

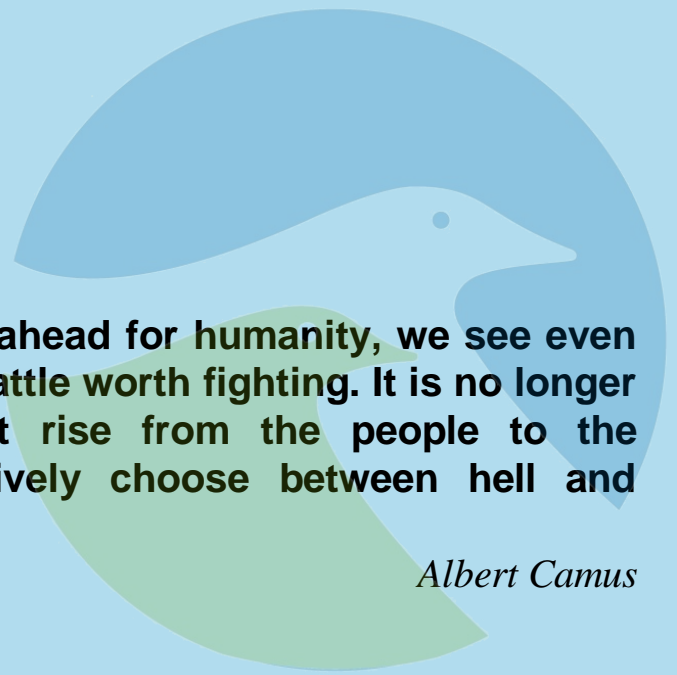
Peace, differently.

To the attention of the President of the French Republic, Mr. Emmanuel Macron;
Mission Report on Israeli-Palestinian Reconciliation.

Ofer Bronchtein

President of the International Forum for Peace

Special Envoy for the Israeli-Palestinian Relations



« In the terrifying prospects that lie ahead for humanity, we see even more clearly that peace is the only battle worth fighting. It is no longer a prayer, but an order that must rise from the people to the governments, the order to definitively choose between hell and reason.»

Albert Camus

« The very idea of rapprochement among Europeans was based on the conviction that we would only recover together, by supporting one another. This was neither a naive pacification nor an intention to absolve the states of their responsibility. It was not about forgiveness or forgetting, but about a lucid and courageous reconciliation, as utopian as it was realistic, all the more necessary as it emerged from the deepest despair. The cycle had to be broken: the reconciliation between European peoples would be the pivot of constructing a peaceful Europe. A gamble had to be made, and adhered to despite obstacles. Building bridges, forging connections, creating a framework in which the passions of hatred would be neutralized. Taking our sufferings, our trials, our wounds as the foundation of a new common endeavor. Friendship would come later. »

Simone Veil

LE PRÉSIDENT DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

Paris, le 26 JUIL. 2020

Monsieur,



Alors que le conflit israélo-palestinien perdure et que de nouvelles menaces pèsent sur son règlement, il est, aujourd'hui, plus que jamais nécessaire de continuer à agir pour une paix juste et durable au Proche-Orient. Sans une solution qui réponde aux préoccupations israéliennes de sécurité et aux aspirations légitimes des Palestiniens, la situation continuera de se dégrader et à alimenter les tensions régionales.

C'est dans cet esprit que j'ai rappelé, lors de mon déplacement en Israël et dans les Territoires palestiniens au début de cette année, l'attachement de la France à un règlement pacifique du conflit dans le respect du droit international, à travers la mise en œuvre de la solution des deux Etats.

Face au déficit de confiance qui peut exister entre les parties, la France, sans se substituer aux acteurs locaux, a un rôle à jouer pour contribuer à les rapprocher.

Très bon connaisseur de la région et artisan expérimenté de la paix au Proche Orient, entretenant des liens anciens avec les Israéliens et les Palestiniens, vous connaissez l'importance et la difficulté d'une telle entreprise. Vous avez également une connaissance fine de ceux qui en sont les acteurs, tant du côté israélien que du côté palestinien. C'est pour cette raison que j'ai souhaité vous confier une mission.

Je vous propose d'aller à la rencontre des acteurs et personnalités des sociétés civiles israéliennes et palestiniennes représentatifs de leur diversité (intellectuels, artistes, acteurs économiques, universitaires, militants associatifs, etc.). Il s'agira pour vous de recueillir leur appréciation de la situation et de les interroger sur les conditions de la relance du Processus de paix.

Je vous propose, par ailleurs, sur la base de votre expérience et de ces échanges, d'organiser, à Paris, une initiative publique qui réunirait des représentants des sociétés civiles israélienne et palestinienne en faveur de la reprise du Processus de paix.

Dans cette perspective, je vous invite à me faire part, par écrit, dès que vous le jugerez possible, du fruit de vos échanges et de m'indiquer les modalités et le format qui vous sembleront convenir à la tenue de l'initiative que je vous propose d'organiser, à Paris.

Vous remerciant d'avoir accepté cette mission, je vous souhaite plein succès dans sa réalisation et vous prie d'agréer, Monsieur, l'expression de ma considération distinguée.



Emmanuel MACRON

M. Ofer BRONCHTEIN

Mr. President,

Following the initial notes sent in 2021 and the report sent in January 2023, as well as our discussions with numerous diplomats, partners, political actors, members of civil society, and the economic community of the region, I am pleased to present the updated report "Peace, differently."

Multiple events have disrupted the region since then, and October 7 marked a major turning point in the history of the Middle East.

In Israel, the formation of a right-wing and far-right government, composed of racist and messianic extremists, has dashed the slim hopes of a negotiated settlement with the Palestinians. The government's desire to reform the judicial system, thereby weakening democracy, has sparked unprecedented popular anger.

On October 7th, the worst terrorist attack Israel has experienced since its creation prompted a response that was as bloody as it was disproportionate against the Palestinians. The solidarity and unequivocal support following the massacres by the Islamist group Hamas have given way to isolation and increasingly pressing criticisms of Israel (labeling the country as genocidal), which are not always legitimate (even questioning the very existence of the State). These criticisms have been accompanied by a worrying rise in anti-Semitism worldwide.

The war in Gaza and the pogrom of October 7 have plunged both societies into a state of extreme trauma. Israelis are convinced that their very existence is at stake, and their leaders want to prove to the population that despite the army's security failure, they are capable of protecting them. Palestinians are going through the most severe humanitarian crisis in their history. Both claim to be victims, both call for revenge.

Never have we witnessed such a lack of empathy on both sides. This will make the reconciliation process more difficult than ever. Paradoxically, due to the weakening of both parties, possibilities for political agreements exist, and we must redouble our efforts to bring Israelis and Palestinians to the negotiation table. These human sufferings and the urgency of the situation compel us to fundamentally change our approach. It is time for France to recognize the Palestinian State while providing the security guarantees Israel needs.

It will be difficult to persuade them if Europe remains divided or if the United States is not determined to lead this initiative in light of the upcoming November elections. In the current cacophony, let us be bold: France can and must pave the way for historic rapprochements and agreements, provided Europe ensures coordination.

We have strategic means to contribute to the revitalization of the Palestinian Authority and support the Palestinians in establishing an independent, viable, and democratic state, while freeing Israel from its devastating and self-destructive grip on Palestinian territories, and ensuring its security and legitimacy.

By collaborating with civil society, political leaders, and economic actors, we can revive negotiations and foster cooperation between the engaged parties. Israeli-Palestinian peace will open new economic opportunities for France and Europe, while strengthening diplomatic recognition of the parties.

Mr. President, you can turn chaos into momentum for peace. This report proposes twenty practical recommendations aimed at encouraging rapprochement between Israeli and Palestinian societies and promoting better regional cooperation.

Thank you for the trust you have placed in me and for your determination to continue our struggles for peace, tolerance, and progress. Humility, lucidity, generosity, and forgiveness will be the foundations of peace and reconciliation between Palestinians and Israelis, between Jews and Arabs. I wish you a pleasant reading.

Ofer Bronchtein

« We owe it to the Palestinians whose aspirations have been trampled for too long. We owe it to the Israelis who have experienced the greatest anti-Semitic massacre of our century. We owe it to a region that longs to escape the promoters of chaos and the sowers of revenge. »

Emmanuel Macron

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Introduction

After years of stalemate, war. After months of apparent calm, terror. For a long time, the international community clung to an illusion: Israeli hegemony and normalization would resolve the Palestinian question. On October 7, 2023, everything changed. Hamas' attack unleashed a wave of terror unmatched since the Holocaust, met with a response as unyielding as it was brutal.

For years, the myth of the start-up nation cleverly masked the transformation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Both societies were undergoing profound changes, and the shift was imminent. On November 1, 2022, Israelis went to the polls for the fifth time in less than four years. The coalition led by Benjamin Netanyahu won a majority of sixty-four out of one hundred twenty seats, and he began his eighth term as Prime Minister, despite his trial for corruption, influence peddling, and conflict of interest. Thirty-two seats for Likud, eighteen for ultra-Orthodox parties, and fourteen for the Jewish supremacists of the Religious Zionism movement, mainly represented by Itamar Ben-Gvir's Jewish Power party. This government marked the arrival of the messianic far-right to power.

In the West Bank and Gaza, before the October 7 attack, the almost daily incidents between Palestinians and the Israeli army, altercations with settlers, and the emergence of new paramilitary groups already evidenced the failure of the Palestinian Authority. Hamas feigned normalization, even assuming the role of intermediary to prevent escalation between Israel and Islamic Jihad last May. Among both Fatah and Hamas, Marwan Barghouti, former leader of a Fatah armed faction, enjoys unanimous support. He is well-acquainted with Israeli society and could unite Palestinian factions and lead them toward challenging yet promising negotiations with Israel. However, he has been imprisoned in Israel for over twenty years based on accusations of playing a role in a series of attacks during the second intifada.

Jerusalem remained the flashpoint of the conflict, and its security situation had been deteriorating for several months. Last January, eight Israelis lost their lives in an attack on a synagogue. Over 220 Palestinians and about thirty Israelis were killed in the West Bank and Israel before the October 7 attack—the highest number of deaths since 2005. This escalation of violence was already causing concern and reverberated throughout the Arab world. The fragile balance of the Abraham Accords was on the brink of collapse.

The intensification of the occupation, the increase in violence, including terrorism, and the absence of a political horizon have strengthened extremists and eroded the hope for conflict resolution among Palestinians and Israelis. The Palestinian Authority has accumulated growing economic and institutional challenges, exacerbated by the constraints of the occupation, the lack of serious reforms, and the bleak prospects for donor support. In Gaza, under blockade for fifteen years and subject to Hamas' Islamist administration, an enemy of the Palestinian cause, the situation was fragile, and the risk of escalation imminent.

You have condemned acts of terrorism. Now, it is essential to call on political, religious, and community leaders in the region to help calm the situation, avoid inflammatory rhetoric, and marginalize those who seek to provoke and exacerbate the situation.

The breakthrough of the far-right in the Israeli elections last November and the impending end of the Abbas era on the Palestinian side were harbingers of political, security, and economic perils with incalculable consequences. The October 7 attack and the ensuing

war surpass our wildest fears. The healing process will be long and painful.

Mr. President, turn this upheaval into diplomatic momentum. Friend of Israelis, friend of Palestinians, France is best positioned to drive negotiations. The feeling of helplessness of our generation is an illusion or an easy way out: Israelis and Palestinians have lived and will live together on this land promised to both peoples.

Resignation benefits Israeli governments that perpetuate the colonization of territories and foster the proliferation of violent acts. Resignation benefits the enemies of peace who stubbornly reject mutual recognition and the sharing of land and resources.

Let us reverse the dynamic to build reconciliation and peace. With civil society, leaders, opinion-makers, and economic actors, we can lead the resumption of negotiations and cooperation among the engaged parties. Israeli-Palestinian peace will provide France and Europe with unprecedented economic opportunities and diplomatic recognition.

From passivity to boldness, let us lead the European Union on the path to Israeli-Palestinian peace.

Some Figures

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has led to the loss of thousands of lives. Since the early 2000s, nearly 45,000 Palestinians have been killed by Israelis, and around 3,000 Israelis have been killed by Palestinians, bringing the total number of victims to over 48,000. This number continues to rise as the war in Gaza persists.

Millions of Palestinians have been displaced from their homes since the beginning of the conflict. UNRWA estimated there were approximately 5.9 million Palestinian refugees in 2023. The Israeli offensive in Gaza has caused nearly 2 million people to be displaced since October 7.

According to estimates by the Israeli Ministry of Finance, one day of war equates to \$200 million. This amount could cover the construction of four hospitals the size of the European Hospital in Gaza.

Israeli colonization, including the massive construction of new roads and the establishment of illegal outposts to control the West Bank, erodes the territory more each year. From 420,000 settlers in 2003, the Israeli population in the occupied territories has now reached 700,000, with over 90% of the territory under the direct control of the State of Israel.

In 2022, Israel allocated \$23.4 billion to military expenditures, which is 123% of the Palestinian GDP for the same year (\$19.11 billion). The Israeli defense budget has doubled since the beginning of the war, now representing 6% of GDP and reaching \$27 billion.

By the end of 2023, the unemployment rate in Gaza is 80%. A UNDP report indicates a drastic drop in the Human Development Index, which will cause a regression in the enclave's development by 16 to 19 years.

Nearly 1,169 Palestinian homes were destroyed in the West Bank in 2023, displacing more than 2,200 people.

The international community has injected nearly \$50 billion in public donations for Palestinians over the past twenty-five years.

In 2023, 53% of Arab households in Israel are likely to live in poverty, compared to 18% of Jewish households facing the same threat.

Since 1993, numerous peace plans and initiatives have been proposed to resolve the conflict, including the Oslo Accords, the Arab Peace Initiative, and various United Nations resolutions. Thirty years later, war ravages the region again, and the two-state solution seems increasingly unattainable.

Part I - The ills

The Importation of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict into France: A Threat to the Republic

The Israeli-Palestinian issue is part of our domestic policy. History and the present compel us. Firstly, the communalization: the eternal conflict pits Jewish and Arab communities in France against each other. The rejection of Israel is perceived as the primary cause of anti-Semitism in France, and Islamophobic rhetoric increasingly appeals to Jewish citizens. The ties that bind France to the Maghreb, our country's colonial past, the question of Zionism since the Dreyfus affair, and the role of the Vichy regime in the Holocaust give French society a particular sensitivity to the conflict. The identity turmoil and the rise of extremism on both the Israeli and Palestinian sides remind us of our own fractures.

Mr. President, the repercussions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on French society necessitate working for peace. Since the October 7 attack, hundreds of anti-Semitic acts have been recorded in France. A large part of our Jewish compatriots conceals outward signs of their Jewish identity for fear of threats or attacks. The assassination of Dominique Bernard pushed France to "Urgence Attentat" alert, with the implementation of security measures around schools and synagogues, and the friendship built between Jews and Muslims is gradually eroding.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict pits Jewish and Arab and Muslim communities against each other and contributes to the communalization of French society. France today hosts the largest Jewish and the largest Arab communities in Europe, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict also influences their relations. The rejection of Israel is perceived as the primary cause of anti-Semitism in France, both by the French as a whole (53%) and by French Jews (62%). Violent anti-Semitic acts systematically increase during periods of tension in the Middle East. During the Israeli operation Protective Edge in Gaza in 2014, anti-Semitic acts and threats in the first seven months of the year doubled, from 276 to 527. Anti-Semitic attacks and vandalism often occur on the fringes of pro-Palestinian demonstrations, such as the looting and vandalism of shops in the Jewish quarter of Sarcelles in 2014. French Jews have fully integrated this phenomenon, with 55% of them feeling more in danger during phases of Israeli-Palestinian conflict. During such periods, 49% of French Jews practice avoidance and concealment behaviors, with this proportion reaching 63% among Jews who wear religious identifiers. While the Jewish population represents 1% of the French population, it accounts for 73% of racist acts against individuals. In 2022, 436 anti-Semitic acts were recorded in France. Between October 7 and October 31, 2023, more than 800.

