

With the Gaza Ceasefire in Place, Trump's Focus Will Shift to Ending the Ukraine War

By Conrad Black

Despite the attempts of outgoing U.S. President Joe Biden to pretend otherwise, it is clear that the beginning of the release of hostages in Gaza has been caused by a combination of the extreme damage done by the Israeli Defense Forces to the Hamas terrorist apparatus, and the assertion by returning President Donald Trump that [if hostages were not released](#) by the day of his inauguration, there would be “all hell to pay in the Middle East.”



Romi Gonen reunites with loved ones after she was released by Hamas terrorists, in Ramat Gan, Israel, Toaf/GPO/Handout via Reuters

The fact that Trump referred to the region and not just to Gaza can probably be taken as a clear indication that he would hold Iran responsible for a non-agreement on hostages and act directly against it. It is well known that Israel has destroyed Iran's anti-aircraft and anti-missile defences, and that the United States possesses the ability, already deployed to the theatre, to destroy anything it wishes within Iran. This includes the leadership; the barracks of the military police which enforces the hated dictatorship in that country; the entire oil extracting, refining, and exporting capability; and the nuclear military program.

The fact that President Trump declared that such a fate would be inflicted if hostages were not released does not imply that it will not be inflicted even if they are. Trump made it clear in his presidential debate with Biden, which caused the end of the latter's political career, that he would not tolerate a

nuclear-capable Iranian military. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu said the same thing [when he addressed](#) the United States Congress on July 24, 2024.

It is likely that both the Israeli government and the incoming Trump administration have concluded that having destroyed more than 80 percent of the Hamas terrorist apparatus (and an almost equivalent scourging of Hezbollah), continuing to tear it out root and branch within Gaza would be a less efficient method of achieving the complete destruction of Hamas as a terrorist operation than moving directly against Iran as the ultimate supplier and paymaster of Middle East terrorism.

The fact that the release of the first three hostages on Jan. 19 was conducted by Hamas paramilitary cadres indicates not only that some of the terrorist group's members survive, but that Hamas continues to govern whatever shattered embryo of political organization remains in Gaza. The [presence at that handover](#) of large numbers of evidently well-fed and well-clothed Gazans gives the lie to all the sanctimonious anti-Semitic drivel in which the Western media have immersed themselves for many months about Israel's merciless war against the civil population of Gaza.

The terminology of the ceasefire indicates that it is a pause in Israel's retaliatory war against Hamas, not that it is the end of hostilities. Unless the Iranian regime has a belated piercing glimpse into the requirements for its own political survival and abandons its terrorist war after it has virtually had its hands chopped off with Hamas and Hezbollah, the next round of this struggle could quite likely be a direct, heavy, and unanswerable blow against Iran itself.

Only if that act were not entirely successful would there likely be any requirement for a return to an all-out assault upon what remains of either Hamas or Hezbollah. Indications are that those movements have gained a substantial number of sympathetic recruits seeking to take the places of their personnel who have been killed by the Israelis, but such people will require a good deal of training, rearmament, and expensive maintenance from the Iranian regime, whose sources of revenue and constancy of commitment to this terrorist

mission are about to face the severest test since the lamentable [Iranian Revolution](#) of 1978–79. This suspension of the violence in Gaza has correctly been seen in the United States and elsewhere as a recognition of President Trump's credibility in giving ultimatums to America's foreign enemies. Many have commented on the apparent similarity to circumstances of the beginning of the Reagan administration in 1981, when the [U.S. Embassy hostages in Tehran](#) were seen boarding their aircraft to depart Iran on a split screen with the incoming president's inaugural address. It also incites speculation about what may be afoot in Ukraine. Both President Trump and Russian President Putin have indicated a desire to meet soon. Putin has effectively revealed his peace terms as being a retention of what his forces have already occupied in Ukraine, and Ukraine refraining from NATO membership. Trump has made it clear that he does not consider Putin's peace terms to be acceptable, and the hysteria in certain habitually delusional anti-American European circles that Trump is about to abandon Ukraine is completely unfounded. It was he who [approved the sale](#) of Javelin anti-tank missiles to the Ukrainians when Obama [had withheld them](#), leaving the Ukrainians practically defenceless from the Russian attacks on eastern Ukraine.

This war has been a disaster for Russia. Putin obviously believed that he could overrun Ukraine as easily as he overran Crimea in 2014. When he invaded in 2022, Putin had the chairman of the American Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Mark Milley, believing that he would [overrun all Ukraine](#) in a few weeks and Kiev itself in one weekend. Russia has caused [over 800,000 casualties](#) in the Ukraine War; the [Wagner private army marched](#) to great acclaim and with no resistance hundreds of miles towards Moscow, and Russia has been reduced to buying ordnance from Iran and importing mercenaries [from North Korea](#). It has not seriously begun to pacify the Ukrainian provinces it has occupied.

In these circumstances, it is probable that President Trump will advise the Russian leader that the United States will arm Ukraine with weapons that will bring the war home to the civil population of European Russia as thoroughly as the Russians have inflicted it upon the civil population of Ukraine, unless Russia agrees to withdraw partially and then accept either a

ceasefire or an outright peace agreement. (He will assure Putin, in the event of his customary blustering about nuclear weapons, that any such recourse will receive a nuclear response, with an invitation to return to his senses.)

Any peace or truce would include an absolute guarantee, under the revised borders of Ukraine by both Russia and all of NATO, a right of everyone in the former borders of Ukraine to be assisted in moving through the revised borders back into Ukraine or out of Ukraine into Russia as they prefer. Given [NATO's Ukraine guarantee](#), membership in NATO would be less important, but that too could be agreed upon in the context of a general peace between Russia and NATO.

These discussions have probably already begun and will quickly accelerate. Everybody now wants this war to end, and no one should doubt the position of strength Trump now possesses to operate the fulcrum in order to bring this terrible war to a swift and satisfactory end. Ukraine would then receive the absolute assurance of its legitimacy as an independent country, which it has never had (and it never existed as a jurisdiction prior to Lenin creating it in 1918). And Putin, having flirted with disaster, will have snatched enough to save face and claim something for the travails of this war.

Very importantly, the circumstances will have been created for a rapprochement between the West and Russia and the return of that country from the potentially mortal embrace of China.

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