

Working Paper

A Framework for Middle East Security, Peace, and Normalization

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The Baker Institute is publishing the attached notional framework for Israel-Palestinian peace authored by Baker Institute Non-Resident Fellows Gilead Sher and Samih al-Abed, prepared by them for CIT-Pax - the Toledo International Center for Peace, as a contribution to the ongoing discussion of how this conflict could be addressed through negotiations leading to enduring peace and security for both Israelis and Palestinians. The framework is characterized by inclusive, regional-international support for negotiations between the parties.

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Preface

We would like to first pay respect to the hundreds of Israeli civilians murdered and taken hostage during the Hamas massacre of Oct 7, 2023, and the thousands of Palestinian civilians as well as hundreds of Israelis killed in the ensuing Gaza war.

It is the loss of innocent lives on both sides that impels us to forward these ideas that aim to prevent any future such bloodshed.

A few weeks after the October 7, 2023 , Hamas' massacre in Israel and the subsequent Gaza war, a small group of people from the Middle East, Europe and North America started working on "The Day After". The group was comprised of officials and unofficial individuals whose identity is not yet to be disclosed. Consecutive meetings and on-going work were organized by the Toledo International Centre for Peace (CITpax) in Madrid. As the situation in the Middle East evolved and became more aggravated, including through the direct involvement of Iran and its additional allies and proxies, it became clearer that any de-escalation and management of future conflict would need to be dealt with through a regional and international outlook. Moreover, if there is any hope to bring about a new vision for the future, this will need to be based on creating a robust coalition of countries that would assume responsibility to campaign against radicalism, terrorism and violence across the Middle East and beyond.

Integrated regional cooperation is a positive-sum game in which all parties can gain. Focusing on national interests and common needs rather than narrow political agendas can transform the reality for a majority of the over 460 million people living in the MENA region and, in turn, millions of others in the immediate neighbourhood in the Mediterranean area, the Balkans and North Africa.

We do not ignore the difficult political realities of the region, nor the deep-rooted challenges and current threats to humanity. Despite this reality of bloodshed, terror, ferocity, bereavement and deeply rooted animosity on all sides, our effort is predicated on the belief that future generations need not be held hostage to such suffering and difficulty. Opportunities for security, de-escalation, normalization, peace, and socio-economic progress, however they may arise, should be seized and built upon. Hence the proposed framework below.

A Framework for Middle East Security, Peace, and Normalization

1. All parties to this framework reaffirm, via its full implementation, their determination to put an end to decades of conflict through a path that will lead to a comprehensive peace agreement and historical reconciliation, security, normalization, peaceful coexistence and mutual dignity, while pursuing regional security and stability, including defence against aggression, terrorism and extremism throughout the region.
2. This framework for security, peace and normalization is driven by three major considerations:
 - i) The need to begin with arrangements that cease major hostilities in Gaza and Lebanon, return all Israeli hostages, living and dead, alongside other agreed measures, including the release of Palestinian prisoners, and provide a time-bound transitional period for control and administration of Palestinian territories, including a plan for the reconstruction of Gaza, leading to mutual recognition of the State of Israel and a future State of Palestine, both on recognized borders, and recognition by key players (Arab states, European countries and the United States).
 - ii) The need to involve regional and international actors in key aspects of this framework to incentivize the parties, confer diplomatic and legal legitimacy, ensure accountability, and facilitate implementation.
 - iii) The need to frontload the process in order to seize the momentum of the current crisis, while taking into consideration the need for phased implementation, a clear end to negotiations, and the overall framework and its objectives.
3. This framework has three dimensions:
 - i) Core substantive principles.
 - ii) Main components.
 - iii) The diplomatic process (choreography).

Core Principles

4. The framework is based on the following principles:
 - a) Security for all parties as a central, indispensable pillar throughout the implementation of the framework and beyond. The parties to, and conveners of this framework are committed to work together towards regional security and to combat terrorism, aggression, violence, and political extremism across the Middle East.

- b) Two states for two peoples, Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security based on UNSC resolutions 242 and 338, and in line with the main principles of the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative.
- c) Notice of intent to declare mutual recognition between Israel and Palestine, as well as recognition of Israel and Palestine by all parties participating in the framework, subject to meeting binding commitments in a transitional phase, including acceptance by each party of the other party's intrinsic right to liberty and equality, as well as achieving clear progress on deradicalization on both sides, as may apply, an end to incitement, pre-requisite Palestinian reforms and other milestones.
- d) The implementation of and compliance with this framework represent an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and finality to its associated claims.