The decision to ban pro-Palestinian demonstrations in the wake of the Hamas attack, particularly due to the risk of anti-Semitic excesses, illustrates the systematic transposition of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict into France. French Muslim communities willingly affiliate with the Palestinian cause and identify more easily with the victims of IDF actions in Gaza and the West Bank than with the victims of other regional crises such as in Libya or Syria. They easily associate Jewish communities with hated Israel, a phenomenon exacerbated by extremist Salafism that urges hatred of Jews and the West. In 2022, 5% of French people harbored animosity towards Jews, but this figure was 21%

among French Muslims. In 2023, 42% of French people under 35 years old surveyed by Crif adhered to six or more anti-Semitic prejudices.

Cries of "death to Jews" in the streets of Paris, the attack on the synagogue on Rue de la Roquette, incidents in Sarcelles, the Dieudonné affair, the torture and murder of Ilan Halimi by the "gang of barbarians," yellow stars worn by protesters opposed to vaccination, the murder of Sarah Halimi: these past twenty years, anti-Semitic acts have deeply moved French public opinion. In 2021, more than a third of French Jews (37%) said they often or occasionally felt insecure, four points more than in 2019. A survey by the European Jewish Association published in June 2022 shows that France is the European country where Jews feel the least safe, with the importation of the Israeli- Palestinian conflict being the main reason.

The divide between Arab and Jewish communities fuels not only attacks on Jews but also terrorist acts such as the hostage-taking and murder of four people at the Hyper Cacher store at Porte de Vincennes in 2015 and the anti-Semitic murder of Sarah Halimi in 2017, committed by French Islamists.

This security escalation concerns us more than ever. Let us remember the terrorist attacks by Palestinian nationalist organizations in the 1980s: the Orly airport bombing, two dead and five injured, the bombing of a synagogue on Rue Copernic, four dead and forty-six injured, the Rue des Rosiers attack, six dead and twenty-two injured. The development of armed Islamist factions in Palestine, echoing the despair of Palestinians, fuels the security threat. The Islamization of part of the population beyond Palestinian borders contributes to the terrorist threat you wish to combat, Mr. President. During the Ambassadors' Conference in August 2022, Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs Catherine Colonna said: "It is the same hand that struck Charlie Hebdo and Salman Rushdie. We must stop it." Every day of inertia on the Israeli-Palestinian issue brings this hand closer to a devastating act.

These attacks also contribute to the dangerous assimilation of Islam with extremism and Muslims with terrorists. Twenty-one percent of French people harbor animosity towards Muslims, and 42% of Muslims living in France have experienced at least one form of discrimination related to their religion during their lifetime, the most common being police checks. Some French Jews adopt Islamophobic and extremist positions, attracted by the Islamophobic rhetoric of Éric Zemmour and his exploitation of traumatic events such as the murder of Jérémie Cohen. In the first round of the presidential election on April 10, 2022, French citizens in Israel gave Éric Zemmour 53.59% of the vote, compared to 7.07% nationally. Despite the low competitiveness of the vote, with barely 10% of the French community participating, these results reveal the increasing support of French Jews for identity and xenophobic personalities. Some French Jewish personalities and institutions unconditionally support successive Israeli governments and readily label their detractors as anti-Semitic. There is no calm dialogue on this subject. Mr. President, society needs determined political leadership that does not fear pressure from either side.

Islamophobic rhetoric appeals to more and more French Jews; anti-Semitic discourse is increasingly shared by French Muslims. The Hamas attack followed by the outbreak of war in Gaza deepens the dangerous divide of communalism every day. The repercussions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are transforming in France: they are less sporadic but more visceral. Palestinian terrorism has not struck in France for several years, but the conflict now manifests as a divide between our Muslim and Jewish communities.

Islamophobia and anti-Semitism are growing day by day. The various Islamic regimes in the Middle East greatly influence the debate on the future of Islam in France. Combating the fear of others, communalism, and terrorism requires re-establishing dialogue between Jewish and Arab communities in France and addressing radicalization at its root while contributing to diplomatic developments in the Middle East.

Is France a Subcontractor of the Israeli Occupation?

The international community has injected nearly \$50 billion in public donations for the Palestinians over the past twenty-five years. France, \$1.1 billion.

While the aid aims to promote a two-state solution and build a viable future Palestine, this prospect seems increasingly distant. If the aid aims to urgently support an occupied and oppressed population, years and billions of euros have not been sufficient to stem the economic crisis in the West Bank. Gaza, under total blockade since October 7, is now a field of ruins where everything needs to be rebuilt.

Intended as contributions to peacebuilding, this aid incessantly bumps up against the Israeli occupation. The cost of tightening Israeli restrictions in the West Bank since 2000 amounts to \$58 billion. The cost of the occupation and Israeli military operations in Gaza since the beginning of the blockade in 2007 amounts to \$17 billion. International donations cannot help build the parameters of a viable Palestinian state without political change. According to the World Bank, if donors had increased aid by \$2 billion between 2003 and 2004, poverty would have decreased by 7%, while it would have decreased by 15% with a reduction in Israeli restrictions.

Anchored in an Oslo framework disconnected from current reality, our aid has allowed successive Israeli governments to continue their expansionist security policy without bearing the economic and social costs.

Before the start of the war in Gaza, the Western donor community had spent \$5.7 billion in aid since the beginning of the Israeli blockade, not counting Asian, Arab, and Muslim countries. Qatar's money, approved and transiting through Israel, regularly financed Hamas officials' salaries. For 15 years, 1.3 million Gazans, or 63% of the population, already depended on humanitarian aid, and 76% suffered from food insecurity. Our aid has prevented Gazans from starving and relieved Israel of its responsibilities as an occupying power under the Fourth Geneva Convention.

In the West Bank, the value of infrastructure financed by the international community that has been destroyed or seized since 2015 was estimated at €1,291,000 in 2023. When Israeli authorities destroy infrastructure, donors rebuild it. Our aid also finances Israel's destructive and suicidal security policy, serving colonization and a dangerous messianic ideology.

Israeli governments know it: without international aid, they would bear the cost of their occupation, colonization, and destruction policies. They even encourage donors to continue supporting the Palestinians.

Amid a purchasing power crisis, the government continues to direct French and European taxpayers' money towards projects unable to build peace, contribute to sustainable development, shape a Palestinian democracy, or counter colonization.

The Costs of War: A Lose-Lose Equation

After seventy years of conflict, Israel and Palestine face a disastrous human and economic toll. In the last fifteen years before the war began, the conflict resulted in the deaths of 6,540 Palestinians, including 1,471 children, and 308 Israelis.

The attack by Hamas in early October and Israel's unequivocal military response have already resulted in thousands of deaths, and the toll continues to rise. In six months, Gaza's Ministry of Health announced the deaths of over 33,000 people in Gaza, 70% of whom are women and children. The October 7 attack killed more than 1,250 people in Israel. Most of the victims on both sides are civilians.

The human and economic toll of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not solely due to the sporadic wars of the past seventy years but also to Israel's policy in the Palestinian territories.

The Continuation of Colonization in the West Bank

Violating international law, the Israeli government has continued the colonization of Palestinian territories since the Six-Day War. About 700,000 Israelis now live in the West Bank and East Jerusalem in 150 settlements and 128 unauthorized outposts. From 0.05% of the Israeli population in 1972, settlers in the West Bank make up 7.6% of the Israeli population in 2023 and 21% of the population in the West Bank. Most settlements are in Area C. On the one hand, Israeli authorities widely discriminate against Palestinians in access to building permits: between 2017 and 2021, Israel issued only 33 building permits for Palestinian residents of Area C. A similarly restrictive regime applies to East Jerusalem, where only 16.5% of building permits were issued to Palestinians between 1991 and 2018, even though they represent 38% of the city's residents.

Colonization also relies on land confiscation and the destruction of Palestinian infrastructure facilitated by Israel's exclusive control over this area. In 2022, 953 Palestinian structures were demolished or seized in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the highest number since 2016. The pursuit of continuity between settlements leads to the construction of bypass roads accessible only to settlers, completing the fragmentation of Palestine into a patchwork territory. Colonization is accompanied by recurrent violence between Palestinians and settlers: more than half of the 170 Israeli civilians who died in the conflict over the past fifteen years are settlers. Since the beginning of the year, 2,327 Palestinians have been injured and 15 killed in the West Bank in incidents involving Israeli settlers, who are allowed to carry arms by Israeli law.

The start of the war has only exacerbated these tensions. Several settler attacks have led to the deaths of Palestinian civilians in recent days. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, nearly 2,000 Palestinians have been displaced due to Israeli settler violence since 2022; 43% since October 7, 2023. These expulsion operations are carried out by settlers with the tacit support of the Israeli army. The far-right Minister of National Security, Itamar Ben Gvir, has himself launched a campaign to distribute thousands of rifles, notably in the settlements, which will only contribute to the increase in violence.

The Israeli Occupation in the West Bank

In the aftermath of the second intifada, Israeli governments restricted the movement of Palestinian labor and goods within the territories and to Israel, Jordan, and Egypt through a network of metal barriers, trenches, roadblocks, earth mounds, and walls, recurrent curfews, and a clientelist and often corrupt permit system for Palestinian workers. These measures, contrary to the economic agreements born out of Oslo, immediately stifled the Palestinian economy: GDP fell by 35% between 2000 and 2005.

Despite the easing of restrictions in 2007, these measures remain an insurmountable obstacle to economic growth. At the beginning of 2023, 565 obstacles to movement were recorded in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Among these obstacles are 49 checkpoints permanently manned by Israeli forces or private security companies, 139 checkpoints with occasional personnel, 304 roadblocks, earth mounds, and road gates, and 73 earth walls, road barriers, and trenches. Frequent closures of the territories hinder production and trade, discourage foreign investment, and lead to the deindustrialization of the Palestinian economy, accelerated by the destruction of infrastructure during episodes of violence and Israeli military operations. Between 1995 and 2016, the share of the manufacturing sector in economic production decreased from 18% to 12%. 750,000 Palestinians, or 21% of the West Bank population, depend on humanitarian aid from international donors. The cumulative economic cost of tightening Israeli restrictions since 2000 amounts to \$58 billion, more than three times the size of the Palestinian economy in 2021.

The Israeli occupation reaches its peak in Area C, under Israel's exclusive control. While the Palestinian Authority exercises exclusive control over Area A, the West Bank cities representing 20% of the population, and partial control over Area B, the Palestinian villages representing 70% of the population, it has neither civil nor security control over Area C. This area covers 65% of the occupied Palestinian territories, which were to be handed over to the Palestinians in three phases over five years according to the Oslo Accords. The 350,000 Palestinians living there alongside 400,000 Israelis face particularly difficult conditions. Beyond infrastructure destruction, a third of Palestinian communities in Area C lack a primary school. More than 70% of these communities are not connected to a water network and must rely on water from tanks, which is much more expensive. 95,000 people receive less than half of the minimum water quantity recommended by the World Health Organization. Nearly half of the Palestinian communities in Area C report that their access to emergency and basic healthcare is hindered by the long distances to the nearest clinic or the need to pass through checkpoints.

Israeli security policy also relies on mass imprisonments of Palestinians, often violating international law, with indefinitely renewable administrative detentions, systematic convictions, acts of torture, and brutality. One-third of Palestinian men have been imprisoned by Israeli authorities during their lifetime. As of September 2023, Israeli prisons held 4,764 Palestinian political prisoners, including 1,310 administrative detainees and 146 minors. In recent months, before the outbreak of the war, Israeli authorities conducted regular incursions into the West Bank, increasing arrests and indefinitely renewable administrative detentions.

In recent weeks, while the international community's attention is focused on Gaza, settlements have been expanding wildly in the West Bank. Taking advantage of the climate of fear that has gripped the region, settlers are imposing their rule. They establish new outposts, build roads around settlements, and connect them to other homes. Their

goal is to spread terror and expel Palestinians. Their means include arson, vandalism, beatings, and shootings. Nearly 400 Palestinians have been killed since the October 7 attacks by Israeli security forces and settlers. Far from condemning these acts, the Israeli government gives free rein to these extremists. These violent acts open up another front of war for Israel, contributing to the ongoing upheaval in the region.

Flaws and Violations of the Paris Protocol

The Paris Protocol, signed in 1994, established a mechanism for allocating budgetary resources to the Palestinian Authority, intended to foster the emergence of a viable and independent Palestinian economy, supposed to last for an interim period of five years. It relies notably on: (i) a distribution of tax and customs revenues between the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli government (since borders are controlled by the State of Israel, it commits to transferring to the Palestinian Authority the taxes and customs duties collected on goods imported on its behalf each month) and (ii) the parties' commitment to ensure the free movement of workers and goods, with the possibility of limiting flows by quotas.

However, the Paris Protocol paradoxically hinders the development of the Palestinian economy. On the one hand, it establishes a de jure customs union between Israel and the Palestinian territories, whereas a common tariff structure is unsuitable for two incomparable economies—the Palestinian GDP represents 3.6% of Israeli GDP in 2022.

On the other hand, the Palestinian Authority denounces the biased implementation of the Paris Protocol, which results in massive revenue losses. It includes:

- The restriction of goods' movement at borders and within the Occupied Palestinian Territories, effectively creating an asymmetric customs union. The limitation of Palestinian production leads to a trade imbalance, with exports representing 64% of GDP in 2022, and imports estimated at 17.3% of GDP. The Palestinian trade deficit reached 12.2% of GDP in 2022, compared to 8.2% in 2021. Israel is the main market for the Palestinian economy, representing 85% of Palestinian exports and 70% of imports.
- Israeli laxity in collecting income taxes from Palestinian workers employed in Israeli territories and regarding clandestine labor networks.
- Israel's use of fiscal revenues collected on behalf of the Palestinian Authority (clearance revenues) as leverage, even though they represent 65% of the Palestinian Authority's budget. Besides their occasional suspension, such as when Palestine obtained non-member observer status at the UN, Israel withholds 5% to 10% of these revenues due to transfers made by the Palestinian Authority to the families of Palestinian prisoners held by Israel. The Palestinian Authority passes these reductions onto its employees' salaries.
- The excessive amount and lack of transparency of deductions made by Israel on these fiscal revenues (net lending), supposedly corresponding to the cost of services (water, electricity, health) provided to Palestinians by Israel.

A Dependent Palestinian Economy

The development of the Palestinian economy is continually hindered by the Israeli occupation, leading the Palestinian Authority and Palestinians to rely on several external and sometimes volatile sources of income.

- **International Aid:** International aid significantly finances the budget and salaries of the Palestinian Authority's officials. The suspension of aid to UN agencies by the United States under the Trump administration highlights its limitations. From 27% in 2008, this aid represented 1.8% of GDP in 2021.
- **Employment in Israel and Settlements:** Palestinians depend on work in Israel and the settlements. The Palestinian economy creates few jobs, and producers can hardly develop activities in Area C, which holds the most valuable resources such as tourist sites and arable land. In 2022, 13% of West Bank workers were employed in Israel or the settlements, and their income represented 36% of the income of all West Bank workers, and about 20% of the Palestinian GDP. At the end of 2022, the unemployment rate in the West Bank was 12.1%, its lowest rate since 2015, partly due to the increase in the number of Palestinian workers in Israel and the settlements. The Israeli economy employed 193,000 Palestinian workers in 2022, 58.6% of whom had obtained a work permit. The high number of undocumented workers escaping taxation indicates significant revenue losses for the Palestinian Authority due to clandestine labor networks coordinated across forty to fifty recruitment points in Palestine.
- **Spending by Israeli Arabs in the West Bank:** Significant spending by Israeli Arabs in the West Bank contributes to the Palestinian GDP. Facing a housing crisis in Israel, Israeli Arabs invest heavily in West Bank real estate, notably in Jericho Gate, a new neighborhood on the outskirts of the city in the Jordan Valley; Rawabi, the first planned Palestinian city in the West Bank north of Ramallah; Tulkarm and Jenin, where the campuses of the Arab American University are located and nearly half of the students are Israeli; and Rafidia in Nablus.

The Return of War in Gaza and the Collapse of an Already Struggling Territory

While Hamas's attack exposed the shortcomings of Israeli intelligence and military services, half a century of occupation has contributed to a humanitarian disaster, and the past fifteen years have only accelerated a foretold catastrophe. The anger simmering in Gaza for years and the despair of its population failed to alert Israel, its Arab neighbors, or the West.

