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Postwar Gaza: Perspectives and a Comparative Analysis of Recovery and Reconstruction Plans and Political Scenarios

The Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS) regularly publishes applied and scientific studies, in addition to brief research papers, as part of an annual series of roundtable sessions on important economic topics of interest to the public and decision-makers. The policy briefs outline the key recommendations of selected scholastic activities, in order to disseminate this information and maximize the benefits derived from this series of sessions.

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1. Background

The Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS) convened a roundtable discussion titled “The Gaza Strip after the War: Visions and Comparative Analysis of Recovery, Reconstruction Plans and Political Scenarios.” To facilitate the discussion, MAS prepared a background paper that reviewed reconstruction plans for Gaza both before and after the war. The paper particularly focused on the pace of planning initiatives since the October 2023 war and on the plans developed after the January 2025 ceasefire.

The paper concluded that several of these plans embody distinct visions for reorganizing life in the Gaza Strip, raising fundamental questions: Who controls the territory? Who governs the population? What can be rebuilt, how, and for whom? What will happen to the displaced population, and who among them will be entitled to return? Reconstruction, therefore, is not solely a matter of rebuilding with concrete and steel; it must also encompass the restoration and development of societal capacities and human capital.

In this sense, reconstruction should be understood as a process of political, economic, and spatial production, involving the reconstitution of the various facets of society. It is not merely a collection of projects or relief-oriented programs implemented under the rubric of recovery.

Accordingly, the background paper focused on comparing these plans and highlighting the shortcomings associated with each, while assessing each plan against a set of nine criteria, helping to identify the official position regarding each plan in terms of acceptance, rejection, or modification, an approach that sparked extensive discussion. The criteria were namely: (1) the entity that prepared the plan and the extent of its legitimacy; (2) the proposed implementing actor(s); (3) the extent and nature of Palestinian participation and involvement; (4) the proposed security and governance model; (5) the economic and financing model; (6) the position on the question of refugees and displaced persons, including the right of return; (7) the political horizon, including sovereignty and liberation; (8) the degree of coordination with Palestinian institutions; and (9) the conditions and dependencies associated with implementation.

Based on these criteria, five distinct categories of plans were identified: the technical developmental approach; the political-security approach; an investment-driven privatization approach; an international transitional governance approach; and a participatory community-based approach.

From another perspective, the paper examined the extent to which the proposed plans align with international and UN frameworks, with the aim of determining which of these plans are consistent with international legal instruments governing displacement, compensation, and the right of return. The analysis found that most of the plans give limited attention to legal dimensions and international conventions. The background paper also discussed possible and anticipated political scenarios. The discussion ultimately evolved into a broad debate on what best serves Palestinian interests, culminating in a set of policy recommendations and practical guidance for decision-makers and experts engaged in the reconstruction efforts.

In conclusion, the background paper generated extensive discussion around three key themes: assessing the plans against the nine evaluation criteria, examining their consistency with international legal conventions, and analyzing the potential political scenarios for reconstruction in light of the overarching orientations and objectives underpinning each plan.

2. Discussion Outcomes and Policy Recommendations

There was a broad consensus among participants and discussants on the need to engage seriously with recovery and reconstruction plans, while emphasizing that a critical assessment of these plans should not be construed as a dismissal of the plans in their entirety. Rather, the objective is to evaluate and guide them in a manner that aligns with Palestinian national interests and ensures that recovery and reconstruction efforts contribute to strengthening the unity of Palestinian land, people, and institutions, supporting the path toward development and economic independence, and avoiding any arrangements that could undermine the Palestinian role in setting reconstruction priorities or managing its processes.

In this context, participants highlighted the Palestinian National Plan as one of the foundational frameworks for recovery and reconstruction efforts, given its emphasis on the Palestinian territorial unity of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and linking national and developmental priorities with recovery and reconstruction. The plan also provides, through its underlying principles and development programs, a basis upon which a comprehensive Palestinian vision for the recovery and reconstruction phase can be further developed.

The comparative analysis revealed significant differences in the approaches adopted by the proposed plans and in the extent to which Palestinian priorities are reflected within them, underscoring the importance of adopting a comprehensive national vision for recovery and reconstruction that ensures an effective Palestinian role in setting priorities, planning, and implementation.

Building on this, the need to solidify the unity of Palestinian land, people, and institutions, and to develop a consensual political and institutional framework to lead the recovery and reconstruction process emerged, while reinforcing the institutional and geographic contiguity between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The comparison further indicates that plans that fail to ensure an effective Palestinian role in setting priorities and making decisions is expected to face greater challenges in terms of acceptance and sustainability, even if they appear feasible or adequately funded in the short term.

Based on the discussion and the background paper, the following key policy recommendations are proposed:

First: General Recommendations with Political and Economic Dimensions as Principles to Be Upheld

- Ensuring an effective political and sovereign role for the Palestinian Authority in reconstruction projects.
- Affirming that any reconstruction framework should be grounded in Palestinian legitimacy, guarantee the effective participation of Palestinian institutions, and safeguard the sovereign and economic rights of the Palestinian people.
- Reviewing any reconstruction plan or initiative in light of international law and human rights principles, while ensuring the protection of property rights, compensation, reparation for damages, and accountability of the party responsible for destruction.
- Initiating efforts to re-establish a short-term economic and sovereign approach focused on relief and the revitalization of economic activity, alongside a long-term approach grounded in Palestinian sovereignty and free from external conditionalities.
- Emphasizing the need for reconstruction plans to comprehensively address all key sectors, including housing, infrastructure and public utilities, economic recovery and private sector development, health and social protection, as well as other priority sectors.

- Working diligently with all international and regional actors to remove occupation-related restrictions impeding reconstruction efforts.

Second: Recommendations Related to Comprehensive Planning

Recovery and reconstruction plans should comprehensively address all issues related to both recovery and reconstruction, ensuring adequate coverage of the following areas:

- **Housing and Urban Reconstruction:** Rebuilding housing units, urban planning of neighborhoods, land management, and the development of public spaces.
- **Infrastructure and Public Utilities:** Electricity, water, sanitation, solid waste management, telecommunications, and transportation networks.
- **Economic Recovery and Private Sector Development:** Supporting businesses and economic enterprises, creating employment opportunities, promoting investment, facilitating trade, and strengthening livelihoods.
- **Health and Social Protection:** Rehabilitating facilities and providing healthcare services, psychosocial support, social assistance programs, and strengthening social protection systems.

Third: Recommendations for Facilitating and Accelerating Practical Implementation

- Utilizing international legal instruments, diplomatic efforts, and political advocacy by relevant Palestinian and international actors to advance the removal of restrictions and obstacles hindering the implementation of recovery and reconstruction programs.
- Achieving Palestinian national consensus and unifying the political vision concerning reconstruction projects.
- Building a productive local economy by assigning the Palestinian private sector a central role in the reconstruction process.
- Strengthening the role of local authorities, the private sector, and civil society organizations as partners in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of reconstruction and economic development programs.
- Coordinating and streamlining the efforts of international institutions within a unified and coherent framework, avoiding fragmented approaches.