Parties

- 5. **The Conveners and an International Commitment:** A coalition led by the United States and the European Union in collaboration with the contracting parties (below) will convene on the basis of this framework and the ensuing process. There will be a commitment by the conveners and participating countries to the framework to provide international and regional support, as well as involvement and participation in the governance, security, economic and diplomatic agreements detailed below.
- 6. **Contracting Parties:** The contracting parties to this agreement are the State of Israel, the Palestinian Authority/the PLO, which will become through the process detailed herein the State of Palestine, and Arab countries.

Elements of the Framework

Based on the above principles, the parties agree on the following components:

- 7. **Mutual Recognition:** Notice on the intent to effect mutual recognition of Israel and a Palestinian state by the contracting and participating countries will take place at the onset of this Framework. Such a recognition will take effect in a transitional phase up to a maximum of two years from the agreement to this Framework, subject to fulfilment of all commitments, including acceptance of each party of the other party's intrinsic right to liberty and equality, as well as achieving real progress on deradicalization, an end to incitement, reforms and other milestones.
- 8. **Transitional period:** To promote this mutual recognition, Israel and the PA/PLO commit to implement the following measures during the transitional period, beginning with the signing of this framework agreement:

- Transitional territorial measures as defined in paragraph 15 below;
 - Deradicalization of political and educational systems and institutions, and an end to incitement on both sides;
 - Governance reform as defined in paragraph 11 below;
 - Security reform and coordination as defined in paragraph 12 below;
 - A public diplomacy campaign to develop mutual trust in both societies.
9. **A Palestinian State:** Upon fulfilment of the agreed-upon milestones, a Palestinian state will be recognized by contracting and participating countries to this framework within the period defined in paragraph 7 above. A UNSC recommendation for admission of Palestine to the UN as a member state will be made at that time.
10. **Arab States Normalization with Israel:** Upon fulfilment of the agreed-upon milestones in the transitional period, normalization of relations between Israel and members of the Arab League participating in this framework who have not yet established and normalized relations with Israel will take place through this framework. This will include an end to any state of conflict, and the establishment of full diplomatic and commercial relations, as well as, *inter alia*, political, security, economic and environmental cooperation and integration. This will also apply to countries participating in the framework that are not members of the Arab League.
11. **Recognition of the borders of Israel and Palestine:** This will take place by the end of Phase I of the Final Status negotiations (see below).
12. **Governance of the Palestinian State:** The conveners and the contracting parties will work with the Palestinian state to develop and/or reform institutions over a period of up to five years total, including the initial two-year transitional period, leading to mutual recognition, in accordance with the reform milestones agreed upon by the parties. Reforms related to mutual recognition will take place in the two-year transitional period. The Palestinian state that is developed and recognized during this transition will supersede and absorb other Palestinian entities such as the PA and the PLO and should be as inclusive as possible in terms of territorial and political representation, while bearing in mind that a prerequisite for participation in governance and political processes is the renunciation of violence. The reform of the institutions will aim for technocratic competence and will include an agreed-upon mechanism for transparency and accountability. Ultimately, there should be elections to establish a mandate for governance of Palestine, with a commitment to accept the outcome of such elections.
13. **Gaza:** The conveners and the contracting parties will:
- a) Develop a detailed plan for the reconstruction and development of Gaza with its own timelines.
 - b) Create a special regional and international fund for the reconstruction and development of Gaza and Palestinian state-building.

14. Security in the Palestinian state: The Palestinian state will have domestic police forces but will otherwise be demilitarized and will have international and regional mechanisms to guarantee its security. During a transitional period of up to five years, Egypt, Jordan and other international actors, in coordination with the USA, will form a security mission that will work with the Palestinian state to restructure and train the security forces and ensure security cooperation with Israel. It is imperative that reforms related to mutual recognition, including security, take place in the two-year transitional period.

15. Final Status Negotiations: Negotiations for a two states for two people solution will begin immediately after the launch of this framework. The talks will take place in three phases, each lasting one year, and progress will be dependent on the achievement of the milestones mentioned above. They shall be monitored and verified as described in the monitoring mechanism in Sections 18-19 below, including a monitoring working group that will issue a monthly report with an accurate and complete accounting of the implementation of agreed upon targets. The talks will take place based on the following principles:

a) **Phase I:**

- i. Talks will take place over security issues for Israel and Palestine.
- ii. Regarding the final borders between Israel and Palestine, the baseline will be the June 4, 1967 lines with equitable and agreed upon territorial exchange. The total surface of the State of Palestine will be 22% of Mandatory Palestine. A mutually agreed number of settlers will be allowed to remain under Palestinian sovereignty.

