

RESEARCH REPORT | Center for American Security

ISRAEL'S WAR OF SURVIVAL AND THE END OF THE TWO-STATE SOLUTION

By Kenneth R. Timmerman

TOPLINE POINTS

- ★ The historic Abraham Accords agreement normalizing Israel's relations with five Arab states fundamentally changed the security equation for Middle East Peace. Israel is no longer isolated and, as a result, has greater latitude in prosecuting the war against Hamas.
- ★ Russia is exploiting U.S. weakness during this conflict and is trying to play the spoiler.
- ★ Despite efforts by the Biden Administration to promote the “two-state solution” as the basis for a settlement after the war, the Hamas attacks killed the notion of a Palestinian state.
- ★ The 800-pound elephants in the room concerning the Israel-Hamas War and Middle East stability are Iran and Qatar.

The October 7 Attacks: How could this happen?

October 7, 2023 was the single largest mass murder of Jews since the Holocaust. “Never again” actually happened—again—for every Jew in Israel to see.

Three generations of Israelis have grown up believing that the events of the Third Reich were history and that the Israel Defense Force (IDF) protected Jews from similar massacres. On October 7, they woke up to see the atrocities happening again, but this time inside Israel.

The sheer size of the October 7 attack—15 times as many casualties per capita as 9/11 in the U.S.—has affected every Israeli. In addition to the families of those killed and taken hostage are

the families of some 300,000 IDF soldiers and reservists currently fighting Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in northern Israel. Every Israeli family has someone directly involved.

How could Israel so thoroughly have let down its guard?

Just one week before the October 7 massacre, Israel concluded a new “ceasefire” agreement with Hamas, reopening the border and increasing the number of permits for Gazans seeking to work in Israel.¹ Both the IDF and the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), the Defense Ministry agency that manages aid to the Palestinians, argued that greater prosperity would encourage stability.² While this latest increase in work permits did not specifically enable the attacks, the mindset of the IDF and COGAT did.

On the day of the killings, survivors said they heard Hamas attackers calling them by name, calling their children by name—even calling the names of their dogs. “The Hamas invasion succeeded so well because the terrorists had an intimate knowledge of the communities they were targeting because they had worked there or had intelligence from those who had worked there.” The guest workers came back “as Hamas rapists and killers.”³

Hamas cynically used the “ceasefire” as a means of lulling the Israelis into a false sense of security, into believing Hamas “did not want a fight.”⁴

While the post-war inquiry into how the IDF and the security establishment missed the warning signs of war has yet to begin, much information has already surfaced.

Israeli and U.S. media reported in November of multiple warnings from low-level intelligence officers and border guards that were discounted by IDF leadership.⁵ But the most sweeping report of the intelligence failures leading up to October 7 was published on November 30, 2023, by U.S.-Israeli reporter Caroline Glick.

Glick pointed the finger directly at IDF intelligence chief Maj. Gen. Aharon Haliva, who allegedly suppressed numerous reports specifically warning of the attack and, most significantly, failed to present those warnings to Prime Minister Netanyahu.

In addition, Haliva’s own family members—including his ex-wife and mother of his children, Shira Margalit—were major figures in the anti-Netanyahu protests that rocked Israel for months before October 7, according to Glick. Since the massacre, Haliva has publicly contradicted Netanyahu, in particular when the prime minister claimed Israel was fighting an “existential” war akin to a “second war of independence.” Speaking to graduates of the Intelligence Corps officer training course, Haliva said, “It’s a war we have no choice but to fight. It isn’t an existential war,” Glick reported.

Here are just a few of the warning signals Haliva rejected prior to October 7, according to Glick:

- Months ahead of the attacks, female intelligence officers of the Field Observers unit at the Nahal Az base (that was overrun on October 7) reported observing Hamas terrorists

“practicing taking hostages and blowing up tanks” and “probing the fence for weaknesses.” Instead of being rewarded, they were told to stop reporting such incidents by “unnamed top-level officers in the intelligence corps.”

- A civilian hacker contracted by the IDF reported on Hamas training exercises “involving invading Israel, penetrating the security fence at multiple points, taking over communities, committing mass murder and kidnapping” in increasingly great detail. Five months before the assault, the IDF seized his electronic surveillance gear and stopped working with him on orders from “senior leadership.”
- A tactical intelligence non-commissioned officer and Hamas expert in the IDF’s signals intelligence Unit 8200 “began providing detailed reports on Hamas’s preparations for the invasion in May 2022... Her reports included all aspects of the invasion that took place on October 7, including Hamas’s use of paragliders, pickup trucks, and motorcycles.” Her reports were rejected, even after they were conveyed up the chain of command, where they were blocked by Haliva, who “dismissed their warnings” and never communicated them to Shin Bet, the IDF chief of staff, or the prime minister.⁶

While many observers believe Prime Minister Netanyahu will become a political casualty of the failure to detect and prevent the October 7 Hamas attacks, his advocacy for “massive strikes” against Gaza on two separate occasions in 2019,⁷ as well as Maj. Gen. Haliva’s apparent dereliction of duty, could mitigate the blame ascribed to him by a post-war inquiry. While the odds remain against it, Netanyahu could very well survive.

