

## Between Trump's Dreams and Netanyahu's "Peace" — Resistance Dictates Its Terms



The dinner meeting on Monday, July 7, between U.S. President Donald Trump and his close ally, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, went far beyond customary diplomatic formalities. Held at the White House, the event felt more like a celebration, laden with mutual flattery and grandiose expressions that were hotter than the food served.

Despite stark differences in personality, the two leaders—bound by deep pragmatism and overlapping interests—appeared eager to script a scene of triumph and close a brutal chapter in regional confrontations. Each hoped to capitalize on recent developments, particularly regarding Iran, to secure personal glory and feed their political egos.

Netanyahu, buoyed by perceived military gains in Iran, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, and the West Bank, is aiming to leverage this momentum to subdue Hamas in Gaza politically and militarily. Trump, leaning toward de-escalation, envisions a diplomatic breakthrough that would bolster his legacy and perhaps earn him the Nobel Peace Prize for his so-called peace efforts.

As the two leaders dined and drafted a Gaza ceasefire agreement tailored to American interests and Israeli preferences—one that lays the foundation for a "New Middle East" that guarantees Israel's regional supremacy and preserves U.S. influence—the Palestinian resistance had a different message. And it may

have been the strongest one since Netanyahu's government violated the last truce.

This visit, Netanyahu's third to the U.S. since Trump assumed office earlier this year, coincides with renewed indirect negotiations between Israel and Hamas in Doha. Though cautious optimism surrounds the talks, the question remains: Can Trump truly breathe life into a frozen ceasefire file?

### Trump's Promises and Netanyahu's Calculations

Trump's public statements struck a conciliatory tone, signaling genuine intent to ease tensions and prevent the current Gaza flare-up from undoing his claimed diplomatic gains. He asserted that Hamas is willing to negotiate a ceasefire, expressing confidence that no major obstacles stood in the way.

However, with deliberate ambiguity, Trump dodged the region's most enduring question—whether a two-state solution is still viable—simply stating, “I don't know,” and leaving the matter to Netanyahu.

Netanyahu, for his part, spoke in the vague, equivocal language of diplomacy he's mastered, suggesting, “We can achieve broad peace in the Middle East with all our neighbors,” and crediting Trump for outlining a peace path. He floated the idea of peace with Palestinians “who do not seek to destroy us.”

Yet, he clung to his hardline positions on the Palestinian issue. He emphasized that Palestinians could govern themselves, but “security will remain in our hands,” signaling continued Israeli presence in Gaza and dismissing calls for a Palestinian state, which he warned would become a platform to threaten Israel.

Netanyahu even resurrected the rhetoric of population transfer, nodding to his far-right allies Itamar Ben Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich. Regardless of whether such movement would be voluntary or coerced, he said Gaza's residents should be free to leave: “If people want to stay, they can. If they want to leave, they should be able to,” framing it as a matter of “freedom of choice.”

The notion hasn't faded from either the Israeli or American playbook. With Egypt and Jordan refusing to accept displaced Gazans, other countries—Sudan, Cyprus, and more recently Syria, amid rumored normalization talks—have been floated as potential destinations, even if such scenarios remain unlikely.

### Capitalizing on the Moment

Both Trump and Netanyahu recognize the Gaza war has become a costly quagmire, with no clear objective. Prolonging it could undo Israel's recent gains, especially if it devolves into a protracted war of attrition that favors Hamas, which has notably refined its tactics and inflicted record losses on Israeli forces.

Still, both leaders crave a triumphant finale, crafted on their own terms: Netanyahu seeks to return as a conquering hero, absolved of corruption charges; Trump yearns to be anointed as a global peacemaker and Nobel laureate.

Their shared interest lies in weaponizing recent victories—particularly against Iran, but also in Lebanon, Yemen, Iraq, and now Syria—into political explosives aimed at Gaza. The goal: force the resistance to submit to an agreement bordering on capitulation.

