

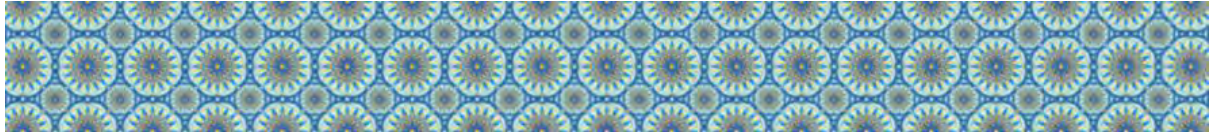
# High-Level Middle-East Dialogue

## A New Era in the Middle East? Between Entrenchment and Possibility

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**A New Era in the Middle East? Between Entrenchment and Possibility**  
**From Escalation to Solutions: Advancing Security, Political Resolution, and Regional Renewal**  
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# Strategic Overview: A New Middle East Being Reordered

*By Hiba Qasas & Professor Steven E. Zipperstein*

The Middle East is not drifting; it is being reordered. Another intense two-year cycle of escalation, layered on decades of unresolved conflict, from the October 7 attacks and the Gaza war to direct confrontation and proxy escalations across Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, and the Red Sea, has left the region marked by exhausted societies, hardened public opinion, and institutions under strain.

Yet, for the first time in decades, there is also a dense web of political frameworks on the table. President Trump's twenty-point Gaza plan, the Franco-Saudi led New York Declaration, and the Sharm el Sheikh peace summit, now anchored in a United Nations Security Council resolution, have created an organising centre for regional diplomacy and a narrow window in which to turn text into power.

The balance of power around that centre has shifted. Iran's regional network has been damaged and is more constrained than at any point in recent years. Spoilers who once operated with relative impunity are on the defensive. Gulf capitals are pressing ahead with ambitious modernisation agendas that require predictability rather than perpetual crisis. The United States has re-entered the field with a different proposition. It combines an ironclad bond with Israel with a strategic compact with Gulf partners, knitting together normalisation, security guarantees, and economic integration with a credible political horizon for Palestinians, and putting this linkage back on the agenda as a central strategic pillar and fault line in regional diplomacy. Europe, heavily engaged in the Middle East, stands to play a role that goes beyond statements and towards a focus on concrete monitoring, financing, and guarantees.

At the same time, three other fault lines will help determine whether this moment produces order or fragmentation. In Syria, a transition has begun that offers the possibility of moving from frozen conflict and sanctions to a negotiated reintegration into the international system, but only if governance, security, and accountability are addressed together. In Lebanon, the question is whether the state can recover sovereignty and advance disarmament in the face of entrenched armed actors and economic collapse. In Sudan, the fall of El Fasher and the deepening crisis across the Red Sea corridor show what happens when international attention and deterrence evaporate. Across all these files runs the Iran question. Whether and how a more constrained Iranian posture is locked in, rather than allowed to rebound, will shape the region's future.

This is the context in which President Trump's Gaza plan has become the reference point against which regional actors are calibrating their choices. The plan's core logic is clear. Transitional governance in Gaza under technocratic authority. An International Stabilisation Force with a political mandate. Sequenced disarmament and deradicalisation. Palestinian Authority reform and a path to a demilitarised Palestinian state embedded in regional guarantees and economic interdependence.

What is decided in Gaza will not stay in Gaza. It will influence the Syrian transition, Lebanon's prospects for sovereignty, Sudan's chances of avoiding permanent fragmentation, and the broader effort to reset the rules of the regional game.

The Geneva conference that this report distills was built around that reality. We convened 260 participants from politics, security, business, diplomacy, media, and civil society as a working group, not as a talk shop. Special envoys and ambassadors sat with senior journalists, business leaders, former officials, and practitioners from the region. The room was deliberately

mixed, Gulf, European, American, Israeli, Palestinian, and regional voices. Those who design and influence policy and those who live with its consequences. This report synthesizes the outcomes of their focused deliberations.

**Three hard questions ran through these discussions:**

- ❑ **The regional compact question.** Can the region convert the new realities and various visions for the region into a cooperative political and security framework that manages rivalries, locks in gains, and reduces the margin for miscalculation, or will they be cannibalised by competing agendas and spoiler violence.
- ❑ **The economic imagination test.** Can corridors such as IMEC, energy and water projects, and reconstruction vehicles in Gaza, Syria, and Sudan be designed as tools of political engineering, creating constituencies that have more to lose from disruption than from cooperation.
- ❑ **The legitimisation trap.** How do we avoid the two classic failures of past operations: timetables without benchmarks that invite a vacuum and fragmentation, and benchmarks without political cover that paralyse decision making? What does tough but fair conditionality look like, and what kind of incentives or support are needed in Gaza, in Palestinian reform, in Lebanon, in the Syrian transition, and in Sudan's state rescue, and who enforces it?

On the Israeli-Palestinian file, the work is particularly specific and urgent. Gaza's stabilisation framework, reconstruction, governance transition, and security arrangements, has become the fulcrum of the wider regional order. If this transition is designed as a narrow security fix, detached from politics and public consent, the opportunity will close and familiar cycles of escalation will resume. If it is embedded in a time-bound political horizon and linked to credible Palestinian reform, it can be the entry point to a different decade: quiet skies, functioning borders, and jobs instead of tunnels.

This report is written for those who will have to make choices in that space. Mediators, ministers, diplomats, and business leaders in the Gulf and Saudi Arabia, the United States and Europe, Israel and Palestine, as well as those dealing with Syria's transition, Lebanon's sovereignty, Sudan's survival, and the future of Iran's regional posture. It is not a catalogue of wishes. It is a set of options and trade-offs. The report is organized into three sections, each addressing a different layer of this landscape.

**Section 1: Between the Trump Plan and New York Declaration: A Blueprint for Operationalization.** The section presents a three-part Gaza Series on security, reconstruction, and governance, together with a structured approach to Palestinian reform under the Trump plan and proposals on the Palestinian economy and public narratives. Taken together, these elements outline how a ceasefire can be converted, step by step, into functioning institutions, a credible verification system, and a political horizon for a demilitarised Palestinian state that is embedded in a wider regional compact.

**Section 2: Navigating the scramble for regional recalibration,** then zooms out to map how key actors, including Iran, Türkiye, Syria, Lebanon and Sudan, are adjusting to this new reality. It examines Iran's posture and explores realistic pathways for Syrian reintegration, what a credible route to Lebanese sovereignty and disarmament would entail, and how to prevent a failed state arc from the Red Sea to the Sahel. It distils the main constraints, leverage points and red lines across these files.

**Section 3: A prosperous interconnected Middle East for all its peoples,** treats economic integration as a driver of both politics and prosperity. It offers key considerations for turning IMEC and related corridors from communiques into governance structures, blended finance vehicles, and early win projects. It shows how economic interdependence can underpin the

regional and Gaza arrangements set out in the first two sections, creating constituencies that have more to lose from disruption than from cooperation.

Much has already moved since our October convening. The United Nations Security Council's endorsement of President Trump's Gaza peace plan; the deepening of United States Saudi security and economic ties; new Palestinian proposals on reconstruction and West Bank revitalisation, early steps in the Syrian transition, and continued stress tests in Lebanon and the Red Sea. The direction of travel is not preordained. It will be set by implementation choices taken in the coming months. In Cairo and Riyadh, in Washington and Brussels, in Jerusalem and Ramallah, in Damascus, Beirut, and Port Sudan.

The P4P and UCLA partnership is anchored in complementary strengths. P4P brings analytical depth, regional expertise, country accompaniment, and operational and policy networks; UCLA contributes academic rigor, regional expertise and more than three decades at the core of Middle East Track II activity. The partnership functions as a practical policy platform that connects discreet dialogue, comparative lessons, and active coalitions to concrete policy design and course correction. Our outputs are built to travel, to inform envoys, brief ministers, guide working level teams, and support those who will have to defend difficult choices at home.

We are grateful to our supporters and backers, namely the Government of Germany, the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Government of the Netherlands, the Government of Switzerland, the Republic and Canton of Geneva, and our philanthropic partners.

A narrow opening has emerged. The purpose of this report is to help define what those next steps look like and to ensure that if this window of opportunity closes, it is not because those who favour stability, accountable security, and a real political horizon lacked options.

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# Core Findings & Actionable Pathways

## Strategic Watchpoints: A Shifting Security Calculus

Nine shifts in the regional security calculus that decision makers should track closely.

1. **The collapse of the pre-2025 deterrence architecture:** The June confrontation referred to as the Twelve Day War, the direct strikes on Iranian territory, and the Israeli strike against Hamas officials in Doha, shattered long held assumptions about regional red lines. Iran emerged weakened and internally divided, with its so-called “Axis of Resistance” already damaged in Lebanon, Syria and Yemen. This recalibration has created a temporary opening for regional actors to reshape deterrence frameworks around more predictable and more multilateral arrangements.
2. **A region-wide recognition that stability requires addressing the Palestinian question:** Arab states, including those that normalised relations under the Abraham Accords, now insist that progress on the Palestinian political horizon is imperative for deeper regional cooperation. This shift reflects both public sentiment and elite level assessments that sustainable regional integration depends on credible movement towards Palestinian governance renewal and a pathway to statehood. In response to these assessments, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 2803 on 17 November 2025.
3. **From Fixed Camps to Diversified Alliances:** Regional actors are increasingly combining security autonomy with transactional, selective cooperation. Rather than sitting in fixed camps, they are building diversified alliances with overlapping but not identical partners. Diplomacy by Türkiye, Gulf states, Egypt and Jordan across the Gaza, Syria and Iran files illustrates this move towards multi-vector foreign policy rather than alignment with a single bloc. This diversification is especially visible as Gulf capitals reassess their balancing strategies vis à vis Israel and Iran and recalibrate their security and economic partnerships with the United States, Europe and emerging powers.
4. **The weakening of non-state proxy networks:** Proxy capabilities in Lebanon, Syria and Yemen were degraded during the last two years. These networks remain dangerous, but their reduced operational freedom has lowered immediate escalation risks and created space for state-centric diplomacy, including discussions on border arrangements, crisis management mechanisms and non-belligerency tracks.
5. **Israel: Integration into the Compact or Strategic Isolation:** Israel now faces a strategic choice: to move towards managed integration into a new regional compact built around President Trump’s Gaza plan, or to remain in a posture of de facto isolation and perpetual crisis management. Integration would mean accepting binding arrangements on Gaza stabilisation, Palestinian reform and a time-bound political horizon in exchange for deeper security guarantees; additional normalization agreements with neighbouring and regional states; new and expanded economic opportunities; and a transformed relationship with Gulf states and key partners. Choosing isolation preserves short-term tactical freedom but risks sustained overextension on multiple fronts, growing friction with allies and a gradual shift in how regional and international actors perceive Israel’s role in the emerging order. Israel’s choice will also depend on the willingness of the Palestinians and all countries in the region, once and for all, to accept Israel’s right to exist and to live in peace.
6. **Converging timelines across key regional states:** Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Israel are all approaching electoral or governance transition moments in 2026. This alignment creates simultaneous risks and opportunities. A crowded political calendar



may heighten volatility, but it also concentrates attention on governance renewal, legitimacy and security assurances.