Gaza's political and geographical isolation has ruined development prospects. The land, air, and sea blockade imposed by Israel since 2007 and the destruction of productive assets during violence episodes have led to the collapse of Gaza's economy, limiting it to commerce, agriculture, and smuggling, primarily cigarette trafficking. The share of industry fell from 19% of GDP in 1994 to 11% in 2020, and agriculture from 12% in 1994 to 6.3% in 2021. Israeli authorities have banned the exploitation of Gaza's gas and oil fields, notably the offshore Gaza Marine natural gas field. Despite recent easing of restrictions

marked by the expansion of the Kerem Shalom crossing for goods and equipment transfers, the number of Gazans authorized to work in Israel remained very limited (14,000) before the war, and coastal restrictions prevented fishermen from accessing parts of the fishing waters allocated by the Oslo Accords. The destruction of the airport by Israel during the second intifada and the refusal to build a port excluded Gaza from international trade. After the blockade was instituted, the number of commercial trucks leaving Gaza drastically decreased, averaging two trucks per month in 2009. Between 2007 and 2018, the economic cost of the occupation and Israeli military operations in Gaza amounted to \$16.7 billion.

The 2007 blockade led to the construction and operation of smuggling tunnels on the Egyptian border, increasing from about twenty in early 2007 to approximately 700 in 2008 and 1,500 in 2013. In 2010, these clandestine imports covered 68% of the goods available in Gaza's markets and up to 90% of construction materials, fuel, and household products. While unofficial on the Egyptian side, smuggling became an essential source of funding for Hamas's budget on the Palestinian side and for the Rafah municipality at the Egyptian border through tunnel licensing fees. The illegal cigarette trade represents a loss of \$700 million annually for the Palestinian Authority. Under the constraints of the Israeli blockade, the institutionalized black market constituted a significant part of the economy, favoring a new class of tunnel owners and merchants but could not be a viable solution to the blockade, especially since Egypt largely curbed it from 2013 onwards.

Heavily dependent on international aid and diaspora transfers, the population suffered from shortages of food, healthcare, electricity, and water, impairing the economy's functioning. In June 2023, the unemployment rate in Gaza was 46.4%, compared to 34.8% in 2006, and 73.9% among young people aged 15 to 29. Women's unemployment was 64% in the second half of 2021, compared to 39% for men. 31% of Gaza households could not afford their children's education. 1.3 million Gazans, or 63% of the population, depended on humanitarian aid largely funded by Qatar, and 72% suffered from food insecurity. The import ban on dual-use goods since 2007 deprived Gaza's economy of necessary materials for construction and infrastructure maintenance damaged by the conflict in a context of high population growth. These restrictions harmed the quality of health, education, water, and sanitation services available in Gaza, although the entry of construction materials under restrictions was facilitated by the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism (GRM) after the 2014 escalation. The population was exhausted by episodes of war. According to the World Health Organization, in 2021, 82% of Gaza's adolescents reported poor or very poor mental well-being.

Population growth exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, where 70% of the population is under 30. The fertility rate is 3.9 children per woman, compared to 3.1 in Israel. The population density combined with the blockade has turned the enclave into an open-air prison. Following political turmoil in Egypt in 2014, Egyptian authorities closed the Rafah crossing for extended periods. Since 2018, this border crossing has been more frequently operational and was open for 138 days out of 212 in the first seven months of 2023. On the Israeli side, the number of exits from Gaza to Israel recorded each year averaged 4,000 people, compared to nearly half a million before the second intifada, mainly workers. From 2014, this number rose to an average of 10,400 exits per month. 90% of Gaza's population has never left the 365 km² enclave. In 2022, Israeli authorities approved only 64% of patient requests to leave Gaza for specialized medical treatment in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Today, Gaza is a true field of ruins. At the end of the first month of the war, the situation

remains critical with insufficient humanitarian aid to meet the population's needs and no additional space to accommodate the growing number of internally displaced persons.

More than 1.7 million people have been displaced, and 60% of homes have been destroyed by Israeli strikes. Over 80% of schools and more than 200 places of worship have been affected. The health situation is critical, with all of Gaza's hospitals out of service except for one. Essential infrastructures such as water and electricity distribution networks are out of order, and a quarter of the enclave's roads have been damaged. Health and protection risks, along with deteriorating humanitarian conditions and the inability to deliver sufficient aid, raise fears of the worst. In recent weeks, an average of 150 trucks entered daily, compared to 500 before the war began, while needs have increased tenfold. Fuel supplies are insufficient and sporadic, though essential for powering hospitals, water desalination plants, food production, and aid distribution.

The Costly Security and Military Policy of Israel

The economic shortfall of a suffocated Palestinian economy, combined with Israel's security policy and now the war in Gaza, is extremely costly for the Jewish state. For Israel, the costs of the war will amount to at least 1.5% of GDP, with the recall of 360,000 reservists (about 10% of the labor force) who will temporarily leave their jobs, the restoration of infrastructure, the risk of a prolonged war, and the rehabilitation of soldiers and victims.

The Israeli Ministry of Finance announces a cost of \$50 billion for 8 months of war in Gaza. Each day of war in Gaza costs at least \$200 million. This high cost is due to Israel's extensive efforts in Gaza and the colossal price of military expenditures. An Israeli F-35 fighter jet costs around \$160 million. An Israeli Merkava-4 tank costs \$5 million. Each Iron Dome interceptor missile costs \$50,000. According to the IDF, an average of 75 rockets were fired daily towards Israel in the first week of December. This equates to an interception cost of at least €3.7 million per day. In 2022, Israel spent 4.5% of its GDP on military expenditures, amounting to \$23.4 billion, which is 123% of the Palestinian GDP for the same year. Military expenditures have increased 2.7 times since 2000 due to a better-armed Hamas. The first eight days of the May 2021 escalation cost Israel as much as the fifty-one days of the 2014 war, averaging \$37 million per day in 2021. In eight days in 2021, Hamas launched 3,500 rockets at Israel, compared to 4,500 over nearly two months in 2014, with each Iron Dome interceptor missile costing between \$50,000 and \$100,000. On October 7, Hamas reportedly launched nearly 3,000 rockets at Israel.

Although the burden of military spending relative to GDP continued to decline below 6% in 2010, Israel's defense burden is now set to massively increase. By comparison, in 2022, EU member states spent an average of 1.6% of GDP on defense.

Financing the Israeli occupation and colonization in Palestinian territories is also extremely costly. The Ministry of Housing heavily subsidizes settlement development, funding subsidized loans, public services, infrastructure, and tax and financial benefits unparalleled in Israeli territory. In December 2021, Israel completed the construction of a wall encircling the Gaza enclave over 65 km at a cost of \$1.1 billion, or 6% of the Palestinian GDP of \$18.0 billion. The total cost of the separation barrier between Israel and the West Bank exceeds \$2 billion, with each kilometer of the barrier costing \$2.56 million.

Installing a solar park in the Negev desert to cover the 600 MW of electricity that Gaza

lacks daily would cost an average of \$2.45 billion, equivalent to only 12 days of war, 25 fighter jets, or 300 tanks. Just two weeks of war savings could end Gaza's electricity shortage that has paralyzed the area for years. 130,000 Palestinians could attend school for a year for the price of a single fighter jet. The rising cost of the status quo and now the war is disastrous for both Israelis and Palestinians compared to the dividends of peace.

The Dividends of Peace: A Win-Win Reconciliation for Israelis and Palestinians

Israeli-Palestinian peace represents a major economic and diplomatic opportunity, beneficial for both Palestine and Israel. The two-state solution is now more than ever the only way out of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The release of Palestinian economic potential would benefit Palestine, Israel, and international investors.

Lifting Israeli restrictions would allow the Palestinian economy to develop based on a skilled workforce and a strong productive fabric, which has been constrained to stagnation by the occupation. With a literacy rate of 98%, Palestinians constitute a qualified and competitive labor force. The workforce is also young, with 70% of the population under 30. Most Palestinian businesses are small and medium-sized family enterprises employing fewer than twenty people, primarily in the trade sector. Large Palestinian companies representing 1% of businesses are connected to the global economy, with partnerships extending to Asia, Europe, the Gulf, and America. This entrepreneurial fabric is largely limited by the blockade and closures implemented by Israel, so foreign direct investment (FDI) represents today 1% of GDP. The lack of international competition also limits Palestinian business investments. Peace would enable the development of this productive fabric and increased investments by many Arab countries supporting Palestine and the Palestinian diaspora, which is more than double the population living in the West Bank and Gaza. Palestinian independence would also reduce costs related to occupation and infrastructure destruction.

Additionally, once Israeli restrictions are lifted, growth would rely on an institutional framework previously created and maintained by the Palestinian Authority, crucial for supporting economic development. In 2013, the PA created a Higher Council for Innovation and Excellence, promoting entrepreneurship and developing the first public Palestinian venture capital fund. A new company law adopted in December 2021, replacing the last one from 1964, facilitates online company formation, eliminates bureaucratic steps, and removes restrictions on foreign investors. The new law also introduces new types of companies, including sole proprietorships and limited liability companies, and creates a legal framework for mergers, acquisitions, and divisions. At the same time, the Palestinian Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technology launched a \$3.5 million e-government initiative to ensure the efficiency and accessibility of online government services. The Palestinian Investment Promotion and Industrial Estates Agency (IPIEA) has identified strategic sectors for Palestinian exports, including industry, stone and marble, tourism, agriculture, food and beverages, including processed meats, textiles and clothing, industry, including furniture and pharmaceuticals, information and communication technology (ICT), and renewable energy.

Beyond its institutional strengths, the future Palestine is full of investment opportunities. Palestinian agriculture, currently limited by water shortages, has significant potential for high-value crops, especially olive oil, fresh fruits and vegetables, herbs, and dates. The

West Bank and Gaza, where the AFD and our consulate in Jerusalem are involved in the renovation and enhancement of the Byzantine St. Hilarion Monastery, have numerous archaeological and historical sites, including four UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Jerusalem, Hebron, Bethlehem, and since September Jericho. In the energy sector, we can mention the progress of solar energy in Gaza, the Marine gas field in Gaza's territorial waters, still unexploited, and the tunnels built, which are ideal storage areas for the cloud. Peace would also allow the development of rail, road, and airport infrastructure in Palestine without fear of destruction and without Israeli roadblocks.

Still modest, the information and communication technology (ICT) sector has great development potential, first based on high mobile network coverage. In 2019, there were 4.3 million mobile subscriptions in the West Bank excluding East Jerusalem and in the Gaza Strip, out of a population of nearly 5 million. While mobile subscriptions increased by 67% in eight years, 82% of Palestinian households owned a smartphone in 2018 - 88% in the West Bank and 73% in Gaza, and social networks had 1.9 million users. However, the transition to 4G, promised by President Biden in July 2022, is still not a reality. The Palestinian innovation ecosystem is gradually developing: from 0.8% of GDP in 2008, the ICT sector now represents 5.9% of GDP and employs nearly 9,200 people. It relies on several incubators and accelerators like the Leaders Association and the Rawabi Tech Hub, seed and support funds like the Ibtikar fund, and Palestinian venture capital and investment funds, with significant resources on a Palestinian scale - more than \$200 million like the sovereign fund Sharakat. Between 2009 and 2019, the number of start-ups created grew by 34% in the Palestinian Territories, with success models like Yamsafer, dedicated to online accommodation booking and ranked fifth in the Forbes 2018 Top 12 emerging companies in the Middle East. The Palestinian innovation ecosystem attracts foreign investors, as evidenced by the Palestine-India Techno Park and the Palestinian Business and Prosperity Centre in cooperation with the Japanese government in the Jericho agro-industrial zone. Israel would equally benefit from the creation of a Palestinian state. Without reconciliation, increasing colonization combined with Israeli occupation will lead to a one-state solution.

In terms of security, the creation of a Palestinian state would be Israel's best guarantee, preventing the development of terrorist organizations capable of striking at any moment like Hamas. The intertwining of Israeli and Palestinian populations is progressing. The apartheid state, fueled by settlement development, has shaped the catastrophe we are currently witnessing and could end the Zionist dream of a Jewish and democratic state, definitively annihilating Israel's message to the world already largely supplanted by the start-up nation myth. Only the ultra-Orthodox and impoverished Palestinians would remain due to a separatist and discriminatory policy, two populations with high fertility rates - 6.7 and 3.9 children per woman respectively, compared to 2.0 for secular Jews and 2.2 for traditional Jews. Moreover, the creation of Palestine would provide Israel with considerable soft power without altering its hard power. Approving the creation of the state and finally respecting international law would restore Israel's image, which has become that of a brutal occupier. Burying the reluctance of Israel's partners regarding their support for this colonial policy, the two-state solution would encourage the development of trade and investment with Europe and Africa, in line with the Abraham Accords.

This would open new markets for Israeli companies and enhance their value. The development of renewable energies in Gaza and the West Bank would allow for the creation of new bilateral partnerships in line with the common desire for energy transition.

Additionally, in terms of security, the cooperation between Palestinian and Israeli institutions established by the Oslo Accords would enhance Israel's ability to combat international terrorism. Finally, ending the blockade would increase trade between the two entities, benefiting both the Palestinian and Israeli economies. Palestine is the natural outlet for Israel, an SME economy that prioritizes exports. The nascent and internationally renowned Palestinian innovation ecosystem would become a partner rather than a competitor, as with India and the United States. The young and qualified Palestinian workforce would meet Israeli labor needs, particularly in the information and communication technology (ICT) sector, with costs comparable to those in India. The Palestinian and Israeli populations would benefit equally from the dividends of peace.

The Time for Peace: Israel and Palestine in the Grip of a Historical Cataclysm or the Unprecedented Opportunity to Create Diplomatic Momentum

The international community has been content with the illusion of a status quo between Israel and Palestine. As peace prospects have receded, Israel's undeniable military superiority and increasing normalization have fostered the belief that the current situation represents a form of solution. With its military asymmetry against various Palestinian armed factions, Israeli defense has managed to contain the conflict for years and shorten sporadic crises. In the eyes of the international community, the conflict had, for several years, resembled a long-standing low-intensity dispute. The October 7 attack overturned everything. The sudden shift into terror disrupted the regional status quo. A series of ruptures at all levels had laid the groundwork for a major upheaval, both within the country and the region.

Is Israel Undermining Its Democratic Foundations?

For over a year and a half, a genuine turning point has been occurring in Israel's history. The coalition in power since early 2023, composed of openly racist, misogynistic, anti-Arab, and homophobic politicians, has dismantled the moral barriers that held the country together. Within Israel itself, an unprecedented rupture has been manifesting for months, with the war erupting in a society already weakened by its fragmentation into two camps: facing the conservatives, ultra-Orthodox, and Jewish supremacists, stands a secular bloc determined to preserve an already fragile democracy.

Each Saturday before the war, hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets in response to the government's proposed reforms. These aimed to give the ruling coalition predominant influence over Israel's structure, eliminating any checks and balances. The proposed reform was set to significantly limit the powers of the Supreme Court, notably stripping it of the ability to overturn fundamental laws passed by Parliament. A simple majority would then have allowed the extremists in power to pass laws. On July 24, the Knesset passed the most controversial measure of this bill. By depriving Supreme Court judges of the power to overturn government decisions deemed "unreasonable," this provision allows the ruling coalition to bypass the fundamental rules of democracy. In a country without a constitution, the Supreme Court was the only body able to oppose executive power. According to the Israel Democracy Institute, two-thirds of Israelis

declared themselves against this bill, and 58% of those polled at the end of July considered the country to be in a state of emergency.

While 2023 and the reform ignited this cultural war, highlighting an unprecedented mobilization capacity, it encapsulates long-standing internal struggles now fracturing the entire country. This is a deep fracture concerning the very definition of the country, its identity, and the existence of a common denominator in the eyes of the people. This crisis, beyond the dangerous shift from a secular model to a religious and reactionary one at the national level, has also caused ruptures regionally. Israel's legitimacy as the region's only democracy has been called into question, and the United States' ability to play its role as a big brother has diminished. Recent months and Netanyahu's destructive war have dealt a fatal blow to Israel's reputation, with much of global opinion now viewing the country as a rogue state disregarding international law.

