

‘Greater Israel’ vision should alarm Mideast: Experts

INTERVIEW Benjamin Netanyahu, the prime minister of the Zionist regime, recently laid out his vision in an interview on the Israeli channel i24, stating, “I’m on a historic and spiritual mission and emotionally connected to the vision of Greater Israel.” These remarks by the prime minister of the Israeli occupation regime set off strong reactions from countries and officials around the world, especially regional leaders, and sparked widespread condemnation among Muslim nations. Foreign ministers from 31 Arab and Islamic countries, the Arab League, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council issued a statement slamming Netanyahu’s comments on the so-called “Greater Israel” plan, denouncing it as a direct threat to Arab national security and the sovereignty of states. In response, Abbas Araghchi, Iran’s foreign minister, also pointed out that Western media usually clap back at anyone mentioning the Zionists’ “Greater Israel” idea by accusing them of “anti-Semitism”. To dive into various aspects of this plan, an interview was conducted with Palestine experts Seyed Hadi Borhani and Mansour Barati, a translated section of which follows:

To what extent do you think Netanyahu’s “Greater Israel” plan serves domestic purposes, and how feasible is its implementation?

BORHANI: This plan has a dual nature: It has both domestic appeal and deep ideological roots in Zionist history. Domestically, Netanyahu is currently under pressure from public opinion in Israel. He has lost out on much of the secular and non-religious support, and his main base now consists of hardline religious groups and the extreme right. Naturally, he aims to hold onto this faction. Promoting the “Greater Israel” idea fits into this framework because this faction openly and boldly backs such a plan. However, it doesn’t stop at the domestic level. If we look back at the history of Israel and Zionism, we see a clear pattern: Whenever given the chance, this regime set its sights on territorial expansion. For instance, during the 1948 war, although the UN partition plan allotted 55% of Palestine to Jews and 45% to Arabs, Israel ended up taking over about 80% of the land, and in 1967, it took control of the West Bank and Gaza as well. Subsequently, they occupied the Sinai desert from Egypt, the Golan Heights from Syria, and parts of southern Lebanon. Israel’s modus operandi is clear: They first declare temporary occupation, then drag out the process, and finally make their presence permanent. The same played out in Syria and the Golan. This history indicates that this is not just domestic rhetoric or political talk; The region must take this seriously. **BARATI:** The roots of the “Greater Israel” idea go back to the 1930s and 1940s, when Zionist ideology for founding Israel was shaping up. At that time, two main currents emerged: mainstream Zionism (left-wing), which pushed for territorial minimalism to increase the chances of coexistence and recognition by neighbors, and revisionist Zionism (right-wing), which demanded maximum territorial claims and distinguished between Jews and non-Jews. From 1949 to 1977, the left-wing held power, but right-wing forces, especially the Likud party since it came to power, have always been the flag bearers of expansionism. The 1967 war was a turning point; Israel tripled its controlled territory in six days. Though later the “land for peace” idea was introduced — whereby territory was gradually returned in exchange for recognition by various countries, like Sinai’s return to Egypt — the Golan Heights, West Bank, and other areas remain occupied. Today’s situation echoes 1967. Israel’s ruling elite thinks it has won the game and believes it can get away with anything. This mindset has been strengthened after the Gaza war and upheavals in Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Egypt.



An aerial view shows the Jewish settlement of Maale Adumim in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. ● REUTERS



Mansour Barati



Seyed Hadi Borhani

talks, and attacks on Iran. The extreme right, including Likud and religious parties, openly talk up annexing Gaza and the West Bank, and are practically rolling out this policy. Even the army, initially opposed to re-occupying Gaza, ultimately backed down under Netanyahu’s pressure. **Given the internal political divisions in Israel, can Netanyahu’s expansionist plan turn into a reality?** **BORHANI:** It is true that the Israeli right-wing religious faction explicitly promotes expansionism. Politically, the left-wing in Israel has never been weaker than today, holding just five seats in the 120-member Knesset. Israeli public opinion also leans towards the right, indicating the internal trend favors right-wing religious groups, who will likely gain more clout in the future. However, expansionism is not just a right-wing monopoly. Even Ben-Gurion, Israel’s founding prime minister, envisioned a much larger Israel in his writings. Zionism generally justifies Palestinian land seizure using three main arguments: historical (David and Solomon’s ancient kingdom), religious (the Promised Land from the Nile to the Euphrates), and geopolitical (need for defensible borders and sufficient resources) — arguments all Israeli factions have used to date. Israel has always seen itself as a tiny entity surrounded by massive adversaries. Recently, Trump

remarked that Israel is a “tiny little spot” on the Middle East map, signaling vulnerability, which drives their territorial ambitions. With such justifications, Zionists feel entitled to annex parts of Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and even Egypt. Hence, the idea of “Greater Israel” is embedded in Zionism; The right-wing states it bluntly, while the left-wing speaks more cautiously for political and diplomatic reasons. Overall, history shows that whenever the opportunity arose, Israel snapped up more territory. Netanyahu’s idea shouldn’t be dismissed as mere political sloganeering or domestic posturing; It needs to be taken seriously since a shift in the balance of power could turn it into concrete action.

Considering Israel’s admission



The map shows how the “Greater Israel” plan eyes large parts of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Egypt. ● WIKIMEDIA

of about 900 soldiers killed in the Gaza war and the fact that it has opened up multiple fronts, with a physically and mentally fatigued army and rising suicide rates, how capable is Israel’s military of carrying out the “Greater Israel” plan? **BARATI:** Implementing this plan is extremely challenging. It claims vast areas, including large parts of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and even Egypt. Clearly, occupying such an expanse is very tough. However, some aspects are pursued on a smaller scale: occupation of the Gaza Strip, alterations in the West Bank to pave the way for annexation, military presence in Syria, which is now defensively weak, and the ongoing occupation of five Lebanese points. Although the US has pushed for Is-

rael’s withdrawal from some parts of Lebanon, it remains unclear if Israel will face down this demand. Thus, what we see on the ground is a piecemeal push rather than full implementation. It is noteworthy that Netanyahu’s talk of “Greater Israel” hasn’t sparked a strong reaction from the Arab world. Although Arab countries have reacted, their responses have been weak and haven’t significantly affected Israel’s behavior. Regarding Gaza’s occupation, the Israeli army faces serious challenges. After nearly two years of war, their army is suffering severe wear and tear and, according to Israel’s own media, needs 300,000 fresh troops to fully occupy Gaza — something the Israeli society does not possess. Israeli society is made up of diverse groups: moderate seculars, left and right, traditional religious Jews, national-religious (far-right supporters), and ultra-Orthodox (Haredim). Among these, only Haredim do not serve in the military, though there is now intense pressure to draft them. Israel’s Supreme Court has ruled that from September 2025 onward, the army must recruit from the 54,000 Haredim, potentially sparking a new political crisis for Netanyahu, who relies on Haredi parties for his coalition. Reserve forces are exhausted after two years of conflict, and the lack of fresh recruits is a major problem for the army. This partly explains why some army commanders opposed a full occupation of Gaza.

The full interview first appeared in Persian on IRNA.

“Zionism generally justifies Palestinian land seizure using three main arguments: historical (David and Solomon’s ancient kingdom), religious (the Promised Land from the Nile to the Euphrates), and geopolitical (need for defensible borders and sufficient resources) — arguments all Israeli factions have used to date. Israel has always seen itself as a tiny entity surrounded by massive adversaries. With such justifications, Zionists feel entitled to annex parts of Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and even Egypt. Hence, the idea of “Greater Israel” is embedded in Zionism.