

## Chapter 2: “The Day After”—An Alternative to Hamas in the Framework of a New Regional Architecture

**It is recommended that the Palestinian Authority, renewed following comprehensive reforms, be the civilian alternative to Hamas.**

Security responsibility will remain in the hands of Israel. Without a replacement for Hamas’s rule, a vacuum will be created, to be either filled by Hamas itself or develop into chaos, from which Hamas will reemerge. Failure to take advantage of the military achievement by not encouraging the establishment of an alternative governing entity means a loss of opportunity and a serious mistake. Alternately, it is possible to adopt the option of installing an Israeli military government in the Gaza Strip for an interim period. However, this choice will exacerbate Israel’s international predicament and, in addition, may lead to a prolonged presence in the Gaza Strip, during which civilian responsibility will also be placed on Israel’s shoulders. Therefore, it is an alternative of secondary priority.

**As for a new regional architecture:** To achieve victory in the war in the full sense of the definition of victory—that is, improving Israel’s security situation over time while inflicting significant loss on Hamas and Iran—a broad regional arrangement is required. For a long time, the United States has been leading the idea of creating a new regional architecture against the resistance front led by Iran and the expansion of China’s influence in the Middle East. The response formulated by the American government is to promote an initiative that will include normalization between Israel and Saudi Arabia and the establishment of a defense alliance between the United States and Saudi Arabia. Separately, the establishment of a defense alliance between the United States and Israel should also be positively examined. It should also be agreed that Saudi Arabia, together with the countries that have peace treaties with Israel, Egypt and Jordan, will form an Arab coalition that will lead the process of rehabilitating the Gaza Strip while enforcing necessary reforms in the Palestinian Authority.

Israel, for its part, will commit to a diplomatic process toward separation from the Palestinians, one that does not compromise its security interests. At this stage, the definition formulated by the American administration is sufficient: “a two-state horizon”—a definition that was accepted by the government led by Benjamin Netanyahu upon acceptance of President Trump’s Deal of the Century plan.

Such a regional arrangement will serve as a response to Iran’s attempt, through its proxies and Hamas, to thwart the regional normalization process and will improve Israel’s security situation in a substantial and historical manner. The parties involved in the initiative—the United States, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and most of the international community—all see the Palestinian Authority as the official and exclusive representative of the Palestinian people. Therefore, a civilian entity in the Gaza Strip in the form of the Palestinian Authority will improve the chances of reaching such an arrangement. Alternatively, any civilian entity that does not include the Palestinian Authority and instead is based on complex, difficult-to-implement, and unstable solutions over time may disrupt the progress toward

realizing the initiative and postpone it. Under the current circumstances, this postponement would represent a missed opportunity—an opportunity that the war in the Gaza Strip provides—and it would also thwart Israel’s effort to translate military achievements into political advantages for itself.

### **A Renewed Palestinian Authority:**

**In the context of the Gaza Strip and with a long-term perspective, the optimal solution for Israel’s security is the “renewed” Palestinian Authority, which would serve as an alternative governmental entity to Hamas. To be recognized as “renewed,” the Palestinian Authority should undergo a process in which it fulfills the following conditions:**

1. Recognize the State of Israel;
2. Cease violence, education for radicalization, and support for families of terrorists;
3. Ensure that Hamas is no longer a legitimate factor in the Palestinian political system, does not run as a party in future elections, and is not a force with military capability;
4. Allow security responsibility to remain in Israel’s hands, similar to the situation in Judea and Samaria;
5. Halt the legal proceedings against Israel in the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the International Criminal Court (ICC).

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Given the political attitude and the public position in Israel toward the Palestinian Authority, coupled with the current weakness of the Palestinian Authority, progress can be made toward establishing the Palestinian Authority as a governing entity in the Gaza Strip as a part of an intermediate stage. There are two options (bridge programs) for this stage:

1. Initially, the move can be implemented as a pilot in a defined geographical area. It is possible to start with local Fatah entities, aided by the forces and administrative bodies of the Palestinian Authority, connected to the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah and the Civil Committee in the Gaza Strip. The actions of these entities can be protected by members of the Palestinian security forces, who will be trained in Egypt or Jordan in coordination with the Palestinian Authority and under the guidance of the American Security Coordinator (USSC).
2. Another intermediate option is the appointment of a local governor for the Gaza Strip, who is seemingly unrelated to Ramallah, such as Mohammed Dahlan. It is estimated that Dahlan has an effective control mechanism, which is supported financially by the United Arab Emirates; local security forces in the Gaza Strip; and external security contractors that he can bring with him. He could come to an arrangement with Hamas

that would spare the fighting between them, in exchange for some degree of survival of Hamas and a promise of future influence (an agreement surrounding individuals on a wanted list, or the surrender of the remainder of Hamas's military power to the Palestinian security forces). The disadvantages of this alternative are: (1) it is likely that the current leadership of the Palestinian Authority will oppose Dahlan's return to the Gaza Strip; (2) The need for coordination between Dahlan and Hamas. Therefore, this alternative as an interim stage is secondary in terms of preference.

It is clear that a magical substitute for Hamas's rule will not emerge, nor is the Palestinian Authority the one. And yet, the desired situation is similar to that which exists in Judea and Samaria: a Palestinian Authority managing civil life with limited ability to threaten Israel, while the IDF is allowed operational freedom to thwart terrorism and its infrastructure throughout the area.