7. **New diplomatic anchors and frameworks:** President Trump's twenty-point plan and the Franco-Saudi led New York Declaration now form the key reference points for regional coordination. Together they signal a shift from declaratory diplomacy to more structured and verifiable implementation mechanisms. These link Gaza stabilisation, Palestinian reform, Israeli security guarantees and regional connectivity under a single strategic frame.
8. **A pragmatic shift towards regional economic interdependence as a stabilising tool:** Energy, water, logistics and digital infrastructure have moved to the centre of diplomatic engagement. IMEC and complementary corridors are increasingly recognised not as abstract mega-projects but as instruments to lock in stability through interdependence. Regional actors see dense economic linkages as a way to reduce spoiler leverage and raise the costs of escalation.
9. **A narrowing window shaped by public opinion and legitimacy concerns** Arab public opinion stands at historically low levels of acceptance towards Israeli normalisation in the absence of tangible political movement for Palestinians. At the same time, Israeli public sentiment remains shaped by recent trauma and concerns over credible security guarantees. Regional decision makers now accept that legitimacy, domestic and regional, is a core security variable, not separate from military considerations.

These watchpoints set the context for the sections that follow. Section 1 examines how Israel, Gaza and the Trump plan sit at the centre of this recalibrated landscape. Section 2 traces how regional actors respond to these shifts, and Section 3 considers how economic interdependence can reinforce or undermine the emerging order.

## 1. Between the Trump Plan and the New York Declaration: A Blueprint for Operationalization

The Israeli–Palestinian arena has re-emerged as the central test of whether the region's current diplomatic convergence can yield durable stability. This section analyses the sequence of interlocking priorities—security stabilization, governance renewal, economic recovery, and regional integration—that together form the building blocks of a sustainable trajectory for addressing the immediate imperatives and ensuring a political horizon for the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It features a three-part Gaza Series on security, governance, and reconstruction, complemented by a distillation of the conference's emergent analysis and recommendations on the Palestinian economy's reform and investment potential and on Israel's evolving regional relations within the emerging Middle East order. Taken together, these strands outline a practical pathway towards sustainable Palestinian governance, credible statehood benchmarks, and an integrated region anchored in mutual recognition, security, economic interdependence, and shared political responsibility.

### 1.1. Gaza at the Core Series: Three-Part Recommendations on Security, Reconstruction, and Transitional Governance

The following principles and recommendations outline the key considerations for successful Gaza stabilization, reconstruction, and governance as discussed by Israeli, Palestinian, and regional experts and stakeholders. They reflect extensive deliberations by the Uniting for a Shared Future (USF) coalition members and regional stakeholders.

### 1.1.1. *Getting Gaza Stabilisation Right: A Fit-for-Purpose Gaza Stabilisation Force*

A fragile but real opening exists. Regional actors are mobilised, and there is a chance to link stabilisation to a credible political horizon. That opportunity will close if the mission is treated as a narrow security fix detached from politics, public consent and regional guarantees. President Trump's Comprehensive Plan rightly emphasises deradicalisation, redevelopment and amnesty for those renouncing violence; these objectives require verifiable political, social and security mechanisms to succeed.

A Gaza stabilisation force must therefore be a politically led operation that provides basic security, oversees disarmament, protects civilians, unlocks humanitarian access and helps restore basic services, while enabling a political horizon and Palestinian technocratic governance under clear benchmarks and reassuring Israel through verifiable risk reduction. Stabilisation must pair verifiable steps to dismantle violent networks with non-coercive exits for those who renounce violence, under strict rules that protect civilians at all times.

#### **I. Guiding Principles for Mission Design**

1. **Primacy of politics:** Security tasks exist to open space for a Palestinian-led transitional administration and a pathway to reunified governance.
2. **Mandate before force generation:** Adopt a precise mandate that sets tasks, authorities, leadership and reporting, authorised use of force, freedom of movement, ceasefire monitoring and verification, humanitarian facilitation, support to disarmament–demobilisation–reintegration and security-sector reform, crossings and borders management, justice and human rights support, and transition conditions including a provisional end state.
3. **Safeguard the political horizon:** Urgent stabilisation should not narrow or pre-judge the political end state. Every security and service measure should reinforce, not undermine, a time-bound pathway to regional normalisation, a non-militarized Palestinian state and governance renewal.
4. **Consent of key stakeholders:** Operate with consent from Israel and the Palestinian Authority; without it, effectiveness collapses and mission creep follows.
5. **Legal authority for protection—not blanket enforcement:** Use Chapter Seven of the United Nations Charter to protect civilians, assure movement, and prevent flare ups; do not equate it with forced demilitarisation.
6. **Only as international as necessary, as Palestinian as possible:** Design every line of effort to restore Palestinian ownership quickly and avoid any perception of a new occupation, creating a clear link with the Palestinian Authority.
7. **Protection, services, and strategic communication from day one:** Pair area security with visible services and continuous, truthful engagement to build acceptance.
8. **Disarmament with credible off-ramps:** Run disarmament as a sequenced process with amnesty, safe passage, screening and vetting, and reintegration pathways; differentiate leaders and ideologues from coerced or transactional personnel. Avoid coercive, blanket disarmament by the mission.
9. **Policing first:** Set up accountable community policing early, including practical border-policing coordination with Israel and Egypt and ISF training/support to vetted Palestinian police.
10. **Integrated civilian–police–military design:** Field a strong civilian pillar (political advice, civil–military cooperation with budget, governance backstopping, justice and human rights), police units, and enabling capabilities (intelligence, logistics, aviation, maritime, and information operations against misinformation and disinformation).
11. **Regional participation, structured deconfliction, and verifiable risk-reduction:** Coordinate with neighbours and key regional actors on supporting roles in ceasefire monitoring, crisis management, and border arrangements. Establish standing mechanisms with Israel, Egypt, Jordan and the PA with US oversight and active



engagement; build monitored benchmarks on ceasefire compliance, border security, and interdiction of illicit finance and arms.

12. **Transparency, metrics, and conditions-based transition:** Publish open dashboards; use independent review; tie progress and exit to verified benchmarks, not dates.
13. **Financing that reinforces governance:** Blend assessed and voluntary funds; route reconstruction through transparent mechanisms and local procurement to stimulate a lawful economy.
14. **Scenario planning and stress-testing:** Plan for spoilers and mandate obstruction; use structured simulation and peace-gaming to test design and sequencing.
15. **Reconnection of Gaza and the West Bank:** Stabilisation must reconnect Gaza with the West Bank and avoid dynamics of annexation or permanent separation.

## II. Policy Recommendations

### A) Disarmament and Deradicalisation

1. **Reassure Israel:** The main fear of Israelis is that Hamas will not disarm and will not give up power – urgent attention is needed to manage these critical concerns, which could easily derail the peace effort. This is also essential for Palestine: until Hamas renounces power and arms, Palestinians will not be widely recognised as partners for peace. Upon disarmament, monitoring and verification mechanisms will be needed, for example to track illicit finance and arms flows.
2. **Surrender corridors and safe intake:** Time-bound surrender windows, safe passage, and cantonment; immediate screening with humanitarian support and protection guarantees.
3. **Weapons management and destruction:** Map, collect, secure; register and destroy heavy munitions under international observation with verified chain-of-custody.
4. **Differentiation and vetted pathways:** Separate leaders and those responsible for grave crimes from rank-and-file, coerced personnel, and civil servants; apply due process and tailored routes.
5. **Incentivised reintegration:** Tranche-based packages—stipends, skills training, public works jobs, scholarships, psychosocial support—with options for women and minors, released upon verified milestones.
6. **Selective integration into non-combat public functions:** After thorough vetting, channel some demobilised individuals into construction, municipal or custodial services under civilian control.
7. **Detention, rehabilitation, and ideational disengagement:** Upgrade detention standards; ensure legal counsel and monitoring; link release to compliance and community sponsorship.
8. **Financial, diplomatic, and border levers:** Tie benefits and movement permissions to compliance; apply targeted sanctions; close financing and supply routes through regional cooperation.
9. **Maritime and crossing control:** Joint oversight at crossings and a maritime inspection regime to prevent rearmament.
10. **Political alternatives and reconciliation:** Guarantee lawful political space for non-violent actors; advance reconciliation and municipal representation to anchor non-violent competition.

### B) Protection of Civilians

1. **Use-of-force and harm-mitigation rules:** proportionate, accountable force; no heavy explosives in dense urban areas except last resort; a civilian-harm cell reviews incidents and enables ex gratia payments.
2. **Distinct posture and conduct:** Clear visual distinction from combat forces; clear understanding of roles applying trauma-informed engagement, including with children and women.

