candidly with one another – there may be marginal and minor disagreements – I don't think the United States is going to impose a settlement on the Israelis. I don't think the Israelis are going to do anything that are really going to anger the Americans, and so I don't see a major crisis coming at hand. Now, you know, anyone who says that who deals with Middle Eastern politics or Arab-Israeli negotiations or American-Israeli relations, you know, ought to have their mouths clamped after they said it, because the next day something happens and we regret to have said it. But it doesn't seem likely, from historical precedent, that we're headed to some sort of cataclysm between the two countries.

Javen-Elan: Can I ask a follow-up?

Stein: Sure.

Javen-Elan: Then why am I hearing, after returning from Israel last week, about so many American Jews being so afraid right now?

Stein: American Jews in this country?

Javen-Elan: Yes.

Stein: In the United States?

Javen-Elan: Yes.

Stein: Afraid of what?

Javen-Elan: Afraid of the Israeli-US relations. I keep hearing that from many people.

Stein: Well I think – you know here... Put President Obama into the context of a President Bush and a President Clinton. President Obama has not demonstrated the closeness to Israel that George Bush did by the end of his administration. And Bill Clinton's – you know one of his very best friends ever in politics was Yitzhak Rabin. And maybe it's the uncertainty that the Obama administration's just started out, and maybe there isn't yet the sense of it being the closeness that one had during those particular periods of time. And it may not have anything to do with the personalities of the political leaders; it may just have to be the nature of the difficulties that both countries are facing. When there is uncertainty, there is anxiety. And I think the uncertainty creates the anxiety, but that anxiety doesn't necessarily have to mean that there is crisis boiling around the corner. I – I'm trying to find it structurally. I'm trying to find it politically. I'm trying to find it ideologically, and I can't seem to find it, unless people in Israel are very angry that the Americans aren't reacting faster or more furiously to the Iranian threat. That may be. You know, because many Israelis see this as tragedy that Ahmadinejad is reelected and that, you know, Israel is in his sights. Other than that, Jan, I have no other speculation to provide, I'm sorry.

Javen-Elan: Thank you very much.

Operator: Your next question comes from Elaine Bloom in Miami, Florida.

Elaine Bloom: I'd like to switch, if I might, to the Iranian situation, since Netanyahu did not really speak about it at all. I wonder why there is no mention ever if, God forbid, a

nuclear weapon were ever utilized by Iran, it would not only wipe out Jews, it would wipe out Palestinians. How come this doesn't ever seem to get the message across, whether it's to Lebanon, to Syria, or to any of the surrounding countries?

Stein: Well, I'm not a specialist on Iran and I'll be the very first to acknowledge it.

Bloom: But would that not help to bind Israel to some of its neighbors?

Stein: Well there is that; there is a concern on the part of Saudi Arabia and Jordan and Egypt, Morocco and others about the hegemonic intent of Iran, both physically and in terms of its economics, in terms of the role it plays in the international oil market. And is this mean that these countries are going to be driven to an alliance of convenience with the Israelis on the issue of containing or constraining Iranian hegemony? Don't know. Most of us don't know what is said privately, what is said diplomatically, what it is said at some coffee shop in Paris when two members of security services happen to be sitting across the table from one another and are sharing pieces of information. And that could be an Arab state and an Israeli state – and the Jewish state. So, what I don't understand is – what I don't know is – I don't know what the degree of collaboration, cooperation, exchange of ideas are. I do know that the united states is deeply concerned about it, and I do know that the united states has made a case that, you know, before action is used against Iran, an effort should be made to exhaust dialogue. We have an envoy who has been appointed to deal with Iran. His name is Dennis Ross, and we haven't heard a word from Dennis about much of his engagement with the Iranians or at what level or how frequently. And I guess, as far as I'm concerned, I think that's pretty good. Because if we don't know about it, that means probably something is going on. Hopefully it will, but I can't make any – I can't make any more judgments about what, you know, what Iran might do. You know, it's one thing to have the capacity and the capability to use a weapon. It's another thing to understand the consequences of your action and if and how you will be held accountable. And you have to assume that there's a level of logic and reason that runs through the decision making process.

Weinstein: Operator

Operator: Your next question comes from Avi Marcus in Washington.

Avi Marcus: Hey Ken, just wanted to A, thank you for taking the time out, B, wanted to get your opinion on the demilitarization option that I guess has been put on the table. What lessons can be learned, if any, from the demilitarization of Germany and Japan post World War II? Do you envision the possibility of a US or international base existing in Israel, which the Israelis have been reluctant to do since inception, or potentially in the West Bank?

Stein: Yeah, I mean both examples might be instructive. International observers, monitors – depends on what their role is. If their role is to play matador defense, you know, lift up the cape every time a lorry comes across the Syrian border into southern Lebanon, I don't think that's what the Israelis have in mind. And as far as the Palestinians are concerned is, they want to exercise the sovereign prerogative to control their own territory, including airspace. And I don't think for an unending period of time they would

accept an agreement that would allow others to determine that sovereign privilege of prerogative. We do have one example where international monitors and observers have worked, have been put down between respective sides in the Middle East, and have sustained the Egyptian-Israeli relationship. In 1975 when Israel and Egypt signed their second disengagement agreement, there was a Sinai force that was put in that became essentially civilians, ultimately, and they're still there actually. And they sort of monitor the troop levels in Sinai. I don't know if we could evolve to that point. The other thing about Sinai is its much more easy to monitor than something like the West Bank would be, because you have – it's almost as porous as Swiss cheese. Now you have this political barrier or the separation fence, whatever you want to call it. Will that be used or will that be moved to accommodate political realities? Again, those are the kinds of issues which only the respective sides can hammer out in negotiations. For the Palestinians, a demilitarized state is too long. For the Israelis a demilitarized Palestinian state would be too short, and you have to find out what the time is in between.

