

The EU's Possible Role in the 'Day After' the Gaza War according to a Reverse Engineering Roadmap

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Policy Paper

Executive Summary

The paper outlines the existing and potential role of the EU in helping to shape a sustainable resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the aftermath of the Gaza war under new Israeli government. It builds on the three stages and sequence of "The Israeli Initiative," a detailed roadmap to establish a demilitarized de-radicalized Palestinian state and promote long-term security for both Israel and Palestine. The paper emphasizes the EU's possible transition from being mainly a financial supporter ("payer") to an influential participant ("player") in the resolution of this conflict.

Key Points:

October 7, the war in Gaza and the hostilities in the wider region brought back the Two-State Solution under "reverse engineering" logic: The US, EU, and Arab countries are planning the steps how to reach it, while providing security to both Israelis and Palestinians. The paper emphasizes the role the EU can play according to the phases in *The Israeli Initiative*.

This plan, developed by Israeli experts, proposes a three-phase approach. *Stage I - Political Horizon*: Establishing a political vision and an international monitoring forum. *Stage II - Transitional Phase (peace-building)*: Advancing a demilitarized Palestinian state, rebuilding Gaza as well as regional mega-projects, and holding Palestinian elections. *Stage III - Negotiation (peace-making)*: Final negotiations for a viable Palestinian state and normalizing relations between Israel and the Arab world.

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The paper introduces Mitvim's concept of *evolving peace* to create the practical infrastructure for a political solution. This rationale fits the EU actorness vis a vis the Palestinian Authority and to preserve the viability of the two-state solution in the West Bank. The more the EU engages, builds trust with both Israel and the Palestinians, and converts its potential influence into tangible leverage, the more it can assert itself as a central player.

EU's Potential Role:

- Nowadays: Continue the humanitarian aid while planning broader humanitarian strategy and first state of reconstruction: building life-sustaining infrastructure. Operating to slow/stop or even counter de-facto annexation in the West Bank, including strategizing the sanctions against violent settlers and their organizations. Stabilizing and revitalizing the PA to counter destabilization in the West Bank. Dealing with Iranian Proxies.
- Stage I - Political Horizon: Convening an international-regional conference, launching the initiative, and establishing an international forum to monitor the initiative's implementation. Conducting with regional players early recovery and reconstruction efforts in the Gaza Strip.
- Stage II - Transitional Phase (peace-building): Advancing demilitarized Palestinian state-building practices; rebuilding of the Gaza Strip; continued revitalization of the PA, including proven Palestinian action to counter terrorism and incitement. Later steps along this stage include recognition of a demilitarized Palestinian state, followed by holding elections to PA, and holding a preparatory dialogue with Israel and Arab states thereafter. Economically, the establishment of regional mega-projects commence during this stage.
- Stage III (Negotiation (peace-making)): The role of the EU in the negotiation phase depends on its increased actorness in the former stages, building capacity, trust and more engagement with Israel and the Palestinians.

Challenges and Opportunities: The success of the EU to build itself as a significant player in the 'day after' depends on building trust with both Israel and Palestine. It should coordinate its role with other international players (division of labour). The EU's ability to influence the peace process hinges on its preparedness to employ its conditionality and act as a constructive player rather than mere payer.

The paper concludes by urging the EU to prepare for the diplomatic, security and economic opportunities of the 'day after' the Gaza war by planning its contribution to the first stages of the Initiative and implementing its existing toolbox according to the evolving peace concept. The EU is already a considerable payer and player in the West Bank. It should use its status as payer to employ conditionality to revitalise and reform the PA, stabilizing the West Bank,

and at the same time building trust with Israel. To achieve that it should also hold more engagement with Israel.

A. Introduction

After being dormant for a few years, October 7 brought back the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to the fore of world attention. The EU, along with the US and Arab pragmatic countries, all point to the same conflict resolution: the **two-state solution**. What has sharpened is the “**reverse engineering**” logic: to draw the necessary steps from the declared end goal of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace, where the security of both is assured. To realise this political – security vision after October 7 and the war in Gaza necessitates much planning and persuasion. Israeli and Palestinian public opinion has furthered away from this vision. Yet in Israel there is a growing general understanding that after eight months, the military operation is limited in achieving long term security. Military means would bring security only if accompanied by political steps. For Palestinian and Israeli new leadership to adopt such a vision, concrete planning and offers should be made by the above international community. This paper tries to envision the European contribution to such process according to an Israeli roadmap.

In March 2024 the Mitvim Institute together with the Berl Katzenelson Foundation published “**The Israeli Initiative - How to Turn the Ongoing Tragedy into a Political-Diplomatic Turning Point: A Roadmap for Long-Term Security**” (hereafter: “Initiative”).¹ The Initiative aims to transform the tragedy of October 7 and the ensuing war into a catalyst of new political momentum in Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Arab relations. The initiative is “designed to offer a political horizon comprising the gradual establishment of a demilitarized, peaceful Palestinian state.”²

This paper aims to use the initiative, as a thoroughly detailed existing plan for a two-state solution under the EU’s reverse engineering approach, to show how the EU can play a role along its different phases. It wishes to engage with European decision-makers, policy planners, diplomats and think tanks to examine what can be the EU’s role according to the initiative. It clarifies the needs of Israel and Palestine under a two-state solution and accommodates practical steps the EU can take in order to promote confidence building measures and play a role in revitalizing the PA, which are essential stages on the route for a political permanent sustainable solution to the Israeli – Palestinian conflict.³ **This paper is an exercise in creative policy thinking which aims to point**

¹ See Omer Zanany, “The Israeli Initiative,” *Mitvim and Berl Katzenelson Foundation*, March 2024: 1-22, <https://mitvim.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/The-Israeli-Initiative.pdf>.

¹ Ibid., 1. Due to the failure of the 2002 roadmap, the term carries negative associations, and therefore the use of the term “initiative” is preferred. See Omer Zanany, “The Israeli Initiative,” *Mitvim and Berl Katzenelson Foundation*, March 2024: 1-22, <https://mitvim.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/The-Israeli-Initiative.pdf>.

² Ibid., 1.

³ Yohanan Tzoref, “What is a Revitalized Palestinian Authority?” *Mitvim and Berl Katzenelson Foundation*, January 2024: 1-11, <https://mitvim.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/English-What-is-a-Revitalized-Palestinian-State-Yohanan-Tzoref-January-2024-final.pdf>; Zanany, “The Israeli Initiative.”

where can the EU pull its capabilities together to play a positive role in stabilising the region and resolving this conflict. It is an exercise showing the great opportunities and gains such a process can bring to both sides of the conflict, to the region, and to the EU/Europe. However, as the Initiative is an Israeli one, it should be complemented by Palestinians, stating their needs and agency.

