

The Trump Plan - A Plan for Annexation, Not for Peace

Why is the US plan so harmful?

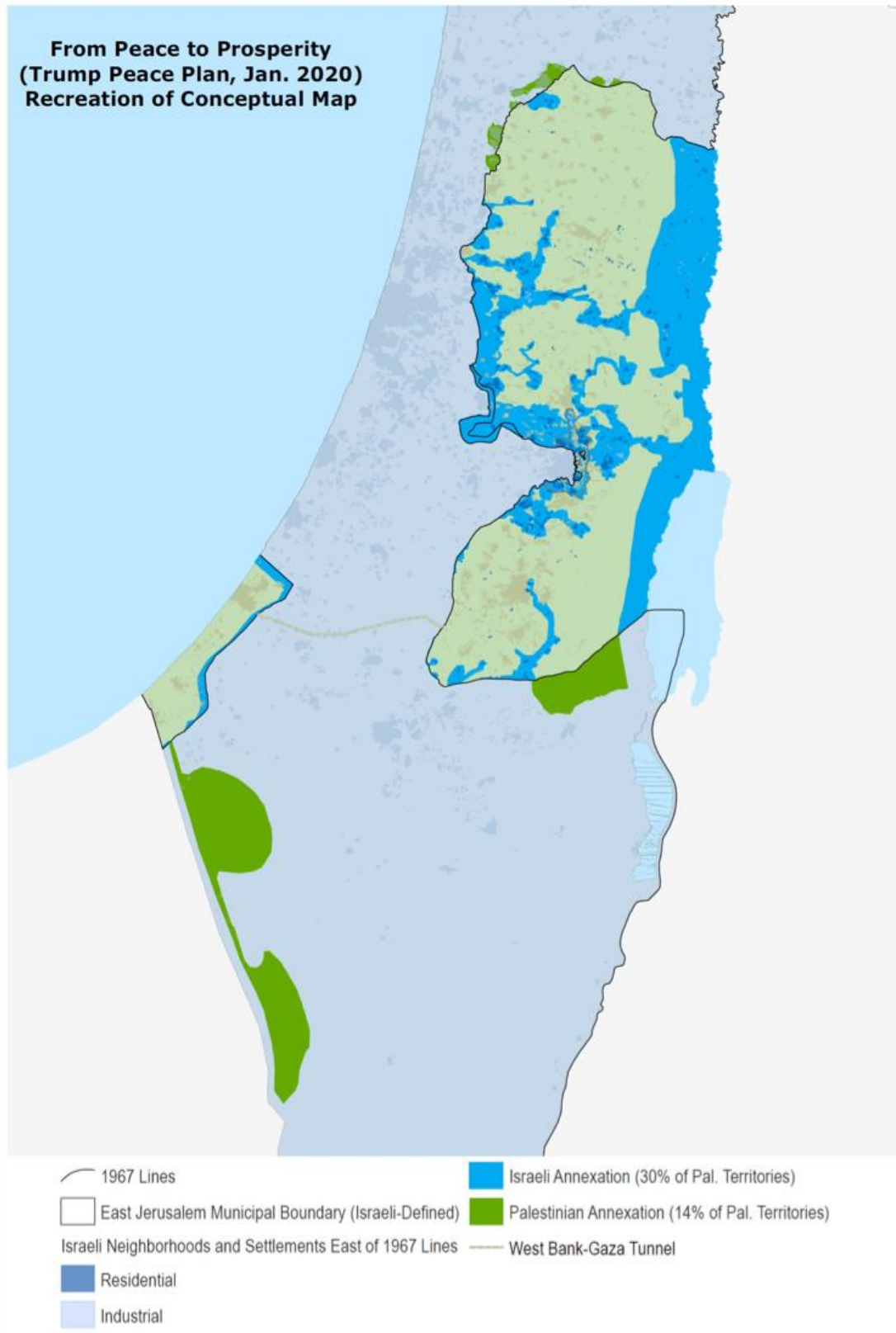
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When the president of the United States, Donald Trump, festively presented his “Deal of the Century,” he repeated the following words several times: “peace plan” and “Palestinian state.” Despite the seemingly appropriate words and the celebratory atmosphere, an examination of the details of the plan clearly reveal the degree to which it lacks both peace and a Palestinian state. A deeper assessment indicates that the plan not only neglects to advance peace, but also has the potential to severely harm prospects for a genuine peace plan for both parties.

Summary: Why Is the Plan So Bad?