Israel’s War to Destroy Hamas

Unlike most of Israel’s recent wars, which have ended inconclusively following intense international pressure, “Operation Swords of Iron” is likely to continue for some time. The Israeli war coalition government has set three war goals: eliminating Hamas, the return of Israeli hostages, and ensuring that Gaza never again becomes “a focus of terrorism, incitement and attacks” against Israel.⁸

Even after Israeli soldiers mistakenly killed three hostages who had escaped their captors and after public pressure from other hostage families intensified to pause the fighting to allow for another prisoner exchange, Prime Minister Netanyahu reiterated those war goals, citing a letter from families of fallen soldiers. “The people are strong, with a steadfast spirit,” the prime minister quoted them as writing. “The heroic civilians and soldiers are determined to reach absolute victory. You have a mandate to fight; you do not have a mandate to stop in the middle.”⁹

And while international pressure on Israel to declare a lengthy “humanitarian pause” intensified at the United Nations and elsewhere, as of this writing (mid-January 2024), Israel’s chief ally, the United States, refrained from joining that chorus. As Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin declared during a joint press conference with his Israeli counterpart in Tel Aviv on December 18, “I am not here to dictate timetables or terms” to Israel.¹⁰

Arguably, one reason for the U.S. restraint has been Israel's standing among its new Arab partners following the announcement of the Abraham Accords in December 2020, the first expansion of countries to sign formal peace treaties and establish economic ties with Israel since the agreement with Jordan in 1994. While Israel's Arab partners have condemned Israel for civilian casualties in Gaza and called for a UN ceasefire, so far, they have not threatened wider action, such as an oil embargo or severing economic ties, despite mounting pressure from Arab media commentators and the Arab street.¹¹

Many Arab leaders, notably in the UAE, Egypt, Syria, Libya, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia, have themselves fought the Muslim Brotherhood (the parent organization of Hamas, al Qaeda, and ISIS), and their leaders had criticized Hamas publicly before the October 7 massacres.¹²

According to a November 16, 2023, *Economist* analysis, "Many Gulf states would like Israel to get rid of Hamas, even as they fear that doing so will awaken extremism in their own countries."¹³

Even before the Abraham Accords, Arab support for the Palestinian cause was on the wane, with most Arab leaders "distancing themselves from their Palestinian brothers."¹⁴ Coming to terms with the Jewish state was seen not only as economically beneficial but as a deterrent against Iran.

Contributing to the apparent U.S. ambivalence to pressure Israel to stop fighting could be the sheer indecency of Palestinian support for the gruesome attacks themselves. An opinion poll taken during the truce of November 24 to December 1 showed overwhelming Palestinian support for Hamas, with an astonishing 72 percent agreeing that Hamas was "correct" to launch the October 7 massacre (82 percent in the West Bank and 57 percent in Gaza).¹⁵

A Hamas fighter shot 21-year-old Mia Schem in the arm as she tried to flee the music festival and took her to Gaza, where she was held by a family in their home. For three days, she received no medication or treatment for her wound. Children opened the door to taunt her. Their father leered at her "with rape in his eyes." At one point, someone told her she was not going back alive. "I experienced hell," she told an Israeli TV channel. "Everyone there are terrorists. There are no innocent civilians, not one."¹⁶

Russia is Exploiting U.S. Weakness and Trying to Play the Spoiler

From the beginning of Russia's involvement in the Syrian civil war in 2015 until just recently, Russian President Putin has maintained a cordial relationship with Israeli prime ministers. He became particularly close to Netanyahu, and the two met frequently during Netanyahu's successive terms in office, from March 2009 through June 2021.¹⁷

Just four months before Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, Russia reaffirmed its "deconfliction" mechanism with Israel, allowing the Israeli air force to strike Iranian targets in Syria without interference from Russian air defenses, while Israel refrained from targeting Russian positions.¹⁸

Israel initially took no position on the war in Ukraine, providing humanitarian aid to Ukraine while refusing to condemn the Russian invasion. At one point, Israel offered to serve as an intermediary between the two for ceasefire talks. Israel's ambivalence caused Ukrainian President Zelenskyy and the Biden administration to publicly pressure Netanyahu in February 2023 to distance himself from Putin and to provide Ukraine with Israel's upper-tier, long-range missile defense system, David's Sling.¹⁹

Following this pivot by the current Netanyahu government, which took office in December 2022, relations with Moscow became increasingly frosty. Putin ultimately took what for him was an unprecedented step, just one week after the October 7 massacre, of comparing Israel's actions against Hamas to the Nazi siege of Leningrad during World War II, which lasted 872 days and took the lives of an estimated 1.5 million people.²⁰ Historians have called Leningrad the longest and most costly siege in the history of warfare.

