

Opinion **Israel-Hamas war**

Israel's reinvasion of Gaza is a strategic disaster

Netanyahu's war isn't about protecting Israelis. It's about protecting himself

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Israeli army tanks at the border with the Gaza Strip. From Israel's position of strength, it can now afford to pivot towards a broader deal © Jack Guez/AFP/Getty Images

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Almost 20 months after the massacre of October 7 2023, Israel faces a fateful choice: reach a deal to bring all hostages home and end the war — or launch a full-scale assault on Gaza in pursuit of the mirage of “total victory” over Hamas.

But the government also faces another, deeper choice: align with far-right ministers like Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich, who are pushing for Gaza's reoccupation and resettlement, or turn towards the international community, US President Donald Trump's vision of regional peace and international law.

Recently, Trump [reportedly warned](#) Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu: “We will abandon you if you do not end this war”. France, Britain and Canada have already demanded that Israel renew humanitarian aid or face consequences and the UK has [announced](#) it will suspend talks on a bilateral trade deal. The pressure is real — and mounting.

A deal would unquestionably benefit Israel. It would mean the return of the remaining hostages, an end to the fighting and the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, and the beginning of reconstruction — offering Israel the chance to integrate into a

new regional architecture, potentially including normalisation with Saudi Arabia and participation in the India-Middle East-Europe economic corridor.

For Netanyahu, however, this path is perilous. It threatens his far-right coalition, opens the door to renewed calls for a commission of inquiry into October 7 and could accelerate his long-stalled corruption trial. More than [70 per cent](#) of Israelis hold him responsible for the October failure, and [more than half](#) think he acts based on personal — not national — interests. A deal could mark the end of his long tenure.

War, on the other hand, shields him politically. But strategically, it's disastrous. Israel has already destroyed most Hamas targets and infrastructure. I believe that another round of fighting will bring more destruction but will end at the same point. "Full elimination" of Hamas, a group embedded and hiding among more than 2mn civilians, is not a practical military mission. Indeed, a renewed offensive in Gaza offers no strategic gain — and renewed fighting will condemn even more hostages to death. That alone should end the discussion.

Many Israelis see Netanyahu's reinvasion of Gaza for what it is: a political war to protect his fragile coalition masquerading as a security imperative. And when it inevitably ends — under global pressure, humanitarian collapse or domestic upheaval — Israel will find itself back where it began, needing to replace Hamas with a legitimate alternative. So why sacrifice hostages, soldiers and more innocent Gazans to get there?

To understand the depth of Netanyahu's strategic mistake, one must recall the origins. October 7 was the darkest day in Israel's history. It created a compelling imperative: ensure Hamas never again rules Gaza or threatens Israel. Yet Netanyahu never tackled this challenge properly. This is the same man who [claimed](#) in 2019 that "whoever is against a Palestinian state should be for" [transferring](#) foreign funds to Gaza to [divide](#) Hamas and the Palestinian Authority. Netanyahu facilitated an estimated \$1.5bn in Qatari funds flowing into Hamas's hands (to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe, he claims). But part of it likely [ended up](#) in tunnels and arsenals.

The first law of war — emphasised from Clausewitz to Kissinger — is that it must serve a political purpose. Netanyahu ignored that rule and failed the core test of leadership: staying cool, sober and strategic under pressure. From the start, the IDF and war cabinet pressed him to define "the day after" in Gaza. He refused. Why? Because it would have led to a politically inconvenient truth: defeating Hamas means replacing it with a government accepted by regional partners, the international community and Palestinians themselves.

That would most likely require a transitional Arab-led force backed by the Arab League and, if needed, the UN. Funding could come from the Gulf states. Governance would fall to technocrats and a bureaucracy affiliated with the Palestinian Authority, and a new security apparatus could be gradually built under Arab and US supervision. Israel, for its part, would redeploy its forces to Gaza's perimeter and require that not a single person from the Hamas military branch will be part of the new governing entity; the IDF would withdraw only after pre-agreed security benchmarks are met.

This plan has been on the table for more than a year. It was easier to implement before Gaza's wholesale destruction. It remains viable now, albeit harder. But it's still the only realistic path to sustainable victory.

Israel today can claim significant achievements: it has degraded Hizbollah's threat from Lebanon, neutralised much of Syria's military capability and struck deep inside Iran, while defending itself when Tehran retaliated. From this position of strength, Israel can now afford to pivot towards a broader deal: release all hostages (living and dead), end the war and pursue a peaceful regional order.

Embracing this path would break Netanyahu's coalition and likely end his political career. The prime minister is not acting in the national interest; he is acting purely for self-preservation. Every other argument is a smokescreen.

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