Marcus: Appreciate it, Ken.

Weinstein: Operator, our time is running short; we can take one more question.

Operator: Our next question comes from Frank Bamberger in Brooklyn, New York.

Frank Bamberger: Thank you, Professor Klein, for your astute analysis. I want to get back to the first question that Lynn asked you about the demand from the Prime Minister for the Palestinians to recognize Israel as a Jewish state before any real negotiations take place. Isn't that really making – that demand is not – or I'll ask you: is it acceptable? Could it possibly be accepted by the Palestinians? And if not, isn't that a way to abort the possibility of peace? If the Prime Minister wants peace, then borders need to be negotiated and all the other issues. That does not require recognition by the Palestinians of Israel as a Jewish State.

It's a state. We are a Jewish state; that's enough.

Stein: Well, I guess it's – I guess it's not enough for the Israeli Prime Minister. And maybe – you know, I don't think he – maybe I'm giving him too much credit, or not enough credit – I don't think he threw this in as an intentional wrench to make the wheels of negotiation stop. I think what you have to do when you reach a certain point in negotiations and one knows that they have been in deep discussions with one another, one has to state explicitly what are those last stumbling blocks that require bridging. And I think what Prime Minister Netanyahu said last night is, "this is not one of those issues that is going to be fudged." And I think he could have last night, if he wanted to. He could have quoted President Obama from his press meeting with BB Netanyahu at the White House, in which Obama spoke, himself, about Israel as a Jewish state. But he didn't. Now, just because the American president says it doesn't necessarily make it gospel, but it's certainly nice to know that the American president has that in his mind.

Bamberger: Well we all do.

Stein: Well I understand that, but apparently there – if you read the Arabic, and if you read the Arab press, if you read the Palestinian-Arab press, there is a resentment and an anger that Jews constitute a nation and that Zionism is illegitimate and that the Jews should go away and this is Arab territory or Muslim territory. And this is spoken of quite frequently. This is not some sort of pie in the sky reference that BB Netanyahu made that is not built on substantive reality. He even said it – I think in his speech last night – he said something to the effect that even moderate Palestinians have difficulty saying that Israel is a Jewish state. He said even *moderate* Palestinians. Now, I don't think Israel has any doubt that there has to be a two-state solution; I don't care what the Prime Minister is. Two states living side to side, whatever the nature of these two states are. But what BB Netanyahu was saying last night is, he said, "I am the Prime Minister of the Jewish state, and I want to tell you what the Jewish state is in my definition. Now you may not like it. None of you may not like – you may not like my definition, but still it is the definition that I see reflects the ideas of the people of this nation," and he wanted to make that quite clear. And he said, "This is not something that's going to change. You're not going to tell me tomorrow morning that the sun rises in the west, because the sun rises in the east, and no amount of arguing and no amount of dreaming is going to change that." Now Palestinians who woke up in refugee camps in southern Lebanon this morning were very angry to have read that, because their dream is to go back to Ashkelon and go back to Haifa and go back to Tel Aviv. But BB Netanyahu was laying what he said, "this is how we see a solution evolving."

Last point: I would be cautious about using the word "peace." I think we have to go through a series of phases and stages to get the respective sides to develop the mutual trust that is necessary for them to reach, ultimately, any kind of lasting agreement. They've been at this for 60 years, since the state of Israel, and they were at it for at least 60 years prior to that. This is not going to happen simply because two prime Ministers who sit down with their respective constituencies are going to just sign on the dotted line and all of past history is going to somehow go away. Egypt signed an agreement with Israel in 1979, and Egypt's relationship with Israel is not warm, it's not embracing, it's not like the United States is with Canada – it just isn't. Now, some people will refer to it as cold. The relationship between Israel and the Palestinian state, because they're so close together, will have to rely upon economic cooperation of some sort – of some sort. So it's a very different kind of treaty that will have to be negotiate, a very different kind of set of agreements. And it's going to be – it's has already been arduous and long and contentious, and it will probably continue to do so and continue to be that way. But once you start laying down the parameters of what negotiations or what a conclusion *might* look like, then you begin to talk out loud and say the things out loud that most people only want to say privately. And I think it's very good that they say it out loud.

I'll end with this; President Obama said it in Cairo. He said, "The things are said to me privately, I wish people would say in public." And I think the more you say in public, the more recognition there is that these are issue that have to be contended with hand have to be adjudicated. However that's resolved depends upon the respective sides. Anyway, thank you very much.

Bamberger: Thank you.

Weinstein: Thank you very much for being on the call today. I think, as Dr. Stein rightly said, Netanyahu's speech probably lays a predicate of some sort, and all have miles to go before they sleep.

Dr. Stein, thank you for taking time to be with us, it is always a treat and an education to have you with us. I should also like to remind everyone that the call's recording, this call's recording, will be available shortly on the Israel Advocacy Initiative website; that's IsraelAdvocacyInitiative.org. And this will conclude our call, and we hope that our discussion has proved useful to you all. Thank you so much and have a good day.

Operator: This concludes today's conference. You may now disconnect.