Since then, Russia has voted at the United Nations to condemn Israel and has supported every resolution to impose a ceasefire in Gaza, blaming the conflict on U.S. policies with rhetoric reminiscent of Soviet propaganda during the Cold War.²¹

A December 22, 2023, UN Security Council resolution pressing for urgent steps to allow expanded aid into Gaza passed with 13 votes in favor and two abstentions by the U.S. and Russia. The U.S. abstained because it did not include a condemnation of Hamas. Russia abstained after the U.S. vetoed its amendment calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities.²²

Putin has exploited the perceived weakness of the Biden administration to "poach" in a region once dominated by the United States, sending his foreign minister to the COP 28 climate change conference in the UAE, where he lashed out at Israel's "collective punishment" of Palestinian civilians in a forum attended by U.S. Climate Change Special Envoy John Kerry.²³

Putin flouted an international arrest warrant against him by visiting the UAE and Saudi Arabia on December 6, where he was greeted warmly by both rulers, and reminded UAE President Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed that "[t]he UAE is "Russia's main trading partner in the Arab world." The following day, December 7, Putin received Iranian President Ibrahim Raisi in Moscow, where the two pledged to expand their already extensive strategic and military ties.²⁴

Since the Ukraine War began, Iran has been supplying Moscow with armed drones and, earlier this year agreed to build a drone assembly plant in Russia²⁵ in exchange for long-range ballistic missile technology, Su-35 fighter jets, Mi-28 attack helicopters, oil and gas swaps, and broad-ranging political and diplomatic support.²⁶ On December 27, the two nations agreed to use their respective currencies instead of the dollar for bilateral trade, shielding them from U.S. sanctions.²⁷

Russia has been angling for the past decade to re-establish its strategic presence in the Middle East, which it lost at the end of the Cold War. The Israel-Hamas war has accelerated those efforts.

The Two-State Solution is Dead

The United States and many Arab states have publicly promoted a post-war settlement based on the two-state solution. Secretary Austin added his voice to this chorus during his trip to Israel on December 18, 2023. As will be discussed later in this paper, Biden Administration officials recently doubled down on this idea with a peace plan it developed with Qatar and Egypt without Israel's involvement and apparently over its objections.

The British Peel Commission (named after its chairman, Lord Robert Peel) first proposed partitioning the League of Nations mandate in Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states in 1937. Ten years later, the United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine also called for separate Jewish and Arab states. Successive Israeli governments have offered the Palestinians an independent state on several occasions. The latest version of the two-state solution, the Trump Administration's "Peace to Prosperity: A Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People" (often called the Deal of the Century), would have given the Palestinian Authority \$50 billion in development aid for their new state. Palestinian leaders rejected all of these proposals.²⁸

For Israelis, October 7 put an end to the notion that a Palestinian state could live peacefully side by side with Israel. Even some liberal Jews today acknowledge that Israel cannot allow an enemy that continues to vow not only the destruction of the Jewish state but the extermination of every Jew in Israel to acquire the attributes of statehood.

Max Abrams, a Northeastern University associate professor of political science who specializes in international security and terrorism, had long been an advocate of the two-state solution. After October 7, he acknowledged, "not all problems are solvable... Hamas has opposed every single two-state-solution peace process, explicitly," he said. "It has intentionally used terrorism to derail a two-state solution. And so there is no bargaining space."²⁹

Ilan Benjamin, a cousin of beheaded U.S. journalist Daniel Pearl and a self-avowed supporter of a two-state solution until October 7, wrote a passionate appeal to fellow progressive Jews in *The Free Press*:

When you killed my family, I forgave you. When you killed my people, I forgave you. But when you killed my idealism, I had no forgiveness left... To friends who dare justify what has happened you are not friends. You are nothing but Nazi supporters dressed up in leftist intellectual language.³⁰

Prime Minister Netanyahu has been categorical that Israel cannot repeat the mistakes of the Oslo "peace process" begun by the Clinton Administration in 1993, with its goal of implementing the two-state solution. Netanyahu made this clear in a December 16, 2023 statement, after learning that IDF soldiers had mistakenly shot and killed three escaping Israeli hostages in Gaza. Netanyahu said:

I will not allow us to replace Hamastan with Fatahstan, that we replace Khan Yunis with Jenin. I will not allow the State of Israel to repeat the fateful mistake of Oslo, which brought to the heart of our country and to Gaza, the most extreme elements in the Arab world, which are committed to the destruction of the State of Israel and who educate their children to this end.

The debate between Hamas and Fatah is not ‘whether’ to eliminate the State of Israel but ‘how’ to do it. According to a poll that was carried out a few days ago, 82% of the Palestinian population in Judea and Samaria justifies the horrific massacre of October 7th. As of this moment, the Palestinian Authority senior leadership simply refuses to condemn the massacre and some of them even praise it openly. They will control Gaza on ‘the day after’? Haven’t we learned anything? As the Prime Minister of Israel, I will not allow that to happen.

It is important to make this clear now because among friends we must tell the truth and not foster illusions, how much more so on an existential and fateful issue such as this. Then I reiterate to our friends: After the elimination of Hamas, the Gaza Strip will be demilitarized, will be under Israeli security control, and no element in it will either threaten us or educate its children to destroy us.³¹

Former Trump administration Middle East Envoy Jason Greenblatt pointedly remarked just three days after the attacks that the widespread “glorification of the slaughter of Jews” had disqualified Hamas and Fatah from achieving an independent state. He said:

Israel cannot achieve peace with Palestinians when a segment of the Palestinian population still intends to destroy it. Israel cannot make peace when the leaders of the Palestinians include Hamas. Or when a member of Fatah... celebrates a “morning of victory, joy and pride” and urges all Palestinians to participate in terror against Israel.

