

Engineering After Genocide: Mapping Arab Positions on the “Day After” in Gaza



It is striking to witness the scene: the leaders of eight Arab and Muslim countries sitting down with U.S. President Donald Trump in New York, on the sidelines of the 80th United Nations General Assembly. That meeting dedicated to efforts to end the war on Gaza and exchange prisoners stood as one of the rare moments in which such a gathering of Arab and Muslim leaders directly engaged with the head of the American administration on the Palestinian issue.

Although the outcomes of the September 24 meeting appeared to share broad consensus in their wording, what transpired behind closed doors revealed deep divergences among participating states both in their reading of the current Palestinian situation and their vision of the political system that should manage the next phase.

Each country brings its own vision, security interests, and degree of influence over the Palestinian file. This diversity has split Arab positions at times sharply between those who favor reviving the Palestinian Authority and integrating factions under its umbrella, and those who push for a wholly new system free of resistance forces and governed under regional or international tutelage.

Under the banner of “engineering the future,” each actor advances its own approach to the postwar moment. Some believe that regional stability begins by reshaping the Palestinian political system to align with regional security equations, while others recognize that political legitimacy in the region still passes through the Palestinian gateway and that controlling the outcomes of this phase grants multiplied influence over Middle Eastern policy and security.

Thus, today’s developments are not confined to reconstructing Gaza; rather, they constitute a reconfiguration of the entire Palestinian political system its symbols, structures, and balance of powers.

The occupation seeks to impose new equations; the United States is reworking the formula through the “Trump plan,” which has morphed into a comprehensive political project; and Arab and Muslim capitals compete to anchor their presence in the “day-after” equation each according to its own calculations of influence, legitimacy, and regional weight.

From this vantage, it is imperative to unpack the current Arab and Palestinian scene by tracing the historical background of Arab attempts to dominate Palestinian decision-making, through the patterns of intervention following the Oslo Accords, and culminating in the post-genocide phase characterized by a frenzied race to reengineer the Palestinian political system on the ruins of a devastated Gaza.

Historical Attempts at Arab Hegemony over the Palestinian Political System

Since the early formation of the Palestinian national movement, Arab states’ efforts to influence the shape and composition of the Palestinian political system have persisted as a defining feature of the struggle over independent national decision-making.

The Palestinian cause has never been purely a Palestinian matter since the Nakba; it has always been an open field for intersecting, often conflicting, Arab interests.

Each state based on its position, fears, and regional ambitions sought to have the upper hand in directing or containing the Palestinian political trajectory within its vision of national security.

The first attempts at “Arab framing” of the Palestinian political system emerged with the establishment of the All-Palestine Government in Gaza in 1948, proclaimed by the Arab League (after modifications to the original Palestinian proposal) as a symbolic platform to counter proposals to annex the West Bank to Jordan.

However, this government was born with limited powers and under full Egyptian

tutelage, and it was effectively dissolved in 1959 under President Gamal Abdel Nasser, by which time it had lost all political substance.

Conversely, Jordan succeeded in annexing the West Bank and integrating Palestinians into its state apparatus—one of the first genuine efforts to neutralize a separate Palestinian entity by turning it into an administrative appendage.

With the launch of armed struggle in the 1960s, the arena of Arab competition became parallel to the conflict with the occupier: Syria, Iraq, Libya, and Egypt each tried to steer Palestinian factions in directions favorable to their policies.

Damascus created the “Al-Sa’iqa” movement as a Palestinian arm under its influence, while Baghdad and other capitals supported rival factions to produce internal balances within the PLO.

This model of “conditional patronage” produced recurring internal crises within the Palestinian structure, making the national decision often captive to inter-Arab rivalries rather than reflecting the will of Palestinians themselves.

The 1974 Arab Summit in Rabat marked a relative turning point when Arab leaders recognized the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people a step aimed at ending dual representation and containing Jordanian–Palestinian tensions.

But this recognition did not fully end interference; some capitals continued to view influence within the PLO as a means to protect their regional interests or as leverage in their dealings with other Arab or international actors.

Patterns of Arab Intervention after Oslo

With the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 and the entry of the PLO into the political negotiation track, the nature of Arab intervention in Palestinian affairs shifted from direct hegemony to a mode of “managing influence” through softer tools such as financial, political, and diplomatic patronage.

Oslo produced a new reality: the Palestinian Authority (PA) emerged as an administrative entity with constrained powers but carrying the symbolic mantle of a pending state. Many Arab states were thus tempted to shape its structure and orientation to safeguard their interests or harness its role in the region.

Egypt emerged as a prominent player, owing to its geography and historical role, by assuming oversight of the Gaza file and positioning itself as guarantor and guide of all political and security paths related to the Strip whether in ceasefires or internal Palestinian reconciliation.

