

The Trump Plan—Risks and Opportunities: Recalibrating Israel's Strategic Compass

Kobi Michael and Ofer Guterman | No. 2050 | October 28, 2025

The future of the Trump Plan regarding the “day after” in the Gaza Strip is ambiguous and fragile. The first phase of the plan has been implemented only partially (the return of all living hostages and some of the deceased, and the implementation of IDF deployment arrangements within an expanded security perimeter—the Yellow Line), while Hamas retains control in the heart of the cities, acts to suppress any expression of opposition to its rule, and violates the agreement by dragging its feet on releasing the remaining deceased hostages in its custody and refusing to disarm.

If these trends continue, the optimal alternative for Israel appears to be establishing, in areas under IDF control, an alternative Palestinian governing space—a technocratic government affiliated with the Palestinian Authority (while continuing to demand reforms from it), supported by regional states and the international community—that would present an ideological-political-civilian alternative to Hamas. This alternative would create a secure space where physical, institutional, and economic reconstruction could begin, temporary governance processes could be put in place, and accessible civilian services could be provided. It would also improve Israel's standing with respect to its security interests and could serve as a better springboard for future military operations against Hamas, with the aim of advancing the disarmament of the Strip. Beyond stabilizing the buffer area between Israel and the area under Hamas's control, the proposed alternative could offer the Gazan public an alternative to Hamas's rule, which is characterized by continued ruin, destruction, and repression.

However, even with this alternative, Israel must engage in preparing the conditions for the establishment of a Palestinian state, to enable Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to take the lead from Qatar and Turkey in shaping the new regional order.

The Trump Plan, with its twenty clauses, remains no more than a potential plan waiting to be realized—except for the substantial progress achieved in the first phase of the framework: the return of all living hostages and some of the deceased. If the plan is implemented in full, it could be regarded as a significant achievement for Israel and as the fulfillment of the war goals defined by the Israeli government, while also carrying a strategic payoff—a substantial expansion of the Abraham Accords as the underpinning of a new regional architecture in which Israel is a central component. Conversely, Hamas, which has violated the agreement since the IDF redeployed along the Yellow Line, has already made it clear that it does not intend to disappear from the political map, let alone disarm, and allow for the demilitarization of the Gaza Strip.

Therefore, it is of great importance that Israel now examine the various scenarios that could develop in this complex reality and advance its interests in line with the principles of the

Trump Plan, and above all, by clearly distinguishing between unrealistic aspirations and achievable goals.

The use of the term “plan” is misleading, since it is in fact a conceptual-visionary framework or outline, rather than a concrete, detailed plan. The Trump framework is essentially a set of principles designed to advance a strategic purpose whose scope and essence extend beyond the Gaza Strip. What was important to President Trump was to frame the first stage of the outline—the release of the hostages and the redeployment of IDF forces along the Yellow Line—as the end of the war. President Trump succeeded in rallying the leaders of key Arab states, along with Turkey, Indonesia, Pakistan, major European countries, and even Japan, Azerbaijan, and Armenia, to support the framework and convene for a festive, high-profile summit in Sharm el-Sheikh in a ceremonial event marking the signing of the agreement and the declaration of a “new dawn” in the Middle East.

Through this move, President Trump entrenched the conclusion of the war in Gaza, imposing acceptance of the plan on both Israel and—via Qatar, Turkey, and Egypt—on Hamas. Yet this acceptance was conditional and largely nominal. In practice, both sides agreed, through an intensive and rapid negotiation process, to accept only the first phase of the framework. However, as for the overall plan, Israel accepted it as a conceptual framework, with room for changes and adjustments on matters of security—the IDF’s deployment patterns, overall security responsibility, operational freedom of action, and the management of the reconstruction process, as well as Israel’s degree of involvement and influence over it.

Hamas, for its part, in a convolutedly worded statement, effectively rejected the plan in terms of the organization’s disarmament, the demilitarization of the Gaza Strip, and the establishment of a loyalty-based governing body (the Peace Board, which in practice would inaugurate the technocratic government). The organization is prepared to relinquish civilian control but not its influence over the composition of the government; moreover, it refuses to forgo involvement in the reconstruction process. These positions, as well as Hamas’s “games” concerning the return of the remains of the deceased hostages, indicate that the organization intends to maintain its status as a dominant actor in the Gaza Strip.

Beyond the Gaza arena, the Trump framework’s reference to the issue of a Palestinian state emphasizes a long-term process of creating the conditions for its establishment. From the perspective of the Arab and other leaders who supported and endorsed the framework, this represents a pathway toward the eventual creation of a Palestinian state, beginning with the return of the Palestinian Authority to governance in the Gaza Strip.