3. **Access and services as protection:** Treat access to food, shelter, health care, water and electricity as integral to security; fund quick-impact projects that enhance daily safety and dignity.
4. **Community policing and complaint mechanisms:** Engagement with communities, public complaint channels, civilian monitors, independent review boards, and published corrective actions.
5. **Real-time deconfliction and incident management:** Ensure adequate information exchange with Israel, the PA, Jordan, and Egypt to prevent escalation.

#### C) Core Mission Build

1. **Comprehensive mandate and matched force mix:** Resource a civilian–police–military mix for urban protection, border management, air and maritime tasks, and truthful public information.
2. **Consent and formal coordination:** Conclude understandings with Israel and the Palestinian Authority; establish standing coordination with Egypt on borders and crossings; destroy smuggling tunnels beneath the Gaza-Egypt border.
3. **Expectation management:** Be first with the truth; communicate what the mission will and will not do; with special attention to deployment phase, report progress and setbacks regularly.
4. **Benchmarks and exit:** All transitions are conditions-based; define a contingency exit if deterioration becomes unavoidable.
5. **Reconnecting Gaza and the West Bank:** Implement measures that strengthen unity and halt annexation dynamics.

#### D) Political horizon and regional framework

1. **Anchor stabilisation in the political horizon:** Urgent security and service measures should reinforce, not narrow, a time-bound pathway to Palestinian statehood and governance renewal.
2. **International and regional participation for legitimacy:** Secure visible roles for regional partners, tied to cooperation with the Palestinian Authority and a shift in Israeli and Palestinian official rhetoric.
3. **Trilateral coordination:** Maintain alignment between the United States, the European Union and the Arab League, under a structured dialogue that connects current initiatives to an agreed pathway.
4. **Operational realism with political visibility:** Ensure the mission's posture and composition signal progress towards peace and regional integration while retaining operational effectiveness.

### III. Don'ts

**Do not outsource lethal functions to private military companies and avoid creating a separate counter-terrorism track.**

#### *1.1.2. Reconstructing Gaza to Break the Cycle: A Sequenced Agenda for Recovery*

As a fragile ceasefire holds, a series of immediate, concrete steps is needed to stabilise Gaza, avert further humanitarian deterioration and put in place the basics for recovery and governance. The task is not simply to rebuild what was destroyed, but to avoid locking Gaza back into cycles of crisis and dependency. Short term measures therefore need to be explicitly sequenced with medium- and longer-term objectives – restoring services and livelihoods, repairing the financial system, and linking reconstruction to economic transformation, governance reform and a broader political and regional framework

#### Guiding Considerations

- ❑ **Act now, on twin tracks:** Start debris removal, early recovery, and relief employment immediately while political and demilitarization arrangements are defined. Deliver

visible peace dividends fast (especially as winter weather approaches) to prevent further displacement and collapse of confidence.

- ❑ **Future-safe decisions:** Design today's mechanisms to be adaptable and non-prejudicial. Use sunset clauses and periodic reviews so short-term financial, political, and administrative fixes do not entrench fragmentation or pre-empt final status outcomes.
- ❑ **Sequence for staying power:**
  - ❑ **Short term:** humanitarian access, rubble and UXO clearance, restoration of basic services, third-party-verified Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration (DDR).
  - ❑ **Medium term:** institutional stabilization, DDR, job creation at scale, rehabilitation of core infrastructure.
  - ❑ **Long term:** regional integration, energy and trade connectivity, and selective megaprojects.
- ❑ **Anchor in regional integration:** tie Gaza and the West Bank into regional energy, water, food, transport, and digital networks. Connect to IMEC and complementary corridors to open markets, attract private and development finance, and build interdependence that strengthens security.
- ❑ **Mobilize de-risked capital, assemble committed investors & stakeholders, and design a new reconstruction financing mechanism:** Blend grants, guarantees, and political-risk cover to crowd in private investment. Stand up a Palestinian Reconstruction and Development vehicle, use receivables "factoring" for withheld revenues, and create local impact funds to finance SMEs and jobs.
- ❑ **Guarantee Palestinian ownership:** No bypass of Palestinian institutions. Ensure central roles for the Palestinian Authority, local contractors, engineers, and civil society in design, governance, and implementation to build legitimacy and capacity.  
**Remove structural chokepoints:** Restore correspondent banking, release withheld tax revenues, unblock currency circulation and movement of goods, and update and ensure fair and effective implementation of Paris Protocol arrangements to unlock liquidity and investor confidence across Gaza and the West Bank, while ensuring through independent audits and other verification methods that revenues are not diverted for corrupt or illegal purposes.

### Key Priorities and Roadmap for Gaza Reconstruction

- ❑ **Short-Term (0–6 months): Stabilize and Enable**
  - ❑ **Civilians protected = access enabled:** Lock in site security, predictable humanitarian and reconstruction access, and spoiler management via a verifiable DDR pathway covering Hamas and other armed actors, benchmarked and monitored by a third party, and sequenced to Israeli drawdown and PA-led governance so crews and corridors can operate.
  - ❑ **Debris/UXO + utilities first:** Launch mass clearance and quick-repair teams for electricity, water, sanitation, and waste to create immediate, visible wins and income.
  - ❑ **Emergency livelihoods:** Scale cash-for-work and use local SMEs and contractors to inject liquidity and legitimacy.
  - ❑ **Liquidity now:** Release withheld PA revenues; restore correspondent banking; deploy donor/DFI bridge guarantees so salaries and private-sector arrears are paid, and the system does not seize up.
- ❑ **Medium-Term (up to 5 years): Recover and Rebuild**
  - ❑ **Governance stabilization:** Reinstate core administration and municipal services with a clear link to a Palestinian-anchored transitional framework, avoiding parallel structures that fragment authority.
  - ❑ **Housing/social infrastructure:** Phase housing, schools, hospitals, and roads with standardised designs and transparent procurement.

- ❑ **Private-sector reactivation:** Stand up a Gaza Recovery SME window (concessional debt + first-loss equity) to crowd in investment; link major contracts to women/youth hiring and apprenticeships.
- ❑ **Long-Term (>5 years): Integrate and Transform**
  - ❑ **Strategic infrastructure & corridors:** Position Gaza and the West Bank inside regional energy-water-transport-digital networks (e.g., IMEC-compatible logistics, regulated maritime link).
  - ❑ **Green growth bets:** Desalination + renewables, water-energy swaps, circular debris reuse, agri-tech hubs.
  - ❑ **Fiscal and trade capacity:** Build revenue administration and customs modernisation towards greater fiscal autonomy under international guarantees.
  - ❑ **Political horizon linkage:** Tie major investments to a credible regional political-security framework and meaningful PA reform.

### Concrete, Bankable Proposals

- ❑ **Liquidity & fiscal stabilization**
  - ❑ **Factoring PA receivables:** Establish a donor/DFI-backed facility to purchase withheld-revenue receivables so the PA clears salary/private-sector arrears now; repay on release.
  - ❑ **Restore the financial plumbing:** Reopen correspondent banking; raise shekel repatriation caps; unblock currency circulation.
- ❑ **Market access to cheaper capital**
  - ❑ **IMF/World Bank/MIGA windows:** Use policy-based guarantees and political-risk cover to lower program costs and crowd-in private capital. (Matches a shift to innovative, multi-sector financing in a low-ODA world.)
- ❑ **Purpose-built funds & trusts**
  - ❑ **A Palestinian Fund for Reconstruction and Development (PFRD):** A single address. Bankable pipeline execution with blended finance and measurable jobs outputs.
  - ❑ **Gaza Marine Trust:** Independent, transparent gas-revenue management tied to reconstruction outlays.
- ❑ **Trade, crossings, and IMEC linkage**
  - ❑ **Crossings surge + logistics hubs:** Modern scanners, cold chain, and throughput targets; treat upgrades as IMEC-prep assets with a Gaza and West Bank working group under an IMEC secretariat.
  - ❑ **Freeport/Special Economic Zone + regulated maritime link:** Pilot with political-risk cover to depoliticise trade ops.
- ❑ **Institutional and regulatory reform:** Targeted fixes to fiscal management, customs transparency, movement of goods, and Paris Protocol arrangements to unlock trade and investment.
- ❑ **Cross-cutting financing architecture**
  - ❑ **“Single address” PFRD:** Create a Palestinian Fund for Reconstruction and Development hosted at a trusted IFI to blend grants, guarantees, and private capital with strict fiduciary rules. Include meaningful Palestinian representation on the board and publish quarterly disbursement/procurement/employment dashboards to hard-wire accountability.
- ❑ **Inclusive contracting & social protection**
  - ❑ **Local preference & JV rules:** 10–15 percent local preference margins; SME tiers; JV requirements; women/youth targets and apprenticeships embedded in contracts.
  - ❑ **Psychosocial & safety nets:** Target conflict-affected groups; consider limited, time-bound UBI pilots tied to employability.

### *1.1.3. Transitional Governance, Legitimacy and a Political Horizon for Gaza and the West Bank: A Practical Roadmap*

A fragile but real opening exists to link transitional governance with a credible political horizon. Governance and security should advance together to sustain the ceasefire and support a durable resolution and broader regional integration. Transitional governance should be legitimate, time bound, and tied to a clearly articulated political process, with Palestinian leadership renewal and verifiable reform as enabling conditions, and with regional and international backing to reduce miscalculation and keep implementation on track.

Legitimacy and effectiveness rest on building public support and clear Palestinian ownership, complemented by a regional–international support and oversight structure. Sustained public legitimacy will be the decisive safeguard against spoilers and the engine for broader regional cooperation.

