

Israel and the US bear hug: An attempt to place Jerusalem under Washington's authority

written by Prof. Zaki Shalom | 27.10.2025

In his speech opening the Knesset's winter session, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said:

"Our enemies have not given up their aspiration to destroy us. They have taken severe blows - and they are licking their wounds and preparing for the next confrontation. We must be ready for that, with strength and wisdom, to ensure that the Jewish people remain safe in their homeland."

For some reason, these words did not receive the attention they deserved. The prime minister is essentially saying that, after more than two years of war, Israel has not succeeded in creating a credible deterrent against its enemies. It has not caused them to change their mindset, to conclude that it is not worthwhile for them to continue their state of war with Israel.

The state of Israel's enemies

Israel's enemies, as implied by the prime minister's remarks, still have hope that they will eventually be able to realize their plan to eliminate Israel. Deep down, they are probably proud of the October 7, 2023, assault. Over the past two years, there have been no clear and decisive expressions of moral condemnation for the horrific bloodshed forced upon Israel two years ago.

Occasionally, there have been pale expressions of disapproval for that massacre. Yet these reservations mainly emphasized that Hamas's attack brought destruction upon Gaza and allowed Israel to push the Palestinian issue to the margins.

The meaning of all this is that the assertion by President Donald Trump - an assertion adopted by many Israelis - that Israel has already achieved most of its war aims and now stands on the threshold of a "period of peace and unprecedented economic prosperity" is inaccurate, to say the least.

The main goal of every war, it must be remembered, is to establish deterrence - to make one's enemies unwilling to engage in further conflict, at least for many years. This was the outcome of World War II, when Germany, Japan, and Italy abandoned the path of war and turned toward peace.

However, in the current situation, the president of Iran has declared that his country will not return to negotiations as long as the United States continues to make “unrealistic and unreasonable demands.” Other Iranian officials have made clear that Iran will not give up its “right to enrichment.”

Hezbollah’s leader, Naim Qassem, has threatened that if Israel renews “wide-scale aggression” in Lebanon, “missiles will explode inside the Zionist entity.”

Hamas, and the entire population of Gaza, may have suffered the harshest blow in this war. However, it continues to toy with Israel on the issue of the hostages. Its surviving leaders continue to emphasize that Hamas will not lay down its weapons.

United States control

At this stage, the United States is making tremendous efforts, in close cooperation with other mediators, to persuade Israel to show “patience” toward Hamas.

These efforts are accompanied by repeated statements from Trump that he can, at any moment, “permit Israel” to attack Hamas in Gaza. Such statements, along with the frequent appearances of senior US officials at rallies for the hostages and their intense involvement with Israel’s security leadership over the heads of its political leadership – all these damage Israel’s image as an independent and powerful state, an image that it has acquired through much blood and sacrifice.

To his credit, the prime minister is making great efforts to clarify that Israel is not a protectorate of the United States, and that it alone will decide how to pursue its security objectives. However, under these circumstances, words are not enough. Israel must demonstrate its independence through deeds, even vis-à-vis the US administration.

If it fails to do so, it will gradually lose the powerful standing it has achieved through an unprecedented combination of political and military daring. Should that happen, the vision of regional peace, in which Israel plays a central role, will lose its meaning as well.

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