Narrow window of opportunity to tackle Iran

written by David M. Weinberg | 12.11.2026

Yashar Party leader Gadi Eisenkot, who has been given the first shot at forming a next Israeli government, this week warned Prime Minister Netanyahu not to exploit national security for narrow political purposes.

He more than hinted that Netanyahu was liable to launch another assault on Iran to force Israeli political parties, including Eisenkot's party, into a national emergency unity government.

God forbid. God forbid that Netanyahu should play politics with such sensitive matters of war and peace. And gulp, God forbid that Eisenkot should have to partner with Netanyahu on anything.

I suspect neither leader of such sin. Netanyahu is honest on the continuing and immediate dangers of Iran, irrespective of his weak political position. Alas, Eisenkot is scrupulous about his refusal to collaborate with Netanyahu under any circumstances, despite security threats.

The fact is that another crushing blow against Iran is necessary, and Israel and the US have a narrow window of opportunity to strike. Yes, this is connected to politics, especially to the adversarial US Congress that is taking office in January which will make Trump's political life miserable and divert his attentions.

But mainly this relates to Iran's renewed and rapid advances towards nuclear weapons capacity and ballistic missile attack capabilities.

There is hard core intelligence which suggests that Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei has ordered a rush to full nuclear weapons breakout, with Iran's facilities for such (at Pickaxe Mountain and elsewhere) well protected against all Western weapons short of tactical nuclear weapons.

Worse still, Iranian leaders believe that they are immune to Western pressures – that they have exhausted the US army and economically depleted America, and deterred America's allies by damaging American military bases in the Arabian Gulf and obstructing the Strait of Hormuz.

They have survived months of bombings and two waves of leadership assassinations and managed to somewhat circumvent (overland via Russia, Iraq, and Turkey) the American blockage of Iran's shipping through Hormuz

In short, Tehran has been emboldened. Its leaders talk as if they beat Trump and Netanyahu at the polls, and they see no reason to compromise. They think that they are close to evicting US forces from the Gulf, forcing Washington to remove all sanctions, and getting the US to accept that Iran is a great power. They also think they will yet overwhelm Israel, if not destroy it, and that the West will shed few tears over this. They may even attempt a massive preemptive strike on Israel and US bases in the region.

Indeed, Tehran is fighting for great-power status in a post-American Middle East, and it has a clear theory of victory for getting there (as explained last month in *Foreign Affairs* by two experts on Iran from Johns Hopkins SAIS).

And remember: Iran remains a threat far beyond the Middle East. Just this week we learned of Iranian cyberattacks in France and threats against US military bases in Britain. Khamenei has sought and will yet seek to assassinate Trump and Netanyahu and other senior "enemy" leaders. He acutely craves revenge.

So the job of capping Iran is incomplete, and our politics must not interfere or delay. Nothing is more important than moving swiftly to curb Iran's hegemonic march to nuclear weapons and regional domination.

Operations Epic Fury and Roaring Lion earlier this year (as well as the 12-day war against Iran in 2025) went a long way in doing so, but America and Israel can knock Iran back much farther and certainly must act to sap its confidence and arrogance.

Collapse of the radical Islamic clerical regime in Tehran may be within reach too. Strikes on that country's energy and internal security nodes could drive the mullahs over the cliff. It is hard to plan or predict such a development, but the obligation to try remains, and surprise upheavals are possible. (Nobody saw the overnight collapse of the Assad regime coming…)

Consequently, Trump and Netanyahu must not retreat now. Trump and especially Vice President JD Vance dare not try to sell us a reheated, slightly varnished version of then-President Obama's rotten, soft 2015 nuclear deal with Iran, with a

puny Abraham Accords cherry on top.

I BELIEVE that President Trump understands that stopping the war against Iran now amid short-term economic discomforts and internal American political infirmities would be a victory for the mullahs.

Iran cannot be allowed to conclude that shutting down oil flows is its passport to survival, now or in the future. After all, the spike in oil prices due to traffic stoppage in the Strait of Hormuz was not unexpected. As Trump himself has said, the disruption is a "small price to pay" for major security advances.

And for all his disparaged "transactionalism," Trump recognizes that the current conflict essentially is a wo rld war against America's greatest strategic adversaries including China and Russia – who are allied with Iran.

Therefore, Trump is exceedingly unlikely to desert the battlefield without more significantly quelling Iran. I doubt that he will allow isolationists like Vance to declare a synthetic "victory" on his behalf and leave Iran to its vices.

I do not think that Trump is at all confused regarding Iran. From his 2018 dumping of Obama's rotten nuclear deal with Iran, to his 2020 assassination of IRGC chief Qassem Soleimani, to Operation Midnight Hammer last June, to Operation Epic Fury this year – Trump has proven neither fickle nor flighty.

On the contrary, Trump has broadcast willpower and purpose. He ain't a paragon of virtue in so many other ways, but Trump has shown understanding of his responsibility to reshape the regional and global strategic architecture by eviscerating Iran.

He also has evinced domestic political courage in this regard, taking on hard Left Marxist and pro-Islamist critics and hard Right isolationist and Christian nationalist critics. He has taken risks with his own MAGA base by slapping-down the loudest and most influential foul-mouth faultfinders like Tucker Carlson.

In defiance of conventional wisdom that the "responsible" approach is to swallow Iran's piecemeal provocations to avoid war, and that Iran's hegemonic ambitions are anyway near-unstoppable, Trump preferred to draw blood and a red line. He defied the ayatollahs instead of dancing with them.

So, if you want to worry that Trump could yet cut a bad deal with Tehran, an

agreement that does not push Iran far enough away from the nuclear bomb and from Israel's borders, go ahead and stew. But for the moment, Trump should still be acclaimed for his continued resistance to Iran (including his long blockade of Hormuz and the recently tightened land cordon around Iran) and partnered with.

Yes, Trump's apparent dithering is dangerous, and his occasional specious slamming of Netanyahu is upsetting (never mind Vance's ugly aspersions about Netanyahu and Israel).

It is similarly irritating that Trump often suggests the force of his personality can fix everything and lead to swift and "huge" peace deals everywhere. This is true regarding his pie-in-the-sky plans for "grand civilizational peace" in Gaza as well as his spasmodic blathering about reaching a "tenth" global accord of peace, with Tehran.

But getting past Trump's annoying approach to people and politics, he still holds a rock-solid policymaking record on the issues most important to Israel.

Therefore, working with Trump specifically over the next three months to complete the campaign more decisively against Iran remains the correct path. Netanyahu is right to pursue this, notwithstanding the internal Israeli political stalemate. Eisenkot is wrong to dismiss this, and he ought not undermine public confidence in the integrity and urgency of the mission.

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