B. The Israeli Initiative - A Roadmap from Tragedy into A Turning Point

The initiative offers a three-phase action plan as an exit strategy to end the war in Gaza according to a clearly delineated timeframe spanning three to five years from its initiation. The initiative is one of the most detailed peace plans according to the two-state solution published after October 7.⁴ It is the product of five months consultation and brain-storming exercise conducted with a group of a few dozen researchers, former diplomats, and security experts, mainly from Israel. The initiative is done under similar “reverse engineering” the Biden Administration, the EU and the Arab pragmatic countries promote. **It is clearly not meant for the current government in Israel.**

In addition to the initiative, a series of papers elaborate on different aspects related to it. For example, Tzoreff deals with a revitalised PA (RPA).⁵ Gal and Sion-Tzidkiyahu set a vision for international partnership for Gaza rebuilding, and for Palestinian and regional economic leap.⁶ Mitvim gives a set of recommendations for sustainable ‘day after’, elaborating on essential Infrastructure and healthcare in the Gaza Strip.⁷ Lavie deals with the conditions to

⁴ For other publications dealing with this question, see, Keith Dayton et al, “Plan for Postwar Gaza,” *Wilson Center*, May 7, 2024: 1-112, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/uploads/documents/Plan_for_Postwar_Gaza_Full_Report.pdf; Michael Koplow and Shira Efron, “Starting From the Ground Up: U.S. Policy Options for Post-Hamas Gaza,” *Israel Policy Forum*, December 2023: 1-16, <https://israelpolicyforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Starting-From-the-Ground-Up-1.pdf>; Tamir Hayman, “The Day After’: The Development of the War Requires Brave Decisions,” *INSS*, April 2024: 1-20, <https://www.inss.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Day-After-04-ENG.pdf>; “Preparing for the economic reconstruction and development of Palestine, working together and building on what has gone before,” *Palestine Emerging*, Accessed August 22, 2024, <https://palestine-emerging.org/initiative/>. (I thank Muriel Asseburg for these references).

⁵ Tzoreff, “What is a Revitalized Palestinian Authority?”

⁶ Yitzhak Gal and Maya Sion-Tzidkiyahu, “A Vision for Regional – International Partnership for Gaza Rebuilding and Palestinian Economic Leap,” *Mitvim*, May 2024: 1-14, <https://mitvim.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/A-Vision-for-Gaza-Rebuilding-Gal-Sion-Tzidkiyahu-English-V1-1.pdf>.

⁷ “Recommendations for Essential Infrastructure and Healthcare in the Gaza Strip,” *Mitvim*, March 2024: 1-21, <https://mitvim.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/English-Recommendations-for-Essential-infrastructures-in-Gaza-V2.pdf>.

hold Palestinian elections.⁸ Armelin writes on the de radicalization of the Palestinian society.⁹

The initiative is divided to three phases: the **opening** phase set a political vision and establish an international forum to monitor its implementation. The **second transitional** phase advance a demilitarized Palestinian statehood, which proves able to counter terrorism and incitement, stepping on the reconstruction of Gaza and regional mega-projects. It includes recognition of a Palestinian state and holding Palestinian elections. The **third concluding** phase focus on **negotiations**, which aim is to establish a demilitarized viable Palestinian state, and normalizing relations between Israel and the Arab world. This transition phase is shaped according to the “evolving peace” concept (see below), where the EU has a significant role to play.

The initiative includes security, political, economic, and governance aspects, alongside an international mechanism designed to monitor its implementation. **The EU can play a role in most of those fields – not merely as a payer, but also and mainly as a player. The list of needs to reach such a reality is so considerable, it would take an international multilateral effort to fulfil them. Acting to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can increase the EU’s actorship (as a player, not merely a payer), deepen political and economic relations with Arab pragmatic states, and increase its strategic cooperation with them.** Such EU action, within international cooperation, is ever more needed both due to the daunting needs in Gaza to stabilize the region, and also to build alliances that can be conducive versus Iran and Russia. **By such steps, the EU can help counter Iran’s moves to dominate the region, outflanking Europe from South-East. Such move can also serve to restore the EU’s reputation and image in the global south, damaged by this war.**¹⁰

The Mitvim Institute advances the concept of “**evolving peace**” to create the practical infrastructure for a political solution. Evolving peace relays on the idea of promoting practical steps on the ground that advance a two-state reality. Each step has a constructive short-term effect, for example on quality of life, immediate conflict prevention, access to resources, or increasing self-sufficiency. More importantly “evolving peace” has a potential to help reshape the long-term political reality. Harnessing the political power of practice includes building physical, institutional, human and psychological infrastructure which prepares the

⁸ Ephraim Lavie, “Palestinian Elections: A Vital Step Toward a Stable Political Settlement,” *Mitvim and Berl Katzenelson Foundation*, January 2024: 1-8, <https://mitvim.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/English-Version-Elections-in-the-RPA-as-part-of-the-2SS-post-Gaza-conflict-Efraim-Lavi-January-2024.pdf>.

⁹ Maayan Armelin, “De Radicalization and Israeli – Palestinian Reconciliation: Lessons and Recommendations in View of the Past,” (Hebrew), *Mitvim and Berl Katzenelson Foundation*, July 2024: 1-10, <https://mitvim.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Hebrew-Deradicalization-Maayan-Armelin-July-2024-Final-1.pdf>.

¹⁰ Maya Sion-Tzidkiyahu and Azriel Bermant, “Europe Response to the War in Gaza,” *INSS*, 2024, forthcoming.

ground for a sustainable political solution. Peace does not necessarily start at the negotiation table, although such negotiations are one end goal. Peace can start with practical steps on the ground which will lead to a two-state solution reality. It should assist to build the revitalised Palestinian Authority (RPA) as a security partner, stop and curb Israeli de-facto annexation moves taken in the past year and prepare the ground for the adoption of a stable permanent peace agreement.¹¹ Such steps can include, for instance, using Area C to build the infrastructure for the future Palestinian state (see section below),

Many components need to fit in the right place at the right time to realise a permanent political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.¹² Opportunities are great, but so are the numerous spoilers. Much of the success in realizing these opportunities depends on **international players, who are trusted by Israel (under a new government)**, that can intervene and help Israel rebuild trust with a RPA. The US, Europe/EU and UK, and Arab pragmatic countries such as Egypt, Jordan, UAE and KSA (under normalisation) are expected to play a role. They can offer a menu of options which would answer the needs of Israel and the Palestinians. Such a menu requires much **preparatory work**.