b) **Phase II:** Talks on Jerusalem will take place based on progress achieved in previous negotiation. Areas with a majority Jewish population will become part of Israel and will be recognized as parts of the capital of Israel, and areas with a majority Palestinian population will become part of Palestine and will be recognized as the capital of Palestine. A Special Regime will be established for the Old City of Jerusalem and other holy sites, guaranteeing freedom of worship and access to all.

c) **Phase III:**

- i. Talks aimed at ending the problem of Palestinian refugees will take place based on the Arab Peace Initiative, without compromising the fundamental principle of two states for two peoples, as well as progress achieved in previous negotiations.
- ii. Talks will also address compensation for Jewish immigrants who were forced to leave their homes and property in Arab countries when they immigrated to the State of Israel after 1948.

16. **Transitional territorial measures for the West Bank and East Jerusalem during Phase I of the final status negotiations lasting one year:** Unless otherwise agreed, settlement growth will be prohibited in all areas until their future will be decided by the parties in phase I of the negotiations.
17. **Regional Security arrangements:** The US will lead a regional and international alliance to ensure security for all regional parties involved in the framework to combat violent extremism and hate speech by all parties in the Middle East and ensure regional stability. These arrangements will include support for security in the Palestinian state as outlined in para 13 above.
18. **Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration:** The EU and the US will lead regional and international economic and environmental initiatives and processes that will be initiated towards the economic viability and prosperity of a Palestinian state, as well as the prosperity and stability of Israel, all based on firm and concrete commitments. Consideration will be given to the creation of special economic zones in the future Palestinian state in order to accelerate economic growth and guarantee stability.

Monitoring & Implementation

19. **Ensuring Implementation:** To ensure implementation of agreed commitments, various aspects of this framework will be linked. For example, international and regional financial support for the Palestinian state will be linked to, and conditioned by, implementation of state building and reform, cessation of terrorism, violence and incitement, and security commitments; steps to implement regional cooperation and normalization will be linked to Israeli implementation of territorial commitments. Furthermore, commitments for the transitional periods will need to be monitored. This will be achieved through three mechanisms:
 - a) **A Steering Committee:** A steering committee composed of the contracting parties as well as the USA, the EU, UK, China, India and other world powers will act as guarantors, with the Monitoring and Implementation Working Groups (see below), to monitor implementation of the Framework, decide on whether benchmarks have been met, commitments implemented, and when to move on to the next steps.
 - b) **Monitoring and Implementation Working Groups:** A monitoring system will observe progress and report back to the Steering Committee. Benchmarks will be agreed to at the onset, with an accompanying process of arbitration, support and incentives from international and regional actors, led by the Steering Committee. Progress will be closely monitored, and the Steering Committee will issue a monthly monitoring report with an accurate and complete accounting of the implementation of agreed upon targets with binding recommendations in such cases where non-compliance is evidenced.

- c) **Dispute resolution:** In the event of a dispute over implementation, the conveners will make a final determination. If a dispute is not resolved within 3 months, the dispute will be referred to the Monitoring and Implementation Working Groups (18 b above) to rule upon, their decisions will be binding on the parties.

20. **Addressing disruptive players outside the Framework:** This framework will not be hostage to the demands of those who reject it, and any attempts to arrest or derail the process will be met by a coordinated and effective response by the Framework's signatories. A parallel track of dialogue will be pursued with parties who reject the framework to keep them informed about the effort and maintain channels of communication.

The Diplomatic Process

21. **Preparatory Diplomacy:** The conveners will conduct a process of diplomacy to achieve agreement on the terms of the framework in the lead up to the event.

22. **Launch:** This framework will be launched by the conveners at an international event and attended by the contracting parties, the Steering Committee and all other invited nations and international organizations that agree to the terms of this Framework.

23. **Objective at the Launching Event:** The framework will be agreed to by participants at this event. The Working Groups below, Steering Committee and Monitoring and Implementation System will be launched.

24. Working Groups:

1. Israeli-Palestinian final status negotiations, as defined in the framework
2. Palestinian State Building, including the reconstruction of Gaza
3. Regional Security Arrangements
4. Regional and International Economic & Environmental Cooperation and Integration
5. Steering Committee, Monitoring and Implementation System

25. The working groups will be linked through the Monitoring and Implementation Working Group, and the Steering Committee. There will be bimonthly meetings of the Contracting Parties, the Steering Committee and the Monitoring and Implementation Working Group, and a quarterly meeting of all participating countries in this Framework.

26. Working Group 1 will pursue its work for three years as defined in the Framework. Other working groups will pursue their work for a period of five years, after which this diplomatic process will end.