#### **Guiding Considerations**

- ❑ **Time-bound transition.** Stand up a Transitional Governance Authority (TGA) with a dated mandate, Arab/international guarantees, and link with the PA. Success in stabilizing daily life, delivering services, and preparing handover to representative government hinges on visible Palestinian ownership and delivery.
- ❑ **Reform as an enabler not a pre-condition:** Use the transitional governance period to enable the renewal of Palestinian leadership and institutions. A transitional process and authority should strengthen and professionalize Palestinian institutions through accountability, technical support, and regional backing, creating the space for leadership renewal and elections without preconditioning the political horizon.
- ❑ **Security-governance concurrency.** Limited, time-bound stabilization forces should create space for politics. Link demilitarization to credible governance, security guarantees, incentives, and an agreed political track.
- ❑ **One administrative apparatus.** Reconnect Gaza and the West Bank across ministries, budgets, customs/borders, and infrastructure, leveraging this opportunity to expand the capacity and legitimacy of governance across the West Bank and Gaza, but with no role for armed militias.
- ❑ **External guarantees and local policing.** Pair finite regional/international guarantees (borders, crossings, verification) with vetted, representative community policing and rights-based justice that taper as capacity rises.
- ❑ **Benchmarks over timetables.** Trigger withdrawals and mandate transitions by independently verified standards.
- ❑ **Borders and access.** Jointly secure crossings to curb smuggling while enabling relief and trade with clear throughput targets.
- ❑ **Regional political-security framework.** Embed the transition within regional security guarantees and economic interdependence, practical steps on energy/water/transport/digital connectivity to lock in stabilization through interdependence.
- ❑ **Public consent and narrative discipline.** Use feedback channels, complaint mechanisms, and factual communication; elevate moderate voices; avoid dehumanizing rhetoric.
- ❑ **Spoiler management.** Anticipate, monitor, and politically constrain spoilers from the outset.

#### **Roadmap for Governance and Political Horizon**

##### **Short Term (0–6 months): Stabilize legitimacy, prevent fragmentation**

- ❑ **Stand up the TGA (PA-anchored, time-bound, benchmarked).** Publish a 12-month milestone chart and quarterly performance dashboards.
- ❑ **Lift vetoes on PA leadership/liquidity.** Release withheld revenues; restore banking relationships.



- ❑ **Resume structured PA–Israel dialogue within a regional political-security framework.** State clear international intent to realize a demilitarized Palestinian state coupled with sustainable security guarantees for Israel. Link President Trump’s plan with the New York declaration and Saudi-Franco Initiative.
- ❑ **Commence a Third-Party Verification Mechanism (TPVM) to start on Day 1.** Define and agree on a Reform and Performance Benchmark Matrix (governance, services, rule of law, financial transparency, community safety); TPVM sets baselines, conducts quarterly verifications, publishes public scorecards/exception notes, and certifies triggers for revenue releases, access/movement easing, phased drawdown, donor disbursements, and entry into next-phase political steps (with defined data access/audit templates).
- ❑ **Advance a process for armed-actor exit:** Negotiate and offer surrender pathways, lawful amnesty for non-atrocity offenders, reintegration; candidacy/public-service vetting; independent monitoring of ceasefire/disarmament, human rights, illicit finance/arms flows.
- ❑ **Begin Security-building from day one:** Catalyse civilian-protection capacities and accelerate community policing.
- ❑ **Jumpstart a quick-impact delivery through PA systems:** Make restoration of utilities, healthcare, local jobs/procurement, and public feedback channels a priority, for the role these issues play in daily-life and public confidence building.

#### **Medium Term (up to 5 years): Reform and Reconnect**

- ❑ **Implement agreed PA reforms:** Hold peaceful, fair elections for candidates renouncing violence and acknowledging mutual coexistence.
- ❑ **Unify governance across Gaza–West Bank administration:** Consolidate ministries, budgets, customs/borders, infrastructure, etc. in an “All of Palestine” approach.
- ❑ **Deliver services with visible institutional credit to PA authorities:** Advance incremental security handover to PA police/justice by TPVM-certified public-safety benchmarks.
- ❑ **Enhance trade & movement:** Reduce barriers; sustain recovery with IFIs and macro-platforms; tie disbursements to verified benchmarks.

#### **Long Term (5+ years): Anchored horizon and statehood path**

- ❑ **Conclude a lasting political settlement:** Reach an agreement which launches a time-bound pathway to statehood, mutual recognition, and responsible self-government, with pacing conditioned on verified delivery
- ❑ **Invest in education and social transformation:** Recognize the long-term, inter-generational nature of societal recovery, and work to build and consolidate reconciliation, public well-being, and co-existence discourse, drawing on lessons learned from other contexts (Northern Ireland, Colombia, etc.).
- ❑ **Pursue permanent regional integration:** Invest in connectivity projects that underpin stability and interdependence.

#### **Concrete, Bankable Proposals**

- ❑ **Political Horizon Declaration:** U.S.-EU-regional statement committing to an irreversible, benchmarked pathway to statehood with TPVM-certified triggers (governance, security, access/economy, diplomacy).
- ❑ **Transitional Governance Authority (TGA):** Time-bound, Arab/internationally guaranteed; quarterly TPVM scorecards and a dated handover plan to PA to prevent de facto partition.
- ❑ **PA Reform & Elections Support Package:** Donor/IFI-backed stabilization (liquidity, arrears), targeted administrative reforms, and inclusive elections; fund releases tied to TPVM verification (financial transparency, payroll regularity, procurement compliance).



- ❑ **Spoiler Management & Monitoring Cell:** Joint mechanism to anticipate/attribute/deter spoilers; coordinates with TPVM for aligned facts and crisis messaging.
- ❑ **Narrative & Civil Society Platform:** Fact-based communication, elevation of moderates, and public-opinion polling linked to TPVM milestones.
- ❑ **Security & Justice Governance Support Programme:** Shared national security vision; accountable policing/justice; training/equipment/handovers triggered by TPVM-verified benchmarks.

## 1.2. Safeguarding and Operationalizing the Political Horizon

### 1.2.1 Palestinian Reform and Governance Renewal: From Intent to Implementation

Under the emerging architecture, Security Council Resolution 2803, President Trump's plan and the New York Declaration set the outer frame for Palestinian reform. The governance provisions of the Trump plan, together with the Franco–Saudi–led New York Declaration and the wider Global Alliance efforts, define reform as the operational pathway back to unified, legitimate Palestinian governance and ultimately to a credible statehood horizon.

Within this frame, the Palestinian commitment has been formalised rather than implied. President Abbas's June 2025 letter to President Macron and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman anchors Palestinian reform in this wider architecture, signalling acceptance that governance renewal, institutional reform and a security transition are preconditions for regaining full administrative responsibility, including in Gaza, and for advancing a political horizon.

Security Council Resolution 2803 and the Trump plan's sequencing provisions give this political understanding form. Article 9 stipulates that Gaza will be administered under a temporary technocratic governance arrangement until the Palestinian Authority completes its reform programme and demonstrates the capacity to "securely and effectively take back control of Gaza." Point 15 identifies the Palestinian police as the "long term internal security solution" for Gaza, to be trained and supported during the transition by an International Stabilisation Force in coordination with Arab and international partners. Article 19 links delivery on this reform and reconstruction track to the possibility that conditions "may be in place for a credible pathway to Palestinian self-determination and statehood."

In this design, reform is no longer an abstract political aspiration. It is the bridge between immediate stabilisation and long-term sovereignty, and the test case for whether Palestinian institutions can regain domestic legitimacy and international confidence. The central challenge is now operational: turning these commitments into measurable progress under a credible verification mechanism. Structural impediments are significant – including Israel's withholding of tax revenues, limited fiscal space and public distrust compounded by corruption and absence of elections – but there is broad recognition that a sequenced, benchmarked reform track is the most viable route to restoring both internal legitimacy and external trust.

The reform programme is expected to centre on elections and seven institutional domains: (1) administrative, (2) financial, (3) media, (4) political, (5) security (6) education, and (7) judicial. Taken together, reforms across these areas are intended to form the foundation for accountable, transparent and modern governance capable of managing Gaza's transition and renewing authority in the West Bank.

### Policy Recommendations and Strategic Priorities

- ❑ **Operationalize the Abbas Reform Letters within a Credible Framework:** Translate the commitments outlined in the Abbas letters—on elections, transparency, and

institutional renewal—into an enforceable roadmap with timelines, responsibilities, and third-party verification linked to the broader transition process.

- ❑ **Anchor Reform in Seven Priority Domains:** Advance parallel but sequenced reforms across administrative, financial, media, political, security, education, and judicial systems. Each should be accompanied by measurable indicators and public reporting to demonstrate tangible progress towards accountable governance.
- ❑ **Embed Digital Governance as an Anti-Corruption and Efficiency Tool:** Prioritize digital transformation of public administration, financial management, and service delivery. Expanding e-governance systems would reduce corruption, strengthen transparency, and increase efficiency, while developing the digital economy would generate jobs and demonstrate the immediate benefits of reform to citizens.
- ❑ **Establish an Independent European-Gulf-Backed Oversight and Verification Mechanism:** European involvement is strategically indispensable. Mutually trusted partners to both Israel and the Palestinians and are well placed to monitor and enable reform implementation. A joint mechanism could assess compliance, publish periodic scorecards, and certify fiscal transparency, establishing verified benchmarks for progress. This would operationalize monitoring and verification without undermining Palestinian buy-in, while reinforcing trust between the parties and international partners and ensuring that the Trump Plan advances smoothly through clear, evidence-based assessment of reform progress.
- ❑ **Link Reform Milestones to Phased Governance Expansion:** Align verified reform progress with the phased restoration of Palestinian governance functions in Gaza and the West Bank, ensuring institutional reforms translate directly into functional authority and territorial reintegration.
- ❑ **Safeguard Fiscal Stability to Sustain Reform Capacity:** Address fiscal bottlenecks and the release of tax revenues withheld by Israel to safeguard institutional functionality during the reform period.
- ❑ **Ensure Palestinian Buy-In and Legitimacy:** Ensure reform design, messaging, and execution remain Palestinian-led. Public engagement, free elections, and visible institutional renewal are essential to rebuild confidence and counter perceptions of external imposition.
- ❑ **Integrate Reform within the Broader Security and Reconstruction Architecture:** Situate the reform process within the sequencing of Gaza stabilization and reconstruction efforts, linking verified progress to both international support and political re-empowerment of the Palestinian Authority.

