

# Macron's Middle East 'grandstanding' will backfire

European leaders who unilaterally recognize Palestinian statehood "pretend to be advancing peace when in fact they are knowingly weakening Israel," expert tells JNS.



French President Emmanuel Macron waits for Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban to arrive for a meeting at Elysee Palace on June 26, 2024 in Paris, France. Photo by Remon Haazen/Getty Images.



**ISRAEL KASNETT**

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**(April 22, 2025 / JNS)** This week, Israel revoked the entry visas of 27 French lawmakers and local officials. While the delegation, organized by the French consulate in Jerusalem, claimed its visit was intended to promote international cooperation and peace, Israeli authorities accused the group of planning activities hostile to the state.

The diplomatic kerfuffle follows closely on the heels of another provocation: French President Emmanuel Macron's announcement that he and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman will

co-host a June conference focused on establishing a Palestinian state—a move that drew sharp criticism from Jerusalem.

“In the coming months, together we will multiply and combine our diplomatic initiatives to bring everyone along this path,” said Macron during a visit to Saudi Arabia.

“We want to involve several other partners and allies, both European and non-European, who are ready to move in this direction but who are waiting for France,” he added.

David Weinberg, managing senior fellow at the Jerusalem-based Misgav Institute for National Security & Zionist Strategy, told JNS Macron is “grandstanding” to “defy and constrain” the Jewish state.

“After all, the insistence on Palestinian statehood—after 30 years of Oslo process failures and the Oct. 7 attacks—flies in the face of logic, justice, history, and basic security realities,” said Weinberg, referring to the Hamas-led Oct. 7, 2023 invasion of southern Israel. “The Palestinian national movement, Fatah and Hamas wings alike, largely have shown themselves to be committed to Israel’s debilitation and destruction, not to a peaceful two-state solution.”

Macron’s inability or unwillingness to read the room and understand that his obsession with a two-state solution is no longer a viable solution matters little, said Weinberg. He aims to follow in the footsteps of Ireland, Spain, Norway and Slovenia, all of which recognized a “State of Palestine,” disregarding the fact that Palestine does not exist.

Macron’s notion that a Palestinian state will bring peace in the region is countered by a recent survey conducted by the Jerusalem Center for Security and Foreign Affairs, which found that 64% of the Israeli public oppose the establishment of a Palestinian state, even as part of a normalization process with Saudi Arabia.

According to Weinberg, European leaders who unilaterally recognize Palestinian statehood “pretend to be advancing peace when in fact they are knowingly weakening Israel.”

Instead, Weinberg suggested, “What the supposedly pro-peace international community ought to be doing is backing Israel’s legitimate war goals until their complete execution and demanding vast reform from Palestinian leaders.”

Without peace education and deradicalization programs for the Palestinians, Weinberg warned that any diplomacy that demands two states “will fail, sinking into the quicksand of Palestinian rejectionism and annihilationism.”

Weinberg also told JNS he fears “a new diplomatic discourse” developing in New York, Paris and elsewhere that views Israel as a global problem because it has grown “too strong, too ‘hegemonic’ in its ambitions, too ‘aggressive’ in its military actions, too ‘dominant’ in resetting the regional strategic situation and too successful in defending itself.”

The prevailing sentiment—echoed by Macron’s remark that Israel “has the right to defend itself, but within proportion”—is that Israel must be “reckoned with” by the West, he added. In practice, this means restraining, constraining, hemming in and ultimately humbling the Jewish state. Put simply, it suggests that Israel should not be allowed to win too decisively.

According to Weinberg, “This is an attempt to delegitimize Israel’s re-asserted defense doctrine of preventively and preemptively downgrading enemy capabilities and threats.”

Israel could respond to this French initiative in several ways, he told JNS.

For instance, Jerusalem could restrict the operations of French diplomats and charities in Judea and Samaria, and cut France out of many regional forums and diplomatic processes.

Such measures, while severe, reflect broader geopolitical tensions, particularly as European nations like France seek to use the Palestinian issue once again to reassert their influence amid shifting global dynamics.

According to Emmanuel Navon, a senior fellow at the Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security, the political situation in the United States is playing a role in shaping Europe’s attitudes.

Europe, he said, feels “marginalized and threatened” by the unorthodox foreign policies of U.S. President Donald Trump.

“In that context, Macron is pulling the classic French card by trying to convince Europe and the Third World that France can offer a reliable alternative to the United States,” said Navon.

Navon explained that Macron is trying to mirror de Gaulle’s policy in the 1960s, when the founder of the Fifth Republic criticized the Vietnam war and sought to emancipate Europe from American hegemony.

“There was something delusional about de Gaulle’s policy, but at least he enjoyed personal prestige, and France at the time was the centerpiece of Europe,” he added.

In contrast, Navon continued, “Macron’s France is not de Gaulle’s. It does not have the prestige and respectability it enjoyed 60 years ago.”

“Macron leads a minority government in a country whose finances are overstretched,” he said. “By calling for a ‘two-state solution’ before Israel’s victory over the Iranian axis, Macron is trying to undermine Trump’s plan for Gaza. Except that, unlike the United States, France does not have significant economic leverage over Egypt and Jordan, nor can it offer Saudi Arabia the security guarantees it demands before normalizing relations with Israel.”

Macron's "posturing" thus "will not boost France's declining influence, nor is it nearly good enough for France's Muslim minority," he said.

Navon told JNS it is "unlikely" that other European countries would follow suit since most Europeans "do not share the French urge to poke America in the eye."

In fact, "East European governments generally support Israel and they do not trust Macron," he added.

Navon believes Israel could mitigate the impact by hitting the French "where it hurts them the most, by denying them the influence they crave in the Middle East."

Navon suggested Israel boycott "their so-called 'summit' with Saudi Arabia in June, and convince friendly European governments not to attend."

He also suggested Israel should work on "nurturing our relations with governments in Eastern Europe that can (and do) veto France's foreign policy initiatives at the European Council, and making sure that the Trump administration excludes France from the reconstruction of Gaza and from the normalization process between Israel and Saudi Arabia."

France, he concluded, "must be made to understand that its arrogance comes at a price and that Israel is now a major power that can exact such a price."