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Editorial

The Board of Peace and the Illusion of Palestinian Liberation: Stabilization, Formality, and the Limits of Managed Peace

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Abstract

This editorial critically examines the Board of Peace as a proposed mechanism for Gaza's stabilization and questions its capacity to deliver genuine peace and Palestinian independence. Rather than treating the Board as a neutral innovation in international governance, the editorial argues that it risks becoming a formal instrument for managing Palestinian dispossession without resolving its political causes. The analysis is based on a critical synthesis of recent academic literature on peacebuilding, post-conflict governance, international trusteeship, legitimacy, accountability, and Palestinian self-determination, combined with policy and media evidence available up to February 2026. The editorial finds that the Board of Peace suffers from four major weaknesses: fragile substantive legitimacy despite formal international endorsement; excessive concentration of authority in an externally led structure; limited Palestinian agency in decision-making; and an overemphasis on stabilization, reconstruction, and demilitarization without a credible path toward sovereignty. It further argues that reconstruction funding and technocratic administration may create the appearance of progress while postponing core issues such as occupation, borders, refugees, territorial unity, equal rights, and statehood. The Board's possible marginalization of established multilateral mechanisms also raises concerns about accountability and the weakening of rights-based international governance. The editorial concludes that the Board of Peace is unlikely to fulfill Palestinian aspirations for peace and independence unless it is subordinated to self-

determination, representative authority, territorial integrity, and enforceable political rights. Without these foundations, it remains a formal peace architecture rather than a pathway to emancipation.

Keywords: *Accountability; Board of Peace; Gaza Reconstruction; Managed Peace; Palestinian Independence; Self-Determination; Stabilization*

Introduction: Peace Without Political Freedom

The Board of Peace presents itself as an innovative instrument for stabilizing Gaza, restoring lawful governance, and securing durable peace. Yet its institutional promise remains doubtful because it begins from stabilization rather than liberation, administration rather than sovereignty, and reconstruction rather than political justice. Until recently, the available evidence suggests that the Board of Peace is less a credible pathway toward Palestinian independence than a formalized mechanism for managing Gaza without resolving the Palestinian question (Hassan, 2025; Sidło, 2026; The Wire Staff, 2025). Its language of governance, order, and reconstruction is politically appealing, but it risks converting a national struggle for self-determination into a technical problem of administration, financing, policing, and demilitarization.

The skepticism is not merely rhetorical. Peacebuilding scholarship repeatedly shows that durable peace requires legitimate authority, inclusive ownership, accountable institutions, and a credible political settlement (Barnett et al., 2007; Cuhadar & Druckman, 2025; McCandless & Tschirgi, 2010). The Board of Peace appears weak on each of these criteria. It promises order before freedom, security before sovereignty, and technocratic administration before democratic representation. In that sense, it resembles earlier peacebuilding projects that managed violence without transforming its causes. For Palestinians, such a structure may produce a formal peace process while postponing the more difficult questions of

occupation, statehood, borders, refugees, rights, and equal political agency.

Formal Legality and Substantive Fragility

The Board of Peace derives part of its legitimacy from international endorsement, particularly the Security Council framework around Gaza's stabilization. However, legality is not identical to legitimacy. A Security Council mandate may authorize a temporary mechanism, but it cannot by itself make that mechanism politically representative, morally credible, or adequate to Palestinian aspirations (B. W. C. Admin, 2026; Brivati, 2026; Santos, 2026). Legal scholars have already warned that the Board's global conflict-resolution ambition exceeds the narrower Gaza-related basis on which its authority was initially defended. This creates a gap between derivative legality and substantive legitimacy, especially when the mechanism claims broad powers without a clear democratic foundation (Dumitriu, 2026; Narbona, 2026).

