

Benjamin Netanyahu - Supervillain of the 21st Century

Benjamin Netanyahu's leadership in 2025 has spiraled into a global crisis, fueled by a historical reliance on violence, strategic missteps, and a desperate bid to maintain power. This essay examines the trajectory of his actions—from Israel's violent origins to the anomalies of the October 7, 2023, attack, his eroding support, and his reckless escalation in Gaza, paired with veiled nuclear threats. Netanyahu's maneuvers, shaped by his and Donald Trump's personalities, risk catastrophic conflict, demanding urgent international attention.

Historical Foundations: The Nakba and Zionist Violence

The establishment of Israel in 1948, marked by the Nakba—the forced displacement of 750,000 Palestinians—was a product of calculated violence by Zionist paramilitary groups like Irgun and Lehi. These organizations targeted the British Mandate, which governed Palestine from 1922 under a League of Nations framework to balance Jewish immigration with Palestinian rights. By the early 1920s, Palestine's population was roughly 90% Arab (Muslim and Christian) and 10% Jewish, but Jewish immigration surged from 60,000 in 1917 to 600,000 by 1947, driven by the 1917 Balfour Declaration's promise of a Jewish national home. This influx, coupled with land purchases, heightened Arab fears of displacement, creating irreconcilable tensions.

Irgun and Lehi, led by figures like Menachem Begin, resorted to terrorism to end British rule. In 1946, Irgun bombed the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, a British administrative hub, killing 91 people, including 41 Arabs, 28 British, and 17 Jews. In 1948, the groups massacred over 100 Palestinian villagers, including women and children, at Deir Yassin, triggering massовый flight and intensifying the refugee crisis. They also assassinated UN mediator Folke Bernadotte in 1948 for proposing a partition plan that reduced Jewish territory. These acts pressured Britain to abandon the Mandate in 1947 and compelled the UN to recognize Israel in 1949, despite Israel's failure to comply with partition plans, refugee return rights, and other UN conditions.

This precedent of using violence to achieve political goals reverberates in Israel's current policies under Netanyahu, who continues to prioritize state dominance over international norms and humanitarian obligations.

The October 7 Attack: Anomalies and Strategic Failures

The October 7, 2023, Hamas attack, which killed 1,200 Israelis and took 251 hostages, exposed significant vulnerabilities and raised questions about Israel's preparedness. The Nova music festival, originally scheduled near Ashkelon, was relocated just days before to a site mere kilometers from Gaza's border, a high-risk area given ongoing tensions. On the

day of the attack, military protection was unusually sparse, with only a small police presence despite the proximity to a volatile border. When Hamas breached the barrier, the Israeli military's response was delayed, taking hours to mobilize forces from nearby bases, allowing the attackers to rampage through communities and the festival, killing hundreds.

Compounding the tragedy, evidence suggests Israel employed the Hannibal Directive—a controversial protocol to prevent captures even at the cost of civilian lives. Survivor accounts and a 2024 UN investigation revealed that Israeli forces, including tank and helicopter units, fired on their own citizens to thwart Hamas abductions, killing an unknown number of festival attendees. These anomalies—the festival's relocation, lack of security, delayed response, and use of the Hannibal Directive—suggest either gross negligence or a deliberate setup to justify a severe retaliation. At the time, Netanyahu faced intense domestic unrest over his judicial reforms, which critics argued undermined democracy to shield him from corruption charges. The attack provided a rallying point, shifting focus to national security and bolstering his political standing, though at a devastating human cost.

Netanyahu's Crumbling Support and Trump's Humiliation

By May 2025, Netanyahu's grip on power is faltering. Domestically, his coalition with far-right figures like Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich has alienated moderates, fueling protests over his judicial reforms and corruption trials. These trials, ongoing since 2019, charge him with bribery, fraud, and breach of trust, carrying the potential for up to seven years in prison. A guilty verdict could also expose him to prosecution under Israel's 1950 Genocide Law, which prescribes a death penalty for genocide, though modern Israeli courts favor life imprisonment. Internationally, the ICC issued arrest warrants in 2024 for war crimes in Gaza, and South Africa's genocide case at the ICJ has further isolated Israel. Public opinion in the U.S., Israel's key ally, has shifted, with polls showing growing disapproval of Israel's military actions, particularly the blockade and bombing campaigns that have killed tens of thousands since 2023.