[...]Israel, like communities of Jews throughout history, will always need to protect itself from haters. As a consequence, any solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, if ever one is to present itself, must always address the need for Israel to defend itself, control security over whatever the Palestinian areas might become and do what it needs to protect its citizens.³²

Biden-Netanyahu Tensions Growing

Prime Minister Netanyahu’s refusal to yield to U.S. pressure on the war and the Palestinians has caused tensions between the President Biden and himself. According to *Axios*, the two leaders reportedly had a heated phone conversation on December 23 over Israel’s decision to withhold tax revenue it collects for the Palestinian Authority. Biden reportedly told Netanyahu he expected Netanyahu to solve this issue and said, “This conversation is over” before abruptly ending the call.³³

According to a January 14 Axios report, “President Biden and other senior U.S. officials are becoming increasingly frustrated with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his rejection of most of the administration's recent requests related to the war in Gaza, four U.S. officials with direct knowledge of the issue. The report said Biden is losing patience with Netanyahu because the president believes he has given Israel his full support while taking a political hit from his base during an election year. Axios added a comment by Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), a Biden ally, “At every juncture, Netanyahu has given Biden the finger.”³⁴

On January 19, Netanyahu and Biden spoke by phone for the first time in almost a month. Before their tense December 23 phone call, the two leaders reportedly spoke almost every day. After the call, Biden told the press that Netanyahu “was not opposed to all two-state solutions, and there were a number of types possible, noting that some United Nations members do not have military forces.”³⁵ Biden appeared to be referring to a demilitarized Palestinian state, endowed with its own police and intelligence forces, such as was created under the Oslo Accords.

Although a senior Israeli official said, “the call was good,” Netanyahu pushed back forcefully after Biden made these public comments, issuing a statement on January 21 in which he reiterated his complete rejection of the Biden Administration’s push for a peace agreement based on the two-state solution or putting Gaza under the control of the Palestinian Authority. According to Netanyahu’s statement,

“Gaza must be demilitarized, under Israel's full security control.

I will not compromise on full Israeli security control of all territory west of the Jordan River.

As Prime Minister of Israel, I have strongly upheld this position in the face of great international and domestic pressure.

My insistence is what has prevented – over the years – the establishment of a Palestinian state that would have constituted an existential danger to Israel. As long as I am Prime Minister, I will continue to strongly insist on this. If someone has a different position, they should show leadership and candidly state their position to the citizens of Israel.”³⁶

Appeasing the Islamic Regime in Iran

President Biden’s appeasement of the terror-supporting regime in Iran, Hamas’s main backer, is one of the most dangerous failings of his administration. Since taking office, the Biden Administration has sought to revive the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), also known as the Iran Nuclear deal, from which President Trump withdrew in 2018. While U.S. negotiators were talking with Iranian officials through intermediaries, the International Atomic Energy Agency issued a series of alarming reports about Iran’s efforts to expand its nuclear capabilities.

The latest of these reports, dated November 13, 2023, concluded that Iran is currently capable of making enough weapons-grade uranium “for six nuclear weapons in one month, eight in two months, ten in three months, eleven in four months, and twelve in five months,” according to former IAEA nuclear inspector David Albright.³⁷

Just one month before the Hamas-led massacre in Israel, the Biden White House released \$6 billion in Iranian assets held in South Korean banks under previous U.S. sanctions in exchange for U.S.-citizen hostages in Iran.³⁸

Ironically or purposely, the White House announced the hostage-ransom agreement on the 22nd anniversary of the September 11 attacks on America. A U.S. federal court in Manhattan found more than a decade earlier that the Iranian regime and its chief terrorist operative, Imad Mughniyeh, played a “material” role in the September 11, 2001, plot and ordered the government to pay more than \$6 billion in damages to 9/11 families.³⁹

Just one day after the October 7 massacre, the *Wall Street Journal*, citing Hamas sources, reported that Iranian government officials had given the green light for the Hamas attack at a meeting in Beirut the previous Monday and that Hamas terrorists had been training in Iran since August on specific scenarios and tactics used to overwhelm Israeli defenses.⁴⁰ In response, Secretary of State Anthony Blinken told CNN the U.S. has “not yet seen evidence that Iran directed or was behind this particular attack, but there is certainly a long relationship.”⁴¹ Under heavy criticism for that statement, Blinken told NBC News five days later that “Hamas wouldn’t be Hamas without the support over many, many years from Iran. And so, we know that. We see that.”⁴²

On the day after the Hamas terrorist attack, Iranian President Ibrahim Raisi spoke with Hamas leaders. Other regime leaders called the attack a “proud operation” and a “great victory” and organized public celebrations of the attacks in Tehran. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei’s chief foreign policy advisor, Ali Akbar Velayati, sent a letter to Hamas and Islamic Jihad leaders, congratulating them on “this great and strategic victory.”⁴³