This problem is consistent with broader literature on post-conflict governance bodies. Hybrid peacebuilding institutions can be useful when they are grounded in peace agreements, domestic legal authority, and inclusive local participation (Agbelengor, 2024; Murphy, 2025; Sripati, 2009, 2020; Walsh & Murphy, 2025). The Board of Peace, however, appears to reverse the logic. Instead of deriving authority upward from Palestinian consent, it imposes authority downward through international sponsorship and elite diplomacy. Such a structure may satisfy formal procedural requirements, but it remains vulnerable to the criticism that it legalizes external power rather than institutionalizing Palestinian self-government.

A Chairman-Centered Architecture

The most troubling feature of the Board of Peace is its concentration of authority. Peacebuilding institutions require

independence, but independence must not become personalized control. The Board's charter has been criticized for giving extraordinary powers to its chair, including agenda-setting, membership control, veto authority, and influence over institutional continuity. Such a model conflicts with the principle that post-conflict governance should be accountable, transparent, and collectively supervised. A peace mechanism dominated by one political figure risks becoming a diplomatic platform rather than a multilateral institution (Bayer, 2026; Makhija & Prathap, 2026; Narbona, 2026).

This design weakness matters because institutional architecture shapes political outcomes. Research on independent commissions indicates that legitimacy depends on balanced appointment procedures, protected mandates, inclusive representation, transparent reporting, and safeguards against capture (Murphy, 2025; Walsh & Murphy, 2025). The Board of Peace does not convincingly meet these standards. Its authority appears more centralized than deliberative, more executive than representative, and more geopolitical than emancipatory. If a body responsible for Gaza's future is structured around external leadership rather than Palestinian agency, it cannot credibly claim to advance Palestinian independence.

Palestinian Absence and the Problem of Representation

No peace arrangement for Palestine can be credible if Palestinians are treated as administrative objects rather than political subjects (Anadolu Agency, 2024; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2025). The Board of Peace is said to supervise a Palestinian technocratic committee, yet this arrangement does not equal self-determination. Technocracy may be useful for service delivery, but it cannot substitute for national representation. A committee tasked with civil administration under international supervision may stabilize daily governance, but it does not answer

who has sovereign authority, who represents Palestinian political will, or how Palestinians can determine their own collective future.

The literature on inclusive peace processes is clear that participation must be substantive, not symbolic (Cuhadar & Druckman, 2025; Walsh & Murphy, 2025). Inclusion that lacks real decision-making power easily becomes tokenism. This risk is acute in Gaza, where administrative reconstruction can be used to defer political settlement. If Palestinians participate only at the level of local management while decisive authority remains with external actors, the Board of Peace becomes a formal structure of tutelage. It may speak the language of peace, but it reproduces the hierarchy that has long undermined Palestinian freedom.

Stabilization Without Sovereignty

The Board of Peace appears to prioritize demilitarization, policing, reconstruction, and humanitarian coordination. These aims are not inherently illegitimate. Gaza urgently needs security, relief, infrastructure, and functioning services. Yet stabilization becomes politically suspect when it is separated from sovereignty. A demilitarized and reconstructed Gaza that remains politically dependent, territorially fragmented, and externally supervised would not constitute Palestinian freedom. It would be a managed enclave, not an independent polity. This is why the Board's emphasis on order must be evaluated against its silence or ambiguity on statehood.

The risk resembles the post-Oslo dilemma. Peace processes can institutionalize limited self-rule while deferring final-status questions indefinitely. Chatham House's warning about "two Gazas and an annexed West Bank" captures this danger: a Gaza-focused administrative mechanism may unintentionally normalize Palestinian territorial fragmentation. Carnegie's lessons from U.S. mediation similarly suggest that peace efforts fail when they do not apply

sufficient pressure on the stronger party or address the core political conflict. A Board that manages Gaza while leaving occupation, settlements, borders, refugees, and sovereignty unresolved cannot deliver durable peace.

Reconstruction as Formality

Reconstruction pledges give the Board of Peace visibility, but money does not equal political transformation. International funds can rebuild roads, hospitals, schools, and utilities, yet reconstruction under unresolved domination may merely make captivity more administratively tolerable. The available reporting until recently shows uncertainty over funding, participation, governance, and disarmament. More importantly, reconstruction has been conditioned on security and governance arrangements that remain deeply contested. This means that the Board's humanitarian promise may become a formal display of generosity without a credible mechanism for liberation.