The more the EU builds trust with Israel and the Palestinians, the more it can become a player. The entry of the new European Commission, and especially a new HR for CFSP, is an opportunity for the EU and Israel (under a new government) to build more trust between them. The new European Commission will start in November, just as the US elections will be held. These are crucial times for the EU, and the two wars it is in the midst of: the strategic security threat of war in Ukraine poses to Europe and the destabilizing one in the Middle East. These are crucial times for Europe, the Middle East and the world, in the midst of the multipolar rivalry between Imperial aspirations of Russia, China and Iran on the one side to the West wishing to preserve its hegemony and international liberal world order on the other side.

Turning the EU from a payer to a player relate to two types of EU activities: (a) Initiation or involvement in large-scale political initiatives, like the Peace Day Effort, (b) Practical steps to develop Palestinian statehood or at the very least to prevent the demise of the two-state solution. This also includes getting involved in humanitarian strategy in Gaza in a manner that promotes its return to RPA control.

Already today the EU plays a vital role in filling essential functions which will be needed also in the 'day after' the Gaza war.¹³ The following section outlines them, and points to places where the EU can increase its role as a player.

¹¹ Zanany, "The Israeli Initiative," 3.

¹² For some of these components, see section C of Gal and Sion-Tzidkiyahu, "A Vision for Regional – International Partnership," 2-5.

¹³ Sion-Tzidkiyahu and Bermant, "Europe Response to the War in Gaza."

C. Opportunities for Further Actorness of the EU Nowadays

Humanitarian Aid: EU humanitarian aid to Gaza increased five times and more since October 7. Aid routes started from the Rafah crossing border with Egypt, then additional aid was delivered through Israel. A little amount was sent by ships from Cyprus to Northern Gaza (**Amalthea operation**). Due to the vast destruction in the Gaza Strip and breakdown of the economic activity there, it is essential that the **humanitarian aid** provided by the EU nowadays will continue until economic recovery is achieved.

The shift from payer to player necessities more EU involvement not only in immediate humanitarian aid but also in **planning** a broader humanitarian strategy and mainly the first stage of reconstruction – i.e. building life-sustaining infrastructure. Once the war stops, it should also include early recovery and rehabilitation, in addition to the emergency aid. For example, essential infrastructure of healthcare in the Gaza Strip, water, sanitation, energy, and early recovery work, such as removal of rubble and unexploded explosive ordnance.¹⁴

Area C and the West Bank: The EU should **step up** its role in **Area C** in the West Bank in the attempt to preserve the two-state solution. Ten percent of the Palestinians live in Area C. it is the land reserved to develop the future Palestinian independent, contiguous, sovereign and viable state. Creeping annexation has been accelerated under Smotrich as Minister in the Ministry of Defence responsible over civilian issues in the West Bank.¹⁵ Aid and planning are not enough. Israeli violent settlers have already driven away 18 Palestinian shepherding communities.¹⁶ In the immediate state of affairs, under the current Israeli government, it was recommended that high rank European political figures visiting the region, such as foreign ministers, should visit at least one of the Palestinian villages suffering from Israeli settlers' violence or Israeli demolitions. The EU and member states should accelerate the humanitarian facilities donated by its member states to Area C, even if some are to be destroyed by Israel.

Revitalizing the PA and countering destabilization in the West Bank: The EU is working to **preserve the financial resilience of the PA** against Smotrich's efforts to collapse it, while reforming/revitalizing it at the same time. On 19 July, the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) and the PA signed a 'Letter of

¹⁴ Gal and Sion-Tzidkiyahu, "A Vision for Regional – International Partnership"; "Recommendations for Essential Infrastructure and Healthcare in the Gaza Strip," *Mitvim*.

¹⁵ Peter Beaumont, "IDF transfers powers in occupied West Bank to pro-settler civil servants," *The Guardian*, June 20, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/jun/20/idf-transfers-powers-in-occupied-west-bank-to-pro-settler-civil-servants>.

¹⁶ Hagar Shezaf, "Since the War Began, Entire Areas of the West Bank Have Been Emptied of Their Palestinian Communities," *Haaretz*, May 5, 2024, <https://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/palestinians/2024-05-05/ty-article-magazine/.premium/since-the-war-began-entire-areas-of-the-west-bank-have-been-emptied-of-their-communities/0000018f-39a9-d9c3-abc7-bfd66980000>.

Intent' in which the EU commits to pay 400m euro to the PA by September, **conditioning** its payment in a series of reforms the PA should commit to.¹⁷ Such EU conditionality is supposed to continue until 2026. Among the reforms are plans to stabilize the PA's finance by decreasing expenses and fighting corruption. Other reforms deal with Israeli and international players demand, such as the US to de-radicalize the educational system and change 'pay for slay' to a general social welfare system (see below). **This is a prime step of evolving peace in the immediate level, assisting to pay the salaries of PA officials and to maintain it functioning. In the longer term it may increase the legitimacy of the PA with its funders and with Israel and make it a more trusted partner for future negotiations.** For such scenario to take place, the EU should ensure its conditionality is indeed applied, and the PA is changing according to the terms and EU's good governance principles. **Such steps should allow the EU to turn from a functional player to be able to demand also a political role later on.** It will be harder for Israel to ignore the EU or shove it aside.

Sanctions against violent settlers: This is a new instrument the EU, along with the US and the UK and indeed all G-7 have taken since February. All of the above have since added new individuals and organisations.¹⁸ Taking such harsh steps following other leading countries helps to avoid EU-bashing in Israel.

Suggestions were made to strategize the use of sanctions to stop building of settlements (e.g., sanctions on *Amana* and other construction companies dedicated solely or mostly to building settlements, as Canada recently did). Some have even mentioned Smotrich himself as a target of personal sanctions.¹⁹

Dealing with Iranian Proxies: The Gaza war opened new fronts by Iran and its proxies. On November 19 the Houthis started to attack ships crossing the Red Sea. They harmed European and regional (as well as Asian) economic interests. In February the EU begun the **Aspides operation**, trying to provide security from the Houthis attacks and assure freedom of navigation at sea. Yet the operation is limited in its impact. It includes only four to five

¹⁷ Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), "Letter of Intent between the Palestinian Authority and the European Commission," *European Commission*, July 17, 2024, https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/597ce07b-fb47-4bd2-b7ef-46c4401487de_en?filename=Letter%20of%20Intent%20-%20EU%20PA%20final.pdf.