The Palestinian Issue Sidetracked

International political concerns have overshadowed the Palestinian issue and trivialized the suffering. The appointment on August 12 of the Saudi representative in Jordan as the non-resident ambassador to the Palestinian Territories was celebrated, but it came as normalization between Saudi Arabia and Israel was taking shape, along with the trivialization of oppression. Despite the Israeli Prime Minister's promise to freeze settlement expansion and the signatories' insistence that these agreements would facilitate peace with the Palestinians, de facto annexation continued, pushing the two-state solution further out of reach. Negotiations under U.S. auspices to normalize relations with Saudi Arabia highlighted the Arab countries' neglect of their Palestinian ally. Weakened by the failure of Arab nationalism, stalled negotiations, and the fragmentation of the Palestinian national movement, the historic struggle against Israel had given way to a pragmatic alliance of Sunni countries united with the Jewish state by common security and economic interests.

The Iranian threat had downgraded the Palestinian issue: with the Shiite crescent forming the new fault line of regional geopolitics, Arab countries aimed to form a united front against Iran, also seeking to confine Hamas to Gaza. The Gulf's petro-monarchies preferred the economic opportunities of the startup nation championing new technologies, green energy, and security technologies over supporting an impoverished people and stalled peace negotiations. This disregarded the unconditional support of Arab peoples for the Palestinian cause. From the onset of the Israeli retaliation following the Hamas attack, thousands took to the streets, from Amman to Istanbul, Beirut to Muscat, and Baghdad to Tunis. Arab governments unequivocally condemned the Israeli bombings, presenting a united front, also fearing the wrath of the street. Normalization projects are now on hold, and regional stability will not be achieved without a political solution to the conflict. Furthermore, the disintegration of the Palestinian national movement had undermined negotiation prospects. The Palestinian Authority no longer represents the aspirations of the majority of Palestinian society, challenged on the ground by armed factions, political dissidents, and clans in West Bank cities. According to a June poll by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Research, 80% of the Palestinian population wants President Abbas to resign. The Palestinian Authority's position is deteriorating, with the percentage of those believing its continued existence is in Israel's interest increasing by six points in three months, while half of the respondents think that the collapse or dissolution of the Authority serves Palestinian interests. Before October 7, Hamas managed to play along with

normalization by avoiding attacks on its Israeli neighbor. Excluded from the latest international mediation attempts for peace, Islamist nationalist parties represent a growing share of Palestinian opinion, particularly among the youth: 41% of young Palestinians identify with Islamist factions. With a significant and growing number of Palestinians calling for Mahmoud Abbas's departure, the indefinite postponement of the legislative and presidential elections scheduled for May and July 2021, on the grounds that Israel denied Jerusalem Palestinians the right to vote, had ruled out the prospects of unifying the territories.

Mr. President, we have witnessed an unprecedented headlong rush. The absence of sponsorship capable of regulating regional dynamics has led to the worst. Following the French line for about twenty years, you can witness these upheavals and leave the Palestinian issue in the hands of the American administration, partially ineffective, and the Israeli government, both judge and party. You can also seize this tragic moment to create diplomatic momentum: break French inertia, put the Israeli-Palestinian issue back on the national, European, and international agenda, contribute to the resumption of dialogue, soothe religious and community minorities in France, and work towards peace. Every war offers opportunities, and peace is more necessary than ever.

France, a Legitimate Mediator Distanced by the United States

For years, France's near-passivity on the Israeli-Palestinian issue granted the United States the role of the sole mediator in the Middle East. However, examples from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Iran have revealed the limitations of American diplomacy in the region, and its legitimacy on the Israeli-Palestinian issue, where it is both judge and party, is in question. Following the failure of the latest American mediation attempts—Oslo Accords (1993), the Roadmap (2005), the Annapolis Conference (2007), and the negotiation cycle initiated by John Kerry (2013)—the relocation of the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in 2018 and the peace plan proposed by Trump in 2020 gave a free pass to the continuation of Israeli settlements, ending Palestinian hopes for negotiated peace. Sponsored by the United States, the Abraham Accords with the UAE and Bahrain, and subsequent normalization agreements with Morocco, Sudan, and recently Saudi Arabia, have sidelined the Palestinian issue and resulted in international acceptance of the status quo. These agreements are a significant advancement, but Israel's security guarantees rely on broader normalization with all Arab and Muslim countries in exchange for progress on the conflict, modeled on the Arab Peace Initiative. Without a lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Abraham Accords remain fragile. Recent violence will have serious consequences in the region, potentially leading to their collapse, similar to the second intifada when Arab countries that had normalized ties with Israel severed them. Absent this broader framework, the unwavering U.S. support has allowed the Israeli government to apply the three noes of the Khartoum Resolution, formerly directed by Arab countries at Israel: no peace with Palestine, no recognition of Palestine, no negotiations with Palestine. The result of such a policy is evident: war and the uprising of a significant part of the world against the West.

France, particularly with European countries, can lead the path to stopping the war and achieving peace. Mr. President, your recent visits to the Middle East have demonstrated your determination to propose solutions acceptable to all parties, both immediate to end

the war and long-term to bring various actors to the negotiation table and resolve the conflict.

The successive visits of Yair Lapid and Mahmoud Abbas last year are symbolic and constructive: both Palestinians and Israelis recognize you as a reliable and indispensable interlocutor. Both Palestinians and Israelis expect France to combat resignation, inertia, and acclimatization. With its balanced strategic positioning, a pillar of the European Union, France must lead the resumption of dialogue and, if necessary, dictate equitable solutions to address Israel's security interests and the legitimate national aspirations of the Palestinians.

History grants you this mandate. France has maintained unique ties with Israel since its independence in 1948. The Fourth Republic fostered the young Jewish state: in 1956, Israel agreed to provide France with intelligence on the Algerian resistance in exchange for extensive cooperation on arms sales. The failed campaign against Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1956 strengthened Franco-Israeli ties, followed by secret nuclear cooperation between our two states. Also, let us recall that the Mirage III planes delivered to Israel by France enabled it to win the Six-Day War.

To this day, successive governments maintain a balanced stance towards Israelis and Palestinians. This is the result of the turning point initiated by General de Gaulle in French diplomacy in the Middle East. As the end of colonization led to a dual immigration of more religious Jewish and Muslim populations marked by the colonial war in 1962, Charles de Gaulle sought to display strict neutrality during the Six-Day War. Ten days after the end of hostilities, he defined what would become the lasting French doctrine before becoming the stance of the UN Security Council: "France does not accept any changes made on the ground by military action," while public opinion remained predominantly pro-Israel. The first Western head of state to advocate for a Palestinian state, President Mitterrand also orchestrated the rescue of PLO leaders besieged in Beirut by the Israeli army and officially welcomed Yasser Arafat to Paris in May 1989, thus granting him international legitimacy and cementing a balanced diplomacy.

Since Mitterrand's famous speech at the Knesset in March 1982, all French presidents have made official visits to Israel and the Palestinian Territories: Jacques Chirac in October 1996, Nicolas Sarkozy recognized Palestine as a UNESCO member state in June 2008, François Hollande in November 2013, and you, Mr. President, in January 2021. These visits and meetings during Auschwitz liberation commemorations have left an indelible mark on me.

Successive French governments have tried to maintain a balanced relationship towards Palestinians and Israelis. Paradoxically, France's diplomatic role with Israelis and Palestinians has stagnated. After the second intifada, French and European openings to Israel—strategic dialogue, strengthening the EU-Israel link, creation of the Union for the Mediterranean—hit the intransigence of successive Israeli governments. Note that Israel suspended association councils with the EU, held annually since 1995, between 2013 and 2022, protesting the EU's decision to distinguish settlements from the rest of Israel for European funding or cooperation. The Paris Peace Conference for the Middle East on January 15, 2017, organized by former Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault, caused no stir. We failed to follow up on the conference organized with Laurent Fabius, attended by Israeli and Palestinian ministers, leading to a water agreement in June 2014. France's involvement in resolving the conflict in recent years boils down to a UN Security Council

resolution proposal condemning the escalation of violence in the Middle East and calling for a ceasefire between Israel and Palestinians on May 18, 2021, supported by Egypt, Jordan, and Tunisia. Successive presidents' official visits to Israel and the West Bank resemble routine visits. French presidents' speeches at the Knesset follow and resemble each other.

French diplomacy has seemed to accept the status quo for years. Recalling its commitment to the two-state solution and waiting for Israelis and Palestinians to return to the negotiating table was not enough.

Peace efforts do not wait for France. In October 2022, Israel and Lebanon signed a maritime border delimitation agreement. France played a constructive role, but Israeli-American envoy Amos Hochstein was the linchpin, and the Israeli military and army were its most fervent advocates, as it guarantees Israeli security. A similar agreement between Israelis and Palestinians was in the offing regarding the Marine gas field off Gaza before the war. The U.S. also sponsors ongoing negotiations between Egyptians, Israelis, and Palestinians. The project was discussed in Paris with Prime Minister Lapid and President Abbas, yet French diplomacy is absent. Total will exploit the Cana field and intends to obtain the Marine exploitation too. French companies know how to position themselves. We hope France will play a constructive role.

The French government maintains a balanced relationship with both Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Its membership in the UN Security Council, the European Union, and NATO seals its legitimacy in peace negotiations. Mr. President, the time has come to position yourself as the initiator of peace in the Middle East.

Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna recalled this during the conference of ambassadors last year. Israel's security goes hand in hand with our commitment to international law and with affirming an equal right to dignity and sovereignty for Israelis and Palestinians, meaning a two-state solution, the only desirable one. Today, our blindness has ensured neither Israel's security, as we saw on October 7, nor respect for international law.

Mr. President, this is the essence of combat diplomacy: not to abandon France to an external threat, not to abandon friendly countries to a destructive and suicidal war spiral, not to abandon our values. At the heart of our country and in times of conflagration, the Israeli-Palestinian issue deserves this fight.

France must lead bold and effective European diplomacy on this issue, in line with the European Union's growing geopolitical role. The first clear stance on the issue dates back to the Venice Declaration adopted by the European Council in June 1980. The declaration calls for Euro-Arab dialogue, particularly political, and recognizes the right to existence and security of regional states. It affirms the right of all countries in the region "to live in peace within secure, recognized, and guaranteed borders" and recognizes the Palestinians' right to self-determination. By this declaration, the nine member states ask Israel to cease territorial occupation since 1967, affirm the illegality of Israeli settlements under international law, and reject any unilateral initiative to change Jerusalem's status.

Reaffirmed several times by the European Council, the European position has remained a dead letter despite the EU's growing geopolitical role. Europe has often explained the apparent paradox between the strength of its discourse and the weakness of its action by the inextricable nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The European inertia is actually explained by the lack of unity and determination in foreign policy. To overcome the

divergences of the twenty-seven countries, European diplomacy has chosen the lowest common denominator: development and humanitarian aid to Palestinians. The sad result of this path is alignment with American diplomacy and powerful lobbies financed by states and private donors. Mr. President, we propose that you choose the path of bold European diplomacy. France can lead the member states on the path to peace. To break European inertia, we alone have the right diplomatic posture.

France's diplomatic presence in the Middle East cements its strategic position to play the role of a determined mediator, with the perspective of creating a new, peaceful, and united space inspired by Europe. Former Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid and UAE President Mohammed bin Zayed chose France for their first official overseas visit. The visits to Paris by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in July 2022 and February 2023 mark the strategic importance of French diplomacy for our Arab partners.

Between the periods 2011-2015 and 2016-2020, French arms exports increased by 44%, and France is now the third-largest arms exporter, notably to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. Mr. President, your visits to Beirut and Baghdad in 2020 and your mediation initiative between Tehran and Washington on the sidelines of the G7 summit in Biarritz in 2019 have impressed upon the international community your desire to regain a significant political and diplomatic role in the Middle East. While you highlighted the difficulties encountered in this region during your speech to the ambassadors a few weeks ago, you also reiterated your intention to reengage with several countries in the Near and Middle East by consolidating an intergovernmental relaunch agenda with the entire region.

Following the attack on October 7, you embodied this commitment by using your ability to speak to all parties. Your visits illustrated your determination to propose solutions acceptable to everyone, both immediate measures to end the war and long-term strategies to bring various actors to the negotiation table. Mr. President, your relentless efforts to encourage negotiations between Russia and Ukraine demonstrate your determination to contribute to peace. You understand better than anyone the sensitivity that characterizes the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Always highly attuned to developments in the Israeli-Palestinian situation, French public opinion has supported the Palestinian cause since the second intifada.

This was not always the case. Previously unanimously supportive of Israel, a portion of French opinion began questioning Israeli policy from 1967, when the debate on the colonial nature of Zionism emerged with an article by Maxime Rodinson. In 1958, 58% of French people felt sympathy for Israel compared to 2% for Arab countries; by January 1970, only 33% expressed support for Israel, and 6% for Arab countries. The conflict then violently reverberated in France through a series of hostage-takings, assassinations, and attacks. After the Munich attack, the assassination of the first Fatah emissary in France, Mahmoud Hamchari, on December 8, 1972, and then his successor in 1977 contributed to the emergence of another opinion in the public debate.

After the failure of the Oslo peace process and the Camp David negotiations, the second intifada completed the shift in opinion towards the Palestinian cause, as images of Palestinian children throwing stones at Israeli tanks circulated. During the violent Israeli operation "Defensive Shield" in April 2002, there were 103 recorded anti-Jewish acts. Disadvantaged and racially victimized suburban youth committing antisemitic acts identified with the Palestinians, abandoned by Western powers and forced into violent

struggle. Immediately after the anti-American attacks of September 11, 2001, there were 65 recorded antisemitic acts, and 63 during the Iraq war in March and April 2003.

After the attack on October 7, Israel enjoyed significantly greater sympathy (37%) compared to the Palestinian Authority (20%) or Hamas (5%), according to Ifop. However, trends show a softening of public opinion divides, influenced by images of bombings in the Gaza Strip. In recent days, sympathy for Israel has significantly decreased (25%), while antipathy towards the Israeli state has slightly increased (14%). Concurrently, Hamas has seen a reduction in antipathy towards it (55%), while the Palestinian Authority has recorded a drop in sympathy (14%). Additionally, the declared goal of Israel to eliminate Hamas from Gaza is perceived as less justifiable by French public opinion.

More than twenty years after the second intifada, the omnipresence of media and social networks amplifies the impact of the conflict in France, and community passions flare up with each new crisis. Fear is palpable among Jewish communities, victims of increasing antisemitic acts, and there is hatred towards Israel and antisemitism among some Muslim communities. A growing minority of French Jews are emigrating to Israel. French public opinion desires appeasement on this issue, which has been at the heart of public debate for years; French Muslims expect government mobilization in favor of the Palestinian cause; Jewish citizens seek a gesture for their protection. Mr. President, the majority of French people, whether Jewish, Muslim, or neither, refuse instrumentalization. They will not become agents of a hateful fracture within French society. French Jews are not the Israeli government. French Muslims are not Hamas. Divergences on the Israeli-Palestinian question never justify antisemitism, Islamophobia, and rejection of the other.

In 20 years, diplomatic initiatives have multiplied. Dozens of special envoys, mediators, and international experts have been requisitioned. Like the Peace Day Effort organized in September in New York, hundreds of seminars, workshops, and round tables have been arranged without succeeding in improving the lives of Palestinians or establishing a climate of peace. Since October 7, we have been witnessing, powerless, the disastrous consequences of these numerous yet futile efforts.

It is now essential to envision the peace process through the lens of individuals and civil societies on both sides. This is also what I propose to you. Young people, women, and all components of Israeli and Palestinian societies must be brought to the negotiation table.

Mr. President, by committing to Israeli-Palestinian peace and ending this deadly escalation in the Near East, you show both Jewish and Muslim communities in France that you are attentive to the concerns of each, and that France can play a crucial role in revitalizing the political process between Israel and Palestine.

European inertia has endorsed the continuation of Israeli colonization and occupation and tolerated for years the deterioration of the parameters of a two-state solution that France claimed to defend. Friend of Israelis, friend of Palestinians, France must set a new dynamic on the Israeli-Palestinian question within the international community through a dual movement mobilizing civil society and political actors.