### *1.2.2. Palestinian Economy: Resilience under Constraint, Renewal through Reform*

Following two years of war, longstanding Palestinian economic difficulties rooted in fragmentation, fiscal dependency and sustained pressure from Israeli policies have been compounded by a hardened security environment, tighter movement restrictions, escalations in settler violence and the withholding of tax revenues to the Palestinian Authority.

As Gaza faces stabilisation and a path to reconstruction, economic activity in the West Bank remains tightly constrained, even as President Trump's plan and the New York Declaration both place explicit emphasis on recovery and renewed prosperity. Over recent decades, GDP per capita has continued to diverge between Israelis and Palestinians, deepening structural disparities. The occupied Palestinian territory operates across four distinct economic geographies – Gaza, East Jerusalem, Areas A/B and Area C – with separate access and governance regimes that limit scale and integration. The Palestinian Authority has nonetheless continued to provide essential services and maintain basic administrative capacity under severe fiscal constraints and dependence on external transfers.

Human capital, entrepreneurship and emerging sectors such as logistics and renewable energy – particularly in Gaza – offer a foundation for recovery if the conditions for investment

and growth can be created. Realising this potential will require regulatory predictability, financial easing and a renewed investment case that restores confidence and enables private sector expansion.

## Policy Recommendations and Strategic Priorities

- ❑ **Short of Revision, Promote Effective Implementation of the Paris Protocol:** While revising the Paris Protocol remains politically complicated, significant gains can be made through more effective implementation of existing provisions. Priority measures include applying provisions on independent audits of revenue deductions, elimination of the “blue tax,” regularized revenue transfers, and fairer access to resources in Area C.
- ❑ **Rebuild Confidence through Governance Renewal and Business Reform:** Emergent plans have increasingly emphasized “investability” as part of readiness for governance and, implicitly, for statehood. In this context, political reform had previously shown its capacity to stimulate investor confidence and can again serve as a catalyst for growth. Genuine reform, fiscal discipline, and credible institutions would not only attract private investment but also reinforce perceptions of Palestinian governance as stable and capable.
- ❑ **Expand the Digital Economy and Financial Transparency:** Support the development of the digital economy as a dual lever for growth and governance reform. Digitalization would strengthen anti-money-laundering and anti-corruption systems while connecting Palestinian entrepreneurs to global markets.
- ❑ **Present a Clear, Investable Palestinian Economic Vision and Projects:** Palestinians should present ambitious, clearly articulated economic proposals to international partners—including the Trump Administration—grounded in practical, investable projects. A clear vision backed by concrete economic asks can reframe the Palestinian economy as an opportunity rather than a liability.
- ❑ **Sustain Existing Businesses and Prevent Collapse:** Immediate stabilization should prioritize liquidity and continuity for existing enterprises. Facilitating access to finance, reducing transaction costs, and easing trade restrictions would help preserve jobs and confidence.
- ❑ **Shift from Dependency to Agency:** Palestine must position itself as a proactive participant in regional economic plans rather than a passive recipient. Integration into regional logistics, energy, and trade corridors can transform it from a constrained economy into a strategic regional player, and regional allies should consider including Palestine in regional infrastructure discussions.

### 1.2.3. Narratives and Public Opinion: Building Societal Readiness for Implementation Context Considerations

With elections anticipated in 2026 for Israelis and Palestinians, public opinion in both societies has increasingly become the centre of several policy discussions, even as Israeli and Palestinian societies operate within distinct informational ecosystems, shaped by polarized media environments, varying degrees of censorship, mainstream editorial lines, and digital silos that have continued to reinforce mistrust and fear.

Engaging the Israeli and Palestinian public debate will be critical to promoting greater understanding of regional and international expectations regarding key issues including Gaza stabilization, regional normalization, and Palestinian statehood. Efforts are needed to rehumanize the other side and demonstrate that partners exist for the resumption of a political process to promote the two-state solution and support a path to Palestinian statehood and regional normalization.

## Strategic Priorities and Policy Directions

- ❑ **Establish a Joint Narrative and Media Engagement Platform:** Develop institutional partnerships between media organizations, civil society, and governments to foster balanced coverage and shared understanding. A practical first step would be creating a database of Palestinian experts and public figures willing to engage with Hebrew media, helping humanize Palestinian realities in Israel's public sphere.
- ❑ **Safeguard Media Integrity and Digital Space:** Work with technology companies and international actors to ensure equitable moderation standards and prevent over-censorship of Arabic content.
- ❑ **Embed a Communication Track within the Implementation Architecture:** Integrate a formal communication and public engagement pillar into the broader implementation framework. Messaging by leaders, institutions, and media should converge around principles of shared benefit, and regional opportunity. Strategic alignment of tone and sequencing can reduce misperceptions and reinforce legitimacy across both publics.
- ❑ **Introduce Public Readiness and Communication Benchmarks:** Monitor levels of trust, fear, and readiness through regular opinion tracking and communication benchmarks. These could inform the timing and help track the effects of key political and security steps, also helping to mitigate spoiler risks.
- ❑ **Strengthen Social Resilience through Storytelling and Dialogue:** Invest in local storytelling, education, and cultural initiatives that normalize coexistence and empathy. Support women's groups, educators, and filmmakers producing content that rehumanizes the other side and anchors peace in shared experience. Incitement, anti-Semitic and hate speech materials towards the other, must be removed from all education materials as required under the Oslo Accords and EU directives. Such initiatives should be viewed as part of the early infrastructure for sustainable implementation.

## 2. Navigating the Scramble for Regional Recalibration

The regional order is in active recalibration. The June 2025 Israel–Iran confrontation and the consolidation of Arab diplomatic positions have accelerated a shift away from the pre-2025 deterrence architecture. Iran’s “Axis of Resistance” has been damaged but not dismantled; proxy networks in Lebanon, Syria and Yemen are weakened yet remain dangerous; Gulf states are diversifying alliances; and key arenas – Syria, Lebanon, Sudan and the Red Sea corridor – sit at different stages of crisis and transition. Actors are moving quickly to lock in gains, hedge against losses and shape the emerging security and political compact. This section summarises forum discussions on how Iran, Türkiye, Syria, Lebanon and Sudan are adjusting to this new environment.

### 2.1. Iran’s Future: Nuclear Ambiguity, Proxies, and Internal Strains

#### Context Considerations

Iran emerged from the June 2025 “Twelve Day War” weakened, divided, and uncertain of its strategic footing. Historically, The Islamic Republic’s deterrence posture has long rested on three main pillars – asymmetric “forward defence” via regional proxies, nuclear hedging and claims of economic self-reliance. The latest escalation exposed vulnerabilities across all three, with proxy networks degraded in Lebanon, Syria and Yemen, and the perceived immunity of Iranian territory called into question. Only economic self-reliance remains partially intact in Iran, and even that is strained by sanctions, mismanagement and deepening internal economic collapse and severe water shortages. The June 2025 confrontation exposed not only vulnerabilities in Iran’s deterrent posture but also the costs of its regional strategy for neighbours and for European security – from missile and drone attacks to threats to shipping and energy infrastructure.

Iran is widely seen as going through a period of internal negotiation and national grief, but this is occurring against the backdrop of a regime whose policies have fuelled escalation and repression. The war exposed the failure of what Iran describes as its “forward defence” strategy – intended to keep the fight away from Iranian soil – after Iran was struck directly, something many inside the system had considered impossible. This was a loss of face for the leadership and has accelerated debate within the regime over whether and how far to retrench from its current regional posture.

Public sentiment is volatile. Many estimates suggest that a large majority of Iranians are deeply dissatisfied with the regime, yet see no credible, organised alternative and fear instability or civil war. Iran’s economic situation is indisputably severe, with inflation, poverty, unemployment and budget deficits all rising. The dominant societal demand is clear: an end to war and confrontation, and a focus on economic relief over costly regional power projection.

Power brokers are jostling around the inevitable succession of the Supreme Leader. Technocratic and pragmatic factions argue for economic reintegration and reduced confrontation with Europe and the United States. Hardliners maintain that confrontation with Israel and the West is existential to the Islamic Republic’s identity and survival. Even in these conditions, the war may have increased the regime’s incentive to accelerate its nuclear capabilities as a deterrent, deepening concerns about non-proliferation and regional security in Europe and the wider international community. Iran’s efforts to reconstitute and enlarge its ballistic missile arsenal and to restart its nuclear weapons program are deeply worrying and present a dire threat to peace and security for the entire region.

In sum, at the time of the conference Iran’s trajectory remained contested: diminished militarily and under economic strain, internally fractured and fractious, yet still capable of shaping regional security dynamics and threatening neighbours. Iran is negotiating with itself more than with the outside world. Effective external policy therefore needs to combine clear deterrence and accountability for malign behaviour with calibrated openings that influence the



internal balance between those arguing for deescalation and those doubling down on confrontation.

### Policy Recommendations

- ❑ **Combine pressure with conditional off ramps.** Maintain firm economic and diplomatic pressure in response to nuclear escalation, regional destabilisation and human rights abuses, but define credible, verifiable off ramps centred on economic integration and sanctions relief tied to specific Iranian actions. Incentives should be structured to strengthen technocratic reformers over ideological hardliners, not to underwrite the current posture.
- ❑ **Avoid a pressure-only strategy:** Sanctions without any conditional incentives risk consolidating the regime's narrative of resistance, punishing society more than decision makers and giving hardliners justification for further repression. Sanctions regimes should therefore include clear, reversible steps linked to compliance on nuclear, regional and human rights files.
- ❑ **Shift from ad hoc proxy management to a regional security compact.** Move key actors away from crisis-by-crisis responses to Iranian proxies towards a broader regional security architecture that benefits the full group of states threatened by Iranian missiles, drones and networks. Build practical inter Arab and Arab–Israeli cooperation on air and missile defence, maritime security and intelligence sharing to reduce the strategic space available to proxies and raise the cost of further attacks.
- ❑ **Support Iranian society in ways that protect civilians.** Expand access to independent information, secure communications and education, and provide technical support to civil society, professional networks and human rights defenders in ways that do not expose them to additional risk or overt politicisation. This should be framed as support for basic rights and connectivity, not regime change, while keeping channels open to monitor societal trends and potential openings for de-escalation.