¹⁸ Sion-Tzidkiyahu and Bermant, "Europe Response to the War in Gaza."

¹⁹ Jacob Magid, "Is the US poised to sanction an Israeli minister for the first time?" *The Times of Israel*, June 19, 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/is-the-us-poised-to-sanction-an-israeli-minister-for-the-first-time/>.

vessels, and its mandate is defensive.²⁰ The EU may need to continue this operation also in the 'day after' period.²¹

In addition to these immediate needs, to increase the relevance and actorness of the EU, it **needs to already work on planning and preparing for stage I of the Initiative.**

Stage I of the Initiative: Political Horizon

This stage includes **four components**: Convening an international-regional conference, launching the initiative, establishing an international forum to monitor the initiative's implementation and issuing declarations of commitment. The EU is relevant to the first three, especially to the conference and the monitoring forum.

In fact, the EU started a diplomatic "nudge" to the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) shortly before October 7. In mid-September, at the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, Borrell initiated the **Peace Day Effort (PDE)** Initiative together with KSA, UAE, Egypt, Jordan, and the Arab League. Fifty foreign ministers from Europe and the Middle East were in the room, along a US senior diplomat. The PDE combines the Saudi 2002 Arab Peace Initiative (**API**) (which needs an update) and the EU's 2013 Special Privilege Partnership (**SPP**) (which needs content).²²

In September the plan was to conduct a **year long process**, convening **three working groups**, which would come up with peace supporting packages ('[Carrots only](#)' approach) to the two conflicting parties.²³ The intention was to **incentivize** Israel and the PA to **re-enter negotiations** on a peace agreement. The first working group was to "outline potential peacetime **regional, political and security cooperation mechanisms**". The second was meant to "develop proposals for **economic cooperation** in areas such as trade, investment, innovation, transportation, natural resources and the environment". The third was to "develop proposals for cooperation in **humanitarian, inter-cultural and human security**

²⁰ Elisabeth Braw, "What attacks on shipping mean for the global maritime order," *Atlantic Council*, August 9, 2024, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/what-attacks-on-shipping-mean-for-the-global-maritime-order/>.

²¹ Zvi Bar'el, "Red Sea Hostilities Erupted Because of the Gaza War – but Could Go on Even After It Ends," *Haaretz*, June 20, 2024, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2024-06-20/ty-article/.premium/red-sea-hostilities-erupted-because-of-the-gaza-war-but-could-go-on-even-after-it-ends/00000190-32a9-d39e-a999-76ef6c170000>.

²² For a suggested update of the API, see Amr Hamzawy and Nathan J. Brown, "Arab Peace Initiative II: How Arab Leadership Could Design a Peace Plan in Israel and Palestine," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, November 17, 2023, <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2023/11/arab-peace-initiative-ii-how-arab-leadership-could-design-a-peace-plan-in-israel-and-palestine?lang=en>.

²³ Ramona Wadi, "The 'Peace Day Effort' offered ambiguity and impunity," *Middle East Monitor*, September 29, 2023, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20230929-the-peace-day-effort-offered-ambiguity-and-impunity/>.

issues.²⁴ Incentives can be bilateral, regional or pose a global approach.²⁵ The PDE was a way for Riyadh to show the Palestinians they do not abandon their cause, even when discussing with the US normalisation with Israel, while strengthening relations with the EU. It was the way of the EU to maintain some relevance and try to influence the normalisation process on the one hand, and not to let the Palestinian issue to be forgotten, while strengthening relations with the Gulf and Arab countries.

The PDE was mentioned in the European Council conclusions of 27 October 2023: “The European Council is ready to contribute to reviving a political process on the basis of the two-state solution, including through the Peace Day Effort, and welcomes diplomatic peace and security initiatives and supports the holding of an international peace conference soon”. **However, in effect, October 7 halted convening the PDE working groups.** Instead, Borrell attempted to convene the **preparatory peace conference (PPC)**, which also includes an element of discussing incentives for peace.

On 17 January, Borrell sent a **12-points** plan to the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC), stating “the time to prepare for comprehensive Israeli-Palestinian peace is now”. He used the January 21 FAC meeting and invited the Israeli, Palestinian and Arab foreign ministers to separate meetings. Instead of a “big conference where everybody is expected to be present at the same time”, which is not foreseen in the near future, the parties can sit in separate rooms and at variable times. It may even take place if the invited Israeli government and the RPA will not show up. It is a step away from a peace conference aiming to reach a peace agreement. The PPC aims to show what regional peace can look like in practice and prepare the ground for it. It aims to show the world’s support of the two-state solution, especially by European and pragmatic Arab states).²⁶

The Special Representative of the EU for the MEPP, Sven Koopmans, travelled to engage and commit leaders to hold a PPC, so far to no avail. Arab countries show polite interest, but its convention depends on a cease fire, which in turn depends on releasing all hostages. Therefore, a lower-rank “preparatory *meeting* among those willing to contribute to peace” may take place as a side-event at the 79 UN General Assembly in September. If so, it is expected to be a lip service or mere photo-op rather than a push for the process. The US is

²⁴ EEAS Press Team, “MEPP: The European Union, Saudi Arabia, the Arab League, in cooperation with Egypt and Jordan, launch the Peace Day Effort for Middle East Peace, and invite the world to join,” *European Union External Action*, September 18, 2023; Jacob Magid, “Saudi-backed EU venture aims to incentivize Israeli-Palestinian peace,” *The Times of Israel*, September 18, 2023, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/saudi-backed-eu-venture-aims-to-incentivize-israeli-palestinian-peace/>.

²⁵ EEAS Press Team, “MEPP: Press remarks by High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell after the ‘Peace Day Effort’ Ministerial-level meeting,” *European Union External Action*, September 18, 2023, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/mepp-press-remarks-high-representativevice-president-josep-borrell-after-%E2%80%98peace-day-effort%E2%80%99_en.