Peacebuilding scholarship warns that durable financing and accountable resource management are essential, but they cannot replace political legitimacy (Agbelengor, 2024; Conca & Wallace, 2009; McCandless & Tschirgi, 2010). If reconstruction funds are distributed through opaque channels or tied to geopolitical loyalty, they may deepen dependency rather than enable independence. Gaza does not need a donor-managed future in which Palestinian rights are postponed until external actors agree that conditions are suitable. It needs reconstruction embedded in legal rights, accountable governance, and a definite path toward Palestinian sovereignty.

The Risk of Bypassing the United Nations

The Board of Peace also raises concerns about multilateral fragmentation. The United Nations system is deeply flawed but replacing or bypassing it with a personalized and selective mechanism

does not solve those flaws. It may worsen them. European and international critics have warned that the Board could marginalize established institutions, weaken UN-centered accountability, and create a parallel governance structure with unclear legal boundaries. This is not a minor procedural issue. In Palestine, institutional fragmentation has often enabled responsibility to be dispersed while rights remain unenforced.

The literature on peacebuilding governance emphasizes coherence, mutual accountability, and institutional coordination (Barnett et al., 2007; De Chazournes, 2007; McCandless & Tschirgi, 2010). The Board of Peace risks doing the opposite. It creates another layer of authority without resolving who is ultimately accountable to Palestinians. If the Board becomes a club of selected states, donors, and strategic partners, then its multilateralism is thin. It may appear international, but it lacks the universality, legal discipline, and normative grounding required for a just peace process.

Conclusion: A Formal Peace Without Emancipation

The Board of Peace should therefore be treated with deep caution. Its formal mandate, diplomatic visibility, and reconstruction language cannot conceal its structural weaknesses. It lacks convincing Palestinian ownership, concentrates authority in ways that contradict accountable multilateralism, and prioritizes stabilization over sovereignty. It may help organize meetings, pledges, committees, and security arrangements, but these are formal mechanisms. They do not amount to Palestinian freedom. A peace architecture that does not confront occupation, inequality, territorial fragmentation, and the denial of self-determination is not a path to justice.

The more plausible conclusion is that the Board of Peace functions as a formalization of crisis management. It may reduce diplomatic pressure by creating the appearance of progress, yet it risks

postponing the substance of peace. For Palestinians, peace cannot mean externally supervised administration without independence. It must mean enforceable rights, representative authority, territorial integrity, protection from domination, and a credible route to statehood. Until the Board of Peace is subordinated to these principles, its promise remains doubtful. It is more likely to manage Palestinian dispossession than to end it.

This Issue

This issue features 15 original articles contributed by scholars whose institutional affiliations span Israel, Malaysia, Nigeria, Kazakhstan, Vietnam, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Türkiye, India, Ethiopia, and Iran. The issue reflects Millah's international scope in religious studies and Islamic thought. Its articles address Sunni–Sufi relations in the medieval period, Shariah-compliant artificial intelligence for Hajj fatwa, Islam in Xinjiang, Catholic ethics and community-based tourism, atheistic parsimony, scriptural foundations for civilian protection, Al-Ghazali-inspired pedagogy, Islamic digital ethics, Islamic tolerance among university students, Arabic literature and civic imagination in Nigeria, metaverse acceptance in Islamic education, Buddhist self-management and leadership, Bhagavad Gita-based sustainability ethics, monastic wellbeing and psychotherapy in Ethiopia, and women's moral agency in Kantian philosophy and Shi'i Islam. Together, these contributions connect religion with ethics, governance, education, technology, ecology, psychology, and social life.