## 2.2. Syria: A State Reinventing Itself Without Transforming

### Context Considerations

Syria's current trajectory is best described as restoration: cautious state rebuilding aimed at international rehabilitation and economic revival without fundamental change in governance. The overriding objective is regime and state stability – rebuilding institutions, restoring services and reclaiming legitimacy at home and abroad. Power remains highly centralised, with key decisions and resource allocation running through informal networks that risk again excluding minorities and peripheral communities unless they are deliberately opened.

The transitional strategy has restored basic order in large parts of the country, but without deeper institutional renewal Syria risks entrenching a system where access and opportunity depend on proximity to power. This would recreate pre crisis patterns of elite capture, concentrated wealth and stunted broad based development. Rebuilding confidence requires transparent economic management, predictable rules for investors and visible inclusion of different social and regional constituencies; without that, the country remains vulnerable to renewed unrest, criminalisation of the economy and external interference.

On the ground, Syria is a mosaic of administrative and security zones with distinct local actors, interests and external patrons. De facto decentralisation has helped prevent a slide back into large scale war, but it has fragmented governance and blurred accountability. A sustainable way forward lies in structured administrative decentralisation that brings the state closer to citizens, improves service delivery and preserves territorial unity. Properly designed, it can strengthen state capacity and provide an entry point for regional and international support that reinforces legitimate institutions rather than parallel structures.



Saudi Arabia is now pivotal to Syria's limited reopening. Under Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Riyadh has shifted from near total isolation of Damascus to conditional backing for its reintegration, in close coordination with Washington. This alignment helped unlock President Trump's decision to ease and lift selected sanctions, opening a narrow door for reconstruction finance and trade. For Syria, this is a significant development: it creates the first realistic pathway to economic relief and political rehabilitation – but only if agreed governance and security commitments are honoured.

Regionally, there is growing recognition that Syria's stability is indispensable to wider Middle Eastern security. How Syria is rebuilt will shape refugee returns, narcotics and arms flows, cross border crime and the operating space for Iranian and other networks. Early, coordinated support – especially from Gulf and European actors – can tilt outcomes towards a more predictable, state centred order rather than a frozen conflict managed through militias and opaque deals.

Internationally, Syria's re-entry into regional and global structures will depend on credible governance reforms, transparent reconstruction channels and tangible steps towards national reconciliation. External assistance is one of the few levers available to influence these choices. If reconstruction is left to unconditioned bilateral deals, the result is likely to be renewed capture, renewed displacement and continued spillover into Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Türkiye. If instead support is channelled through transparent mechanisms and tied to decentralisation, inclusion and accountable security, it can help lock in a more inclusive settlement and reduce incentives for renewed proxy competition on Syrian soil.

The Syrian diaspora, one of the region's largest and most skilled, is an underused asset for investment and reconstruction. Many expatriates are willing to contribute, but only with credible assurances on rule of law, contract enforcement and safe return. Structured schemes for diaspora investment, skills transfer and temporary return, backed by clear legal guarantees and, where possible, international monitoring, could turn this constituency from a political fault line into a development resource.

For partners in the Gulf, Europe and beyond, the choice is straightforward. Supporting Syria's transition towards transparent reconstruction, administrative decentralisation and inclusive economic recovery now is cheaper and safer than managing repeated crises at its borders later. It is also a necessary condition for any regional compact that seeks to stabilise Lebanon, secure the Jordanian frontier, limit Iranian leverage and make emerging corridors such as IMEC workable in practice rather than only on paper.

## **Policy Recommendations and Strategic Priorities**

- ❑ **Pursue Administrative Decentralization to Strengthen the State:** Promote administrative decentralization as a tool to make the state more efficient and bring governance closer to citizens. This approach should be clearly distinguished from any form of political federalism or opposition to Syria's territorial and political unity. Properly implemented, administrative decentralization can strengthen—not weaken—the state by improving service delivery, enabling local accountability, and ensuring that recovery efforts respond directly to community needs while remaining anchored in a unified national framework.
- ❑ **Launch a National Framework for Inclusive Governance:** Ensure deliberate inclusion of minorities—Christian, Druze, Kurdish, and others—within the country's reconstruction and reform structures. Building participatory mechanisms and consultative councils would help guard against marginalization and demonstrate national renewal through diversity.
- ❑ **Establish a Syria Reconstruction and Investment Trust:** Channel all major reconstruction funds through a transparent, internationally supervised trust with strong Syrian leadership. Participation by the diaspora and independent local actors would

ensure accountability, prevent capture by vested interests, and attract credible investors.

- ❑ **Safeguard Economic Fairness and Transparency:** Introduce clear rules for public-private partnerships and procurement to avoid the **reemergence of economic elites tied to political power**. Independent auditing and transparent contracting will reassure citizens and partners that reconstruction benefits the wider population.
- ❑ **Support a Syrian-Led National Dialogue on Renewal:** Facilitate a structured national dialogue to update the social contract, addressing representation, local governance, and transitional justice. International partners can provide technical and mediation support to keep the process nationally owned yet globally credible.
- ❑ **Integrate Local Defence and Security Structures:** Gradually unify local defence units under state command through coordinated arrangements supported by regional actors such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and the EU. This would professionalize security provision and reduce reliance on external patrons.
- ❑ **Anchor Recovery in Rule of Law and Institutional Reform:** Strengthen judicial independence, anti-corruption bodies, and public financial management systems as prerequisites for wider sanctions relief and economic reintegration. These measures would also enhance investor confidence and domestic legitimacy.
- ❑ **Engage the Syrian Diaspora as Partners in Reconstruction:** Design secure investment mechanisms and joint ventures that allow expatriates to contribute capital and expertise while ensuring protection under Syrian law. This will mobilize skills and resources critical to long-term recovery.
- ❑ **Advance Gradual Normalization Steps with Neighbours:** Implement confidence-building measures drawn from the non-belligerency draft with Israel, such as predictable border management and crisis-communication channels. Similar practical cooperation with Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey can reduce friction and support regional stabilization.
- ❑ **Provide a Robust International Support Architecture:** Frame external support not as conditionality but as scaffolding to help Syria emerge stronger—a structure that balances sovereignty with transparency. A joint Saudi-Turkish-EU facilitation mechanism could oversee implementation of UNSCR 2254 benchmarks, coordinate assistance, and ensure reconstruction benefits the Syrian people equitably.

Syria's re-entry into regional and international frameworks hinges on demonstrating governance renewal that combines national ownership with credible safeguards. A recovery model grounded in administrative decentralization, inclusion, and fairness can allow the state to reinvent itself without losing unity, and to anchor regional stability through legitimacy rather than coercion.

## 2.3. Lebanon: Sovereignty at a Turning Point

### Context Considerations

Lebanon is entering a moment where internal and regional incentives for disarmament and state restoration are at last aligned. A reformist government is trying to reassert the state's monopoly on force, stabilize the economy, and advance decentralization and accountability. With elections in May 2026, it needs visible gains on disarmament, border stability, economic alleviation, and reforms.

Hezbollah as an organization is under pressure: external financial flows are tightly monitored, operational autonomy is constrained, and leadership under Naim Qassem is viewed as weakened and divided. Because its strategic flexibility is reduced, resistance to calibrated shifts is more limited.

The Shia community faces separate pressures. The end of the Assad regime has stirred fears of retribution linked to Hezbollah's former role in the Syrian war. Community needs centre on

reconstruction, economic participation, dignity, and inclusion. The state has an opportunity to respond to these popular demands and reducing reliance on Hezbollah structures.

The broader security context remains volatile due to instability in Syria and continued Israeli direct action. Significant intelligence gaps persist on stockpiles, command hierarchies, and logistics sites, complicating progress on Hezbollah's disarmament. Because these factors can rapidly derail progress, the opening remains fragile.

While the Lebanese Armed Forces remain the only credible institution to lead disarmament efforts, the LAF faces acute financial strain, as Lebanese state institutions continue to operate at partial capacity and require external support. Because state capacity determines whether Lebanon can absorb a security transition, fiscal backing will be necessary to assure the viability of any disarmament path.

Converting this opportunity into irreversible progress requires reinforcing state institutions, and sequencing security, political, and economic measures and support to allow the state to reclaim authority while safeguarding Lebanon's delicate social and political ecosystem.

### **Policy Recommendations and Strategic Priorities**

#### **❑ Enable Structured Disarmament through Four Parallel Tracks**

- 1) **Security guarantees:** Establish reciprocal guarantees with the U.S., Israel, and regional actors, which should consider:
  - a) Serious effort by the Lebanese government to disarm Hezbollah, as required by the 2024 ceasefire agreement with Israel.
  - b) Cessation of airstrikes and targeted killings
  - c) Treatment of detainee and prisoner issues
  - d) Progress on border delimitation
  - e) Assurances regarding to Syria to prevent spillover in retribution for Hezbollah's support of Assad
- 2) **Reconstruction of the South:** Allow the South to become a "living space" again through:
  - a) Visible, state-led reconstruction
  - b) Restoration of public services
  - c) Livelihood opportunitiesThis should help draw local communities closer to the state and away from Hezbollah.
- 3) **Political and institutional reform,** to advance:
  - a) Decentralization
  - b) Anti-corruption measures
  - c) Public administration reformTo restore trust in the state and demonstrate tangible governance dividends.
- 4) **Regional dialogue with Iran:** Engage Tehran directly, with pressure to greenlight Hezbollah disarmament, linking Hezbollah to broader strategic negotiations on Iran's regional posture.

#### **❑ Consolidate the Lebanese Armed Forces as the Core Security Institution**

- Provide the LAF with financial and logistical support to stabilize salaries and operations.
- Integrate intelligence sharing between the LAF, CENTCOM, and regional partners to enable Lebanese-led disarmament efforts and minimize the need for Israeli direct action.
- Recognize that Israel holds significant intelligence on Hezbollah's military leadership, infrastructure, and storage sites that the LAF currently lacks; establish a structured mechanism – possibly through CENTCOM or UNIFIL channels – to share or triangulate this information and enhance the LAF's operational capacity to disarm the group.