The \$6 billion payment and the attempt to revive the broken Iran nuclear deal were not the only measures of appeasement taken by the Biden White House toward Iran. They also allowed Iran to sell oil on international markets in violation of Trump-era sanctions, earning more than \$26 billion in hard currency revenues from March to December 2023 alone, according to Iranian regime statistics.⁴⁴ Daily oil exports have soared from less than 500,000 barrels a day when Biden took office to more than 1.5 million barrels a day today.⁴⁵ And that windfall in hard currency earnings comes in addition to the \$10 billion in frozen electricity payments the Biden White House authorized Iraq to release to Iran in November, more than one month after the Hamas attacks.⁴⁶

The Biden Administration is not only appeasing the Iranian regime with financial favors, it has gone easy on Iran’s terror proxies. On February 6, 2021, the White House removed the Iranian-backed Houthi rebel group in Yemen from the State Department’s terrorism list, allowing them to conduct business through the U.S. financial system, among other benefits.⁴⁷ The Biden

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On February 6, 2021, the White House removed the Iranian-backed Houthi rebel group in Yemen from the State Department's terrorism list, allowing them to conduct business through the U.S. financial system, among other benefits. Biden officials announced on January 17, 2024 that it was returning the Houthis to the U.S. list of terrorist organizations. It turned out, however, that the Biden Administration decided to restore the weaker and little-known of two terrorist designations imposed by the Trump Administration, the "specially designated global terrorist organization" designation. Under this designation, Houthi members can apply for a U.S. visa; supporting them is not a crime, and U.S. banks are not required to seize Houthi funds. This designation also was postponed for 30 days. The Biden Administration declined to restore a second, much tougher terrorist designation imposed by the Trump Administration by placing the Houthis on the U.S. list of "Foreign Terrorist Organizations."

Iran deployed its Houthi terrorist proxies to launch ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and drone strikes on U.S. warships in the Red Sea on October 18, 2023, initiating a nine-hour battle with the U.S.S. *Carney*.⁴⁸ Since then, Iranian proxies in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen have launched 151 attacks on U.S. bases in Iraq and Syria, according to the Pentagon, with only limited U.S. response. Meanwhile, Iranian proxy Hezbollah continues to launch rockets into Israel from Lebanon, threatening to open yet another front in the war.⁴⁹

After two months of Houthi drone and missile attacks against Israel and Red Sea shipping, the U.S. finally retaliated with airstrikes against military sites in Yemen on January 12. These airstrikes did not deter the Houthis or stop the missile attacks, apparently because the Houthis viewed the U.S. attack as weak and, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, the Biden Administration undermined the effectiveness of the first strike by warning the Houthis of this attack in advance so they could evacuate targeted sites.⁵⁰ As a result, the U.S. had conducted seven more airstrikes against Houthi missile and drone sites in Yemen when this paper went to print, including a large joint strike by U.S. and UK. forces on January 22 against 150 weapons at 30 locations.

Conversely, when President Trump ordered a U.S. drone strike on Quds Force commander Qassem Soleimani on January 2, 2020, as he was arriving in Iraq to take command of ongoing attacks against the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad,⁵¹ those attacks stopped almost immediately. Except for a half-hearted missile strike on U.S. and Iraqi troops stationed at the al-Asad airbase north of Baghdad, which the Iranians warned Baghdad about ahead of time, Iran and its proxies stood down.⁵²

Qatar's Cozy Relationship with Terrorists

Hamas leaders have lived in luxury in Qatar for years. Well before the current war, the Israeli government claimed on Twitter that the top three Hamas leaders living in Qatar had a net worth of \$12 billion, money presumably skimmed from international aid payments and transfer payments from Israel.⁵³

The U.S. Treasury Department first accused Qatar of harboring terrorist leaders and financiers in 2014. “There are U.S.- and UN-designated terrorist financiers in Qatar that have not been acted against under Qatari law,” Undersecretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence David S. Cohen said at the time.⁵⁴ Israel’s permanent representative to the United Nations published an op-ed in the *New York Times* that year calling Qatar the “Club Med for Terrorists.”⁵⁵

As evidence expanded of Qatar’s involvement with multiple terrorist groups, including ISIS, al-Qaeda, Hamas, and the Taliban, Saudi Arabia broke diplomatic relations with Qatar in 2017.⁵⁶

For years, however, Israel not only allowed the government of Qatar to fund Hamas but actually encouraged it since the Fatah-controlled Palestinian Authority was not transferring customs duties and other funds to the Gaza regime once Hamas seized control of Gaza militarily in 2007. “Nobody else is ready to help but Qatar,” Brig. Gen. Yossi Kuperwasser, the former head of research for Israel’s military intelligence, told NPR in 2015: “We believe that better conditions in Gaza would lessen the incentive of Hamas and the population to go again to war. So in a way it is helping the deterrence.”⁵⁷

Kuperwasser was expressing the then-majority view among Israeli security experts. Today he acknowledges the ambiguity of Qatar’s position. “You can’t be on the one hand a major non-NATO ally of the United States, and at the same time provide excellent living conditions to the leadership of a terror organization responsible for the most horrific, barbaric attack of all time,” he told the *Jewish Chronicle*.⁵⁸

In a separate essay acknowledging that the Israeli security establishment was lulled to sleep by its own assumptions and a failure of imagination about Hamas, Kuperwasser argued after the attacks that Israel must “change its policy towards Hamas from containment and deterrence to decisively defeating it to make sure it will not be able to rearm itself.”⁵⁹

After the October 7 Hamas terrorist attack, Israel publicly dispatched Mossad chief David Barnea to Qatar to negotiate the temporary truce that ended on December 1 after the release of more than 100 Israeli hostages by Hamas and continues to use Qatar as an intermediary to parlay with the Hamas leadership in Gaza.

