



## Reconstruction of Gaza

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:** The ongoing Israel-Gaza conflict has devastated large portions of the Gaza Strip as Israel seeks to dismantle Hamas following their attack on October 7th. This offensive has left many neighborhoods in ruins, driven hundreds of thousands into homelessness, and crippled Gaza's economy, raising fears of a humanitarian crisis. With Hamas significantly weakened after a year of fighting, Israel faces the challenge of developing a post-war reconstruction plan to ensure long-term stability. Drawing inspiration from the Marshall Plan, Israel must prioritize rebuilding critical infrastructure, establishing governance, and revitalizing the economy. This involves temporarily assuming control to maintain order, providing essential services, and fostering community governance. By empowering local leaders and promoting civic engagement, Israel aims to transform Gaza from a conflict-ridden area into a stable region.

The ongoing Israel-Gaza war has destroyed large parts of the Gaza Strip due to Israel's invasion on the grounds of removing Hamas, the main governing power of Gaza, for the past two decades, after their attack on Israel on October 7th. Israel's offensive has reduced many neighborhoods and cities in Gaza to rubble, intending to wipe out the military capabilities of Hamas while simultaneously driving hundreds of thousands of Gazans into homelessness and reducing the economic output of the Palestinian enclave to near zero. Infrastructure related to medical

services and food distribution has been critically damaged, with international organizations fearing famine and disease might spell a humanitarian disaster in Gaza. Israel's goal for invading Gaza was to wipe out Hamas and make sure an attack like October 7th never happens again. Now, after a year of fighting and Hamas drastically weakened, Israel needs to develop a post-war reconstruction plan for Gaza that will ensure stability and peace in the region. Hamas' rule over Gaza can be categorized as authoritarian, with all opposition being silenced. The prevailing ideology is fundamental Muslim Brotherhood Islamism coupled with a fervent hatred towards Israel. The complete destruction of the Jewish state is explicitly enshrined in its constitution. This leaves a challenge for any reconstruction plan put forth by Israel, as an immediate occupation will be unacceptable to the people of Gaza.

Nonetheless, the inevitable temporary control of Gaza by Israel will occur to implement a lasting and permanent peace in the Gaza Strip. Israel needs to look at historical examples of post-war reconstruction, the highlight being the Marshall Plan. The Marshall Plan was a U.S.-sponsored initiative to rebuild war-torn Europe after the Second World War. It had three main objectives: restoring the economies of European countries, preventing the spread of Soviet communism, and stabilizing the region to promote peace. Around 100 billion dollars in today's money was invested in war-torn Europe to rebuild the infrastructure and industry and to foster economic cooperation. This ensured Western European countries were stable democracies with robust economies that could compete with Soviet influence from the East.

One of the greatest accomplishments of the Marshall Plan was the rapid rebuilding and economic growth of Germany, which saw most of its major cities and industrial capabilities destroyed through a campaign of Allied air bombing. The air war was intended to reduce the military capabilities of Nazi Germany and submit the population to surrender. Instead of repeating the same mistake of doling out reparations to the defeated Germans, such was the case in the First World War, which enabled Adolf Hitler to gain popularity with the bitter German public, the United States loaned billions to the newly formed Western German government. This enabled them to revitalize their economy and win over the German public on the side of the West. Another factor that enabled the tremendous success of the

Marshall Plan was the persistent deployment of US troops stationed all across Western Europe as a deterrent to the growing threat of the Soviet Union, which wished to undermine the American influence in Europe.

If Israel wishes to establish a stable regime in the Gaza Strip that won't backslide into the hands of other terror groups, then it would need to implement its own Marshall Plan in Gaza. Israel must immediately set out to win the hearts and minds of the Gazans, who still hold sympathies towards Hamas while seeing Israel as the reason their relative was killed and their home turned to rubble. Still, as seen with the Germans post-Second World War, it is possible. Israel will have to take over from Hamas, who have been the main source of income and food for many Gazans. Taking over the patronage role will come with great difficulties as many will be reluctant to take aid from Israel. The first step Israel must take in Gaza is becoming the sole authority in the strip until a new Palestinian government can take hold. This includes establishing order and taking on the responsibilities of policing. The next step would be to rebuild all necessary civilian infrastructure, such as hospitals, schools, roads, clean drinking water, and facilities to remove human waste.

While civilian infrastructure is being rebuilt, housing the thousands left homeless will be crucial, even if it's only temporary housing. Germany's constitution and government structure post-war was based on the United States, which Israel should consider when reforming the government of Gaza. However, it should be remembered that Gaza has not experienced democracy in a long time, which has resulted in a population with little civic culture and an admiration for a strong authoritarian state. Reversing this thinking will be crucial in implementing a democratic state. Israel should assign initial power of authority to heads of clans that make up Gaza. The heads of clans will be responsible for opening dialogue with Israel and the civilian population of Gaza, as well as providing food and shelter with the assistance of Israel.

The reconstruction of Gaza presents a daunting yet crucial opportunity for Israel to foster lasting peace and stability in the region. By drawing inspiration from the Marshall Plan, Israel can embark on a comprehensive strategy that prioritizes infrastructure rebuilding, establishing governance, and economic revitalization.

Winning the trust of the Gazan population will be challenging, but with a dedicated effort to provide essential services, temporary housing, and opportunities for self-sufficiency, it is achievable. The initial phase will require Israel to assume control and maintain order. Still, the ultimate goal should be to cultivate a self-sustaining, democratic government that reflects the needs and aspirations of its people. By empowering local leaders and fostering civic engagement, Israel can lay the groundwork for a peaceful and prosperous Gaza, transforming a history of conflict into a future of cooperation and mutual growth.

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