Part II - The Toolbox

1. Gaza First

The responsibility for managing Gaza in the aftermath of the war presents a complex issue given the extent of the damage and the distress of the population. A national unity government with control by the Palestinian Authority should be established with the support of a multinational force composed of Arab countries such as Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia. This initiative should also benefit from the supervision of the UN or NATO to ensure stability and security in the region. Once the weapons fall silent, massive reconstruction and investment will be needed.

On one hand, in terms of infrastructure: a seaport, the reconstruction of the airport, a 40 km railway to connect the south and north of Gaza, another 70 km line between northern Gaza and the southern West Bank, desalination plants, and power plants. Hospitals and schools will need to be rebuilt. An industrial zone at the border between Gaza and Israel could employ thousands of Palestinians. In agreement with Egypt, the exploitation of gas and oil fields off the enclave could provide a significant financial windfall. Territorial expansion of Gaza (45 km²) towards Sinai (60,000 km²) in exchange for the cancellation of part of Egypt's debt could be negotiated.

On the other hand, in terms of human development: two million Gazans are traumatized. Deprived of their own state, they will need solid and continuous support to recover and become citizens rather than refugees. An emergency universal basic income could be granted to ensure economic autonomy. For a year, the population could receive a monthly income until they can reintegrate productively. This plan would obviously require international aid, which we can afford.

Gaza's youth must play a central role in building a resilient, inclusive, and sustainable society. An exchange of skills and practices among experts should be organized when the time for reconstruction comes. We will need common frameworks to bring together Palestinian and Israeli teachers, business people, doctors, and community leaders. The creation of interconnected expertise networks will ensure a community capable of resisting the pressures of fanatics.

Humanitarian aid practiced for decades has shown its limits. The mission of UNRWA has become obsolete. Its activities, though necessary, allow states passivity and do not encourage the strengthening of the Palestinian Authority. UNRWA should no longer be the mechanism perpetuating the precarious refugee status that Palestinians cling to. It has been a lesser evil solution providing vital services to the failing Palestinian population. However, it is on the level of political negotiation that the issue of Palestinian refugees must now be resolved.

2. Recognize Palestine Now!

The immeasurable human suffering of recent weeks and the urgent situation compel us to overturn the current paradigm. Recognize the State of Palestine and provide security assurances to Israel first, then negotiate. This courageous decision will send a strong signal to the international community. France, with its history and influence, is capable of delivering this powerful message and leading European nations in the same direction. In December 2014, the National Assembly and the Senate adopted a resolution to recognize the State of Palestine, as 139 countries have already done, but the executive branch did not follow through. Recognizing the State of Palestine will act as a true catalyst to revive peace negotiations, guarantee the security and dignity of Palestinians and Israelis, and envision a future where two states coexist in peace and security.

The two-state solution seemed never closer than during the opening of peace negotiations in the late 1980s, as the first intifada questioned the sustainability of Israel's control over the West Bank and Gaza. The principle of the two-state solution continued to guide subsequent cycles of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations in 2007 and 2013. Today, the return of war and the stalemate in peace negotiations lead parties to despair of this outcome for the conflict. The development of settlements brings Israel closer every day to a suicidal binational state, entangling Israeli and Palestinian populations and territories. Increasingly, voices seem to be calling for a binational state solution. While a binational state could only be an apartheid state or in civil war, the two-state solution respecting the principles of self-determination remains the only viable peace option. Support for this solution, however, has seen a significant decline, from 43% among Palestinians and 44% among Israelis in 2020 to 33% among Palestinians and 35% among Israelis in 2023.

Hundreds of negotiation cycles have an advantage: we know the solutions for peace. For each so-called thorny issue of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, there are ten winning solutions for both Israelis and Palestinians. Take the issue of borders: after the Six-Day War, the adoption of UN Resolution 242, calling for Israel's withdrawal from territories occupied during the war in exchange for recognition by Arab states, enshrined the principle of "land for peace." Today, territorial exchanges between Israel and the future Palestine constitute an acceptable solution for Israel to retain most of its settlements without Palestine losing territory. Mr. President, only boldness and political impetus are lacking.

It is crucial to remind at all times that the two-state solution remains the only viable option for fairness between two peoples with legitimate national aspirations. Still sought by the majority of the population, only this solution will guarantee Israel's security. Moreover, it is crucial to act accordingly, and swiftly.

If the Israeli government refuses to engage in a peace process leading to agreements and the birth of a Palestinian state, we must consider stopping the financing of the Israeli occupation. The international community has injected \$50 billion in public donations for Palestinians over the past twenty years. If it had conditioned these aids, Israeli authorities would have had to reconsider their policy of suffocating the Palestinian economy, especially in Gaza.

On one hand, these aids, anchored in a post-Oslo framework disconnected from current reality, do not fulfill their function. Designed as contributions to peacebuilding, they incessantly clash with the Israeli occupation. According to the World Bank, if donors had increased aid by \$2 billion between 2003 and 2004, poverty would have decreased by 7%, while it would have decreased by 15% with the easing of Israeli restrictions. In Gaza, the majority of the population depends on international aid, which has become permanent emergency humanitarian allocations. In the West Bank, these political aids are insufficient to build the parameters of a viable state.

On the other hand, these donations allow successive Israeli governments to continue their expansionist security policy without bearing the economic and social costs. When Israeli authorities destroy infrastructure, international donors rebuild it. Nearly a quarter of the 911 infrastructures destroyed in 2021 by the Israeli army were financed by international aid.

In Gaza, the Western international community has spent \$5.7 billion in aid, with Qatar also being a significant contributor, since the beginning of the blockade. By the end of 2022, 60% of Gaza's population lived below the poverty line. The return of war has finished off a territory already in agony. International aid has prevented Gaza's inhabitants from starving and relieved Israel of its responsibilities as an occupying power under the Fourth Geneva Convention. Between 2007 and 2018, the economic cost of occupation and Israeli military operations in Gaza amounted to \$16.7 billion.

Transforming destructive assistance into contributions to development and progress requires greater involvement of Palestinian civil society and businesses in planning. The West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem are full of educated Palestinians, aware of local realities, rich in innovative ideas, and with a vision for Palestine. These entrepreneurs, teachers, opinion leaders must participate in the programming of aid from conception to implementation. Today, aid is still intimately linked to the long-buried Oslo Accords. On one hand, local agencies mostly cooperate with the Palestinian Authority, which no longer represents the aspirations of a large part of the population, hence the importance of involving more representatives of Palestinian civil society. On the other hand, international organizations favor long-standing partnerships and organizations adapting to their requirements, promoting minimal flexibility. International aid must take a step back and detach from its original political vocation to better meet the current aspirations and realities of Palestinians.

Stopping destructive assistance will confront Israel with its responsibility as an occupying power. If the international community had conditioned its aid, Israeli authorities would have had to reconsider their policy of suffocating the Palestinian economy, especially in Gaza, aware of the security threat fueled by the worsening humanitarian and economic crisis of the enclave.

Within the mission you have entrusted to me and the confidence you have placed in me, I have met numerous Israeli and Palestinian actors, presidents, current and former prime ministers, military personnel, intelligence members, parliamentarians, civil society representatives, opinion leaders, from the economic, cultural, and scientific worlds. I can assure you that if France convinces at least one Arab or Muslim state to recognize Israel, Israeli decision-makers - including former prime ministers, ministers, influential public figures - and Jewish opinion leaders worldwide will support French recognition of Palestine and West Jerusalem as Israel's capital, followed by many states including the European Union.

The prospect of a two-state solution has been receding since the failure of the Oslo Accords. The war ravaging the Gaza Strip has shattered hopes of reconciliation. The Palestinian Authority constitutes a meager substitute for a state, and the growing occupation and colonization implemented by Israel undermine the viability of a future Palestine. The principle of transitional autonomy for Palestine having failed, the full recognition of the State of Palestine could instantly revive negotiations.

France must overturn the paradigm on the permanent status of peace: recognize the State of Palestine and provide security assurances to Israel first, then negotiate. Let us organize discreet meetings with Israeli, Palestinian, and Arab decision-makers to encourage reconciliation. The negotiation will take place based on the solutions repeatedly found for peace.

3. Encourage Arab and Muslim States to Recognize Israel

The isolation of Israel has led to a series of harmful consequences by depriving Arab countries of a positive influence on the conflict and reinforcing mistrust within Israeli society, already facing hostility from neighboring countries. This exclusionary logic has also contributed to fragmenting Arab societies, creating divisions between pro-Israel countries and those fiercely opposed to the Jewish state.

The recognition of Israel by Arab countries represents a potential strategic pivot in the region, offering a pathway to security for Israel and its neighbors. By recognizing Israel, Arab countries would send a strong message of stability, thereby helping to ease regional tensions and promote mutual trust. This recognition could also foster a climate conducive to the peaceful resolution of territorial and political disputes, offering prospects for lasting peace in the region.

Such recognition could stimulate regional economic development by facilitating trade exchanges, regional integration, investments, and partnerships between Israel and Arab countries. It would open up new opportunities for collaboration in key sectors such as technology, innovation, and energy, benefiting all populations in the region.

The Abraham Accords represent a significant advancement but must be contextualized within the framework of the Arab Peace Initiative. Israel will only achieve peace after the recognition of Palestine and its recognition by all Arab and Muslim countries. Recent months have highlighted the dramatic risks of ignoring the Palestinian issue. In the current political context of the Middle East and on the international stage, Arab nations are in a position to play a crucial role in facilitating the cessation of violence between Israelis and Palestinians to develop a negotiation framework aimed at resolving the conflict, supported by regional and international actors. A new Arab Peace Initiative must be rearticulated with clearer language, and Saudi Arabia's role must be paramount.

4. Call for Presidential and Legislative Elections in Palestine as Soon as Possible

While Israelis are dealing with a unity government between the right and the far right, Palestinians today have an authoritarian and corrupt government. In power since 2005, Mahmoud Abbas indefinitely postponed the legislative and presidential elections scheduled for May and July 2021, citing Israel's denial of voting rights to Palestinians in Jerusalem. The collapse of the Palestinian Authority has contributed to the frustration and radicalization of Palestinians, who have turned to armed Islamist factions. Yet, the Palestinian Authority is the only entity capable of uniting Palestinians.

The Hamas attacks on Israel and the ensuing war have reshuffled an already complex deck. While many uncertainties remain about the governance of Gaza post-war, the end of Hamas rule is certain. The Palestinian Authority is seen as the only entity that can bring unity and reconstruction to Gaza and the West Bank, but this solution will not be accepted by Palestinians without fundamental changes, including the departure of Abbas and the holding of elections within a comprehensive peace process.

Leader Marwan Barghouti, incarcerated for two decades for attacks he has always denied, has maintained a firm stance against Israel while being open to talks. He represents hope for the Palestinian population and could become a symbol of unity. Despite his imprisonment, he has continued to actively influence Palestinian politics.

In 2006, he played a key role in drafting the Prisoners' Document of National Accord, a joint initiative by imprisoned leaders from various Palestinian factions, including Fatah, Islamic Jihad, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), and Hamas. This accord aimed to strengthen Palestinian political unity. The document advocated for the creation of a Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders, limiting Palestinian resistance to the occupied territories of 1967, adhering to a mutual ceasefire, and calling for resistance against occupation in accordance with international law. The goal was to form a coalition government to overcome the political deadlock following Hamas's victory in the legislative elections in Gaza.

By advocating for Marwan Barghouti's release, France would demonstrate its commitment to lasting peace in Palestine, encouraging dialogue between concerned parties and supporting efforts towards Palestinian political reunification. A democratic process is absolutely necessary to restore confidence in a potential Palestinian government, especially since there are popular candidates to succeed Mahmoud Abbas.

Mr. President, by publicly calling for new elections in Palestine, you would demonstrate a heightened awareness of the Palestinian political situation and send a positive signal to both Israelis and Palestinians. France must seize the political space created by the imminent end of Mahmoud Abbas's reign. Peace can no longer be dependent on the political timelines of various parties; it has been so for too long. Marwan Barghouti's notable popularity in both Gaza and the West Bank makes him a real bulwark against a militarized Hamas. While his release and potential political rise may provoke strong opposition in both Israel and within the Palestinian Authority, this option could counteract the inevitability of a long-term armed conflict and numerous human losses.

5. Encourage National Unity in Palestine

The violence and barbarity of the October 7 attack compel us to condemn Hamas terrorists. After months of silence and restraint, their militants spread terror by massacring hundreds of Israeli civilians before the horrified eyes of the world. Mr. President, you have reiterated: nothing, ever, justifies terrorism.

Last year, we warned: it is illusory to think of orchestrating peace negotiations in Palestine without including organizations and personalities that thrive among significant segments of the population. Peace can only be made with one's enemies. Hamas will not disappear, as we know. Its military wing will undoubtedly be weakened in Gaza, but its political branch and ideas will persist and continue to represent a large part of public opinion in Palestine.

From this point, Europe has two options: continue to bury its head in the sand by categorically refusing dialogue with Islamists, or attempt to achieve lasting peace in the Middle East by accepting to bring together all leaders soon to prepare for a return to dialogue. This dialogue must, of course, take place with clear and firm conditions: the immediate cessation of violence and terrorism, the dismantling of the organization's military wing, and the recognition of agreements signed with Israel.

We saw during the release of the first Israeli hostages: communication channels exist. Qatar and Egypt have pivotal roles and could be strong mediators to initiate discussions with Hamas political leaders. Today, efforts are being made by Fatah and the PLO to integrate the organization's political wing. Hamas cannot continue to exist in its current form. It must change its name, charter, and leaders. Simultaneously, strengthening the Palestinian Authority is essential. It alone must control Gaza and the West Bank with the help of the international community.

6. Transform UNRWA

A lasting peace in the Middle East cannot be achieved without addressing the fate of the 6 million Palestinian refugees registered with UNRWA. The challenge of Palestinian refugees and their right of return has often hindered peace agreements due to the lack of political will to tackle it with justice and firmness.

Mr. President, only a genuine political compromise will end the suffering of Palestinian refugees and ensure lasting peace in the Middle East.

In 1948, the Arab-Israeli war caused the exile of at least 750,000 Palestinians. To address this crisis, the international community created UNRWA in 1949, designating the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. Originally, the agency aimed to provide employment programs and humanitarian assistance to refugees. Today, its activities have evolved in line with human development principles and focus on education (58%), health (15%), support services (13%), relief and social services (6%), and infrastructure and camp improvements (4%). Its staff is 99% Palestinian, making the organization a significant source of employment for refugees.

UNRWA was initially intended as a temporary solution with a mandate of only three years. It is the only UN entity directly dependent on the UN General Assembly. Today, over 70

years later, UNRWA still operates. It has been a measure to alleviate Palestinian suffering but is not suited to solving the refugee problem.

Mr. President, it is time to end a temporary solution that has lasted for over 70 years. A real plan for refugees must emerge, ending UNRWA and offering refugees a perspective for the future.

Today, UNRWA registers nearly 6 million beneficiaries. It administers 58 camps with approximately 1.5 million refugees in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem. While UNRWA's work in these camps is crucial, it appears unsustainable in the long term. The number of refugees continues to increase due to the intergenerational transmission of refugee status. UNRWA is responsible for granting this status. However, UNRWA struggles to provide the necessary services to its 6 million beneficiaries, compared to less than a million at its inception. The agency faces an unprecedented financial crisis. In June 2023, UNRWA was already operating with a deficit of over \$75 million. The situation has only deteriorated since October 7.

Numerous incidents have marred UNRWA's credibility and weakened its position of neutrality on the international stage. Accusations include the politicization of UNRWA, particularly through its school programs, which can incite hatred against Israel. Furthermore, the recent scandal involving 12 UNRWA employees in the October 7 attack has fueled accusations of ties to terrorism. The weakening of UNRWA's legitimacy exacerbates its funding difficulties and the hostility it faces internationally.