However, according to a November 20, 2023, Politico article, pressure inside the United States is mounting to demand that Qatar close the Hamas office in Doha and expel Hamas leaders. Senator Ted Budd (R-NC) argued that once the hostage crisis is resolved, the Hamas leadership “should be extradited to the United States so that these terrorists can face justice.” And a senior administration official, speaking on background, said, “There can be no more business as usual with Hamas” for U.S. partners in the region.⁶⁰

Former Treasury Department analyst Jonathan Schanzer, now a vice president at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, scoffed at Qatari assistance in the hostage negotiations: “[W]hen America thanks Qatar for its assistance, it’s a bit like thanking the thug who punched you in the

eye for bringing you an ice pack... In their efforts to steer the Gaza conflict toward a permanent ceasefire, the Qataris have actively tried to help save Hamas from destruction, which is Israel's stated war aim... The Qataris are terror sponsors, not stewards of Gaza."

Schanzer further argued that the U.S. should not just demand that Qatar "jettison its Hamas leaders from the country" but be "stripped of its status as a Major Non-NATO ally" and "sanctioned as a State Sponsor of Terrorism." "The Pentagon should also begin to make contingency plans for moving our air assets out of the country," he wrote, referencing U.S. Central Command headquarters at Al Udeid Air Base, the largest U.S. air base in the region.⁶¹

FoxNews Digital revealed on January 20, 2024, that Qatar had hired a former CIA officer to spy on U.S. politicians and non-profit organizations and to mount a smear campaign against them, because they had sought to have the United States designate the Muslim Brotherhood – the parent organization of Hamas – as a terrorist organization.⁶²

October 7 Was 'Our Generation's Kristallnacht'

The Hamas charter calls for the eradication of the state of Israel and, by extension, the murder of every Jew in Israel.⁶³ In a 2014 essay in *The Atlantic*, Jeffrey Goldberg called the charter "a frank and open call for genocide, embedded in one of the most thoroughly antisemitic documents you'll read this side of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion."⁶⁴

In a 55-second compilation of Friday sermons posted to Twitter by the Israel Defense Forces, official Hamas clerics urged their followers to "bring annihilation upon the Jews" and to continue killing them "until not a single Jew or Zionist is left on the face of the Earth." Said another, "Our doctrine in fighting you (the Jews) is that we will totally exterminate you. We will not leave a single one of you alive." In a historical clip, Mahmoud al-Zahar, the Hamas co-founder, quotes the Quran as saying, "Kill them wherever you may find them." And on, and on.⁶⁵

Israel's Special Envoy for Combating Antisemitism, Michal Cotler Wunsh, said that October 7 was "a moment in time that is just like Kristallnacht," the November 9-10, 1938, "night of broken glass," when Nazi thugs torched 1,400 synagogues across Germany and smashed Jewish shops and businesses.⁶⁶ "This is our generation's Kristallnacht," wrote one foreign commentator.⁶⁷ "It's fair to compare Oct. 7 to Kristallnacht," wrote another.⁶⁸

Watching the rage of pro-Palestinian, anti-Semitic demonstrations in major U.S. cities and on college campuses, HotAir's Ed Morrissey wondered if they were America's Kristallnacht. "A few months ago, these scenes would have been unthinkable... but this has exploded on the Left into mainstream thought. We have seen an unending stream of anti-Semitism and intimidation of Jews since the early days of the war, and that was bad enough. Now it's spilling into the streets and taking aim at Jewish businesses and Jewish communities, and all with the same purpose: to marginalize Jews and push them out of public life, just as intended in 1930s Germany."⁶⁹

A Role for the United Nations?

President Biden and others in the U.S. administration have suggested that the United Nations could play a role in guaranteeing Israel's security by administering Gaza.⁷⁰ But every time over the past 70 years that the UN has set up an observer or monitoring force as part of a ceasefire deal between Israel and its neighbors, it has led to renewed conflict.

- After the 1956 Suez War, the UN Security Council sent UN observers, known as the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF), to Israel's border with Egypt. When Egypt demanded their departure on May 16, 1967, just two days after moving Egyptian forces into the Sinai, they left. Similarly, when Jordanian troops advanced on Israel in early June 1967, the Jerusalem-based UN Truce Supervision Organization fled. The Six-Day War soon followed.
- After the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the Security Council created the UN Disengagement Observer Force, UNDOF. When fighting broke out between the Syrian Army and the Syrian opposition in early 2013, the observers fled.
- After the first Lebanon war in 1978, the Security Council established the UN Interim Force in Lebanon, UNIFIL, to demilitarize the border between Israel and Lebanon. UNIFIL did nothing to prevent the PLO from establishing military bases in its zone during the late 1970s and early 1980s, leading to the second Lebanon War of 1982. Later, UNIFIL stood by as Hezbollah occupied the same area, leading to the third Lebanon war of 2006. When U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice intervened to expand UNIFIL's mission to disarm Hezbollah in exchange for a permanent ceasefire, UNIFIL allowed Hezbollah to expand its missile capabilities ten-fold.
- After Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005, it agreed to a European Union force to monitor the border with Egypt to prevent weapons smuggling into Gaza. Once Hamas took over Gaza by force in 2007, the EU force fled.⁷¹