The first article examines the complex relationship between Sunni jurisprudence and Sufi mysticism in the Ayyubid and early Mamluk periods through the case of al-ʿIzz ibn ʿAbd al-Salām. Using a qualitative inductive method, the study triangulates al-ʿIzz's authenticated legal and ethical writings with medieval biographical

and hagiographical sources to clarify whether he was formally affiliated with Sufi orders and how he judged Sufi practices. The findings show that al-ʿIzz respected orthodox Sufi figures, especially al-Shādhilī, and accepted the ethical-ascetic dimensions of Taṣawwuf. However, he endorsed Sufism only when it remained bound to Shariʿah-centered orthodoxy and rejected ritual innovations such as Samāʿ. The article therefore redefines him not as a formal Sufi initiate, but as a "juristic gatekeeper" of spiritual boundaries in medieval Islamic intellectual history.

The second article develops a Sharīʿah-compliant framework for using artificial intelligence as a supportive tool in fatwa delivery within Malaysian Hajj management. Focusing on Malaysia's state-based fatwa governance, the study addresses questions of permissibility, reliability, institutional authority, and scholarly accountability in real-time religious guidance for pilgrims. Using a qualitative doctrinal method, it analyzes uṣūl al-fiqh principles, Malaysian fatwa institutions, Hajj-related rulings, and risks posed by generative artificial intelligence, including hallucinated rulings and jurisdictional confusion. The article proposes a hybrid model in which artificial intelligence assists but never replaces accredited muftīs. Its framework emphasizes authenticated Malaysian fatwa corpora, evidentiary reasoning, escalation protocols, audit mechanisms, and maqāṣid al-sharīʿah protections for religion, life, intellect, dignity, and wealth, offering a responsible model for technological innovation in Islamic legal governance.

The third article analyzes the geopolitical and ethnocultural factors that shaped the spread and social embedding of Islam in Xinjiang, historically also known as East Turkestan. Using a historical-comparative design supported by geopolitical and content analysis, the study addresses the mismatch between broad regional narratives and community-specific evidence. It combines English-language

scholarship on Uyghur religious history with Kazakh- and Russian-language historiography on Kazakh Muslim communities in Xinjiang. The article applies a four-phase periodization to examine external linkages, political authority, elite incentives, Sufi networks, religious institutions, cultural production, and ethnic boundary-making. Its findings show that Islamization emerged through shifting interactions among connectivity, elite sponsorship, and authority infrastructures. The study contributes a mechanism-oriented synthesis that distinguishes Uyghur majority and Kazakh minority configurations within Xinjiang's Islamic history.

The fourth article explores how Catholic ethical principles are translated into faith-based social responsibility within community-based tourism in Ngu Hiep Islet, Dong Thap Province, Vietnam. Framed through Corporate Social Responsibility and Catholic Social Teaching, the study examines how faith, moral conduct, and sustainable development interact in a rural Mekong Delta ecological–cultural setting. Using qualitative data from 20 in-depth interviews, participant observation, and secondary documents, the research finds that Catholic faith shapes spiritual life, labor ethics, service orientation, and environmental awareness. The parish functions as a moral and social institution that guides community behavior through the principle of "serving in love." The article proposes a Faith-Based CSR model as an alternative to conventional CSR, highlighting religion's role in ethical tourism, sustainable rural development, and community-based social order.

The fifth article critically examines the Atheistic Parsimony Argument, which claims that the God hypothesis should be rejected because simpler explanations are preferable when competing theories have equal explanatory strength. Through an analytical method grounded in Thagard's coherence principles and Swinburne's explanatory model, the study evaluates whether simplicity alone can

legitimately function as the decisive criterion in theory selection. The findings argue that the Atheistic Parsimony Argument misuses parsimony by excluding the God hypothesis from the explanatory system and by elevating ontological minimalism above explanatory power. To address this limitation, the article proposes a Cross-Domain Coherence model that broadens theory choice beyond simplicity alone. The study contributes to philosophy of religion by challenging reductionist atheistic reasoning and defending multidimensional explanation in debates over God, reality, and rational belief.