Since its inception, the organization has suffered from internal contradictions in its mandate. UNRWA is supposed to provide humanitarian aid to refugees while preparing a solution with regional states to end international assistance. But this solution is far from clear. UN General Assembly resolutions, on which UNRWA depends, oscillate between the possibility of reintegrating refugees into Arab states and preserving their right of return, to which Palestinians adhere, symbolized by UN General Assembly Resolution 194 (III). Its ambiguous mandate, coupled with the weakness of international multilateralism on the Israeli-Palestinian issue, has led UNRWA to a process of political autonomy. UNRWA has become a symbol of a violated right of return for the Palestinian community, which crystallizes around its function of granting refugee status. Consequently, any attempt to reform the UN agency is fraught with difficulty. The same applies to a redistribution plan including the reintegration of some refugees into Arab states. UNRWA perpetuates the illusion of a right of return for 6 million Palestinian refugees, which is impossible in the current situation. In this sense, UNRWA has become an obstacle to peace. The reintegration of some refugees into Arab states, although painful, is now to consider.

UNRWA serves as a crutch for the cowardice of the international community, which has turned a blind eye to the Palestinian refugee issue since 1948. Thus, it becomes part of the problem rather than the solution. Its activities, however crucial, allow states to remain passive and do not encourage the strengthening of the Palestinian Authority. UNRWA should no longer be the mechanism for perpetuating the precarious refugee status to which Palestinians cling. It has been a lesser evil solution, providing vital services to the distressed Palestinian population. However, the issue of Palestinian refugees must be resolved through political negotiations.

Mr. President, thinking about the future must be centered around a fair and realistic peace plan. A fundamental prerequisite for a lasting outcome is the strengthening of the

Palestinian Authority and its return to Gaza. This is the only viable solution that excludes both total Israeli domination over Gaza and the return of Hamas to power.

A lasting peace agreement requires the return of refugees to autonomous Palestinian territories or their integration into Arab states willing to welcome them, whether the state in which they reside or a third country.

A transfer of responsibilities must be made from UNRWA to the Palestinian Authority in Gaza and the West Bank and to the Arab states that will host the refugees. This transfer must be gradual to avoid harming the refugees and destabilizing the region. UNRWA plays a key role in humanitarian support, health, and education. Its removal without a replacement for its activities would only penalize Palestinians and bolster Hamas's popularity. A balance must be found for the continuity of essential activities provided by UNRWA. The transfer could start with activities furthest from its original mission of work and relief, so that UNRWA is confined to emergency humanitarian assistance before disappearing or remaining confined to this role.

The transfer of responsibilities must be territorially phased to account for differences in the treatment of refugees based on host countries.

In Jordan, UNRWA's responsibilities can be gradually transferred to the Jordanian government.

In Palestinian territories, UNRWA's responsibilities should be delegated to a strengthened Palestinian Authority equipped with the means to govern.

In Syria and Lebanon, the refugee issue is more complex due to their difficult relations with governments and the discrimination they face. Negotiations can be initiated with governments to encourage them to integrate refugees within their countries. Meanwhile, a solution for reintegrating refugees into third states or Palestinian territories should also be considered. UNRWA would continue its activities in this area until a political solution is found.

For this, a portion of international aid should be progressively redirected from UNRWA to an international fund for the reintegration of refugees and to the Palestinian Authority.

As for refugee status, it would gradually end as host countries' nationalities are obtained. All refugees who wish to would benefit from Palestinian nationality and could return to autonomous Palestinian territories.

The issue of the right of return to the State of Israel remains thorny. Currently, it is inconceivable for Israel to accept the return of 6 million registered refugees within its territory. Insisting on this would erase any prospects for a lasting peace in the Middle East. However, the modalities of the return of some Palestinians to Israeli territory can be determined in reasonable proportions in accordance with international law.

The issue of reparations is also crucial. It must be considered in line with international law principles to address the harm done to Palestinians.

UNRWA's cooperation for this new peace plan is necessary given its unparalleled expertise in the humanitarian management of refugees. This transition plan must be carried out with, not against, UNRWA, which should be a major player in its transformation.

This new peace plan would end the tragedy experienced by refugees for over 70 years while strengthening the Palestinian Authority and working towards a two-state solution.

Mr. President, the stagnation of the current refugee situation is a threat to peace throughout the Middle East. A redistribution plan for refugees is a necessary step for building peace and healing the sufferings of both Palestinians and Israelis.

7. France, the Locomotive of Europe

Mr. President, we witnessed the aftermath of the Hamas attacks on Israel: the position of the European Union remained inaudible due to the cacophony among its member states.

This situation was highlighted after the unexpected announcement of the halt, and then the quick reactivation, of development aid to the Palestinians. Ursula von der Leyen's visit to Israel, where she expressed strong solidarity with Benjamin Netanyahu's government, contributed to this confusion by partially neglecting concerns about Palestinian civilians. This approach drew critical reactions from many member states and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs. To clarify the European position, the leaders of the twenty-seven member states had to reaffirm their support for Israel's right to defend itself in compliance with humanitarian and international law.

The European Union holds significant responsibility for what is happening in the Middle East. Despite having historical influence in the region and its conflicts, and despite its numerous declarations supporting the two-state solution, it has failed to exert effective pressure on the parties to bring them to the negotiating table. Yet, this pressure could have been applied using the massive economic leverage of the European Commission, which injects millions of euros into the Palestinian economy each year. The EU's consensus-based decision-making process among its member states has slowed and limited its ability to take decisive political action on the conflict. It must now intensify its diplomatic efforts and use its economic leverage to encourage Israel and Palestine to seriously engage in peace talks. Against European inertia on the Israeli-Palestinian issue, a single voice for twenty-seven member states would compel Israel to take action.

Mr. President, you can lead a united and unifying action, coherent and effective. Beyond a domino effect recognition of Palestine, with France at the forefront, why not consider a single European diplomatic representation encompassing all others, or a European Development Agency (EDA) modeled after AFD to replace the sometimes discordant national and international agencies?

The European Union must also initiate a resolution at the United Nations Security Council. A resolution on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict proposed by the European Union would clarify European countries' support for the Palestinians, currently diluted in billions of euros of aid. A single-voice resolution would bring the Israeli-Palestinian issue back to the forefront and demonstrate to Israel the increased scrutiny of its actions.

8. Review the Paris Protocol

The Paris Protocol, signed in 1994, established a mechanism for allocating budgetary resources to the Palestinian Authority, intended to be temporary and aimed at fostering the emergence of a viable and independent Palestinian economy. It includes: (i) the distribution of tax and customs revenues between the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli government (with borders controlled by Israel, it commits to transferring taxes and customs duties collected on imports for the Palestinian Authority); (ii) the parties' commitment to ensure the free movement of workers, with the possibility of limiting flows by quotas; (iii) the creation of a bilateral decision-making body on the agreement's implementation (Joint Economic Committee) and technical committees (on water, energy, finance, transportation, communication, trade, and industry).

On one hand, the Paris Protocol *de jure* establishes a customs union between Israel and the Palestinian territories. A common tariff structure is unsuitable for two incomparable economies, with the Palestinian GDP representing 3.6% of the Israeli GDP in 2023.

On the other hand, the Palestinian Authority criticizes the biased application of the Paris Protocol. The restriction of goods movement at the borders and within the Occupied Palestinian Territories creates a *de facto* asymmetrical customs union. Israel uses the collected fiscal revenues for the Palestinian Authority (clearance revenues) as leverage. As mentioned earlier, Israel withholds part of these revenues and has suspended their transfer for political reasons, particularly in 2016 following Netanyahu's desire to annex the West Bank. Thanks to you, Mr. President, this was resolved through a formula found with the assistance of General Abu Roukoun (in charge of the occupied territories), allowing both parties to return to peaceful civil and security cooperation and enabling Palestinians to receive the 4 billion shekels due to them.

The excessive amount and lack of transparency of the deductions made by Israel on these fiscal revenues (net lending) supposedly correspond to the cost of services (water, electricity, health) provided to West Bank and Gaza Palestinians by Israel.

Setting the parameters for Palestinian economic development requires both revising an outdated Protocol and ensuring its strict application by Israel.

Some avenues for revising the Paris Protocol:

- Change the trade regime between the Israeli and Palestinian economies. Creating a free trade zone would necessitate economic borders, allowing the Palestinian Authority to adopt a trade policy suited to its economy and ending fiscal losses.
- Abolish the instruments responsible for the Palestinian economy's dependence on Israeli authorities.
- Promote the development of agricultural and industrial sectors to encourage Palestinian autonomy.
- Create industrial free zones to attract foreign direct investment upon the opening of the Palestinian economy.
- Reform the taxation of Palestinian workers employed in Israel and settlements. First, tax the workers according to the Palestinian fiscal system. Second, regularize the 44,000 clandestine Palestinian workers employed in Israel and settlements, who currently evade taxation.

- Provide allowances to the neediest Palestinian families, not directly to prisoners' families, to prevent Israeli withholdings and perceptions on revenues meant for the Palestinian Authority.

At a minimum:

- Ensure negotiations between the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli government to develop a mechanism for calculating and transferring Palestinian revenues.
- Regularly exchange information on the transfer of clearance revenues between the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority.
- Remove the maximum transfer delay of fiscal revenues identified in the Paris Protocol to avoid losing the right to claim them after expiration.
- Eliminate non-tariff barriers to the movement of Palestinian goods imported from third parties to reduce indirect imports through Israeli intermediaries.
- Allow Palestinian customs officials to enter Israeli ports, clear their goods, and follow customs procedures as outlined in the Paris Protocol.
- Permit Palestinian customs officials at Israeli crossing points to monitor customs work related to Palestinian goods.
- Establish a Palestinian tariff schedule for goods imported from third parties and ensure the application of these tariffs within customs arrangements, such as creating special customs zones and using the transit system for goods imported via Israel.
- Conduct fiscal awareness campaigns highlighting the importance of direct imports for the Palestinian economy while diversifying import sources.
- Develop advantageous trade and fiscal policies for importers of raw materials and intermediate goods to rebuild the productive base of the Palestinian economy, helping Palestinian manufacturers produce, compete, and replace imported goods with local ones.
- Develop advanced control tools for Palestinian customs to handle all aspects of trade and customs situations using the latest international standards in information technology for customs purposes.
- Train Palestinian customs personnel and develop their technical systems to strengthen the capabilities necessary for a sovereign Palestinian state embodying the principle of sovereignty.

9. Worker Protection: A Priority

Employment in Israel is vital to the Palestinian economy. In 2022, 17% of West Bank workers were employed in Israel or the settlements, and their income represented 20% of the Palestinian GDP. Before the war, the Israeli economy employed 192,700 West Bank workers, 27,000 Gazan workers with work permits, and about 44,000 illegal workers.

Palestinian employees in Israel work under deplorable conditions. Many Israeli employers do not comply with Israeli law, which is supposed to protect them. French organizations and unions, particularly the CFDT and the Jean Jaurès Foundation, can play a crucial role in ensuring labor laws are respected in Palestinian territories and promoting positive economic exchanges by cooperating with Israeli and Palestinian unions.

On the West Bank side, the 192,700 workers employed in the West Bank economy theoretically have the same working conditions as Israeli employees, but Israeli employers do not always respect them. The main Israeli union, Histadrut, has expressed willingness

to set up an Arabic-language hotline providing legal assistance and lawyers to Palestinian workers. Histadrut could also help dismantle the clandestine labor networks coordinated between Israelis and Palestinians, thereby regularizing 44,000 workers who currently evade taxes and work in precarious conditions.

In Gaza, Israeli authorities issued new permits to workers after fifteen years of complete closure, gradually increasing their number to 27,000 before the war. Since October 7, no worker has crossed the border. Gazan workers held work permits from entrepreneurs and passed through Gazan companies paying taxes to Hamas, a status that prevented them from having the same rights as Israeli workers, such as health insurance or a pension system.

Before the October 7 attacks, in partnership with a specific NGO in Gaza, Histadrut expressed willingness to make legal interventions with military and political authorities to transform the status of Gazan workers, granting them work permits identical to those of West Bank workers.

NGOs, Palestinian unions, and Histadrut had submitted several proposals to improve working conditions for Gazan workers:

- Establish a unit in Gaza for information collection, liaison with Histadrut, and legal assistance for workers.
- Train Gazan workers by training Gaza teachers in the latest skills and technologies in various fields at Israeli institutions and centers, in collaboration with Histadrut, the single Palestinian union - the Palestinian Labour General Union, the CFDT, and social organizations.
- Create a digital platform connecting Israeli employers with Palestinian workers to encourage the matching of Israeli job offers with Palestinian labor.

For all these projects requiring collaboration between Histadrut, the main Israeli union, and the Palestinian Labour General Union, French social organizations and unions, particularly the CFDT, can play a facilitating role and thus:

- Initiate regular meetings between French, Israeli, and Palestinian unions at the French Consulate General in Jerusalem, like the one I organized in July 2022.
- Provide legal means to Palestinian workers employed in Israel to protect their working conditions, prevent precariousness, and avoid regular humiliations.
- Promote the highly educated Palestinian workforce, with a literacy rate of 98%, to the Israeli labor market, which suffers from a worker deficit in the high-tech sector, among others.
- Identify economic opportunities for French companies and forge partnerships with Israeli and Palestinian companies, also within the framework of Medef visits.
- Encourage an increase in the number of Palestinian workers in Israel, playing an essential role in restoring dialogue and trust between Israelis and Palestinians.
- Train women in high-tech to enable them to enter the labor market.

I have identified and met several proponents of cooperation between French, Israeli, and Palestinian unions, including the Jean Jaurès Foundation and Mr. Laurent Berger, Secretary General of the CFDT. Mrs. Anne Gueguen, then head of the North Africa and Middle East department at the Quai d'Orsay, also expressed France's willingness to undertake joint projects with the Histadrut president during a lunch in Paris. French

facilitation between the unions will help transform an economic relationship of dependence and domination into one of interdependence.

10. Increase Strategic Investments in Palestine and Israel

The multitude of untapped resources in the Palestinian economy were previously mentioned.

We should multiply strategic investments in green energy, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, water management, quantum physics, and other areas in Israel; and in renewable energy, agriculture, innovation, road, port, and rail infrastructure in Palestine. These investments will help to:

- Encourage the development of the future Palestine;
- Contribute to prosperity and peace;
- Position France as a strategic partner from the very beginning of a promising state;
- Stay ahead of our economic competitors, who are already well-positioned in these markets, such as China, the United States, and Gulf countries;
- Intensify exchanges with regional states ahead of regional integration;
- Address the European energy crisis with the region;
- Develop new supply chains at lower costs and with a smaller ecological footprint.

An entrepreneur's initiative to create a French-law fund investing in Israeli and Palestinian companies meeting ESG criteria deserves French public support.

In the current context, we could create an investment fund for peace and sustainable development by instituting a tax on fossil fuels and arms sales. Such a tax would generate several billion dollars annually, not to mention its multiplier effects. The funds would be invested in projects and companies supporting sustainable development, including renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, or access to clean water.

A 0.25% tax on oil exchanges would generate colossal revenues for the reconstruction of Gaza and the development of peace. Global oil production is approaching 100 million barrels per day, with about 40% of this production coming from OPEC member countries. Revenues from these activities amount to trillions of dollars annually. Investments in the oil sector reached \$1.73 trillion in 2022. In light of these figures, the cost of rebuilding Gaza, about \$50 billion, seems trivial. Assuming a hypothetical scenario with global production of 100 million barrels per day and an average price of \$80 per barrel, a 0.25% tax on oil exchanges would bring in about \$20 million per day or \$7.3 billion per year. This tax would be paid into an international investment fund for peace.

Thus, seven years of this tax would be enough to finance the entire reconstruction of Gaza, estimated at around \$50 billion. Of course, this would complement international aid and could not replace it. Additionally, renewable energy projects would be developed. The construction of a solar park in the Negev Desert providing 600 MW of daily electricity to Gaza could be partially financed by this oil tax.

An international peace fund financed by a 0.25% financial levy on global oil exchanges would work towards the reconstruction of Gaza and a necessary energy transition to ensure long-term peace.

11. Investing in Unifying Projects in France

The importation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict into France is not a fantasy and contributes to a significant increase in racist and anti-Semitic acts. Beyond raising awareness, these facts underscore the need for targeted action to counter this phenomenon and contribute to the peace of our society.

