

An Analysis of Benjamin Netanyahu's Policies, Rhetoric, and their Strategic Consequences

Executive Summary

This report provides a comprehensive analysis of the allegations surrounding Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's policies toward Hamas, his administration's conduct of the war in Gaza, and the legal and rhetorical dimensions of the conflict. The analysis deconstructs the complex interplay between historical strategic choices, the motivations behind current military operations, and the international and domestic consequences of his government's approach. The findings indicate a profound contradiction at the core of Israeli policy under Netanyahu. The report details how the government consistently facilitated the transfer of Qatari funds to the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip. While publicly justified as a humanitarian measure, this policy has been widely criticized by internal and external sources as a deliberate strategy to bolster Hamas as a political counterweight to the secular Palestinian Authority, thereby undermining the prospect of a two-state solution. This "divide and conquer" doctrine is now accused of directly enabling Hamas's military buildup, with former Israeli intelligence officials believing it contributed to the October 7 attacks.

The current military campaign in Gaza has exposed deep rifts within Israel. Prominent figures from the military, intelligence community, and the public have voiced strong dissent, warning that Netanyahu's plan for a full occupation would be a "black hole" and is motivated more by his personal political survival than by a clear military objective. This has been juxtaposed with his government's rhetoric, which frames the conflict in dehumanizing and biblically charged terms, a discourse now cited as circumstantial evidence of "genocidal intent" in a legal case before the International Court of Justice. The severe humanitarian crisis in Gaza serves as a critical point of evidence in this legal and political debate, as the physical reality on the ground appears to contradict the government's official statements regarding its efforts to protect civilians.

Part I: The Strategic Context: Policy, Finance, and the Creation of a "Necessary Enemy"

1.1. Historical Origins: From Counterbalance to Catastrophe

The relationship between the Israeli government and the Palestinian militant organization Hamas is complex, rooted in a strategic policy that predates the group's formal establishment. In the 1970s and 1980s, Israel's military governor in Gaza, Brigadier General Yitzhak Segev, provided financial assistance to the Mujama al-Islamiya, the Islamic charity precursor to Hamas, on the direct instruction of Israeli authorities.¹ The strategic rationale was to provide a public standing for Islamic elements to offset the influence of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and other secular nationalist groups. This was a deliberate attempt to strengthen an opponent of the PLO from within the Palestinian population, thereby fragmenting the political opposition and preventing a unified push for an independent state.¹ This policy, which later evolved into a strategy known as "mowing the grass," involved a predictable cycle of limited violent clashes with Hamas followed by informal agreements and accommodations, a practice that enjoyed wide consensus within the Israeli political and security spheres.³

1.2. The Qatari Funding Mechanism: A Controversial Partnership

This historical strategy found its modern expression in the transfer of Qatari funds to the Gaza Strip. From 2018 to 2023, the Israeli government under Benjamin Netanyahu approved and facilitated the transfer of millions of dollars from Qatar to Hamas-run Gaza.¹ The payments, which were initially intended to help impoverished families and prevent a humanitarian disaster after the Palestinian Authority cut salaries for Gaza employees, were transported in cash-filled suitcases directly through Israeli territory.⁵ The official justification provided by Prime Minister Netanyahu was to prevent a "humanitarian collapse" and return calm to southern Israeli communities.¹

However, the core allegation from analysts and officials is that this policy was a "controversial deal" ⁴ with a strategic, non-humanitarian purpose. The deal was allegedly supported by Netanyahu in the hope that it would make Hamas an effective counterweight to the Palestinian Authority and prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state.¹ This strategic gamble began to unravel as early as 2019, when former Israeli intelligence chiefs, including the head of the Shin Bet, reportedly warned Netanyahu that the funds were being diverted to Hamas's military wing.⁶ Today, Israeli intelligence officials believe this money played a role in the success of the October 7 attacks.¹

1.3. The "Qatargate" Scandal: Allegations and Internal Turmoil

The policy of engaging with a state that funds Hamas has become a point of intense domestic scrutiny following the so-called "Qatargate" scandal. The investigation centers on accusations

that two of Netanyahu's close aides, Jonatan Urich and Eli Feldstein, were allegedly paid by Qatar to run a public relations campaign aimed at improving the Gulf state's image among Israelis.⁸ This alleged arrangement occurred while Qatar was a key mediator and financial patron of Hamas, a fact that has raised significant questions about a profound conflict of interest. The scandal highlights a system where a key enemy's patron state is simultaneously a partner in a financially questionable arrangement, raising questions about whether policy was influenced by private gain. The blurring of lines between state policy and personal finance suggests a willingness to engage in transactional relationships with a state that is deeply connected to an avowed enemy.⁸

