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From BFFs to blocked:

Trump ghosts Netanyahu in redrawing the region

Trump is reshaping West Asia without Israel in the room – and Netanyahu can't get him on the line.

US President Donald Trump is currently [touring](#) the Persian Gulf – not Tel Aviv. Trillions are at stake, nuclear files are in motion, and Gaza lies at the center of a backroom arrangement that no longer includes Israel. For the first time in years, the choreography of American power in West Asia is unfolding without Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at its center.

Israeli media outlets, including *Israeli Army Radio*, *Channel 12*, and *Israel Hayom*, confirm the fallout: Trump has [severed direct communication](#) with the Israeli premier. A senior member of Trump's circle reportedly [told](#) Israeli Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer that what the president's biggest pet peeve is being seen as naive or manipulated – and that Netanyahu had been doing just that.

Washington isn't waiting. A Gaza plan is already being drafted with Cairo, Doha, and Abu Dhabi, and Hamas has been summoned to Cairo. As US envoy Steve Witkoff bluntly told the [Israeli press](#): “We want to bring the hostages back, but Israel doesn't want to end the

war.” Meanwhile, a Saudi nuclear deal – once conditional on Israeli normalization – is moving forward [without Netanyahu’s input](#).

This isn’t just a shift in tone; it’s an ego war. Trump thrives on being the sole architect of regional policy. The idea that Netanyahu used him, or tried to script his narrative, is intolerable. For “Bibi,” it’s existential.

Having clawed back to office more times than any Israeli leader – often under the [threat](#) of indictment – Netanyahu sees himself not as a peer among statesmen, but the last bulwark against Israeli collapse. Control, for both leaders, isn’t merely power, but identity.

The Kushner–Netanyahu bond that broke

Not long ago, Netanyahu could call the White House and get what he wanted. Trump moved the US Embassy to Jerusalem, cut UNRWA funding, pulled out of the Iran nuclear deal, unveiled the so-called “[Deal of the Century](#),” and furthered Arab normalization with the occupation state.

[Jared Kushner](#) – Trump’s son-in-law and West Asia policy lead– was more than a conduit to Israel; his relationship with Netanyahu was personal.

As [reported](#) by Israeli and US media, Netanyahu once stayed overnight at the Kushner family home in New Jersey. A teenage Jared gave up his bedroom so Netanyahu could have it. That wasn’t just anecdotal – it was emblematic. The Kushners, especially Jared’s father Charles, blurred diplomacy with familial loyalty.

When Trump took office, that closeness translated into policy. AIPAC, the Adelson family, the ZOA, and a network of [hawkish think tanks](#) and [mega-donors](#) shaped strategy. Netanyahu’s regional goals – isolating Iran, sidelining Palestinians, and formalizing Arab normalization – were folded into Trump’s doctrine.

But fractures emerged. Israeli officials quietly resented Kushner’s push for the Abraham Accords, which required Israel to [pause the occupied West Bank annexation](#). The deeper break, however, came when Trump ultimately refused to authorize a military strike on Iran, despite incendiary rhetoric.

Netanyahu, politically besieged at “home” and fixated on Tehran, saw escalation as both necessary and politically useful. Trump remained unconvinced, opting instead to preserve his image as a [dealmaker](#), not a wartime president.

Netanyahu's obsession with Iran

Few modern leaders have hinged their political identity so obsessively on a single threat. For Netanyahu, that threat is Iran’s nuclear program. From [cartoon bomb](#) diagrams at the UN to

decades of pressure campaigns in Washington, he has made it his life's mission to prevent an Iranian nuclear breakout.

The rhetoric hasn't changed. "We will act to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear state – not for anyone else, for ourselves," the Israeli premier declared in [March 2024](#). Meanwhile, Israeli intelligence leaks continue.

The *Jerusalem Post* [reported](#) in March that the Israeli army's recently appointed Chief of the General Staff, Eyal Zamir, said that 2025 is "the year of war" on Gaza and Iran and that the military is ready for all options.

Trump, however, appears to be walking away. US political [sources](#) claim one trigger behind the dismissal of Congressman Mike Waltz from Trump's circle was a secret meeting with Netanyahu – an attempt to align messaging and push Trump into war. Trump wasn't having it.

Instead, he may be preparing to let Israel strike alone. Or he's maintaining distance for plausible deniability if Netanyahu acts unilaterally. As ex-army intel chief [Amos Yadlin](#) once said: "Israel doesn't need America on D-Day. It can do it alone."

Trump's Persian Gulf detour: Jerusalem left off the map

Following Riyadh, Trump's next stops include Abu Dhabi and Doha – but not Jerusalem. His team is aiming to bring home more than a trillion dollars in deals. The [agenda](#) also includes a Gaza ceasefire and reconstruction framework developed in coordination with Egypt, Qatar, and the UAE, [without](#) direct Israeli input.

A US official who met with families of captives in Gaza said Trump is "increasingly frustrated" with Israel's resistance to ending the war. As [Al Jazeera](#) reported, the official added: "If Israel doesn't come to its senses, even the 'Deal of the Millennium' will happen without it."

Oman, meanwhile, has resumed its role as quiet [intermediary](#) between the US and Iran. Backchannel diplomacy helped seal a bilateral ceasefire between Washington and the Sanaa government in Yemen to reduce Red Sea tensions. "The United States isn't required to get permission from Israel" to cut a deal with Yemen's Ansarallah-aligned government, a US official said, as [quoted](#) in the Israeli press.

The Saudi nuclear deal without Israel

For years, Israel insisted that any US-approved Saudi nuclear program go through Tel Aviv. That informal veto was embedded in a broader trade-off: normalization in exchange for civilian nuclear rights – but that formula is unraveling.

According to [Israel Hayom](#) and the [Arab Weekly](#), Trump no longer has the Senate support to make Israeli participation a condition for the Saudi deal. His team is advancing a framework that would permit the Kingdom to enrich uranium, no strings attached.

That urgency is real. In a widely-cited [2018 CBS interview](#), Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MbS) warned: “If Iran developed a nuclear bomb, we will follow suit as soon as possible.” With Iran reportedly enriching uranium near weapons-grade, Riyadh is hedging its bets. Tel Aviv’s ability to block that effort is fading.

From ally to afterthought

It started like a perfect first date. Netanyahu called Trump “the greatest friend Israel has ever had in the White House.” He got bunker busters, a White House invite, and his moment. He posted on X as if the alliance was back, stronger than ever.

As in dating, coming on too strong in politics can also get you ghosted. Netanyahu assumed too much, too soon. Now, Trump isn’t picking up. The calls go unanswered. And Israel, once seated at the table, is starting to look like a bitter ex, watching deals get inked from across the room.

And what the occupation state fears most isn’t just exclusion, but what’s signed in its absence – when it’s not there to stop it.

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