²⁶ Magid Jacob, “EU envoy details plans for ‘preparatory’ conference to advance Israeli-Palestinian peace.” *The Times of Israel*, March 2, 2024. https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/eu-envoy-details-plans-for-preparatory-conference-to-advance-israeli-palestinian-peace/.

not on board with a PPC, and without the US support, the EU, or more specifically Borrell, is powerless. It may very well be that the way to Washington goes through Jerusalem. As Borrell is untrusted by the Israeli government and diplomats, his initiatives were doomed to fail. A month before his mandate is over, he is more a lame duck than right after October 7.

The aim of the PPC is to prepare and help the sides move towards it, by spelling out answers to the following questions: How can the contributing sides help to ensure Israel's security? What can they contribute to a stable state of Palestine? How can both Israel and Palestine "be integrated in the region, politically, economically, in cooperation on security, water, energy and climate change? What can regional normalisation for both Israel and Palestine mean in practice?" The PPC will "adopt a working plan to develop all the components of a comprehensive regional peace".²⁷ Following that preparation phase, Israelis and Palestinians would be invited separately to say what they need from the contributing parties. Along the carrots for a two-state solution there may be sticks if the parties do not accept it.²⁸

Halting the PDE and not convening its working groups leaves the EU empty handed or at least unprepared to offer an incentive package to encourage the Israelis and Palestinians to choose the path of political resolution. Having initiatives for the sake of public diplomacy shows the political weakness of the EU as an insignificant political player.

For the first stage of political horizon to commence, the **Israeli (new) government would need to commit to the two-state solution**. This is not yet in the cards. A security deal between the US and KSA may advance without normalisation with Israel. Halting the PDE may also leave the EU ill prepared to take maximum advantage of the possibilities of Arab full normalisation with Israel, as it was when the Abraham Accords were announced. The EU should plan for such a scenario too, in which the considerable normalisation carrot offered by the US is not on the table (or played by Trump if elected).

Despite the ongoing war in Gaza, the EU and the Arab partners should prepare for the 'day after' and have the joint working groups prepared a joint offer to make to the Israelis and the Palestinians and to the region. Presenting such economic and practical opportunities can help tilt public opinion in all sides involved. "It could generate hope on both sides, by spelling out tangible future benefits of peace, which were not previously put on the table."²⁹

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Press and information team of the Delegation to the UN in New York, "Statement EUSR Koopmans – UN Security Council: Situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question," *Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations in New York*, April 18, 2024, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/un-new-york/statement-eusr-koopmans-%E2%80%93-un-security-council-situation-middle-east-including-palestinian-question_en?s=63.

²⁹ Nimrod Goren, "Despite the unprecedented Israeli-Palestinian crisis, new opportunities for peace emerge," *The Progressive Post*, November 16, 2023, <https://feps-europe.eu/despite-the-unprecedented-israeli-palestinian-crisis-new-opportunities-for-peace-emerge/>.

The PDE combines **diplomacy with economic regional development and collaboration**. In 2013, when the EU suggested the Special Privilege Partnership, the Israeli (Netanyahu) government never bothered to reply.³⁰ But Israel is facing now huge financial and economic costs due to the war, along increase boycotts in different fields (security, economic, academic, cultural, etc.). Under such economic situation, the EU-Arab package of incentives may be more appealing to the Israeli public, carrying the burden. It may resonate better with a new Israeli government.

The third element in the first stage of the Israeli Initiative is to **establish an international forum to monitor its implementation**. The Quartet on the ME established in 2003 with the US, EU, UN and Russia is no longer relevant under the current global rivalry. A different Quartet should be established with the US, EU, UK and Arab pragmatic countries to support the political process.³¹ Lessons from the previous Quartet should be drawn regarding basic mechanism of such forum. It should be given explicit precise goals with well-defined milestones and a clear roadmap. The mechanism should maintain consistent and ongoing engagement with both parties, keep the momentum, and conduct balanced mediation.

The further the war in Gaza continued and the shorter Borrell's time in office, he has been more and more secluded in his efforts to convene a PPC. The US was not on board. As mentioned, **the entry of the new European Commission, and especially a new HR, is an opportunity for the EU to build more trust with Israel when a new government is established there.**

Stage II of the Initiative: Transition Period - Advancing Demilitarized Palestinian State (Peace Building)

Stage II is the longest one in the Israeli Initiative, expected to last two to three years. In this stage the **EU has a prominent role to play in advancing a demilitarized Palestinian state, realizing once and for all the Palestinians right to self-determination**. Under a joint political horizon of stage I, Israeli government objections are expected to decrease. As tasks are so numerous and formidable, **cooperation with other partners is part of the planning and design which needs to be prepared as much as possible in advance, such as a draft of adjusted mandate to forces, updated economic planning and feasibility studies. Preparatory work should be agile and open to change, adjusting to reality on the ground.**

³⁰ "The EU Offer to Special Privilege Partnership with Israel as Stimulus for Peace," (Hebrew), *Mitvim*, May 2016, [https://mitvim.org.il/wp-content/uploads/Hebrew - The EU SPP offer as an incentive for peace - May 2016.pdf](https://mitvim.org.il/wp-content/uploads/Hebrew_-_The_EU_SPP_offer_as_an_incentive_for_peace_-_May_2016.pdf).

³¹ Zanyan, "The Israeli Initiative," 11.

It includes the (1) rebuilding of the Gaza Strip and (2) revitalizing the PA. **Diplomatically** this stage comprises (3) recognition of a demilitarized Palestinian state, followed by (4) holding elections to the RPA, and (5) holding a preparatory dialogue with Israel and Arab states thereafter. Mainly, this stage encompasses **capacity building** and strengthening the Palestinian statehood, including (6) proven Palestinian action to counter terrorism and (7) incitement. (8) **Economically**, the establishment of regional mega-projects commence during this stage.

It is in this stage that the EU can play a significant role, building on its existing activities and ongoing cooperation with the RPA at the West Bank, including in Area C. There is virtue to such practical steps, especially because they would be feasible in a future reality of a right-center Israeli government and supported by large majority in the Israeli public, they are tailor-made to the EU's own limitations of political will and capacity and follow the identity of the EU as a success story of functional measures building up co-existence. This is the most crucial interface between EU capabilities, autobiographical narrative and the basic logic of evolving peace. It is in the EU's expertise to turn the practical steps into a shaper of political reality.

Those eight steps are presented according to their sequence in the rationale of the Israeli Initiative. They are elaborated below according to economic, diplomatic and state building measures.

