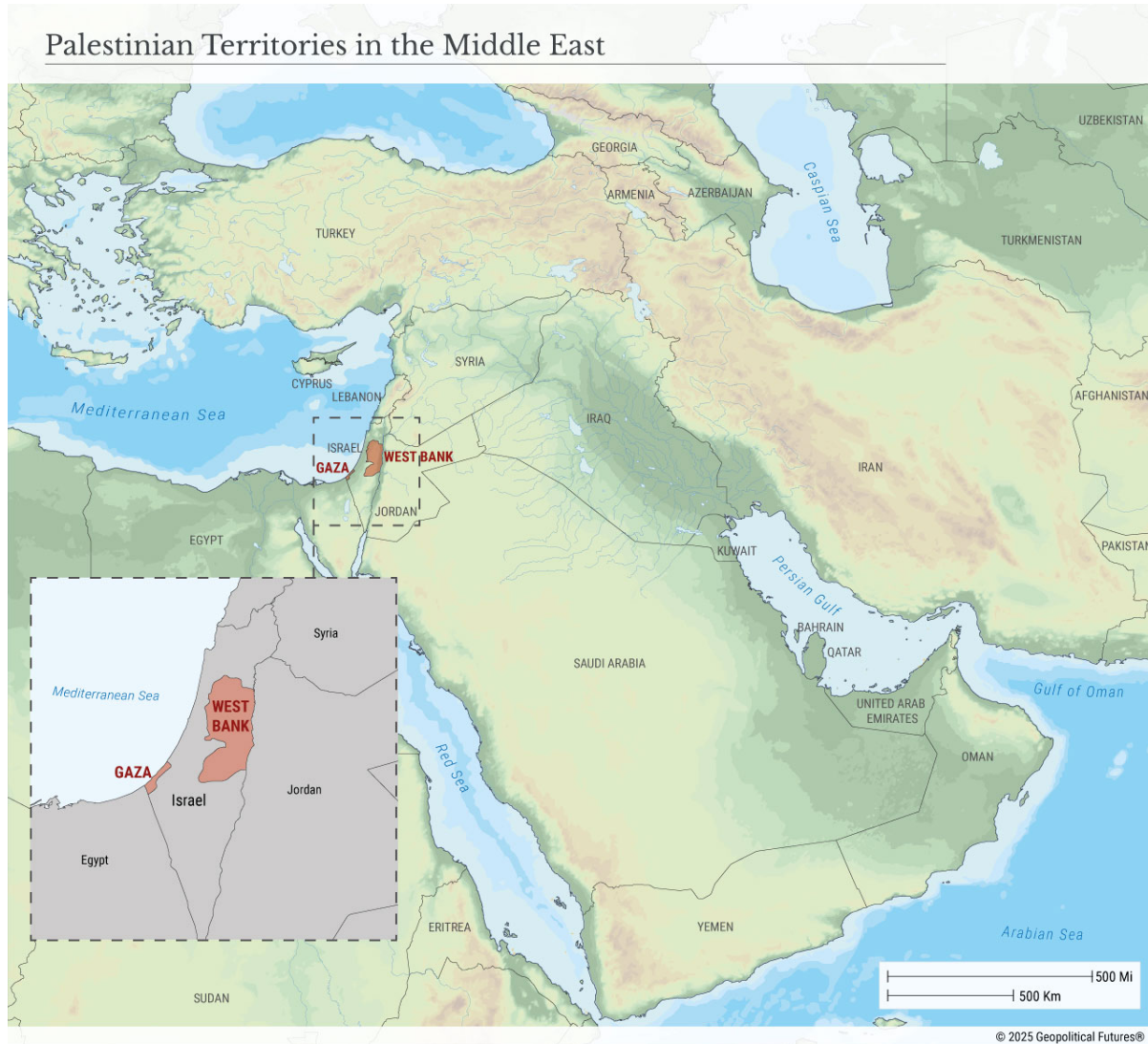


# The Most Important Point in the Gaza Peace Proposal

by Kamran Bokhari - October 2, 2025

In an Oct. 29 joint press briefing at the White House with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, U.S. President Donald Trump unveiled a 20-point plan to end the nearly two-year war in Gaza. The most consequential point, point 15, concerns who will assume responsibility for security – and, by extension, governance – in the Gaza Strip. Washington will collaborate with Arab and international partners to establish an entity known as the International Stabilization Force that will serve as the long-term internal security solution and a partner to Israel and Egypt in securing the Palestinian enclave's borders. Its two central responsibilities will be to oversee the disarmament of Hamas and demilitarization of Gaza, and the establishment of a Palestinian constabulary to become the area's permanent security force.