Trump's dream of a redesigned Middle East serves both his vanity and U.S. strategic interests. In this vision, Israel is the unrivaled superpower holding the region's keys, while the rest line up to accept its supremacy.

But their bet on time wearing down Hamas and its allies, after over 21 months of siege, has faltered. Recent days have turned the tables, with the resistance showing it remains firmly rooted and defying expectations of its collapse.

### Resistance Reshuffles the Deck

While Netanyahu flattered Trump with praise and touted the recommendation letter he submitted to nominate the U.S. president for the Nobel Prize, and as both discussed shaping a ceasefire deal that crowned their supposed victory, the resistance issued a fierce counter-message.

The Beit Hanoun operation—executed on the very day of Netanyahu's Washington visit—killed five Israeli soldiers and wounded 14 others. It was a pointed statement to Trump, Netanyahu, and the Israeli negotiators in Doha, revealing the resistance's position on the entire negotiation process.

The attack followed leaks from Israel's security cabinet reaffirming the army's intent to remain in Gaza. Alongside earlier operations, this sent a sharp warning: military occupation guarantees more casualties and deeper entanglement.

The symbolic weight was even greater given the location of the resistance's ambushes—buffer zones like Khan Younis, Jabalia, Shuja'iyya, and Beit Hanoun—which Israel claimed to control. These actions shattered the myth of absolute victory that Netanyahu sold to Israelis for months and narrowed Israel's leverage at the negotiating table.

According to Israeli military data, June was the deadliest month for its forces since the war began, with 20 soldiers and officers killed. Since fighting reignited in March, 37 Israeli military personnel have died and at least 98 have been wounded. Since October 2023, the total death toll for Israeli forces has reached 887, including 443 killed in ground operations.

### Cautious Optimism and Positive Signals

Israeli media reports suggest the current ceasefire proposal—partially revised from Steve Whitkoff's draft—meets 80–90% of Israel's objectives. Remaining disagreements center on key Hamas demands, particularly a full Israeli withdrawal and a definitive end to the war.

Despite Hamas's unexpected flexibility, the Israeli delegation is applying intense pressure for more concessions—turning negotiations into a tug-of-war aimed at stripping Hamas of its leverage without offering firm guarantees.

In an analysis published in the French magazine *L'Obs*, writer Esther Poliquin outlined several indicators suggesting both sides may accept the deal. Though largely similar to past proposals, the current version reportedly includes a 60-day ceasefire, the release of 10 living Israeli hostages and some remains, and the freeing of a number of Palestinian prisoners.

Poliquin cited three reasons for hope. First is Trump's eagerness to end the conflict and take credit for the final hostage release—a desire reflected in his July 3 meeting with Idan Alexander, a dual American-Israeli hostage freed by Hamas two months ago.

Second, both sides seem more willing to compromise. Hamas has said it is ready to “immediately engage” in negotiations and accepted some Israeli preconditions, including scrapping public hostage-release ceremonies that Tel Aviv deemed humiliating.

Third, despite Israel's rejection of Hamas's amendments—chiefly full withdrawal and a war-ending guarantee—Netanyahu did not cancel the Doha talks. On the contrary, his office instructed Israeli envoys to continue pursuing a deal under Qatar's framework, a move Poliquin considers a positive sign.

Meanwhile, growing domestic pressure within Israel is pushing for a ceasefire and prisoner swap, fueled by ongoing protests and mounting dissent among political and military elites. The IDF has also reportedly concluded that its objectives in Gaza are nearly complete, making continued fighting unnecessary.

This is no longer just a Gaza war. The battle now extends across the Middle East. While the Strip remains its epicenter, Trump and Netanyahu are attempting to redraw the region's map. But the resistance is fighting to rewrite the rules—ensuring it remains a central actor and guardian of the Palestinian cause. It's a grueling war of attrition, with high stakes for all involved.