

Macron's peace rhetoric masks a path to escalation

written by Meir Ben Shabbat | 26.09.2025

Arguments pointing to the incoherence and lack of logic in Emmanuel Macron's move and those of his partners to recognize a Palestinian state could fill many pages, and still not be exhaustive. As President Donald Trump said in his UN speech, this is a reward to Hamas and the greatest achievement the terrorist organization can claim for the atrocities it carried out on October 7. Hamas spokesmen were quick to boast about it in media interviews, but they need not try hard. Even without them, the Palestinian public will not see it any other way.

Moreover, the recognition move gives backing not only to Hamas and not only within the Palestinian issue, but to Islamist terrorism in all its forms, precisely at a moment when Israel, in its war against parts of those forces, is managing to dent their capabilities through this approach.

Furthermore, the declaration that Macron and his partners intend to improve the standing of the Palestinian Authority and what remains of Fatah will politically strengthen Hamas and its allies. The move will paint the Palestinian streets in Judea and Samaria green, Hamas' color, an area where support for the terrorist organization is already trending upward.

And another point: the recognition initiative, which Macron and his partners say is meant to help establish calm and stability, not only fails to achieve that, it is already increasing tensions that will probably escalate further as a result of the countermeasures Israel will be forced to take. The next wave of terror and violence, heaven forbid it comes, already has a name: "Macron escalation".

Anyone impressed by the conditions some leaders attached to their declaration has probably not closely examined the real condition of the Palestinian Authority and how it operates. This applies not only to its involvement in financial support for terrorists and their families, the glorification of attackers and turning them into role models for Palestinian youth, but also to the corruption that has spread within it and the way it is perceived by parts of its own people. The sheikhs of Hebron proposing to detach from the Authority and join the Abraham Accords as an autonomous area is evidence of how it is perceived, at least by some of the

public. The fine words about conditions to be imposed on the Palestinian Authority are nothing more than lip service, pretence or at best naïveté.

And we have not yet addressed feasibility: in his speech this week at the UN “Two-State Solution” conference, Mahmoud Abbas said that “ Hamas will not have a part in the government. Hamas and its partners must hand over their weapons to the Authority.” As the old saying goes, words do not pay the customs duties.

Can that same Palestinian Authority, which cannot cope on its own with phenomena of terror, the proliferation of weapons, anarchy and lack of governance in whole areas that are already under its responsibility, sustain itself at all? Countless IDF operations in the field and the thousands of arrests the Shin Bet carries out each year to rein in trends of terror are a sign of the magnitude of the security challenge it faces, and of course that is not the only challenge before it.

In fact, do Macron and his partners in the initiative recall that the Palestinian Authority they speak of in their speeches is the same “Authority” that in 2007 lost control of the Gaza Strip to Hamas? Mahmoud Abbas is the same Mahmoud Abbas, only older, and he will turn 90 in a month.

In Gaza’s previous iteration of the Authority, heavy pressure was exerted on Israel to grant measures to Abbas and expand his powers to improve his electoral chances against Hamas. Those gestures were given, Hamas won, and we all remember the aftermath. Of course, that does not prevent Macron and his colleagues from reviving the same ideas.

While leaders continue to wax lyrical about the importance of their initiative, security reports bring us back down to earth: another rocket was located, this time in Tulkarm, days after a terror cell from the Ramallah area was exposed producing rockets intended for launch from Judea and Samaria. This comes about two weeks after the attack at the Ramat Junction in Jerusalem that claimed six civilian lives, which was also carried out by perpetrators from the Ramallah area.

The Macron, Keir Starmer and partners initiative to recognize a Palestinian state is initiative for the sake of initiative. Once, when an idea like this came up, Hamas leaders might have suspected some hidden trick and tried to decipher the sophistication. Today such a possibility does not even cross their minds. Hamas understands that this is a step meant to signal “we are here too,” and that

domestic politics and international competition were important motives in its crafting, and that its consequences were not seriously examined. All they have to do is stand aside and enjoy the gains. Evildoers, their work is done by the naïve.

Anyone who links this step to the start of an IDF operation to conquer the city of Gaza is invited to listen to the interview Macron gave back in April of this year, in which he spoke about the recognition initiative he is promoting, long before Israel's cabinet decided on the conquest of Gaza. Save the self-flagellation for other occasions.

How should Israel respond?