The sixth article examines the religious foundations for protecting civilians in armed conflicts from the scriptural perspectives of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Rather than debating the legitimacy of war, the study focuses on the moral obligation to preserve the life and dignity of non-combatants. Using an analytical-inductive method, it analyzes the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, the Qur'an, rabbinical writings, patristic sources, and prophetic traditions to identify ethical norms governing warfare. The article finds that the Abrahamic religions share a strong humanitarian commitment to civilian protection, the sanctity of human life, and the rejection of unjust violence. By linking sacred texts with contemporary armed conflicts, the study argues that religious ethics can strengthen universal humanitarian consciousness and provide a theological foundation for protecting civilians across religious and cultural boundaries.

The seventh article develops the IQRAK Model as a 21st-century teaching and learning framework for Religious Primary School teachers under the Melaka Islamic Religious Department in Malaysia. Grounded in Al-Ghazali's educational philosophy and aligned with Malaysia's National Education Philosophy, the study responds to the limited development of contemporary pedagogical models for Islamic religious schools. Using a qualitative design, it combines literature

review with focus group discussions involving approximately 40 informants, with data analyzed through NVivo. The findings show that SRAJAIM teachers' practices reflect lifelong learning, holistic education, and the integration of knowledge, character, and practice. The resulting IQRAK Model offers the first structured teaching and learning model designed for the JAIM education system, contributing to balanced human capital development in Islamic education.

The eighth article develops an Islamic digital ethics framework for social media use by applying *al-Ta'lil bi al-Hikmah* as a complement to the Maqasid Shariah approach. Responding to ethical challenges such as misinformation, harmful online discourse, privacy erosion, excessive consumption, and algorithmic influence, the study argues that broad Maqasid-based models often remain insufficient for guiding individual users' everyday digital decisions. Using qualitative jurisprudential analysis grounded in *usul fiqh*, it interprets Qur'anic injunctions, Prophetic traditions, and classical juristic discussions to identify ethical wisdom related to communication, privacy, moderation, and accountability. The article shows that a hikmah-centered approach translates Islamic moral objectives into practical guidance for content sharing, online criticism, time management, and digital responsibility, thereby advancing micro-level Islamic ethics for contemporary social media engagement.

The ninth article investigates how Islamic tolerance awareness influences university students' perceptions of academic and societal tolerance in the United Arab Emirates. Based on a quantitative study of 422 participants across diverse genders, ages, academic levels, and specializations, the article finds that students demonstrate a high level of Islamic tolerance awareness, with no statistically significant differences across demographic groups. Perceptions of societal tolerance are also largely consistent, although gender-based differences appear in academic tolerance, with male students

reporting higher perceptions than female students. Correlational and regression analyses show strong relationships among Islamic tolerance awareness, academic tolerance, and societal tolerance, confirming that awareness significantly strengthens students' perceptions of tolerance in educational and social contexts. The study contributes to discussions on Islamic values, higher education, and social cohesion in the UAE.

The tenth article examines the intersection of Islamic thought, Arabic literature, and civic imagination in Nigeria, highlighting their influence on cultural identity, religious life, intellectual formation, and education. Drawing on historical texts, oral traditions, and contemporary literary works, the study shows how Nigerian Arabic literature has evolved as a dynamic medium for moral reflection, social critique, and community formation. Through a multidisciplinary rhetorical and pedagogical analysis, it identifies thematic and stylistic richness in works addressing corruption, gender equity, social justice, interfaith relations, and social harmony. The article argues that Arabic literary traditions in Nigeria are not merely historical artifacts but active resources for education reform and civic renewal. Its contribution lies in demonstrating how Islamic intellectual heritage can support inclusivity, ethical citizenship, cultural policy, and broader public engagement in contemporary Nigerian society.