Economic Measures

The **rebuilding of the Gaza Strip**, the economic development of the West Bank and the connectivity between them should be based on two complementary principles: economic fast growth and sustainable prosperity. The domestic Palestinian connectivity should be complemented by regional one.³² Sustainability also puts an emphasis on health and shared interest of Palestinians and Israelis.³³ The EU has conducted many such projects in the West Bank, such as water resources management, wastewater and reuse (European Commission 2024).

The EU has a major role to play, together with the Gulf countries, strategically investing in state building projects, for example in **sustainable energy infrastructure** to increase energy independence, **independent water-security and self-sufficiency capacities** both in Gaza and the West Bank via desalination facilities. These are classic evolving peace measures ([Rapaport](#) 2024, 22. For other projects see Gal and Sion-Tzidkiyahu 2024). A few years ago the EU funded a desalination facility in Gaza, serving Khan Younis and Rafah, providing water to 10 percent of the population (250,000 people), and was planning to enlarge it ([UNICEF](#) 2023).

³² Gal and Sion-Tzidkiyahu, "A Vision for Regional – International Partnership."

³³ "Recommendations for Essential Infrastructure and Healthcare in the Gaza Strip," *Mitvim*.

The **EU-Palestine Investment Platform**, launched in December 2020, serves as a good basis for EU-Palestinian policy dialogue and planning. Domestically, it is meant to “identify, prioritise, coordinate and promote investment opportunities.”³⁴ Externally it is meant to attract public, institutional and private funding and investments to Palestine. Besides the European Commission, the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD) are also involved, demonstrating the importance of EU institutions as payers-players. The investment platform can be a significant arm to identify needs and do joint planning also in the Gaza Strip. Member states of the EU can develop the fields in which they specialize or have added value (e.g., Cyprus and maritime connection or the EuroAsia Interconnector).

Part of the Palestinian rebuilding and economic leap includes connecting their economy to the regional one, mainly to Arab states. The aim is not to decrease the connections to Israel, but to decrease Palestinian dependency on it by increasing connectivity and interdependence with other neighbouring countries. **Enhancing regional interconnectedness should be done also through Israeli-Arab cross-border initiatives.**

This stage includes commencing the establishment of **regional mega-projects**.³⁵ IMEC is such a mega project holding great regional economic development promises. It should be connected to the West Bank and Gaza.³⁶

An example for a project requiring international partners is the [artificial infrastructure island](#), aiming to provide Palestinians with “humanitarian, economic and transportation gateway to the world without endangering Israel’s security.”³⁷

Diplomatic Measures

This stage comprises **recognition of a demilitarized Palestinian state**, according to the “reverse engineering” logic.³⁸ Following recognition, the next move would be to hold **elections for the RPA president and Palestinian legislative council**. Sequencing is a key element for these two steps: recognition of a Palestinian state should be followed by

³⁴ Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, “The European Union and Palestinian Authority convene Investment Platform and announce EUR 42 million of investments for the Northeast Ramallah Wastewater Treatment Plant,” *European Commission*, June 13, 2024, https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/european-union-and-palestinian-authority-convene-investment-platform-and-announce-eur-42-million-2024-06-13_en.

³⁵ Gal and Sion-Tzidkiyahu, “A Vision for Regional – International Partnership.”

³⁶ EcoPeace, forthcoming.

³⁷ Ruth Eglash, “Israel is still floating a plan for Gaza island. And now there’s a video,” *The Washington Post*, June 27, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/06/27/israel-is-still-floating-a-plan-for-gaza-island-and-now-theres-a-video/>; Shmuel Even, Shlomo Gartner, and Dov Kehat, “Artificial Islands off the Gaza Coast,” *INSS*, 5(4), February 2003, <https://www.inss.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/fe-2285692372.pdf>.

³⁸ Tzoreff, “What is a Revitalized Palestinian Authority?”

holding election to create a positive effect. This is one reason why recognition should not be introduced in an earlier phase, unlike some European countries have done in May and June.

Lavie is calling to the international community, first and foremost the US, EU and Arab pragmatic countries, to “**present an international political outline** for all actions and steps to be taken, including general elections. The outline will be prepared in full coordination with Israel and the PA and will include specific timetables.”³⁹

The three Quartet conditions posed to Hamas after it won the 2006 elections should apply as a condition *before* the coming elections, to prevent elections of extremists opposing political settlement. The three conditions are: abandoning the path of terrorism and armed struggle, recognizing Israel and its right to exist, and affirming the previous agreements signed with the PLO. These limits should be legally binding. Political parties lists and candidates would be disqualified if their platforms, actions or statements deny these principles.⁴⁰ Such conditions should be adhered also in the RPA local elections. Confidence building measures from Israel would be stopping settlement building.

The EU has a role to play in these elections. It was involved in the PA elections in 2006, contributing its election observation capabilities, and was ready to do the same with the PA elections planned for 2021. It has been “support[ing] the Central Election Commission of Palestine and other electoral stakeholders in conducting inclusive electoral processes” by enhancing transparency, strengthening institutional capacities and promoting democratic environment to encourage participation and engagement via other means.⁴¹

The diplomatic act also includes **holding a preparatory dialogue with Israel and Arab states**. For the EU to play a significant role here, trust building measures would need to take place between the EU and Israel under a new Commission and Israeli new government. Approaching Israel *before* announcing a diplomatic move is a first condition to rebuilding such trust and cooperative working relations with Israeli diplomats and the government.

State Building Measures – Evolving Peace

Mainly, this stage of revitalizing the PA encompasses **capacity building** and strengthening the Palestinian statehood according to democratic and good governance principles. The rationale is a “Salam Fayyad” one of good governance and conducting good security coordination with Israel.⁴² This is essential for the RPA to regain trust from the Palestinian

³⁹ Lavie, “Palestinian Elections: A Vital Step Toward a Stable Political Settlement,” 5.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁴¹ European Joint Strategy in Support to Palestine 2021-2024, “Towards a democratic, accountable and sustainable Palestinian state,” *The Office of the European Union Representative (West Bank and Gaza Strip, UNRWA)*, 2021: 16, https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/e41dd433-b299-4f26-bf39-4357a440acc4_en?filename=C_2022_8279_F1_ANNEX_EN_V1_P1_2333429.PDF.

⁴² Gal and Sion-Tzidkiyahu, “A Vision for Regional – International Partnership,” 3; Zanany, “The Israeli Initiative,” 9-10, 14.

public and the international community. It is extremely important vis a vis the UAE and KSA if they are to invest in the Gaza rebuilding and Palestinian economy, as well as the EU and the US. Such steps would increase the legitimacy and credibility of the RPA, which will have a positive impact also regarding international aid. It can already assist by releasing PA tax money held by the current Israeli government.