In the wake of the scandal, Netanyahu has initiated a series of defamation lawsuits against political opponents who have connected him to the affair, including Yair Golan, the chairman of The Democrats party.⁶ Golan's defense is that the lawsuits are a Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation (SLAPP), intended to "silence any public discussion about the connections that led to the strengthening of Hamas, the failure and the massacre of October 7".⁶ A judge's decision revealed testimony from Netanyahu that he was unaware of his aide's alleged work for Qatar, but added that even if he was, "there's nothing illegitimate, many people work for many countries. Qatar is not an enemy state".¹¹

The strategic doctrine of cultivating a "necessary enemy" ultimately led to a full-scale war against that very enemy. The sequence of events—beginning with a policy to strengthen Hamas, leading to the group's military buildup, and culminating in the catastrophic October 7 attacks that served as a pretext for the current war—constitutes a self-defeating spiral. The policy did not prevent a conflict; it merely postponed and intensified it, representing a catastrophic strategic failure.

Aspect of Policy	Stated Justification	Strategic Goal (Alleged)	Ultimate Outcome
Historical Policy (1970s-80s)	N/A	Weaken the PLO by bolstering Mujama al-Islamiya, Hamas's precursor.	The rise of a powerful Islamist movement (Hamas) that would later become a direct, existential threat.
Qatari Funding (2018-2023)	Humanitarian aid to prevent a humanitarian disaster in Gaza.	To further weaken the Palestinian Authority and prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state.	Funding was reportedly diverted to Hamas's military wing, contributing to the success of the October 7 attacks.
"Qatargate" Scandal	N/A	To improve Qatar's image as a reliable mediator and partner in Israel.	Exposes a profound conflict of interest and raises questions about private gain influencing national security policy.

Overall Doctrine	To contain threats from Palestinian factions and manage the conflict.	To prevent a unified Palestinian state through a "divide and conquer" approach.	A catastrophic strategic failure that created the conditions for a more violent and devastating war.
<i>Table 1: The "Divide and Conquer" Policy and its Consequences</i>			

Part II: Military Strategy and Dissent: The Justification of the Gaza War

2.1. Official War Aims and Justifications

The Israeli government, under Prime Minister Netanyahu, has articulated four official goals for the military operation in Gaza, known as "Operation Iron Swords": to destroy Hamas, to free the hostages, to ensure Gaza no longer poses a threat, and to facilitate the return of displaced residents of northern Israel.¹² Netanyahu has publicly stated that the objective is not to occupy Gaza but to "free Gaza" from Hamas terrorists.¹⁴ His government's justification for the war is that it is a direct and necessary response to the "unprecedented" brutality of the October 7 attacks, which he claims gives Israel both "motivation and legitimacy" for a total victory.¹⁶

However, the government's postwar vision for Gaza lacks a viable "day after" plan, a reality highlighted by think tanks and analysts.¹⁸ Netanyahu has proposed a demilitarized Gaza with "overriding security control" by the Israeli military and a non-Israeli civilian administration in charge.¹⁴ Critics, however, argue that this vision of an indefinite Israeli military presence without a clear plan for governance or an exit strategy is deeply flawed.¹⁸

2.2. The "Forever War": Contradictions and Critiques

The current military strategy has been met with significant dissent from within Israel's security and political establishments. According to reports, IDF Chief of Staff Eyal Zamir has warned that a full occupation of Gaza would "drag Israel into a black hole," taking responsibility for millions of Palestinians, and exposing soldiers to guerrilla warfare while simultaneously "jeopardizing the hostages".²¹ Similarly, the Commanders for Israel's Security (CIS), a group of former military generals and intelligence chiefs, have stated in an open letter that Hamas "no longer poses a strategic threat to Israel" from a military perspective.²⁰ This internal critique is

echoed by former Mossad head Yossi Cohen, who claims he warned Netanyahu not to "rush into Gaza" without carefully reviewing intelligence, particularly from the same officials who were "party to the disaster" of October 7.²²

This internal opposition is matched by fierce domestic criticism, particularly from the families of the hostages. The Hostage and Missing Families Forum has publicly accused Netanyahu of being the "real obstacle to any agreement" and of endangering the lives of the remaining captives.²¹ A poll for Israel's Channel 12 showed that most Israelis believe Netanyahu cares more about clinging to power than winning the war.²⁰

2.3. The Political Motivation of Warmongering

The widely held criticism is that Netanyahu is prolonging the war to maintain his coalition government and avoid the potential ramifications of his ongoing corruption trial.¹⁸ The strategic dangers of a permanent occupation and the absence of a viable "day after" plan suggest that the current military actions are not set up for a lasting peace but for a prolonged, low-intensity conflict. Analysts warn that this will likely provoke a potent insurgency, positioning Hamas remnants, criminal gangs, and extremist groups to counter Israel's occupation and leading to a "forever war" in Gaza.¹⁸