The creation of a cultural incubator dedicated to supporting unifying projects between Jewish and Muslim communities will strengthen dialogue and highlight the similarities between the two communities. While many believe that they are entirely divided, the common denominators are numerous. We saw this during the remarkable exhibition on the Jews of the East, organized at the Institut du Monde Arabe at the end of 2021, which offered a unique perspective on the existence of this Judeo-Arab culture through the centuries. Whether it's a shared sense of celebration for some, prophets for others, or through cuisine, poetry, and music, these common traditions deserve to be celebrated and held up as symbols of peace.

The cultural incubator will enable individuals to carry out projects aimed at strengthening social ties between communities and sparking interest and curiosity in each other. Ignorance leads to fear, fear leads to hatred, and hatred leads to violence. Many of our fellow citizens have a distorted view of Jewish and Muslim cultures. Stereotypes persist, even among youth. Many have never imagined that numerous interactions between Jewish cultural life and Arab-Muslim societies have contributed to mutual enrichment.

Mr. President, this narrative, this shared history must be conveyed by all means. It is a precious instrument for the stability of our country. We should encourage young people and students to develop robust and bold projects to foster interreligious dialogue. The mutual contribution of Jewish and Muslim communities in the fields of art, scientific and intellectual production, craftsmanship, and heritage has shaped the world today. Let us revive this fruitful alliance!

Simultaneously, an economic incubator could be created. Designed as a dynamic and inclusive space in the heart of France, where collaboration and innovation transcend cultural and religious differences. This economic incubator, named "Bridges of Innovation," would support startups from entrepreneurs in the Jewish and Muslim communities and encourage their cooperation. With a focus on social innovation, sustainable development, and future technologies, Bridges of Innovation would offer a comprehensive program of support, mentoring, financing, and networking. As a driver of positive synergies, Bridges of Innovation would provide a unique venue where cultural sharing serves innovation and peace. By emphasizing intercultural dialogue, this incubator aims not only to promote entrepreneurship but also to create paths of understanding and mutual respect between communities in France and around the world.

An example in which we are already involved and that seems promising: the first "Davos of the Suburbs," which will be held next September and aims to improve the integration of suburban businesses into the national economic fabric. By promoting the sustainable and continuous growth of companies established in the most disadvantaged areas, the Davos of the Suburbs will pave the way for numerous opportunities for the creation of local jobs, internships, and apprenticeships. These initiatives will be particularly beneficial for residents, thereby strengthening cohesion within territories and communities. This

dynamic will help establish a climate of peace and stability, fostering an environment conducive to economic and social progress.

12. Considering Cantonization as an Alternative Solution

While the two-state solution remains a consensus, it is increasingly becoming less feasible due to deep divisions between Israel and Palestine and the fragmentation of territories, notably Area C, the most significant part that the current Israeli government largely desires to annex.

On the Israeli side, neither the right, firmly opposed to the two-state solution, nor the left, too weak to implement the return of 700,000 settlers from the West Bank, would be able to obtain the necessary support to carry out such a significant action and the traumatic measures it entails.

Initially, a Palestine-Jordan confederation could be envisaged (there is no official census, but half of the Jordanian population is said to be of Palestinian descent), combined with the cantonization of Israel in its diversity (including about 80% of the West Bank settlements). Subsequently, an Israel-Palestine-Jordan confederation could be established, meeting the real needs of the Palestinian and Israeli peoples today.

The history of Switzerland, ravaged by a civil war between liberal Protestants and conservative Catholics, and the archetype of its federalism could serve as models for creating a confederation of states in this conflict-ridden region.

The strength of federalism lies in its flexibility. People are the bearers of sovereignty and political legitimacy. Cantons are based on geography. In Israel-Palestine, assuming the adoption of a similar system, some cantons would be predominantly Orthodox Jewish, some Muslim, others secular, and some would also comprise Bedouin, Druze, or Christian minorities. These ethno-religious groups could thus express themselves within regional cantonal governments where all would have a clear majority.

The 2021 report of the Commission on the Civil Service depicts a rather grim reality: most ministries have not met the targets for Arab representation - only four out of 22 ministries and 29 out of 102 units have done so. Racism and intolerance from the authorities plague administrations.

The Arab population of Israel, which represents about 21.1% of the country's total population and resides in five main areas (northern Israel, the Triangle region, the Negev, "mixed" Arab-Jewish cities, and the Jerusalem corridor), could thus obtain a majority within defined cantons that these areas could constitute.

Tel Aviv is secular and will remain secular. Haifa is secular, composed of a mix of Arabs and Jews. The two cities are fundamentally incompatible with the culture of Jerusalem, which is religious. The cantonal model is promising in that it seeks to encourage both unity and diversity. It would allow us to break the current deadlock and provide a basis for reconciliation to initiate lasting peace.

This project would lead to the creation of a joint Israeli-Palestinian-Jordanian administration to structure a federal republic and draft a joint constitution protecting the rights of all citizens. Governance reform would need to be implemented to create regional

administrations in about twenty autonomous cantons. It would grant substantial local autonomy to each canton, particularly in the educational, cultural, religious, and social domains within a clearly defined constitutional framework.

Each canton would also have a local police force, whose prerogatives and means would need to be defined. The development of multi-ethnic police forces could be considered and should align with the goal of ensuring that their mission is carried out in accordance with international human rights principles. In 2021, Israeli police statistics indicated that the Judea and Samaria District police opened 282 investigation files related to crimes committed by Jewish nationalists. In 113 cases, the victims of crimes were Palestinians, and in 169, the victims were non-Palestinians (Israeli security forces as well as Israeli and international activists). Only three indictments were filed for cases where the victims were Palestinians, or 2.6% of the total number of investigations. In cases where the victims were not Palestinian, 16 indictments were filed, or 9.5% of the total number of investigations. In other words, Israeli law enforcement is 2.5 times more likely to indict Israelis who act against non-Palestinians in the West Bank than Israelis who commit crimes against Palestinians.

These figures are telling. Discrimination in the application of Israeli law within Palestinian territories can no longer continue. The police must be conceived as a representative body of ethnicities, and a system for monitoring the composition of its teams must be put in place. The recruitment of underrepresented minorities must be organized, ensuring the elimination of any discriminatory barriers. An exchange of expertise could be envisioned with France, with regular personnel training focused on ethics and inter-community relations.

On the legislative front, each canton would have its own parliament. Cantonal parliaments would be responsible for passing laws, adopting a cantonal budget, and overseeing the activities of the cantonal government. Members of parliament would be elected by universal suffrage for a term of four years.

The federal government would operate based on a written constitution. This constitution would establish, among other things, a clear separation between state and religion. The constitutions of the cantons could be oriented towards the local majority culture while preserving the freedoms of all religious beliefs. To ensure some stability, the parliament would be bicameral, consisting of the existing Knesset and a new body representing the cantons.

The federal government would oversee issues of defense, foreign relations, and macroeconomic policy. Initially, Israel and Jordan would retain control of the military. The establishment of a confederation would create a common market ensuring the freedom of commercial exchanges between Israel, Palestine, and Jordan and restoring balance. The gap in living standards has not narrowed; on the contrary, it has worsened since the signing of the Paris Protocol, with Palestinian per capita income still representing 1/15th of Israel's in 2022. By lowering trade barriers and utilizing the natural and human resources of the entire region, the common market would ensure the economic prosperity of the confederation. Regional integration would be accompanied by the development of transportation networks that would connect Europe and Middle Eastern countries via the Mediterranean.

The federal government could be based in Jerusalem. The capital would be shared and open, Palestinian in the east, Israeli in the west. The old city would be co-managed by a consortium of countries including Israel, Palestine, Jordan, as well as Saudi Arabia, Morocco, and a Western Christian country. The participation of the European Union in this consortium should also be considered. Jerusalem could host the headquarters of an international organization, sending a strong message of peace and resilience.

For Israel, an appropriate federal solution would provide the Jewish state with peace, adequate security guarantees, ensure the protection of Jewish settlements in the territories, and a share of the earth's common resources (especially water resources).

For Palestine, this solution would ensure the continuation of privileged ties with Jordan and the Arab world. The Palestinian people could finally enjoy their rights fully and would be represented by cantonal parliaments reflecting their citizens.

For Jordan, this system would guarantee enhanced national security, protecting the territory from the development of potential extremist Palestinian factions. The country would also gain official status, influence over Jerusalem, and duties and responsibilities related to the holy sites of the three religions.

The Swiss cantonal system has proven successful in many respects. While Switzerland and present-day Israel-Palestine share much in common (compact small states composed of different languages and cultures), it is evident that Switzerland has managed to minimize conflicts through robust decentralization and solid constitutional guarantees. An Israel-Palestine-Jordan confederation is one possible solution and could constitute a viable alternative.

This alternative solution should not be seen as the end of the two-state solution, but rather as a fresh perspective that can give rise to new ideas. The new Palestinian state could incorporate certain elements of cantonization. This proposal is intended to be flexible and should be adapted to the local context.

13. Putting Peace on Track

And the first train will be French.

The construction of a first French train in the Palestinian territories has long been a consensual project. I proposed it to Presidents François Hollande and Nicolas Sarkozy and repeatedly to Alstom's leaders, without follow-up from them. I have identified partners and funding sources.

Your impetus, Mr. President, will make it a reality.

During the construction of the Jerusalem tramway in 2007, the Palestinian Authority sued French companies involved in its construction, Alstom and its subsidiary Alstom Transport, as well as Veolia Transport. The court ruled against them.

At the request of Alstom's representative in Israel, formerly Israel's ambassador to France Mr. Nissim Zvilli, I contacted the Palestinian authorities to convince them that it would be preferable to request France to construct a first train in Palestine rather than litigate against French companies. Numerous meetings with our consul in Jerusalem, the director of the French Development Agency, and the Palestinian Authority at all levels including

the President, the Minister of Finance, and the Minister of Transport at the time, persuaded the Palestinians to officially request France on this matter.

Through my exchanges and contacts with Palestinians, I know that resuming the initiative to build a first French train in the Palestinian Territories will be well received by the Palestinian Authority, by donors, and by the Israeli government. Defense Minister Benny Gantz and Transportation Minister Merav Michaeli were both ready to support and facilitate this initiative. I have good reason to believe that the next government will be open to continuing it.

This project has a symbolic dimension: the first train in Palestine would be French, demonstrating France's confidence in the construction of a viable Palestinian state. Economically, this project will mobilize thousands of Palestinian workers, create sustainable jobs, and position France at the forefront for economic opportunities and infrastructure construction in Palestine.

At this stage, I propose that a railway line of approximately 12 km be built between the center of Ramallah and the Qalandia checkpoint. Today, this is the main axis for thousands of Palestinians who work in Jerusalem and Israel, forced to leave their homes early in the morning to reach there. The French companies identified for the project include Meridiam, Alstom, and RATP, among others. We should request a French company to conduct a feasibility study, which could be financed by the French Development Agency (AFD), as promised to me at the time.

Simultaneously, a new tender will be launched in Israel for the construction of an additional section of the tramway in East Jerusalem. At the request of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, French companies withdrew from a tender for the construction of an extension of the tramway serving East Jerusalem in 2019. I recommend that French authorities allow French companies to participate in these tenders in Jerusalem, on the condition of equal participation on the Palestinian side. With French or foreign partners, these sections will be constructed.

In the long term, the construction of a 40 km railway to connect the south and north of Gaza could be part of the initial investments in the enclave's reconstruction. Once again, the participation of French companies in this project would send a strong signal. In a subsequent phase, another 70 km line between northern Gaza and southern West Bank could also contribute to reunifying the Palestinian territory, a crucial element for its prosperity and stability.

14. Renewable Energy: A Priority

Following the model of European construction, let us encourage cooperation based on environmental projects. The states in the region are closely linked, and their immediate resources are scarce. Let us transform their factual interdependence into chosen interdependence as the foundation for peace, following the model of the European Union. Let us promote strategic partnerships to highlight the potential for collaboration between parties, with improved overall living conditions as a result.

Let's consider a small case study. The solar energy market is poised for rapid expansion in the Middle East. On the demand side, the United Arab Emirates has pledged \$150 billion to achieve zero emissions by 2050; Saudi Arabia has committed to 50% renewable energy

by 2030. Israel aims to reach 40% of electricity from renewable sources by 2030, requiring the installation of between 18 and 23 gigawatts of solar panels. The entire region benefits from abundant permanent sunshine, with Jordan, for example, possessing the world's third-largest solar energy potential.

The European Union should support this market by financing projects through loans, similar to the U.S. financing of a \$500 million Indian photovoltaic module manufacturing facility. On one hand, clean energy supply chains are a priority, aligned with the European Green Deal. The recent energy strategy of the European Commission has acknowledged the potential for future imports of clean energy from the Middle East. The water-energy agreement concluded between Israel and Jordan in November 2021 is expected to create a market of 5 to 7 gigawatts. On the other hand, such an agreement helps promote sustainable peace based on energy interdependence and trust among states. Thus, the NGO EcoPeace proposes a cooperation framework based on the exchange between Israeli desalinated water and Jordanian solar energy and promotes solar energy production in Area C. Local businesses have expressed interest in photovoltaic solar energy production.

These investments are particularly important as the European Union and the world are currently heavily dependent on China, which produces two-thirds of the polysilicon and 90% of the semiconductors necessary for photovoltaic cell manufacturing worldwide. This dependency led to a doubling of polysilicon prices in July 2020 following an explosion at a Chinese factory, which increased prices by over 50%. Today, Chinese state-owned enterprises are taking stakes in solar parks and construction projects in Dubai, Oman, Iraq, Morocco, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Iran. To counter Western dependence on China, let us support ambitious solar panel manufacturing programs to create healthy interdependencies that help defuse the energy crisis in Europe.

15. Water: Source of Peace

A scarce resource in the Middle East, water is among the subjects left to negotiation in the final status talks of the Oslo Accords. Today, however, advancements in Israel's water management have made this element an uncontroversial conflict resolution tool. Resolving the water issue would demonstrate to both parties that the other is a viable partner and would help address each party's climate and security interests.

The region faces water scarcity, with demand exceeding available supply. This scarcity is exacerbated by factors such as population growth, climate change, and poor resource management. Under a high emissions scenario, the average annual temperature in Israel and the Palestinian territories is projected to increase by about 4.4°C by 2100, and a 20% decrease in Eastern Mediterranean precipitation by 2050 is expected to lead to more frequent drought episodes, directly impacting food systems and exacerbating existing vulnerabilities.

Although Israel recognized Palestinian water rights in the 1995 Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip (Oslo II), this pertains only to groundwater in the West Bank's mountain aquifer, where Palestinians have the advantage. The contours of Palestinian rights to water in this aquifer and in the two other main water sources—the coastal aquifer (partly underlying Gaza and Egypt) and the Jordan River—were left to negotiations that were supposed to be concluded by 1999.

In the decades since, Israel has exploited transboundary waters without regard for Palestinian needs in Gaza or the West Bank, where the population has significantly increased since Oslo II's water allocations were set nearly a quarter-century ago. The interim agreement essentially legitimized prior restrictions on Palestinian water use, allowing Israel to control 80% of the West Bank's groundwater.

Under Israeli occupation, the Palestinian government lacks control over its own territory and natural resources, which face systematic and widespread violations. Beyond negatively impacting the implementation of the Palestinian government's environmental policy, the occupation forces the Palestinian Authority to propose different scenarios for calculating its nationally determined contribution (NDC) to climate change mitigation: one where Israel maintains its military occupation and another where Palestine is a fully sovereign state. In contrast, Israel's defined territory in its NDC encompasses 24,000 km², nearly all of the pre-1948 Palestinian territory, envisioning a future where it maintains occupation over most of the territory but is not responsible for Palestinians.

Both Israelis and Palestinians rely on two main aquifers: the coastal aquifer and the mountain aquifer. Despite population growth, Palestinian water withdrawals from the mountain aquifer remain limited under Oslo II terms, often enforced by Israeli military control. Significant water scarcity affects certain areas of the West Bank. The recharge zone of the mountain aquifer is vulnerable to groundwater pollution and is degraded by inadequately treated wastewater and unsanitary solid waste dumps, often due to limited capacity to timely advance projects in Area C communities. Approximately 47 million cubic meters of untreated and poorly treated Palestinian wastewater are discharged annually into the shared environment.