Meanwhile, Jordan sought to secure its role in Jerusalem and the West Bank by coordinating security, religious and administrative affairs, preserving its

traditional status in managing Islamic holy sites, and ensuring it would not be marginalized in any final settlement.

Gulf states exercised influence via funding and reconstruction, turning economic assistance into a soft political lever used to regulate the Palestinian agenda under regional policy parameters. In many periods of internal division between Gaza and Ramallah, some capitals used aid to strengthen one side over another or to limit the scale of political escalation.

Though the post-Oslo era granted Palestinians an institutional form of self-rule, the national decision remained constrained by heterogeneous Arab influence: every state sought to guarantee a foothold in shaping the future of the Palestinian polity whether through negotiations, tools of support, or patronage of conflicting currents.

Thus, Arab influence evolved from imposing direct tutelage to circulating hegemony via subtler mechanisms, making the Palestinian political system a mirror of regional balances more than an expression of the Palestinians' own will.

After the Genocide...

From the earliest weeks of the genocidal war on Gaza, the term “day after” surfaced in the discourse of the U.S. Secretary of State and White House spokespeople, quickly becoming a central heading in the political debate over Gaza's future.

Though this discussion appears ostensibly limited to postwar governance of the Strip, its strategic implications reach far beyond it implicates the contour and texture of the entire Palestinian political system, which has long been vulnerable to intricate Arab and international contestation since the PA's founding in 1994, and whose fragility deepened with the 2007 internal split that entrenched administrative and geographic separation between Gaza and the West Bank.

In this setting, several Arab states closely tied to the Palestinian file coordinating with international actors are drafting divergent visions for the postwar moment. These range between efforts to anchor the PA in its current form, and attempts to radically restructure the Palestinian political system in alignment with U.S. and Israeli conceptions of the “day after.”

In this context, the concept of a “renewed authority” has emerged from Washington and rapidly entered Arab discussions, revealing a clear divide between capitals that view the PA as the natural representative of Palestinians and those that consider it obsolete and in need of replacement or complete overhaul.

Jordan: Upholding the Authority as Pillar of Stability

Jordan sees the West Bank as a direct extension of its vital border and national security. Historically the closest to the Palestinian political system, Amman insists on preserving the PA in its existing form as the best guarantee of stability and balanced influence in the region.

It has no fundamental objection to its figures or structure, provided they do not infringe on Jordan’s security or symbolic role in Jerusalem and the West Bank.

In Jordan’s view, any reforms should remain administrative. For Amman, stability in the West Bank is a necessary condition to prevent spillover chaos, particularly since tens of thousands of residents in the West Bank hold Jordanian citizenship making any drastic change a matter of national security, not merely political debate.

Egypt: Stabilizing the System and Containing Factions

Egypt has long been a pivotal player in the Palestinian arena especially regarding Gaza, which lies adjacent to its border and represents a direct security extension. Amid growing discussion of the “day after,” Cairo proposed a sweeping reconstruction plan costing between \$20 and \$30 billion to counter proposals of displacing the residents of Gaza.

Its plan includes forming a government oversight body for reconstruction and excludes Hamas and the current PA from transitional executive roles, in partial imitation of Israeli proposals of “disarming politics in exchange for reconstruction.”

Simultaneously, Egypt affirms the PA as a legitimate political framework but calls for integrating Palestinian factions within it to enhance political and security stability especially in Gaza, where Cairo envisions a transitional phase leading to PA governance return.

Cairo is also keen to retain its traditional influence in mediation and reconciliation and maintains strong connections with the ousted Fatah figure Mohammad Dahlan, whom it views as a critical lever to reconfigure Fatah and PA internal dynamics.

The appointment of Hussein Sheikh as deputy head of the PLO Executive Committee, however, displeased Egypt, as it closed opportunities for renewing Fatah unity and undermined the reconciliation agenda Cairo had fostered.

Saudi Arabia: Political Sponsorship with Security Preconditions

Saudi Arabia aims to be part of a grand regional settlement under U.S. leadership, which includes Gaza’s reconstruction as part of a broader revival of the Palestinian state process. Riyadh believes that any financial or political support must be conditioned on the disarmament of Hamas and the presence of

a “renewed” PA enjoying both domestic legitimacy and international support.

The Kingdom fears that canalizing reconstruction funds without security assurances could lead to fresh destruction in a future confrontation. Thus, it insists on a demilitarized Gaza under the PA or an international legitimacy-backed body.

While it remains cautious of the PA’s performance, Saudi Arabia does not seek to dismantle it; rather, it wants to reform and empower it, regarding the PA as the sole acceptable partner to usher in the postwar phase. Evidence of this is the visible Saudi backing of the newly appointed Vice President of the PA, Hussein Sheikh.

United Arab Emirates: From Humanitarian Donor to Political Architect

The UAE is perhaps the most engaged Arab state in shaping the contours of the “day after,” leveraging close ties with Israel and the U.S. and its role as a potentially major reconstruction funder.