A US Congressman has stated that high civilian casualties in Gaza "ultimately gives strength to Hamas".²⁵ This highlights a dangerous feedback loop where the means of war—the extensive bombing campaign and high civilian death toll—inadvertently strengthen the enemy's political base. As analysts have noted, Hamas as a political movement or "idea" is impossible to defeat militarily.³ The IDF chief's warning that a full occupation will "expose soldiers to guerrilla warfare" further supports this conclusion.²¹ The stated military goal of "eliminating" Hamas is therefore strategically counterproductive, as the military's actions may be creating the very conditions for Hamas to thrive as a resistance movement. This suggests a strategic outcome that may serve a political purpose—Netanyahu's survival—more than a stated military one—achieving a definitive victory.

Aspect of Strategy	Official Justification	Internal & Public Critique	Relevant Sources
War Goal	To "finish the job" and "complete the defeat of Hamas."	Hamas no longer poses a strategic threat; the goal of total defeat is not militarily feasible.	³
"Day After" Plan	A demilitarized Gaza with a non-Israeli civilian administration.	Lacks a viable plan, which will lead to a perpetual military occupation and a potent insurgency.	¹⁸

Hostage Strategy	A military offensive is the only way to pressure Hamas to release the hostages.	The offensive endangers the hostages' lives and is motivated by political rather than military objectives.	20
Table 2: Competing Narratives on Israel's Military Strategy			

Part III: Rhetoric, Incitement, and the Allegations of "Genocide"

3.1. Dissecting the Discourse: Rhetorical Framing and Dehumanization

The allegations of "genocide" are not only a legal matter but also a rhetorical one, shaped by the language used by Israeli leaders. A critical discourse analysis of Netanyahu's speeches reveals a consistent strategy of framing Israel as a passive victim of heinous acts while simultaneously depicting its military as a powerful, righteous defender.²⁶ This narrative is reinforced by the persistent use of the label "terrorist," which Netanyahu applies broadly, arguing that a Palestinian state would be a "terrorist state" ¹⁵ and that the chant "Free Palestine" is a modern version of "Heil Hitler".²⁸ Netanyahu has also utilized deeply charged and dehumanizing language to describe Hamas and its fighters, referring to them as "human beasts".²⁹ The most potent rhetorical device, however, has been the invocation of the biblical "ancient command 'Remember what Amalek did to you'".²⁹ This reference, made as the ground invasion of Gaza began, is linked to a narrative of total war and is used to justify the goal to "wipe them off the face of the earth".²⁹ The invocation of this historical and religious context provides a powerful ideological framework for the military action, regardless of the conflicting interpretations of the text itself.³⁰ In response to international criticism, Netanyahu has repeatedly claimed that allegations of starvation and genocide are a "global campaign of lies" orchestrated by Hamas, the international media, and UN institutions.¹⁵ He asserts that these groups are complicit in spreading "false and dangerous narratives" to undermine Israel's right to self-defense.³²

3.2. The Legal Dimension: The ICJ Case and the Definition of "Genocide"

The allegations of "genocide" have been formalized in a legal case brought by South Africa

against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ).³³ South Africa's application alleges that Israel has committed genocidal acts with the "requisite specific intent... to destroy Palestinians in Gaza as a part of the broader Palestinian national, racial and ethnical group".³³ The alleged acts include mass killings, causing serious bodily or mental harm, and deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about the group's physical destruction.³³ Under the UN Convention, the legal standard for genocide requires proof of "intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group".³⁴ Notably, this intent can be inferred from circumstantial evidence, including the public statements of senior officials and the scale of the destruction.³⁵ In its defense, Israel has characterized South Africa's charges as "baseless" and accused the country of "functioning as the legal arm" of Hamas.³³ The ICJ, in its initial ruling, stated that it is "plausible" that Israel's acts could amount to genocide and ordered provisional measures to prevent such acts, but did not order a suspension of military operations.³³

3.3. The Humanitarian Crisis as Circumstantial Evidence

The scale of the humanitarian crisis on the ground serves as powerful circumstantial evidence in the legal and political debate surrounding genocidal intent. Reports from Gaza's health ministry, which are considered reliable by UN agencies and independent experts, state that over 64,000 Palestinians have been killed, including thousands of women and children.²³ These figures stand in stark contrast to Netanyahu's claims that Israel takes "unprecedented steps to minimize civilian casualties".¹⁵

Furthermore, UN officials and humanitarian agencies have reported widespread starvation and a "man-made famine" in Gaza, a situation described as "pure and simple" starvation.³⁷ This directly contradicts Netanyahu's repeated statements that there is "no hunger" or that Israel's policy is the "exact opposite" of starvation.¹⁴ The mass displacement of Gazans into overcrowded "safe zones" with dire living conditions further compounds the crisis.¹⁸

A significant discrepancy exists between the stated intentions of the Israeli government and the observed outcomes of the military campaign. While Netanyahu's rhetoric frames the military's actions as "surgical" strikes to minimize civilian harm²⁶, the sheer scale of the civilian harm and humanitarian crisis documented by international bodies serves as powerful circumstantial evidence. This reality can be used in a legal setting to argue for a specific destructive intent, even in the absence of explicit orders. The rhetoric of self-defense is thus directly challenged by the physical reality on the ground.