The EU has a considerable menu of state building projects, missions and operations, such as the ongoing EUPOL COPPS and suspended EUBAM Rafah, and building infrastructure that increase self-sufficiency in energy and water in the West Bank. This menu of “evolving peace” steps should be strengthened, upgraded and extended to other fields. The following section reviews some of the EU's tools.

Security reform – the RPA will need to take de-militarisation steps such as arms collection.⁴³ Tzoreff recommends disarming Tanzim Fatah and any affiliated militia groups and the non-affiliated ones.⁴⁴ The mission includes recruiting and training qualified personnel to keep internal security by increasing their professional skills both in the West Bank and in Gaza, allocating more resources, improve enforcement capabilities, adapting it to the new circumstances. Here the US and Arab partners can join the EU.⁴⁵ Emphasis should be put on proven Palestinian action to **counter terrorism**, assisting Israel's security, enhancing the existing security cooperation, though this may not be one of the tasks the EU should handle.⁴⁶ IDF and Israeli police force in the West Bank has to be reformed as well to apply the rule of law in an equal manner and to protect Palestinians and their property from violent settlers.

RPA security and institutional reform: The EU already runs **EUPOL COPPS** in Ramallah since 2006. Its operation was enlarged along the years from criminal justice to include different aspects of rule of law. In addition to civil and criminal police and justice system advisors, the mission includes also consultancy in judicial aspects, such as court team, respect for human rights, accountable and trusted law enforcement and justice institutions. It deals with many aspects of trainings of rule of law: institutional development, operations, cyber, community policing, human rights, intelligence, criminal investigation, family protection, medical aspects, and more.⁴⁷ It has above 100 staff, about 70 of them Europeans seconded from law enforcement and justice institutions of the member states. In the ‘day

⁴³ Lavie, “Palestinian Elections: A Vital Step Toward a Stable Political Settlement”.

⁴⁴ Tzoreff, “What is a Revitalized Palestinian Authority?” 6.

⁴⁵ For further elaboration on the steps needed between Israel and the RPA, see Tzoreff, “What is a Revitalized Palestinian Authority?” 8.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁴⁷ European External Action Service, “European Union Police Mission for the Palestinian Territories,” 2024, <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2024/EUPOL%20COPPS%20%20Annex1%20for%201-2024%20CfC.pdf>.

after' the war EUPOL COPPS can operate in Gaza, as its original mandate included it. It will need a much bigger staff for training and guiding.⁴⁸

EUPOL COPPS can be extended to **reform the PA judicial system** independence, increase the rule of law, conduct training programs for judges, prosecutors, and lawyers, as well as technical assistance to improve court administration, case management, and legal drafting.⁴⁹

As part of a RPA, EUPOL COPPS can and should play a bigger role in stepping up the RPA's **fight against corruption**, both via legislation, investigation and prosecution and in internal auditing and control. Asset declaration system and witness protection were recently discussed.⁵⁰ Whistleblower protection should also be assured.

De-radicalisation and **countering incitement** is another objective the EU and certain member states can contribute to.⁵¹ Changes in the education system are one of the conditions DG NEAR inserted to the 'Letter of Intent' signed with the PA on 19 June.⁵² It is best that countries such as KSA or UAE, which did similar process in their textbooks, will advise from their experience and assist with that aspect.

The **EUBAM Rafah mission** (Border Assistance Mission for the Rafah Crossing Point) was discussed in the FAC of May 27. The ministers decided "the EU will explore options for [its] reactivation... in coordination with the Palestinian Authority, and the Israeli and Egyptian authorities."

In 2005 the aim of EUBAM was to provide expertise and support for enhancing border management between the Gaza Strip and Egypt. It was a civilian mission, facilitating mainly the movement of people and also some goods. Since the mandate of EUBAM Rafah was designed in 2005, the EU gained more experience in civil missions and military operations. Lessons were drawn from failed missions, and capacity building theory and practice evolved. What is necessary today is to address Israel's security concerns of what is entering above the ground and not to allow underground tunnels. What is needed today is not just a civilian

⁴⁸ European External Action Service, "EUPOL COPPS: EU Police and Rule of Law Mission for the occupied Palestinian territory - Civilian mission," November 30, 2020, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eupol-coppspalestinian-territories/eupol-copps-eu-police-and-rule-law-mission-occupied-palestinian-territory-civilian-mission_und_en?s=338.

⁴⁹ Tzoreff, "What is a Revitalized Palestinian Authority?" 9-10.

⁵⁰ EUPOL COPPS, "Head of Mission meets with the Palestinian Anti-Corruption Commissioner in Ramallah," April 6, 2024, <https://eupolcoppes.eu/single-news/872/en>.

⁵¹ Tzoreff, "What is a Revitalized Palestinian Authority?" 9. See also Armelin, "De Radicalization and Israeli – Palestinian Reconciliation," Mitvim and Berl Katzenelson Foundation.

⁵² Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), "Letter of Intent between the Palestinian Authority and the European Commission," *European Commission*, July 17, 2024, https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/letter-intent-between-palestinian-authority-and-european-commission_en.

mission, but also a military operation to secure the entire 'Philadelphi corridor'. Ensuring only inspected and authorized entry of dual-use military equipment, in addition to customs procedures and good border governance. The question who should do this along Egypt is not clear. If the EU and member states choose to play a part at the Rafah crossing point, it is expected that they will need to cooperate with additional border mission forces from Arab countries.⁵³ Such cooperation and tandem with Arab countries knowing the language and understanding the culture and mentality is vital.

For smaller projects the tool of **Twinning** can be an additional measure of state building along approximation of laws and practices.⁵⁴

Conditioning financial contributions on canceling 'Pay for Slay' and assisting the PA in building a general welfare system: The EU and the member states are the biggest donors to the PA, thus having potential leverage, especially during these crucial financial times due to Smotrich's moves. The EU is already using its leverage here, trying to become a player rather than mere frustrated payer.⁵⁵ **The EU's actorness will be examined according to the level of decisive implementation of its conditionality to the PA according to the agreed timetable.**

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) – supporting peace-making at P2P and B2B via CSOs and their involvement on the ground is a classic role the EU has been playing and should further enhance. But it should allocate only to NGOs and CSOs supporting the two states solution. The June G7 summit committed "to closely coordinate and institutionalize [their] support for civil society peacebuilding efforts, ensuring that they are part of a larger strategy to build the foundation necessary for a negotiated and lasting Israeli-Palestinian peace."⁵⁶

⁵³ For example the UAE, see Jacob Magid, "Egypt, UAE prepared to participate in postwar Gaza security force — officials," *The Times of Israel*, June 27, 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/egypt-uae-prepared-to-participate-in-post-war-gaza-security-force-officials/>.