During months of war, Abu Dhabi held secret discussions with U.S. and Israeli officials among them former U.S. envoy Brett McGurk and Israeli Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer about plans to restructure governance in Gaza.

According to reports by Axios and Israel Hayom, the UAE proposed establishing a temporary administration in Gaza grounded in a “renewed” PA or an international technocratic body, contingent on full disarmament of Hamas before any funding begins.

Former UN Ambassador Lana Nusseibeh indicated that the UAE is ready to contribute troops to a temporary international peacekeeping mission in Gaza provided the U.S. leads the political process and invites a new PA led by a prime minister with real authority and autonomy.

In statements by Minister of International Cooperation Reem Al Hashimy, the UAE emphasized that stability in Gaza begins with forming a new sovereign, independent, and capable Palestinian government to oversee reconstruction and pave the way for unifying Gaza and the West Bank under a single legitimate authority.

The UAE is also a leading backer of Mohammad Dahlan, viewing him as a strategic pivot to building a new governance alternative outside of the traditional PA.

In this framework, Abu Dhabi offers multiple proposals concerning Gaza and the broader Palestinian landscape, many of which overlap with aspects of Trump’s plan particularly in reconfiguring education, redefining internal security, and linking reconstruction to full political transformation.

Such positioning makes the UAE highly aligned with the U.S. vision on disarmament, international/Arab oversight, and the dismantling of resistance-based national identity in the Palestinian system.

Qatar: Conditional Reform and Integration of Resistance

By contrast, Qatar maintains its role as a central actor in the Palestinian arena by virtue of its hosting of Hamas leadership and sustained funding for Gaza’s infrastructure and humanitarian needs. Yet Doha also sustains formal ties with the PA and President Mahmoud Abbas, endorsing a vision of comprehensive system reform that integrates Hamas and Islamic Jihad into a unified national structure as a guarantee of political stability and cohesion.

Until mid-2024, Qatar resisted any conditional framework of disarmament for reconstruction. More recently, Doha has begun engaging with Arab and international initiatives proposing phased, overseen disarmament especially within the Saudi–French initiative that seeks to revive the two-state solution.

Qatar seeks to remain a key architect of the “day after,” either as a reconstruction partner or as guarantor of Hamas’s representation within any new political framework

thus safeguarding its regional stature and mediator role acceptable to all parties. Ongoing debates suggest that the Arab rift over the future Palestinian system runs deeper than differing positions: it signals a fundamental divergence over the nature of Palestinian polity itself.

While the Egypt–Jordan–Saudi axis holds to a renewed PA without radical structural shifts, the UAE pushes for a technocratic alternative devoid of resistance influence, and Qatar advocates comprehensive reform with integration of factions into a unified system.

Amid these three trajectories, Washington and Tel Aviv continue investing in Arab contradictions, seeking a formula that reengineers the Palestinian system to secure Israel’s security and sustain regional tutelage over Palestinian national choice rather than an independent, autonomous entity as has long been the Palestinian aspiration.

Between Two Tutelages ... And the Quest for Independent Will

Over the past seven decades, the Palestinian political system has remained an open field for intersecting regional and international wills an ongoing testbed of balance in the Arab world. From the first Arab tutelage attempts after the Nakba, through the era of national liberation and the rise of the PLO, to the PA and Oslo, and now in the post-genocide epoch Palestine has never simply pitted an oppressed people against a conquering occupier.

It has also been a battleground over who wields the keys to Palestinian decision-making: the people themselves, or the elaborate structures seeking to shape consciousness and commandeer wills?

Today, two years following one of the most brutal wars of this century, Arab and international initiatives converge again on Gaza not as a land of resistance, but as a laboratory for a new political system meant to emerge disarmed, constrained, and governed by a network of financial, security, and administrative tutelages.

While Arab positions differ some insisting on preserving the PA in its current form, others pushing for its renewal or outright replacement the common denominator is that the Palestinian political entity has never been permitted to chart its own trajectory. Its future is being redrawn in regional capitals as much as or more than in the field.

Here lies the central question: Will the Palestinian political system rise from the ashes as a unifying national body, or will it be reconstructed according to an imposed engineering that secures the enemy’s safety and perpetuates Arab and international tutelage?

The answer depends on the Palestinians’ ability to reclaim decision-making from external influence, and to build a political system that draws legitimacy from the field not from capitals and from people’s will not from regime interests. Reconstruction without sovereignty, renewal without independence, will only reproduce the same crisis under a new guise and postpone the coming explosion, not avert it.

After all, post-genocide is not just a label for a new political phase it is an existential test: can Palestinians reclaim their right to be masters of their own political fate?

The people who endured genocide must now prove to the world that they can forge their future free from tutelage and beyond those who view Gaza as a testbed for their security theories or instruments of regional leverage.