Israeli war coalition leaders have insisted that Israel cannot and will not allow the international community to impose a ceasefire until Israel has vanquished Hamas and has responded coolly to U.S. suggestions of a UN or EU monitoring force.⁷²

UNWRA's Responsibility

The IDF has repeatedly hit targets in UN schools in Gaza run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), often after being attacked by Hamas fighters inside.⁷³ Created as a UN relief and human development agency to help Palestinian refugees, UNRWA has been criticized by many for fomenting anti-Israel Palestinian extremism and for sheltering Hamas.⁷⁴

In Beit Hanoun, in northern Gaza, the IDF found two tunnel entrances near UNWRA-run schools, "including one that was booby-trapped," as well as a weapons stockpile.⁷⁵ On December

28, the IDF destroyed three Hamas tunnel shafts near the UNRWA-run Rantisi Hospital and a nearby girls' school, connected by an underground network.⁷⁶

UNWRA itself, in the past, has acknowledged the cynical Hamas practice of hiding weapons in UNWRA schools. After the IDF released aerial photos and videos of rocket launch sites around a mosque, hospital, and children's playground and video of rocket launchers found next to an agricultural school in Gaza, UNWRA said it would launch "a comprehensive investigation into the circumstances" surrounding these Hamas practices. That was in July 2014.⁷⁷

Israel called Hamas's use of UN-protected schools and hospitals for terror purposes "double war crimes" since they were not only firing rockets at civilians but firing them from UN facilities. IDF spokesman Lt. Col. Jonathan Conricus told CBS News that the IDF has seen "a systemic abuse by Hamas of sites and locations that are supposed to enjoy special protection under the Geneva Convention and humanitarian law." These UN facilities are "supposed to be out of bounds, according to the law of armed conflict, and specially protected," he added.⁷⁸

Israeli researcher David Bedein, who has documented the use of UNWRA schools as "terror-summer camps" for children and has been exposing the hate-drenched curriculum used by UNWRA schools in Gaza and the Palestinian Authority for nearly two decades, said in a recent podcast that money sent by Qatar and others to UNWRA for medical equipment has "disappeared," presumably used for tunnels and terror infrastructure. "They have a \$1.6 billion budget, with no accountability or transparency," he said. "It's time to disarm UNWRA. Why should schools in a UN education system be filled with arms? They should be removed. It would save lives."⁷⁹

President Trump froze U.S. payments to UNWRA in 2018 because of the organization's terror ties, placing more than \$360 million into an escrow account. But just months after taking office, the Biden State Department released those funds, waiving a Treasury Department ban mandated by the Taylor Force Act, which prohibited U.S. funding for the Palestinian Authority until it "stopped paying salaries to imprisoned terrorists and their families." According to internal communications obtained through the Freedom of Information Act, Biden administration officials assessed that "there is a high risk Hamas could potentially derive indirect, unintentional benefit from U.S. assistance to Gaza" but released the funds regardless of those concerns.⁸⁰

Senators Rick Scott, Marsha Blackburn, and four Republican colleagues introduced a bill to cut off U.S. funding to UNWRA on October 17, 2023.⁸¹ Similar legislation was introduced by Republican Senators Hagerty, Cruz, and Braun, and by Nebraska Republican Senator Pete Ricketts.⁸² U.S. funding to UNWRA was continuing when this paper went to print.

Germany froze funding to UNWRA in November 2023, and the Swiss National Council froze funding on December 13 (a move that must be ratified by the Swiss Senate, which voted against the measure).⁸³

‘After Gaza’ Talks Have Begun

Israel has already held back-channel talks with its Arab partners to insist that any future arrangement in Gaza must include a significant physical buffer zone on the Palestinian side of the border to prevent future attacks, a proposal opposed by the Biden administration, which wants no reduction of Palestinian territory.⁸⁴

October 7 showed that a border fence and electronic monitoring alone are not enough to deter attacks on Israel. “You cannot base a national security strategy on fences,” Or Yissachar, head of research of the Israel Defense and Security Forum, told i24 News. “The enemy only understands when we are on the offensive... The IDF needs to be present in the territories forever to keep arresting those terrorists.”⁸⁵

Another proposal currently being floated by Sander Gerber, CEO and CIO of Hudson Bay Capital and an architect of the Taylor Force Act (see above) is to incentivize Israel’s Arab partners to rebuild and administer Gaza collectively.⁸⁶ Politico reported that this approach would appear to be favored by the State Department in its internal post-war planning.⁸⁷

But the real question is whether the Biden administration will allow Israel to finish the job or whether they will intervene to save Hamas from destruction.