- Encourage the LAF to document and publicize its disarmament actions to reassure partners.

#### ❑ **Integrate Southern Shia Communities into the State**

- Launch a national dialogue to promote inclusion of Shia communities and facilitate their transition from reliance on parallel governance structures to integration within state institutions.
- Use economic and service delivery programs in the South to reinforce this inclusion.

#### ❑ **Link Border and UNSCR 1701 Implementation to Confidence-Building**

- Pursue practical measures under UNSCR 1701, including:
  - Full LAF deployment
  - Technical work on demarcation
- Israel can reinforce progress by de-escalating its posture in response to verified Lebanese actions, for example by:
  - Reducing overflights
  - Gradual withdrawal from the five occupied points along the Blue Line as a confidence-building measure

#### ❑ **Leverage Classic Disarmament and Verification Tools**

- Apply proven arms-control practices from other contexts, including structured verification, incident logging, and joint intelligence mechanisms.
- Build verification on multi-source intelligence sharing – including Israeli data on Hezbollah’s command, logistics, and weapons infrastructure – to support international monitoring and reduce unilateral military action.

#### ❑ **Secure Fiscal and Institutional Lifelines**

- Provide urgent stabilization support to the LAF and critical public institutions to prevent state collapse.
- Acknowledge that GCC states are willing to sustain humanitarian and short-term aid but will not provide long-term financing without clear plans and guarantees.
- Lebanon should swiftly enact financial and governance reforms to qualify for IMF and European assistance.

#### ❑ **Support Political Continuity and Democratic Renewal**

- Support the current reformist and pro-disarmament leadership’s capacity to deliver ahead of the May 2026 elections and maintain active support for timely Lebanese elections.
- Lebanon should continue to show bold and serious steps on reform and disarmament to sustain its regional and international support and legitimacy.

#### ❑ **Treat Lebanon as a Stand-Alone Strategic File**

- Treat Lebanon as a separate strategic file for the duration of its volatile transition, until disarmament, economic stabilization, and governance and financial reforms are consolidated. In this phase, tying Lebanon too tightly to broader regional bargaining risks inadvertently empowering spoilers and derailing a still-fragile path to stabilization and regional integration.

## 2.4. Türkiye's Regional Influence: The Age of "Anchored Independence"

### Context Considerations

Türkiye is emerging as an assertive regional player at a moment when geopolitical dynamics are more fluid than ever. Erdogan's foreign policy rests on three reinforcing pillars – securitized stability, economic development, and strategic autonomy – producing a highly pragmatic and transactional approach. Ankara seeks the benefits of NATO membership and Western alignment while simultaneously building independent leverage through playing a role in regional mediation, export of arms exports, and expanding economic influence across the Middle East, Africa, and Eurasia. Rather than choosing between the West and autonomy, Türkiye aims to operate from a position of "anchored independence."

Economically, Türkiye is positioning itself as a regional hub, deepening logistics and infrastructure links, especially in Iraq, where Turkish firms now represent a third of all registered foreign companies. Its growing defence industry, with arms exports more than doubling since 2020, bolsters its influence and reduces reliance on foreign procurement.

Regionally, Ankara sees opportunity in Gaza and Syria, using its channels with Hamas, the U.S., and Israel to gain a seat at key negotiation tables along with rivals in the Gulf and European countries. The Kurdish issue remains a strategic hinge: Türkiye wants stability in Syria and the return of refugees, yet actions to weaken Kurdish autonomy could drive destabilization and friction with Washington.

Domestically, Erdoğan's need to sustain nationalist support during economic strain reinforces a securitized posture. Despite democratic backsliding and low trust in Western capitals, Türkiye remains indispensable but unpredictable – a necessary mediator capable of enabling cooperation while also generating friction.

### Policy Recommendations

- **Leverage Türkiye's mediation ambitions** by involving it in Gaza and Syria stabilization working groups, where its channels to multiple actors (including Hamas) can support negotiated outcomes and ceasefire diplomacy. Concerns by Israeli Participants over presence of Turkish groups in Gaza was loud and clear.
- **Anchor cooperation around areas of economic mutual gain** (energy, logistics corridors, transportation), where Türkiye's motivations are pragmatic rather than ideological.
- **Encourage guardrails on Kurdish-related escalation** by linking Türkiye's role in regional processes to commitments that avoid destabilizing Syrian Kurdish zones. Develop a coordinated approach to Kurdish issue stabilization to avoid military escalation in Syria.
- **Reinforce NATO and EU engagement to counterbalance democratic backsliding** and maintain long-term Western alignment.
- **Establish a trilateral consultation cell (U.S.-Türkiye-regional actors) focused on Gaza** ceasefire sequencing and humanitarian access.
- **Identify infrastructure projects** (transport corridor, energy cooperation, IMEC integration) where Turkey can be a contributing partner, and which advance larger goals of positive interdependence.

## 2.5. Sudan: Preventing a Failed-State Arc from the Red Sea to the Sahel

### Context Considerations



Sudan has become the epicentre of a rapidly expanding crisis whose consequences now stretch from the Red Sea to the Sahel. The situation can no longer be reduced to a confrontation between two armed commands. It reflects the collapse of national cohesion, the rise of tribal and regional mobilisations, the multiplication of armed actors with external sponsorship and the erosion of a civic and institutional centre capable of holding the country together.

The humanitarian toll is immense – millions displaced, cities emptied, entire regions depopulated – but the deeper danger is strategic: the emergence of multiple power centres anchored in local allegiances and foreign patrons, creating de facto partition. If left unmanaged, Sudan risks hardening into a permanently fractured security vacuum running from the Sahel to the Red Sea corridor. A regional security compact that claims to be resilient to extremist influence cannot afford to ignore Sudan. Historically, the country hosted Osama bin Laden and Al-Qaeda; A new vacuum on this scale would offer similar movements, and their successors, a staging ground at Europe's and the Gulf's doorstep.

Regional dynamics are compounding the crisis. Mediation efforts are stalled by misaligned interests among regional and international actors. Instead of converging on a shared stabilisation agenda, key sponsors are pursuing overlapping or competing tracks that effectively incentivise hard-line positions on the ground. As long as external actors are not aligned behind a single framework, any internal ceasefire or political roadmap will remain fragile and easily reversible. Inside Sudan, meaningful national dialogue is direly needed and is challenging under current conditions. Civilian voices have been marginalised or driven into exile; civic leaders are under threat and armed actors dominate the political space. Yet any viable path out of the crisis still requires a Sudanese state that can reclaim basic functions, deliver services and rebuild legitimacy. Supporting Sudan is therefore not only about managing armed groups; it is about sustaining and reconstructing institutional capacity where it exists, and creating space for a renewed, broadly accepted central authority to emerge.

Given the security environment, credible intra-Sudanese dialogue can take place outside the country, in safe, neutral environments where political, community and professional leaders can articulate a national vision without coercion or surveillance. The Sudanese diaspora – with significant economic, professional and communicative weight – will be central to any attempt to rebuild national consensus and shape narratives both inside Sudan and in key capitals. Relief, state-building and reconciliation are not separate tracks: unless they are linked and anchored in a renewed political centre, Sudan will drift further towards fragmentation and warlordism.

Participants stressed that treating Sudan as a traditional peace-process file misses the point. This is a nation-building and state-rescue crisis. It requires a reset of civilian–military relations and regional sponsorship patterns. Without a coordinated strategy that links ceasefire enforcement, political restructuring, support to legitimate Sudanese institutions and external alignment, Sudan risks entrenching a failed-state arc comparable to Somalia or Libya, but on a far larger geographic and demographic scale.

### Policy Recommendations

- ❑ **Secure a monitored, enforceable humanitarian ceasefire.** A ceasefire cannot rely on goodwill alone. It must be backed by third-party verification from actors with leverage over the warring parties, ensuring compliance and preventing the rapid collapse that characterised previous attempts. Verification must track troop movements, ceasefire violations, and humanitarian access constraints.
- ❑ **Guarantee humanitarian corridors with cross-border access.** Humanitarian delivery should not be hostage to territorial control. Military-free humanitarian corridors—especially through neighbouring states—are essential to reach besieged populations and stabilise displacement patterns. Corridors must be internationally monitored to prevent diversion or manipulation.



- ❑ **Launch a political DDR compact, not just a security one.** Participants stressed that DDR in Sudan cannot be technocratic. Reintegration must be tied to political guarantees, economic incentives, status arrangements, and community-level reconciliation mechanisms. Without political assurances, armed actors will have no incentive to demobilise, and DDR will collapse as it has in past Sudanese transitions.
- ❑ **Establish a civilian–military reform forum.** The forum should bring together civilian actors, armed commanders, and regional sponsors to negotiate sequencing towards a unified command or functional security architecture. This is critical to prevent competing regional patrons from shaping separate military centres of power.
- ❑ **Create a Joint Arab-African Stabilisation Consortium.** The transcript strongly supported the need to align external actors. A consortium bringing together the AU, Egypt, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the United States would reduce contradictory sponsorships, harmonise pressure on the armed actors, and create a single diplomatic address for ceasefire enforcement and political transition.
- ❑ **Support neutral, external convening spaces for Sudanese actors.** Participants encouraged establishing protected dialogue platforms—such as in Geneva—where Sudanese political, tribal, civil society, and professional leaders can deliberate freely. These spaces would help rebuild national consensus, identify transitional arrangements, and prepare the civic groundwork for future governance.
- ❑ **Engage diaspora networks strategically.** Sudanese diaspora communities play an outsized role in funding, narrative-setting, and political leverage. Engaging them in structured consultation tracks can channel this influence towards stabilisation and national cohesion rather than polarisation and hardening of positions.
- ❑ **Re-elevate Sudan on the international agenda.** Participants warned that Sudan is suffering from a dangerous visibility gap. Renewed diplomatic attention—particularly coordinated between Gulf, African, European, and U.S. actors—is essential to generate leverage over armed actors, mobilise resources, and prevent Sudan from becoming a forgotten crisis with global security consequences.