- **Unilateralism and lack of reciprocity** – According to the US plan, Israel may already (unilaterally) annex settlements in its initial stage of implementation, prior to negotiations. A Palestinian state will be established, conditionally, per terms that will be determined unilaterally.
- **The proposed Palestinian “state” isn’t really a state:**
 - It lacks territorial contiguity or potential for economic development – The proposed Palestinian state is akin to Swiss cheese, whose land is interconnected via roads and tunnels that prevent any sustainable development.
 - It lacks independent boundaries – The proposed Palestinian state will be surrounded by the state of Israel on all sides. Even the crossing between Gaza and Egypt will have an Israeli presence.
 - It lacks self-sufficient security – According to the US plan, Israel will retain sweeping security control over the Palestinian state.
- **Indefensible borders** – Annexation of settlements that will become enclaves of sorts in a Palestinian state, will constitute an overwhelming security burden for the Israeli military.
- **The plan lacks a solution for Jerusalem** – Trump’s plan does not resolve one of the focal points of the conflict, leaving all of East Jerusalem and hundreds of thousands of Palestinian residents under Israeli sovereignty.
- **Land swaps and population transfers** – The US plan includes the possibility for Israel to strip hundreds of thousands of Arab citizens of their Israeli citizenship, “transferring” them in a virtual manner by redrawing the Green Line so that they will live under Palestinian rule. This racist proposal will not really add much to Israel’s Jewish supermajority, and will severely harm the delicate fabric of life between Jewish and Arab citizens.

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(Map based on Trump's plan. Credit: Dan Rothem)

Breakdown and Clarification:

A. Annexation now; negotiations later

Per the US plan, Israel may unilaterally annex the settlements in the West Bank during its initial stage, prior to negotiations.

- **Unilateral measures** – Among the basic principles of negotiations in conflict resolution are consensual progression and complete avoidance of unilateral measures. The first effective action proposed by the US plan involves applying unilateral sovereignty, prior to commencing negotiations, over all settlements in the West Bank. Such a grave measure would shift the reality on the ground, without negotiations and bilateral confidence and security building measures, which are liable harm prospects for bringing the conflict to an end. Furthermore, such a measure is illegal in accordance with international law.
- **Lack of reciprocity in advancing the agreement** – Israel has been granted free reign to act toward shifting reality on the ground upon the commencement of the process, without granting anything to the Palestinians (the vision for a Palestinian “state” remains distant from constituting a viable state, as detailed below). That is, even prior to commencing negotiations, the state of Israel has already received what should be agreed upon and modulated as a result of the negotiations.

B. Trump’s vision for a Palestinian “state”

A state has a number of components including borders, independence, territorial contiguity, and more. None of these elements are included in the proposal.

- **Borders** – According to Trump’s plan, the Palestinian “state” is surrounded by Israel and has no independent border with another state aside from a small borderline with Egypt adjacent to Gaza, which even then will have an Israeli presence at the crossing.
- **Independence** – In accordance with the plan, the Palestinian “state” will have no sovereignty in all matters related to security and defense of its national borders. Security responsibility on behalf of another state’s military inherently invalidates the nature of such a state, by definition. Israeli control of all borders also prevents genuine economic independence.
- **Territorial contiguity** – Per the proposal, the Palestinian “state” will be split into six separate areas perforated by dozens of enclaves of settlements and outposts, preventing the urban expansion of Palestinian cities, villages, and towns. A state’s socioeconomic development requires territorial depth for the development of roads and infrastructure, open spaces, and more. The proposition to connect the disjointed sections of the Palestinian state, which is already very small and lacks potential for natural growth, via “strips” of road (subject to the control of another state) without territorial depth, will undoubtedly prevent prospects for its

development. It is important to note that it is in Israel's interest for the future Palestinian state to be viable and retain the capacity to develop and thrive, in order to ensure a sustainable lasting peace.

C. A conditional Palestinian state

The plan determines that a Palestinian state will only be established after four years, and will be contingent upon Palestinians' compliance with eight conditions. Contrary to the conduct of all previous negotiations and the conflict settlement, unilateral steps were determined that oblige the Palestinian party, which was excluded from the discourse on formulating the initiative, to certain conditions in order to fulfill its future national aspirations.

D. Israeli security responsibility over territory belonging to a future Palestinian state

The US plan deems that sweeping security responsibility over the Palestinian state will remain in Israel's hands.