On the diplomatic level, although the immediate significance of recognition is mainly declaratory, it must not be taken lightly, because it gives substantial reinforcement to the standing of the Palestinian Authority in international legal proceedings against Israel. It also creates a foundation for decisions and measures against moves that Israel will carry out in Judea and Samaria.

There is no need to confront Macron head-on now, but under no circumstances should Israel turn the other cheek. There is also no reason to continue treating him with deference. Those who initiated and led this move cannot be accepted as mediators, partners or observers in any process in which Israel is involved.

Despite sympathy with the call to apply sovereignty over parts of Judea and Samaria, one should question the advisability of such a step. First, because taking it as a reactive or provocative measure weakens the claim of its justice. Second, because it is a divisive act during wartime that requires as broad a consensus as possible, and even without it internal tension is high. It seems that a balanced step that enjoys broad internal agreement and has a good chance of securing backing from the Trump administration would be a decision to apply sovereignty over the Jordan Valley.

Regarding security, Israel's general approach should convey the message that its activity for its security will continue as usual and will not take any political recognition of the Palestinians into account. Furthermore, against the backdrop of terror trends, it is correct to make clear that an area that chooses to behave like Gaza will end up like Gaza.

The security establishment must prepare on the assumption that we are facing

another rise in tension in Judea and Samaria. The offensive approach adopted at the beginning of the war should continue, including the use of focused preventive measures, and monitoring and security along the seam line must be tightened. Given the independent manufacturing capabilities for weapons and explosives in that area, it is right to stop entirely the entry into Palestinian Authority areas of dual-use items that terrorist elements use in production processes.

An umbrella that will allow Hamas to preserve its power and capabilities

Several media outlets have reported an American plan formulated for the Gaza Strip that is supposed to include, among other things, the release of all the hostages, a permanent ceasefire, the end of the war and the establishment of a civilian governing mechanism with the involvement of moderate Arab states and the Palestinian Authority.

This idea is not new. In the Arab world and within Hamas there has for some time been discussion of formulas that would allow ending the war and reaching the “day after,” without IDF rule in the Strip and without implementing Trump’s transfer plan.

Hamas spokesmen have repeatedly declared their readiness to vacate their role in managing Gaza’s civilian affairs and hand them over to other actors. In previous statements they emphasized that Hamas’s position on the Strip’s future rests on two principles: first, that managing the Strip is an internal Palestinian affair that requires a “national consensus” — a code name that brings the Palestinian Authority into the equation and allows Hamas to set conditions and demands. The second principle is that “armed resistance to the Israeli occupation is the right of the entire Palestinian people over all Palestinian land, and not only the right of Hamas.” This implies opposition to the disarmament of military capabilities.

The civilian mechanism and rehabilitation efforts in Gaza are the main channel for building Hamas’s military capabilities. Everything that enters Gaza for civilian purposes will be used by Hamas to build its military power, from engineering equipment brought in to clear rubble that will be used to prepare tunnels, to cement and rebar brought in for construction that will be used for tunneling, to glues, resins and fertilizers that, although entering for civilian uses, will be diverted to the manufacture of explosives. As long as Hamas is the dominant force in the Strip, it will effectively control everything brought into its territory, even if

it is not formally a partner in the civilian governing mechanism.

Moreover, a plan that transfers civilian management away from Hamas but leaves it as the significant power broker could lead to the Hezbollahization of Gaza. Under the cover of a “management committee,” or whatever name is chosen for that governing body, Hamas would rebuild its military strength and pull the strings behind the scenes in the management of all its affairs. The organization could funnel the energies it regains into increasing terror efforts both in Judea and Samaria and in other regions. Arab and international involvement in implementing such a scheme would only complicate matters for Israel and hinder its ability to confront Hamas’s maneuvers.

Therefore, Israel must make clear that it will not compromise on its demand for the demilitarization of the Strip from military capabilities, in addition to the collapse of Hamas’s rule — and not in its place. Israel cannot allow civilian control to be placed in a framework that in practice serves as an umbrella for preserving Hamas’s power and rebuilding it.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said a few months ago: “Israel is doing the dirty work for all of us.” He was referring to Israel’s strike against Iran as part of Operation With the Lion, but his words are also true regarding Israel’s war in Gaza. Alongside continued fighting to destroy Hamas’s capabilities, the real answer to Gaza’s problems is implementing Trump’s initiative. This is a rare opportunity to bring about a fundamental change in the situation, purchased at a terrible human cost. It must not be missed.

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