Another strength of the Trump framework, reflected in the president’s speech to the Knesset on October 13 and in the subsequent conference at Sharm el-Sheikh, is the conception that Israel and the Palestinians are incapable of moving onto a political track bilaterally; therefore, a multilateral approach is required, which does not refrain from coercive mechanisms and can broaden the range of the parties’ interests. In that respect, the framework can help regularize the situation in the Gaza Strip and perhaps even across the Palestinian arena as a whole, while at the same time assist Israel to integrate into the region through a new regional architecture. This strategic logic aligns with Israel’s strategic interest and disrupts Hamas’s logic of action, although implementing Israel’s strategic preference will also require initiative and concessions on Israel’s part.

At this point in time, it is unclear how committed and determined President Trump is to advancing full implementation of the framework he presented. Therefore, Israel's working assumption should be that without the president's personal involvement and sustained resolve, the framework will not be implemented. Israel's aspiration should be to have close, tight coordination with him and his inner team, to prevent situations in which the president forces problematic measures on Israel or treats it as a vassal, beholden to the patron's grace. Israel should create and secure conditions for freedom of action and control of the process and avoid being dragged into measures that would be imposed upon it (for example, Turkish and Qatari involvement at scales or in forms that would jeopardize its interests). This should, of course, be balanced with avoiding a situation in which Israel is perceived as sabotaging the Trump framework.

Above all, because Israel will find it difficult to live with an evolving terror threat on its borders, it must ensure that Hamas cannot exist in the Gaza Strip as both a governing and military entity and that the Strip is demilitarized. The challenge before Israel now is therefore to secure American support and regional and international legitimacy for the realization of its objectives in the Gaza Strip, including the employment of military force if Hamas refuses to disarm and demilitarize.

Addressing this challenge requires a judicious combination of diplomacy and military action, along with optimal use of the Trump framework—while preserving the president's active involvement and support for Israel's vital objectives and, as noted, avoiding any appearance of obstructing the framework's implementation. Accordingly, Israel should respond harshly and decisively to any violation of the agreement by Hamas, backed by American support and by building the necessary legitimacy among the key states that support the framework. This approach is essential to ensure a decisive change in the security reality and the rules of the game that existed before October 7. At the same time, Israel should propose now to begin preparing the conditions for implementing clauses 16 and 17 of the framework. These clauses refer to the potential establishment of a Palestinian technocratic government and the deployment of an International Stabilization Force (ISF) in areas free of Hamas's presence (under the guidance of the Peace Board chaired by President Trump and managed by Tony Blair).

The most relevant area for this purpose at present is the space between Khan Yunis and Rafah (eastern Gaza), which can also be expanded. Implementing the idea in that area is meant to initiate the reconstruction process. The dynamics that would emerge might encourage Palestinians who currently live under Hamas control to come to this secure area where, alongside physical, institutional, and economic reconstruction, a process of social–civil healing could also begin.

This area should develop as an antithesis to the territory under Hamas's control—characterized by construction, development, security, freedom, and rehabilitation, as opposed to destruction, insecurity, repression, and poverty; light versus darkness, hope versus despair. The new space should present itself as a clear alternative—the informed, preferred choice of Gaza's residents and the foundation for the future of the entire Strip. As Gaza's population shifts from the north of the Strip to the south (with Israeli control of the crossings to prevent infiltration by Hamas elements into the secured area), Hamas will lose

one of its most significant sources of power as well as its human shield. More importantly, Hamas will be ideologically weakened by the alternative growing at its doorstep and replacing it.

American backing, along with regional and international agreement, is essential for leading this effort. This includes support for a comprehensive campaign against the remaining Hamas elements throughout the Gaza Strip, as well as for harsh responses to Hamas violations—actions that would not necessarily require ground maneuvers on the scale of those conducted over the past two years. In effect, this approach entails running two concurrent systems within the Gaza Strip, with differing—even conflicting—characteristics and rationales. Implementing this approach, for which the Trump framework provides the basic conceptual infrastructure, could assist the military effort to dismantle Hamas or at least significantly and persistently weaken the organization and demilitarize the Strip. It would also help establish the operational and political conditions for a gradual, phased takeover of areas currently controlled by Hamas, particularly if the organization refuses to cooperate with the Trump framework while being militarily degraded by Israel and losing public support to the emerging alternative.

Moreover, establishing an alternative Palestinian governing space for Hamas in territory currently under IDF control could serve as an important stepping stone for advancing President Trump’s vision of fostering a new regional architecture that would include normalization with Israel and its integration into the region, while weakening radical forces.

However, the chances of success for establishing this alternative that is favorable to Israel depend largely on Israel’s willingness to permit a linkage to the Palestinian Authority (PA), while maintaining its demands, and effectively the Gulf pressure, for the PA to implement reforms and to genuinely commit to preparing the conditions for the eventual establishment of a Palestinian state. This would meet the conditions set by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates for their involvement in stabilizing the Gaza Strip. Their involvement is critical to shaping the political and social character of the new space in accordance with their moderate vision, which seeks to replace an era of wars with an era of stability and economic development. Otherwise, Qatar, backed by Turkey, will once again take the lead in shaping the space, thereby preserving Hamas’s power and reinforcing the ethos of continued struggle against Israel.