- **A state in which another state's military controls security is not a sovereign independent state** – One of the basic definitions of a sovereign state entails security control over its territory. In the framework of various former peace talks, an understanding has already been reached that a Palestinian state will be demilitarized, as a means of addressing Israel's security concerns. Yet stationing the Israeli military in territory belonging to a future Palestinian state effectively denies Palestinians of a state.
- Annexation of settlements essentially transforms many of them into **Israeli enclaves within the "state" of Palestine**, which have the potential to incessantly disrupt Palestinian daily life due to security issues. Moreover, the 15 settlements deemed enclaves will greatly complicate security matters and create constant friction among populations living in the same territory.
- **Instead of establishing equitable defensible borders**, Israel will retain a border that is five-times as long, along with the security burden, for the foreseeable future. The circumstances that would require Israel to defend over 200 points of settlement and their thoroughfares, turn this security mission into a deeply cumbersome ongoing task. Rather than redeploying from the majority of the territory and establishing a contiguous defensible border, as is typical for national borders, Trump's proposal maintains the current reality on the ground, leaving Israeli military forces to manage a weighty security burden.

E. Jerusalem: There's no resolution to the conflict that doesn't address Jerusalem

The US proposal determines that East Jerusalem, along with its hundreds of thousands of Palestinian residents and holy sites, will remain under Israeli sovereignty, while Palestinians are left to establish their capital in surrounding towns and villages. The issue of Jerusalem and its holy sites is among the focal points of the conflict, retaining national and religious claims on behalf of both parties. East Jerusalem is the largest Palestinian city in the West Bank (with approximately 340,000 Palestinians),

and is the historic, national, economic, social, and religious heart of the Palestinian people, in the very same sense that it is the beating heart of Israel.

The US proposal not only denies Palestinians of their symbolic national and religious capital, but it also permanently leaves hundreds of thousands of Palestinians severed from a Palestinian state, under Israeli sovereignty. Previous negotiations have proven that the conflict cannot be resolved without finding a solution for Jerusalem. Israel's previous attempt to do so at Camp David in 2000, in proposing that the Palestinian capital be located in Abu Dis, led to the derailing of talks and contributed in part to the national-religious tensions over the ownership of parts of Jerusalem that precipitated the outbreak of the Second Intifada.

F. Land swaps are unequal in size and quality

The US plan deems that Israel will annex approximately 30% of the West Bank, granting Palestinians territory equivalent to 14% of the West Bank, primarily from the Negev Desert, which is located dozens of kilometers from the Gaza Strip. These territories, due to their vast distance from the future Palestinian state's infrastructure and population centers, do not meet Palestinians' genuine needs for land with potential for future development, thus harming the state's prospects for stability and sustainability. In effect, the land of the future Palestinian state is equivalent to a mere 84% of the Palestinian Territories as per the pre-1967 lines.

Likewise, this constitutes a blatant violation of the basic principle of the territorial compromise on which the 1967 lines are based, whereby Palestinians forfeit their dream of sovereignty over Mandate Palestine, and settle for 22% of it, per the borders determined prior to 1967, while Israel gives up the same dream, settling for 78%.

G. Exchange of populated territory (or in other words, depriving Arab citizens of their Israeli citizenship)

The US proposal offers the possibility to transfer territory in the area of Wadi Ara, also known as the Triangle Region, along with Arab citizens of Israel there, within the framework of land swaps. This is a shamelessly illegal and illegitimate proposal to deprive state citizens of their citizenship. Israeli citizens of the Wadi Ara area have been part of the State of Israel from the beginning and have become an integral part of it. Calling this into question is unfounded, and such a proposal reeks of ethnic cleansing.

H. Peace agreement

A peace agreement must be founded on meaningful negotiations that result in mutual understanding and concessions on behalf of both parties. In contrast to all previous rounds of negotiations, this proposal will entail unilateral steps that will alter reality, and on which there will be no discussion between both parties, such that they will be carried out without Palestinian consent. Such a proposition permits Israel to annex significant territory from the West Bank, without even any requirement for a genuine intention of advancing a peace plan. This destructive scheme may gravely harm prospects for reaching a future agreement and bringing about an end to the conflict.

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Conclusion

The US proposal may be long and complicated, but it has nothing in common with a proposition truly aimed toward achieving a peace treaty. Furthermore, each element of this proposal is likely to result in prolonging the conflict and distancing any chance for a peaceful resolution in the coming years. Negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians alone, without unilateral steps, are what are needed to bring us closer to a political agreement. Only a resolution based on two states for two peoples, with a defensible border, Jerusalem as both states' capital, and an agreed-upon solution on the refugee issue, can bring about an end to the violent conflict and increasingly anti-democratic reality that has persisted for over 52 years.