The Biden White House is under tremendous pressure from pro-Palestinian Members of Congress and their supporters to press for a UN-imposed ceasefire. Even a group of administration interns—not generally a group to publicly express disagreements with their boss—sent a letter to the president in early December calling for a cease-fire, saying they will “no longer remain silent on the ongoing genocide of the Palestinian people.”⁸⁸

There are signs that both Biden and Secretary of State Anthony Blinken are sympathetic to those calls. Secretary Blinken said on December 20 that the U.S. wants Israel to “shift its military operations in Gaza to a lower-intensity phase” with “more targeted operations,”⁸⁹ while Biden’s repeated comments that Israel must do more to limit civilian casualties indicates a disconnect with the extraordinary efforts taken by the IDF to do just that. Since the beginning of Israel’s military actions in Gaza, the IDF has sent 10 million SMS messages warning residents to flee specific areas because of impending attacks, as well as nine million pre-recorded phone calls, four million dropped leaflets, and 30,000 live calls to Gaza cellphones.⁹⁰

The real question will be whether the Biden administration accedes to efforts, apparently underway by the Hamas leadership in Qatar, to marginalize Gaza leader Yahya Sinwar and establish a new ruling agreement with Fatah in the West Bank to save what can be saved of the Hamas political and leadership structure, as well as access to international aid. External Hamas leaders Mousa Abu Marzouk and Ismail Haniyeh have both indicated a willingness to “engage in discussions on establishing a unified Palestinian leadership... and even hinted at potential recognition of Israel,” according to Washington Institute researchers Ehud Yaari and Matthew Levitt.⁹¹ Both positions are anathema to Gaza leader Sinwar and Israel’s coalition war cabinet

but could find favor with the Biden administration and with Arab leaders in Egypt and Saudi Arabia involved in the mediation.

As mentioned earlier, the Biden Administration doubled down on its effort to negotiate a post-war peace plan over Israel's objections with a peace proposal jointly developed by the United States, Qatar, and Egypt that was leaked to the press on January 21, 2024. This plan calls for a full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, freedom of movement inside the Gaza Strip, and an end to Israel's overhead drone surveillance in exchange for the release of Israeli hostages and the normalization of relations between Israel and its Arab neighbors.⁹²

This peace plan contradicts Prime Minister Netanyahu's January 21 statement firmly rejecting the Biden Administration's attempts to craft a peace plan based on the two-state solution and placing Gaza under the control of the Palestinian Authority. Although Netanyahu did not comment on this proposal, in his response to a Hamas demand that Israel withdraw all its forces from Gaza that same day, he said: "Were we to agree to this, our soldiers would have fallen in vain. Were we to agree to this, we would not be able to ensure the security of our citizens."

Policy Recommendations

The following are recommended changes to U.S. policy in response to the deteriorating security situation in the Middle East since the October 7 Hamas terrorist attack.

- The United States should be unequivocal in its support for Israel and its Middle East allies. Strong and decisive U.S. leadership will deter Russia, China, and Iran. By contrast, weakness and vacillation will encourage Russia and China to expand their presence in the region, endangering America's economic and national security interests and emboldening Iran to continue its support for terror and its pursuit of nuclear weapons.
- Israel must be given the time it needs to thoroughly defeat Hamas as a military and political entity. There can be no going back to the accommodations before October 7. Hamas must not be allowed to rise from the ashes.
- The Biden administration must give Israel all the military aid it needs and stop holding aid for Israel hostage to unpopular aid to Ukraine.
- The Biden administration should not try to second-guess the Israeli government as to its military needs, its policies, or its war goals and should not try to entangle Israel in "peace process" talks about a two-state solution. The October 7 attacks demonstrated beyond any doubt the utter folly of empowering Hamas or Fatah with statehood. Hamas killed the two-state solution on October 7.
- The United States should end aid to the Palestinian Authority until new leadership emerges that explicitly and irrevocably acknowledges Israel's right to exist as a sovereign state within secure borders and demonstrates through its actions that this new policy is not another Oslo subterfuge. One necessary step new Palestinian leadership must take is

to abolish the hate-filled curriculum taught in schools. Another is to end the preaching of Jew-hatred in the mosques, which are controlled by Hamas and the Palestinian Authority. These are generational reforms.

- The United States should end funding to UNWRA until the agency has been thoroughly reformed, with regular inspections of UNWRA facilities by Israeli security authorities to ensure they have not been re-militarized.
- The Biden administration should step up enforcement of sanctions imposed by the Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) to increase the cost of doing business with sanctions violators, terrorists, and human rights abusers in Russia, Iran, Lebanon, and elsewhere.
- Beyond that, the United States needs to return to the “maximum pressure” policy toward Iran, to include comprehensive sanctions and enforcement of oil sanctions, and to eliminate terror cells that launch attacks on U.S. troops and bases in the region.

Palestinian leaders continue to lavish praise on the “martyrs” who carried out the October 7 massacres, vowing to repeat such attacks until Israel has been “annihilated.”⁹³ Elsewhere in the region, the Iranian regime continues to order its proxies to attack Israel, international shipping, and the U.S. Navy. Until now, U.S. policy has been to conduct pinprick strikes against Iranian proxies and to resurrect the shopworn rhetoric of a “two-state solution.” A far more robust U.S. policy is needed to re-establish security in the region, which starts with fulsome U.S. support for Israel, one of America’s closest and most important allies.

Author Biography

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