The eleventh article investigates the acceptance of metaverse technology in teaching Islamic sciences, using Hadith and the Prophetic Biography as instructional models within the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology framework. Conducted at Al Qasimia University in the United Arab Emirates, the study examines how performance expectancy, perceived ease of use, institutional support, motivation, hedonic enjoyment, and demographic factors shape Sharia-informed digital pedagogy. Using

a quantitative descriptive-analytical design, it collected online survey data from 201 staff members and students and analyzed the results through Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling. The findings show that motivation, perceived ease of use, and performance expectancy strongly predict behavioral intention, while enabling conditions support implementation. The article contributes an ethical, culturally responsive, and Sharia-compliant model for integrating metaverse technology into Islamic higher education.

The twelfth article redefines self-management through early Buddhist ethical thought and applies it to modern leadership and organizational practice. Drawing on the *Dīgha Nikāya*, *Majjhima Nikāya*, and *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, the study uses qualitative thematic analysis to conceptualize self-management as an integrated system of ethical discipline (*sīla*), mental discipline (*samādhi*), wisdom (*paññā*), mindfulness (*sati*), and non-attachment (*virāga*). The findings argue that Buddhist self-management is not merely a neutral psychological technique but a form of ethical self-governance. *Sīla* fosters moral accountability and social trust, *samādhi* regulates attention and emotion, *paññā* supports wise judgment under complexity, *sati* sustains ethical vigilance, and *virāga* reduces ego-driven attachment. The article contributes an ethically grounded alternative to instrumentalized views of mindfulness in leadership studies.

The thirteenth article extends the wisdom of the *Bhagavad Gita* to strengthen the philosophical foundations of sustainability by shifting its orientation from anthropocentrism to cosmo-centrism. Responding to critiques that modern sustainability remains human-centered, non-inclusive, and rooted in Western dualistic assumptions, the study argues that Eastern philosophical traditions can deepen sustainability's conceptual and practical relevance. Using Gadamerian philosophical hermeneutics, it interprets selected verses of the *Bhagavad Gita* to show how Vedic non-dualism can overcome the

limitations of Cartesian dualism and Kantian moral formalism. The article demonstrates that integrating Western and Eastern perspectives can make sustainability more inclusive, cross-culturally meaningful, and operationally pragmatic. Its contribution lies in reframing sustainability as an ethical and cosmological responsibility that connects human action with broader ecological and spiritual order.

The fourteenth article explores how monastic experiences within the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church contribute to mental wellbeing and psychotherapeutic practice. Using a case study design, the research draws on purposive interviews with nine monks and nuns from selected Ethiopian monasteries to examine the psychological value of prayer, meditation, obedience, fasting, and disciplined spiritual life. The findings show that monastic practices foster mental wellness by cultivating mindfulness, emotional stability, spiritual focus, and positive psychological dispositions. The article argues that mindfulness-oriented therapy, already gaining attention in psychology, can be enriched by faith-based healing traditions rooted in Ethiopian Orthodox monasticism. It recommends integrating monastic insights into psychotherapist training, either through formal curricula or short-term programs, and encourages policy frameworks that recognize religious practices as resources for holistic mental health.

The fifteenth article compares the foundations of women's moral agency in Kant's practical philosophy and Shi'i Islam. It asks how each framework conceptualizes women's agency and how inner subjectivity becomes externally realized in moral and social life. Through conceptual analysis, the study argues that Kantian autonomy contains a tension between the transcendental rational subject and Kant's empirical view of women as deficient in rational capacity, thereby limiting women's objective agency. In contrast, the Shi'i

Islamic framework develops a model of "situated agency" grounded in *fiṭrah*, *khilāfah*, substantial motion, credal perceptions, and psycho-emotional difference. The article argues that Shi'i legal institutions, including *mahr*, *nafaqah*, and independent property rights, function as structural supports for women's agency. Its contribution lies in formulating "religious autonomy" as an alternative to Kantian autonomy.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

During the preparation of this work, the author used ChatGPT, DeepL, Grammarly, and PaperPal to translate from Bahasa Indonesia into American English and improve the clarity of the language and readability of the article. After using these tools, the author reviewed and edited the content as needed and took full responsibility for the content of the published article.

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