Netanyahu's health, strained by age—he is 75—and the stress of leadership, adds to his vulnerability. On May 12, 2025, Donald Trump dealt a significant blow by negotiating directly with Hamas to secure the release of Edan Alexander, the last known living American hostage in Gaza, bypassing Netanyahu entirely.

Facilitated by U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff and mediated by Qatar and Egypt, the deal humiliated Netanyahu, whose office claimed credit but was clearly sidelined. This move signaled U.S. frustration with Netanyahu's refusal to accept a ceasefire, with reports indicating Trump threatened to cut military aid—a critical lifeline for Israel. In response, Netanyahu escalated his assault on Gaza, a tantrum reflecting his desperation to reassert control and avoid the legal and political consequences of losing power.

Gaza Escalation and the Samson Option: A Dangerous Gamble

Netanyahu's intensified assault on Gaza, described by locals as a twentyfold increase in bombing intensity, targets displaced people's tents, hospitals, and schools, exacerbating a humanitarian crisis. A 71-day blockade as of May 16, 2025, has cut off all aid, causing famine among Gaza's 2 million residents and killing thousands since the offensive resumed in March. This escalation appears designed to deplete Israel's U.S.-supplied stockpiles, a strategic move to pressure the U.S. into maintaining support despite Trump's threats to withdraw aid. The rapid depletion of munitions—precision-guided missiles, artillery shells, and other ordnance—leaves Israel vulnerable, especially as its actions have provoked regional adversaries. Iran, Hezbollah, and the Houthis have retaliated, with Houthi missile strikes near Israel's main airport and Iran likely seeking revenge for the 2024 assassination of a Revolutionary Guard commander.

Netanyahu avoids directly threatening the Samson Option—Israel's nuclear last resort, involving its estimated 80-400 warheads—but likely hints at it in backroom talks with diplomats. This aligns with his history of strategic ambiguity, such as his 2012 UN speech setting a red line on Iran's nuclear program. By suggesting to U.S. officials like Marco Rubio that a vulnerable Israel might resort to "unthinkable measures," Netanyahu aims to secure continued backing, warning that a cutoff of U.S. aid could lead to nuclear escalation. This dual strategy—emptying stockpiles while hinting at the Samson Option—either forces the U.S. to maintain support despite shifting public opinion or sets the stage for a catastrophic response if regional threats escalate, risking a multi-front war with global implications.

The Personalities Driving the Crisis: Netanyahu and Trump

Netanyahu's actions reflect a leader defined by brinkmanship and survival. His history—defying allies, escalating conflicts like the 2024 strikes on Iran, and rejecting ceasefire proposals despite global condemnation—shows a willingness to prioritize personal and political survival over ethics. His legal troubles, health concerns, and eroding support amplify this desperation, making him a dangerous actor willing to risk global stability to avoid jail. Trump's personality, impulsive and transactional, fuels the volatility. Initially supportive, lifting arms restrictions in January 2025, Trump shifted to frustration by May, evident in the Alexander deal and his focus on Saudi normalization. Sensitive to U.S. public opinion, which increasingly opposes Israel's actions, Trump might follow through on cutting aid, especially if he perceives Netanyahu's defiance as a personal slight. This interplay—Netanyahu's calculated escalation and Trump's unpredictable reactions—creates a powder keg where missteps could ignite a broader conflict, potentially involving nuclear escalation if Israel faces an existential threat.

A Global Threat Demanding Urgent Action

Netanyahu's trajectory—from the violent origins of Israel to the anomalies of October 7, his crumbling support, and his reckless escalation in Gaza—marks him as perhaps the most dangerous supervillain the world has ever faced. His hints at the Samson Option and depletion of Israel's stockpiles risk a catastrophic conflict, driven by a desperate bid to

evade accountability. International leaders must urgently consult their intelligence offices and prepare contingency plans to address this escalating threat before it engulfs the world in chaos.