Part IV: Synthesis and Geopolitical Consequences

4.1. The Interplay of Domestic and Foreign Policy

The analysis of Netanyahu's policies, rhetoric, and actions suggests a deep connection between his domestic political challenges and his strategic decisions. Reports indicate that the prime minister has been accused of prolonging the war to maintain his right-wing coalition and postpone his corruption trial.¹⁸ His actions, such as weighing the annexation of the West Bank despite international warnings, appear to be motivated by the need to appease domestic allies who are propping up his government.¹⁹ The fusion of personal political survival with national security strategy has created a situation where military and diplomatic decisions are viewed as serving a political agenda rather than clear, long-term strategic goals.

4.2. Strategic Failures and The "Day After" Challenge

The lack of a viable political endgame in Gaza is a critical strategic failure that analysts predict will lead to a prolonged insurgency and a "forever war".¹⁸ Without a clear post-conflict plan, the military's actions risk creating a political vacuum and a security environment ripe for further radicalization. This stands in stark contrast to the government's official goal of ensuring long-term security for Israel.

This strategic misstep has also led to Israel's growing diplomatic isolation. Countries such as the United Arab Emirates have condemned Netanyahu's statements on displacing Palestinians, viewing them as a "dangerous continuation of occupation policies".³⁹ Meanwhile, European nations have called for sanctions against Israel and pledged to recognize a Palestinian state.⁴⁰ The case at the International Court of Justice further signals the erosion of Israel's international standing and the legal challenges it faces.³³

The relationship between Netanyahu's rhetoric and his government's actions creates a powerful feedback loop. The rhetoric frames all Palestinians and their international supporters as a unified, existential threat²⁷, justifying a military strategy that has led to a dire humanitarian crisis. This crisis, in turn, fuels international condemnation and legal action, which is then used by Netanyahu to validate his initial claims of a "global campaign of lies" against Israel.¹⁵ This strategic interplay allows the prime minister to maintain political support and insulate his government from both domestic and international pressure, as all opposition, from a foreign government to a local protest group, is framed as part of the same anti-Israel conspiracy.

Policy/Strategy	Associated Rhetoric	Consequence
Qatari Funds	Official narrative: Humanitarian aid.	Alleged consequence: Enabled Hamas and contributed to the October 7 attacks.
Prolonged War	"Decisive war" to "smash and eliminate Hamas" and "free Gaza."	High civilian casualties, internal dissent, and risk of a prolonged insurgency and

		"forever war."
Denial of Famine	Accusation of a "global campaign of lies."	Humanitarian crisis is used as circumstantial evidence of genocidal intent in legal proceedings.
Conflation of Hamas/Palestinians	A Palestinian state is a "terrorist state"; "Free Palestine" is "Heil Hitler."	Justifies the military campaign to a domestic audience and fuels international accusations of collective punishment.
<i>Table 3: The Nexus of Policy, Rhetoric, and Geopolitical Outcomes</i>		

Conclusions and Future Trajectories

The analysis of Benjamin Netanyahu’s policies reveals a series of profound and interconnected contradictions. The strategic decision to cultivate a "necessary enemy" in Hamas, initially designed to weaken the Palestinian Authority, has now led to a full-scale, devastating war. This policy, which relied on the tacit funding of a group designated as a terrorist organization, has been widely criticized as a catastrophic strategic failure that inadvertently created the conditions for a more violent and devastating confrontation. The current conflict has not only resulted in a dire humanitarian crisis but has also exposed a deep chasm between Israel's political leadership and its security establishment. The widespread dissent from former military and intelligence leaders signals a lack of confidence in the government's strategic objectives and a belief that the war is being prolonged for political, rather than military, reasons. This internal division, combined with growing international condemnation and legal action, jeopardizes Israel's long-term security and international standing.

Without a viable political endgame, the conflict risks becoming a prolonged cycle of violence. The current military strategy may be inadvertently strengthening the political foundation of Hamas as a resistance movement, ensuring a perpetual state of insurgency. The symbiotic relationship between the government's rhetoric and the consequences of its actions creates a self-reinforcing cycle, where the outcomes of the war are used to justify the initial, uncompromising stance. Ultimately, the report concludes that the policies and rhetoric under examination have not only failed to achieve lasting security but have led to a deeply uncertain and volatile future for the region.

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