But before that can happen, there is the matter of who will constitute the ISF. Current reports indicate it will comprise troops from Arab and Muslim-majority nations. The meetings Trump held on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly suggest Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Egypt, Indonesia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Jordan will provide the bulk of the personnel. Additional Arab and Muslim states could join, and personnel from non-Muslim countries could also be included. The language of the plan suggests that the U.S. may have a role in mobilizing this force.

In keeping with the Trump administration's new geostrategic doctrine, Washington expects Arab and Muslim nations to shoulder the bulk of the security responsibility. They could do so under the auspices of the 41-member Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition, launched by Saudi Arabia in

2017 and nominally led by retired Pakistani Gen. Raheel Sharif. However, the alliance has no standing troops and has never been deployed as a permanent peacekeeping or stabilization force under a unified command. A coalition composed exclusively of Arab and Muslim forces for policing or stabilization in a third-party territory would be unprecedented in modern history.

The first priority is to establish a clear chain of command. Creating a functional military structure requires a multilateral political understanding among participating nations. The two major regional stakeholders, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, are central to this negotiation, and the seating arrangement at the U.N. meeting – Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan at the head of the table and Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan to Trump's left – illustrates the imbalance between Ankara's and Riyadh's respective military strengths. This is at least partly why Saudi Arabia formalized a strategic mutual defense agreement with Pakistan a week beforehand.

For Saudi Arabia, the SMDA is meant to improve its leverage in negotiations and, by extension, its influence over the Gaza mission. For Pakistan, it elevates Islamabad as a key stakeholder, particularly if it shoulders the bulk of the military responsibilities under its bilateral agreement with Riyadh. Egypt's geography and historical involvement with Gaza also make it a critical player in this collective security effort. Ultimately, a coalition of military forces must agree on a structure and rules of engagement under a single commander, which is liable to be a long and difficult process.

If Hamas agrees to the terms, its first and most difficult task will be to disarm the Palestinian Islamist movement. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration is always difficult, but it will be especially tricky in Gaza given the prevalence of underground tunnels. Then there is the open question of what assurances need to be made to keep Hamas from reconstituting itself as a military force. Gaza, after all, is its home turf, and it has a nearly four-decade-old history of being a militant organization.

Assuming Hamas does elect to give up being a militant organization, it's still unclear what will happen to it as a political organization. Ensuring that the group has no role in the future governance of Gaza will be extremely challenging, considering it's been ruling Gaza for 18 years – and there aren't any other competing mainstream groups in the territory. Hamas emerged in 1987 out of the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, which had operated as a social and religious movement since 1946. The ISF, then, will also have to deal with Hamas as a social phenomenon, even as it tries to create an environment in which it cannot take over.

This means the ISF will have to work with the clans from which militias have already started to fill the vacuum left by Hamas. The ISF will also need to engage with non-Hamas factions for the purposes of recruiting and training for a new indigenous security force. Meanwhile, it will have to work with the

new international transitional body known as the Board of Peace, chaired by Trump himself and likely coordinated by former British Prime Minister Tony Blair. The ISF will also need to ensure security for immediate humanitarian aid (food, water, shelter, medical care) to be dispensed to the nearly 2 million displaced Gazans.

Over the longer term, Trump's peace plan calls for Gaza's recovery, reconstruction and development and the establishment of a new governance structure – a program the World Bank will spearhead, according to the proposal. And that is to say nothing of the reformation of the Palestinian Authority before it can become the official body of governance in Gaza.

The ISF, in other words, will be looking down the barrel of a 10-year commitment, at the very least. For countries such as Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, which lack formal ties with Israel, participation will require unprecedented direct coordination with Israel to establish a new security architecture in Palestinian territory.

That is to say, they will have to work with the Israel Defense Forces, which will retain control over Gaza's borders and maintain a presence inside the territory. Long-term security cooperation between participating Arab/Muslim states and the IDF has the potential to reshape the region's geopolitics. The Abraham Accords process was torpedoed with the Hamas attack almost two years ago and has made Saudi-Israeli normalization impossible in the short term. Thus, the long-term presence of an Arab-Muslim security force in Gaza could, in theory, form a de facto working relationship between Israel and countries like Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.

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