The coastal aquifer, located beneath the Gaza Strip, provides 95% of Gaza's drinking water. Due to extreme overuse and contamination of the aquifer by untreated wastewater from 1.8 million people, 96% of groundwater is no longer drinkable. Seawater infiltrates the aquifer, and salinity levels far exceed World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines for drinking water.

The continued blockade of Gaza and the failure of internal Palestinian reconciliation have rendered Gaza uninhabitable due to water and sanitation crises, long before the current war. The Palestinian Authority had advanced the operation of short-term, low-volume desalination plants to achieve approximately 12 million cubic meters of capacity on the nominal capacity of 13.3 million cubic meters. Two additional plants of this type were planned, with additional capacity of 17.5 million cubic meters.

Despite these remarkable efforts, Israeli bombings and Israeli militarization of water since the start of the war have caused an unprecedented health crisis. The challenges of reconstruction will be numerous, including those related to the entry of materials into the territory. Wastewater treatment stabilization can only be achieved with the maintenance of the Sheikh Ejleen wastewater treatment plant. Expanding the emergency treatment program in northern Gaza and constructing a new facility in Rafah will be absolutely necessary to maintain water treatment quality and address environmental challenges.

Israel is also severely affected by the water and sanitation crisis in the West Bank and Gaza. Wastewater from the West Bank flows through transboundary streams to major Israeli cities and contaminates the groundwater of the mountain aquifer that Israel predominantly exploits. In 2018, over 108,000 cubic meters of raw wastewater flowed from Gaza into the Mediterranean Sea daily through 9 sewer outlets along the Gaza

coast, up from 50,000 to 80,000 per day in 2008. This discharge directly threatens the viability of Israel's coastal desalination plants, which provide 70% of the country's drinking water, thereby endangering water security and Israeli national interests.

Current water management jeopardizes Israel's security and health interests: a pandemic outbreak is just a matter of time. The health situation in the enclave is catastrophic. Rainfall has facilitated disease development, and hospitals have reached a breaking point. Condemned to worsen over the coming weeks, this situation will have disastrous consequences not only for Gaza's Palestinian population but also for the entire region.

In addition to the immediate need for a ceasefire, Israel has a long-term interest in cooperating with the Palestinian Authority, especially given its leadership in using treated wastewater for agriculture and developing reverse osmosis desalination technology to ensure access to treated water in addition to natural water. Currently, 70% of Israel's drinking water comes from desalination, and half of agriculture is cultivated with treated wastewater.

The availability of large quantities of treated water makes equitable sharing of natural water between Israelis and Palestinians possible, significantly improving the lives of every Palestinian and benefiting the Palestinian economy. Palestine could fully enjoy its water rights by pumping water from the three basins of the mountain aquifer, while Israel would reduce its dependence on groundwater by increasing desalinated water production.

To compensate for Palestinian and Jordanian losses of Jordan River water due to diversion and river pollution, increased pumping from the Sea of Galilee could also be considered, following the model of the peace treaty between Israel and Jordan. Today, Palestinians are excluded from negotiations. The signing of an intention declaration between Israel and Jordan on the Jordan River at COP27 without the Palestinian Authority testifies to this.

Mr. President, inviting Israelis and Palestinians to negotiate the water issue to replace Article 40 of the 1994 Oslo Accords and create a joint water management committee is an essential and accessible axis for ecological, economic, diplomatic, health, and security progress.

Some suggestions for a water agreement based on NGO recommendations:

- Create a water market between Israel and Palestine, and possibly Jordan, promoting optimal and sustainable water management.
- Double the volume of water sold by Israel to Gaza, from 10 to 20 million cubic meters, matching the current capacity of water pipelines crossing Gaza from Israel. In March 2015, the Israeli government committed to doubling the volume of water sold to Gaza from 5 to 10 million cubic meters. Imported water could be blended with groundwater, providing 40 million cubic meters of drinking water.
- Invest in reservoir construction and network repair. Of the promised 10 million cubic meters, Israel can only provide 8 due to insufficient storage capacity. Urgent investments are needed to increase the network storage capacity and address water losses, estimated up to 50%. Before the war, the German Development Bank (KfW) had completed the rehabilitation of the Al Montar reservoir in Gaza City, and international donors were considering the construction of an additional reservoir to store water imported from Israel.
- Increasing Electricity Supply for Water and Sanitation. To enhance electricity supply

for water and sanitation, in June 2016, Israel agreed to provide an additional 6 MW of electricity to Gaza to power a recently constructed wastewater treatment plant in northern Gaza under the auspices of the World Bank (NGEST project). However, given the state of the existing connection between Israel and Gaza and the inability to control the allocation of this additional electricity once it crosses the border, the construction of a power line linking the Israeli supplier to the plant is essential for its short-term operation. In the long term, it is necessary to build a high-voltage power line to deliver an additional 100 MW of electricity (the planned 161 line) and a pipeline linking Israel to Gaza to directly supply electricity to the Gaza power plant and a potential desalination plant with a capacity of 55 million cubic meters.

- **Developing Stand-Alone Desalination Solutions.** To offset limited water supply, off-grid solar-powered stand-alone desalination can improve the quality of saline groundwater and expand potential crops. Following a successful prototype, the Arava Institute and two British universities are currently installing such a system on a Palestinian farm in the West Bank.

Water is a vital resource that does not conform to political borders. Many rivers, lakes, and aquifers are shared by multiple countries. The need to access and manage these shared water resources encourages cooperation and dialogue among nations. A healthy environment also guarantees increased stability. Sustainable water practices, such as reducing pollution and protecting ecosystems, can contribute to long-term peace by maintaining the balance of natural systems that support human societies.

By working together to ensure equitable access and sustainable water management, Israelis and Palestinians can reduce the risk of conflict and pursue a path toward peace.

16. Intensifying Trilateral Cooperation

Decentralized cooperation is one of the strengths of the French Consulate General in Jerusalem, with over 80 active agreements of Franco-Palestinian cooperation, illustrating France's support to the Palestinian population. These partnerships result either from the willingness of French cities or from trilateral projects (twinning of a French city with an Israeli and a Palestinian city) born after the Oslo Accords. The Intifada marked a halt for the latter: let's restart and multiply trilateral cooperations between universities, cities, French, Israeli, and Palestinian schools.

Not only do such partnerships constitute important economic and diplomatic opportunities for France, but they also contribute to dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians on neutral ground, absolutely necessary to combat rejection of the other. In continuation of the Erasmus + program to which Israel belongs, the creation of a Euro- Mediterranean Erasmus would encourage students in the region to learn more about their neighbors and thus foster the sharing of common challenges. Mr. President, we must not limit these twinships to cities.

Let us initiate bilateral and trilateral partnerships between universities - following the partnership we have with Sciences Po Paris, research centers, hospitals, museums, all essential spaces for dialogue and knowledge in the education of peace. If Israelis think that Palestinians have nothing to teach them, France will show them that this is false. If Palestinians think that Israelis refuse dialogue, France will show them that this is false.

17. Making Francophonie a Vector of Peace in the Middle East

We must recall the deep link between Francophonie and peace. This community represents much more than a linguistic union. It embodies the values of diversity, dialogue, and solidarity among peoples and nations sharing the French language. Beyond borders and cultural differences, Francophonie unites millions of people around a common heritage, thus providing fertile ground for peacebuilding. Integrating Israel and the future Palestinian State into the OIF: Harnessing Francophonie's influential network in Israel and Palestine represents a significant opportunity to promote a culture of peace and dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians.

An important initial step would be to integrate Israel and the future Palestinian State into the OIF, which would promote closer collaboration and cultural exchanges between the two parties. OIF promotes intercultural dialogue and cooperation among Francophone countries worldwide. By integrating Israel and a future Palestinian State, OIF could offer a neutral platform where representatives of these two entities could meet, exchange, and work together on common projects in language, culture, education, and development. By integrating Israel and a future Palestinian State, the organization could facilitate cooperation in areas such as trade, tourism, health, and the environment, contributing to sustainable development and regional stability.

Encouraging stronger collaboration between French Institutes in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Ramallah, Haifa, Nazareth, and Gaza: In the region, we observe a certain lack of cooperation between the French Institute of Israel and the French Institute of Jerusalem, which has jurisdiction over Palestinian territories. Administrative reasons such as separate budgets, divergent policies, and a lack of diplomatic boldness explain this lack of dialogue. The French Institute of Jerusalem focuses mainly on interactions with Palestinians, while the French Institute of Israel works more with Israeli populations. It is essential that these two institutions do not remain passive in the face of the conflict. On the contrary, they must actively contribute to promoting dialogue and mutual understanding between the two parties. One way to do this would be to establish joint educational programs between the two French Institutes, for example, organizing correspondence between students in French courses at Israeli and Palestinian institutes and organizing joint events, bringing together Israeli and Palestinian artists. Uniting the budgets of the two French institutes would be an essential prerequisite to facilitate coordination and the organization of common events. By collaborating more closely, the institutes could play a crucial role in promoting peace in the region, using the French language as a tool for reconciliation and mutual understanding.

Developing the Francophonie Workshops: These workshops will mobilize young Francophone volunteers to help the Palestinian populations rebuild Gaza through volunteer and skills exchange programs. Bringing young Francophones together around this project could contribute to the material reconstruction of Gaza, while strengthening solidarity within the Francophonie and promoting peace, cooperation, and mutual respect.

18. Encouraging Regional Cooperation

Beyond the already mentioned benefits such as economic growth and enhanced trade development, regional cooperation will foster infrastructure projects and strengthen dialogue among peoples.

The project unveiled at the G20 summit in New Delhi regarding the creation of a new trade corridor between India and Europe could represent an unprecedented opportunity for closer ties and transform the region. The railway and maritime transport network will pass through Saudi Arabia and Jordan, then through Palestine, Israel, and the port of Haifa, up to Greece. It could also become a flagship project for the reconstruction of Gaza, making the enclave a strategic transit point.

The Emirati-Saudi railway project powered by renewable energy passing through Jordan and heading towards the ports of Haifa and Gaza could significantly enhance the security and stability of the region's countries, making Gaza a key node in regional trade routes.

The corridor could also serve as a catalyst for increased diplomatic collaboration and unprecedented geopolitical stability. The economic integration brought about by this monumental project will encourage collaboration on various fronts, including security, counter-terrorism efforts, and regional stability.

IMEC could play a crucial role in promoting peace in the Middle East by introducing the innovative concept of a "Peace Triangle," promoting regional integration between Israel, the future State of Palestine, and Jordan. Gaza could thus be included in flagship projects of regional integration:

- **Water-Energy Exchange Project:** Expand the joint agreement between Israel, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates, fully including Palestine. This involves constructing a desalination plant in Gaza to not only meet local water needs but also supply water to the region, including Jordan.
- **Renewable Energy Initiative:** Develop renewable energy production led by Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan, harnessing solar and wind resources. The goal is to generate electricity and green hydrogen, then transfer this energy to continental Europe via Cyprus, using the ports of Haifa and Gaza as starting points.
- **Expansion of the Railway Network:** Expand a renewable energy-powered railway network project, initially developed by the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, through Jordan to the ports of Haifa and Gaza.

In this context, the European Union (a signatory to the agreement alongside the United States, India, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates) must advocate for Palestinian participation in this large-scale project, so that economic opportunities can also benefit them. In this regard, the proposal to quickly build a French train in Palestinian territories (proposal 13) will later facilitate the easier integration of Palestinians and Israelis into this international corridor upon its implementation.

19. Organizing a Conference to Encourage Euro-Mediterranean Partnerships

Demographic trends, climate change, political unrest, gender inequality, and now war: the Middle East faces a range of challenges threatening its political and economic stability. Concurrently, the Abraham Accords illustrate a dual major evolution: on one hand, state pragmatism today sets aside past ideological disputes; on the other, common interests enable states to rapidly forge economic, diplomatic, security, and cultural ties beyond their historical antagonisms.

Instead of maintaining nationalist and religious discourse, a regional language based on shared values and interests can weaken divisive rhetoric and promote new, innovative frameworks for stability and prosperity. The Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty serves as an interesting model in this regard, as it recognizes common interests of both states in water issues and cooperation in this domain as a foundation for peace.

By facilitating new relationships and partnerships among rival parties in the region, the EU can promote cross-border solidarity and regional transformation, essential for changing realities on the ground.

This approach combines facilitating partnerships based on common interests, building coalitions like the Union for the Mediterranean to be revitalized and depoliticized, and creating new pragmatic alliances. Israel's position can be transformed, and Palestinians can access their place at the negotiating table within these regional institutions established.

We propose organizing a meeting in Paris among one hundred representatives from Israeli, Palestinian, Arab, and European civil societies. Entrepreneurs, leaders, artists, intellectuals, opinion leaders, and influencers will gather on neutral ground to build partnerships based on common interests.

The meeting aims to achieve several objectives:

- Develop new means of communication based on shared interests by valuing respective resources and comparative advantages, and the interdependencies that can arise.
- Abandon the paradigm of competing sufferings prevalent in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and promote a new narrative: Israel and Palestine as vibrant spaces and reservoirs of resources.
- Create a new space dedicated to peace and prosperity outside the perpetual debates on the conflict. Israelis and Palestinians have not met since the construction of the wall. Opportunities are limited to rare official political meetings and clashes between Palestinians and Israeli settlers or soldiers in the West Bank. Restoring dialogue and trust is crucial to generate interest in warm peace and solidarity. In 2020, 90% of Palestinians and 78% of Israelis believed the others were not trustworthy.
- Affirm France's willingness to contribute to regional peace and thus put the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue back on its political agenda and that of Europe.
- Initiate a new movement of strategic cooperation for peace beyond the conference, (i) demonstrating that dialogue is possible; (ii) selecting joint projects arising from these meetings for integration into the financing plan of the

international community of donors; (iii) launching a platform during this meeting that constitutes the virtual version of this meeting space based on shared interests.

Further engage the international community, both European and regional, in concrete cooperation based on projects of common interest. Arab states, keen to maintain their support for the Palestinian cause without compromising their ties with Israel, will participate confidently in this unconventional meeting.

The meeting is based on a few essential principles:

1. A needs-based approach. In this regard, we have identified four promising areas: sustainable economy, new technologies, future networks (women, youth, media), and culture and peace education. These areas will promote cooperation on essential topics such as water, health, food security, renewable energies, women's employment, high-tech training, and media.
2. An intersectoral approach. Mixing the private and public sectors is essential because (i) there are few meeting forums allowing such an approach, (ii) given the importance of the private sector in the region, its involvement in peace consolidation efforts will create the necessary incentives to broaden support circles, and (iii) the combination of civil society actors, political leaders, and international organizations will demonstrate a new conception of peacebuilding outside the traditional cycles of negotiations among currently paralyzed leaders.
3. A regional approach. Regional cooperation is the only way to sustainably address challenges whose impact transcends national borders. Promoting a new regional discourse based on solidarity and interdependence, particularly regarding climate change, desertification, water, and food security, will promote a culture of cooperation with others and bring about the necessary cultural changes for peace.

After the conference, let's create a digital platform targeting the numerous engaged actors of civil society. This Peace Book will list on one side calls for tenders and initiatives for Israeli-Palestinian peace, and on the other side citizens, small and medium-sized NGOs, and SMEs to encourage cooperation and propose joint projects.

Today, there are over 600 civil society organizations committed to conflict resolution in all areas. Their scattering limits large-scale projects; their convergence would contribute to building a common vision for the future.

This Peace Book will also foster transparency, as much information today is accessible only to major international donors and governments.

20. Organizing Cultural Meetings with Jews from the Orient

At the request of President Abbas and the Palestinian Authority, organizing cultural meetings with Jews from the Arab and Muslim world will provide an opportunity to transcend political divisions and build relationships based on mutual respect and appreciation. These meetings could highlight cultural, historical, and linguistic similarities between Palestinians and Jews from the Orient, focusing on shared traditions, culinary dishes, songs, dances, and other aspects of culture. Encouraging dialogue between Palestinians and Jews from the Orient will contribute to easing tensions and laying the groundwork for eventual regional integration.

France can facilitate cultural exchanges between Palestinians and Jews from the Orient.