### 3. A Prosperous Interconnected Middle East for All Its Peoples

Regional economic integration is no longer a secondary outcome of diplomacy: it is emerging as the driver of it. Governments, sovereign funds, private investors, and civil society are converging on the idea that infrastructure, capital, energy, and technology can shift political incentives faster than negotiations alone, and we are seeing this play out in the news daily. Economic cooperation offers a way out of zero-sum dynamics and towards shared prosperity – but vision without architecture will fail. Much more must be done around strategy and desired outcomes, cooperative planning and decision-making, definition of governance rules, sharing of feasibility data, and ensuring Israeli and Palestinian participation. Without steps like these, initiatives are vulnerable to fragmentation and to spoilers who benefit from mistrust.

Economic integration does not replace politics: it affects political calculus and makes political progress more durable. When cross-border projects generate jobs, ownership, and visible benefits for communities, they create stakeholders with something tangible to lose from instability and something to gain from cooperation. That shift – from abstract peace to material self-interest – is what turns diplomacy from fragile into sustainable, building constituencies that constrain spoilers and reward moderates.

#### Guiding Considerations

- ❑ **Political and economic progress must advance in parallel.** Economic projects cannot be sequenced after politics, nor can they replace diplomacy; each reinforces the viability and credibility of the other.
- ❑ **De-risking architecture is essential to crowd in private investment.** Investors will only commit capital if blended finance tools – guarantees, first-loss capital, and insurance – reduce exposure to political and security volatility.
- ❑ **Co-ownership of assets builds constituencies for peace.** Joint ventures in energy, logistics, and infrastructure create mutual interests that make stability more valuable than disruption for all parties involved.
- ❑ **Early visible wins matter more than mega-visions.** Small connectors – like a rail link, renewable node, or SME fund – prove momentum, reduce scepticism, and build trust faster than grand, long-term masterplans.
- ❑ **Public buy-in is non-negotiable.** Regional economic integration succeeds only when people can see tangible benefits – jobs, mobility, lower costs – and understand what's in it for them and their community.
- ❑ **Economic prosperity alone will not deliver sustainable, broadly-felt peace without a political horizon and eventual resolution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict.** If Palestinians are not included – politically and economically – regional projects will be at threat of rejection by the public and exploited by spoilers.
- ❑ **Regional prosperity must include all regional actors, including Jordan,** whose geographic position is structurally indispensable in every corridor design. Should Iran's posture change, its natural resources and human capital could transform from a spoiler to a stakeholder if policy direction enables it.
- ❑ **Governance and follow through.** The India–Middle East–Europe Corridor (IMEC) currently lacks a secretariat, governance rules, defined membership, shared feasibility data, and a project pipeline. Without these, IMEC and other initiatives will remain aspirational declarations rather than executable infrastructure.

#### Roadmap for Regional Economic Cooperation & Shared Prosperity

**Short-Term (0–6 Months): Stabilize Legitimacy and Prove Momentum**

- ❑ **Commission feasibility and demand modelling studies.** Produce shared data – on routing, cost, volumes, bankability – incorporating openings created by Trump’s twenty-point proposal that expands space for Israeli-Palestinian-regional business cooperation; start planning now rather than waiting on politics.
- ❑ **Create an IMEC Interim Secretariat.** Establish a formal governance “address” so implementation, permitting, and financing can begin. IMEC cannot move from vision to execution without a structure that convenes parties and sets rules.
- ❑ **Launch a Palestine Economic Continuity and Recovery Facility.** Provide rapid financing to prevent collapse of key employers and SMEs – including impact-investing instruments such as a social-impact security listed on the Palestine Stock Exchange that could support Palestinian households – signalling that Palestinians are economic actors, not aid beneficiaries.
- ❑ **Resolve liquidity, banking, and revenue transfer barriers affecting the Palestinian economy.** Support the PA’s access to international banking and urge the Bank of Israel to relieve liquidity constraints at the Bank of Palestine, removing the immediate chokepoints that deter investment.

#### **Medium-Term (Up to 5 Years): Build, Connect, Co-Invest**

- ❑ **Stand up a regional blended finance platform with guarantees and first-loss capital.** Use public and philanthropic risk-sharing to mobilize private investment that would otherwise remain on the sidelines.
- ❑ **Deploy catalytic cross-border projects like the Peace Triangle water-energy nexus concept.** Demonstrate interdependence by linking Jordanian renewables, Gaza desalination, and regional grids with Israeli involvement—expanding cooperation into water, energy, food and advanced technology.
- ❑ **Enable private sector co-ownership of rail, renewables, data, and logistics assets.** Joint ownership creates financial constituencies for stability – companies and investors who have more to lose from disruption than from cooperation.
- ❑ **Shift from viewing water as a scarce resource to treating it as a tradable commodity.** Leverage desalination capacity, regional aquifers, and technology transfers so water moves to where it is needed most, enabling Jordanian and Palestinian development and reducing stress on shared basins.
- ❑ **Develop a Gaza Freeport-Special Economic Zone linked to IMEC routing.** Transform Gaza from an isolated enclave into a logistics and industrial hub, including the option of a joint Ashkelon-Gaza free port zone that incentivizes cooperation and normal commercial ties.
- ❑ **Institutionalize public and civil society engagement.** Rebranding, mapping tools, and transparent benefit communication build legitimacy and reduce spoiler risk by ensuring people see jobs, lower costs, and mobility – not just infrastructure diagrams.

#### **Long-Term (5+ Years): Regional Economic Area & Final Status Alignment**

- ❑ **Create a Levant-Gulf Regional Economic Area modelled after the European Coal and Steel Community.** The same logic that turned centuries of European conflict into a shared market can apply to the Middle East. Economic interdependence can make peace more profitable than instability.
- ❑ **Fully integrate Gaza and the West Bank into regional energy, rail, digital, and logistics networks.** Ensure Palestinians have actual access to regional markets, supply chains, and data flows.
- ❑ **Link economic milestones to political horizon milestones.** Economic prosperity alone will not deliver peace; eventual Palestinian statehood and clarity on sovereignty are required to de-risk investment and unlock scale.
- ❑ **Hold space for future regional transformation.** Over the long term, actors with large markets and natural resources could become stakeholders in regional prosperity instead of spoilers.

## Concrete, Bankable Proposals

- ❑ **IMEC Governance & Secretariat.** A central coordinating body (including Gulf, Jordan, Palestine and Israel) that sets rules, manages a project pipeline, and convenes governments and financiers.
- ❑ **Regional Blended Finance Facility.** Combine public, private and philanthropic funding, with guarantees, insurance, concessional capital, and first-loss structures that de-risk private investment.
- ❑ **Regionwide economic opening measures.** Encourage governments to repeal legal restrictions on commercial engagement with Israeli or Palestinian firms to unlock mutually beneficial investment and normalize business collaboration.
- ❑ **Peace Triangle-Water-Energy Nexus Project.** Jordanian renewables powering Gaza desalination and feeding regional grids, creating positive interdependence.
- ❑ **Gaza Freeport-Special Economic Zone and Rail Connector.** A logistics and industrial hub linked to IMEC routing, positioning Gaza as a node rather than an enclave.
- ❑ **Public and Civil Society Legitimacy Platform.** Mapping tools, data transparency, and benefit communication to build public buy-in and counter spoiler narratives.

## The Path Forward: From Dialogue to Execution

The region is at a fork in the road. Lebanon, Syria, Sudan, Israel, Gaza, the West Bank, together with the Iran file and Red Sea corridor, now sit inside one connected security and political equation. Gaza stabilisation, the deterioration in the West Bank, Lebanon's sovereignty and disarmament, Syria's controlled restoration and Sudan's state collapse risk will either be managed as part of a coherent regional compact, or they will feed a cycle of fragmentation and radicalisation that no one can contain.

The choice is stark. One path leads to managed integration: a fit for purpose stabilisation force and reconstruction track for Gaza linked to a political horizon, a constrained Iranian posture, a realistic track for Syrian reintegration, a credible route to Lebanese sovereignty and disarmament, robust regional economic cooperation and development, and a joint effort to prevent Sudan from becoming a permanent security vacuum along the Red Sea and the Sahel. The other path is drift: ceasefires without enforcement, reconstruction that entrenches capture, a Palestinian economy and Authority that slowly implodes, elections in 2026 that destabilise more than they renew, and economic corridors such as IMEC that remain on paper.

The quality of implementation, not the elegance of communiqués, will decide which path is taken.

Nearly 60 years ago, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 242, promulgating the dual principles of land for peace and peace for land. Today, Security Council Resolution 2803, President Trump's plan and the Saudi-French initiative provide an organising frame that did not exist in previous cycles. They offer a roadmap, political cover and a measure of international consensus. What is missing is not more frameworks, but political will and execution that is fast enough to matter and disciplined enough to survive spoilers.

In that context, our platform is designed as an asset for those who must deliver. It is an input mechanism, a sounding board and an amplifier. It connects ministers, mediators, security officials and investors with coalitions, and with business, media and civic actors who shape public consent. It stress-tests plans, surfaces trade-offs early and helps translate technical designs into sequences that can be explained and defended at home. These influential leaders can build ground support and legitimacy around stabilisation missions, reconstruction vehicles and regional economic projects, making them more resilient to domestic and regional pushback. It is a demonstration of what becomes possible when regional actors from politics, security, business and public opinion operate in the same space rather than in parallel tracks.

We invite policy makers and partners to use this capability. Between convenings, the platform will continue to run working groups, confidential consultations and technical labs on various tracks and countries, regional security arrangements and economic corridors.

Our next convening, planned for late March 2026, will take stock of progress and setbacks across these files, update recommendations in light of developments on the ground and identify where additional political and financial capital is needed. The choice now is whether to let events set the agenda, or to use the tools, coalitions and frameworks already on the table to bend this moment towards stability, accountable security and shared prosperity.