⁵⁴ The first twinning with the PA started in 2019 aiming to improve customs revenue collection (enhancing the PA's fiscal position) and borders crossings control. Such project also helps to fight corruption and misuse of public office and can assist in applying the international audit standards. For more on this, see European Commission, "Strengthening the Capacity of the Palestinian Authority to Improve Customs Revenue Collection and Borders Crossings Control," 2019, <https://um.fi/documents/385176/0/Strengthening+the+Capacity+of+the+Palestinian+Authority+to+Improve+u+stoms+Revenue+Collection+and+Borders+Crossings+Control.pdf/2cfd90ba-d3eb-0afd-fe93-93c58807d97b>; Another twinning project launched in 2022 dealt with [public energy](#) sector, aiming to strengthen the institutional capacity of two PA agencies, one for energy the other for electricity, to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all in Palestine. For more, see "Palestine: EU launches twinning project to support public energy sector," *EU Neighbours South*, July 7, 2022, <https://south.euneighbours.eu/news/palestine-eu-launches-twinning-project-support-public-energy-sector/>; Also, since 2019 six TAIEX events with the PA took place. See European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), "Palestine," *European Commission*, https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/european-neighbourhood-policy/countries-region/palestine_en.

⁵⁵ DG NEAR, "Letter of Intent between the Palestinian Authority and the European Commission."

⁵⁶ ALLMEP (@ALLMEP), "G7 leaders commit to centering peacebuilding efforts within civil society. ALLMEP will continue to work alongside G7 governments to uphold this pledge and to enhance the efforts of Israeli

Unlike the 1990s or even the beginning of the 2000s, the EU and its member states are probably the players which have the biggest acquired knowledge, experience and tools in building the future Palestinian state. The EU is therefore essential and vital player in the 'day after'. Recently Israeli diplomats expressed willingness for EU participation and contribution in the 'day after', not merely as a payer, but as a player.

Stage III of the Initiative: Negotiation (Peace Making)

For now, it is too pre-mature to discuss or develop this phase. According to the reverse engineering rationale, the political horizon of two-state solution is clear. The more the EU will increase its actorness in the first and especially the second stages, build trust and conducive engagement with Israel, the more it would assure its place around the negotiation table of state III. Under such circumstances one can also expect that Israel would be willing to at least consider its initiatives, unlike its refusal towards the Special Privilege Partnership of 2013 and 2016, which Borrell attempted to revive in the Peace Day Effort.

D. Conclusion: How to Turn the Ongoing Tragedy into a Political-Diplomatic Turning Point

As much as the war in Gaza arises security dangers for the stability of the entire region, it also poses great opportunities if a cease fire is reached, and all hostages are released. Under a new Israeli government, normalisation with the KSA can be established along a commitment to a two-state solution. Normalization will have a security component versus Iran and added value of regional economic (and social) development. There can be numerous advantages for the EU in advancing the triangular EU-Arab-Israel relations, projects and cooperation.

Combining EU financial assistance with strict good-governance conditionality together with its much-needed capacity building capabilities can also enhance the EU's diplomatic engagement. The EU can help to build a RPA which can govern effectively in the aftermath of the conflict. Together and in coordination with the US and the pragmatic Arab countries, it can play a significant role in helping Israelis and Palestinians reach a common political horizon and assist reconciliation efforts.

and Palestinian civil society peacebuilders," X, June 14, 2024,
<https://x.com/ALLMEP/status/1801676890945818929>.

The EU is already a player in the West Bank.⁵⁷ It has numerous tools to be a conducive player in the 'day after' the war also in Gaza. Planning for the 'day after' should have already commence, not only within the EU CFSP mechanisms, but also together with Arab states even while the war continues. The crucial role the EU can play nowadays is **to keep the two states solution a viable option**. First and foremost, by **assisting the PA financially**, and using its conditionality to revitalise and reform it.

In addition, the EU can play a significant role, building on its existing activities and ongoing cooperation with the RPA at the West Bank, including in Area C. There is virtue to such practical steps, especially because they may be feasible in a future of a right-center Israeli government and supported by large majority in the Israeli public. They are tailor-made to the EU's own political limitations of political will and capacity and follow the identity of the EU as a success story of practice. This is the most crucial interface between EU capabilities, autobiographical narrative and the basic logic of evolving peace. This is EU expertise in turning the practical steps into a shaper of political reality.

The EU can play a role in most of the mentioned fields – not merely as a payer, but also as a player. As mentioned, the list of needs is so considerable, it would take an international multilateral effort to answer them. Acting to solve them would increase the EU's actorness as a player, and deepen strategic cooperation, political and economic relations with Arab pragmatic states. International/multilateral collaboration between Europe, the US and Arab countries should avoid duplication. As part of the preparatory phase of planning, **division of labour** should be agreed to allow best player to play its role, taking into consideration, for example, the importance of the Arab partners in understanding the language, culture and mentality of Palestinians (and Israelis). If done properly, engaging the Israeli counterparts - diplomats and ministers, the EU would also build trust with Israel.

By such moves, the EU can help to stabilise parts of its southern neighbourhood and counter Iran and its proxies' moves to dominate the region. Such policy can also serve to restore the EU's reputation and image in the global south, damaged by this war. This would be beneficial to Ukraine and the war against Russia. Such EU action, within international cooperation, is ever more needed both due to the daunting needs in Gaza to stabilize the region, and also to build alliances that can be conducive versus Iran and Russia.

Much of the success in realizing the above opportunities depends on **international players, who are trusted by Israel and by the Palestinian leadership (and public)**, and can intervene and help Israel rebuild trust with a RPA. **Nomination of the next European Commission is an opportunity to develop trust with Israel's (new) government.** This is essential for the EU as well as for Israel.

⁵⁷ Sion-Tzidkiyahu and Bermant, "Europe Response to the War in Gaza."

There are numerous spoilers to such optimal scenario. Contingency plans should be made in the EU in case, for example, Trump wins the US elections or in case no replacement of the Netanyahu government is foreseen in 2025.

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