



TRUMP'S PEACE PLAN: PATHWAY TO PRIVATION

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February 25, 2020

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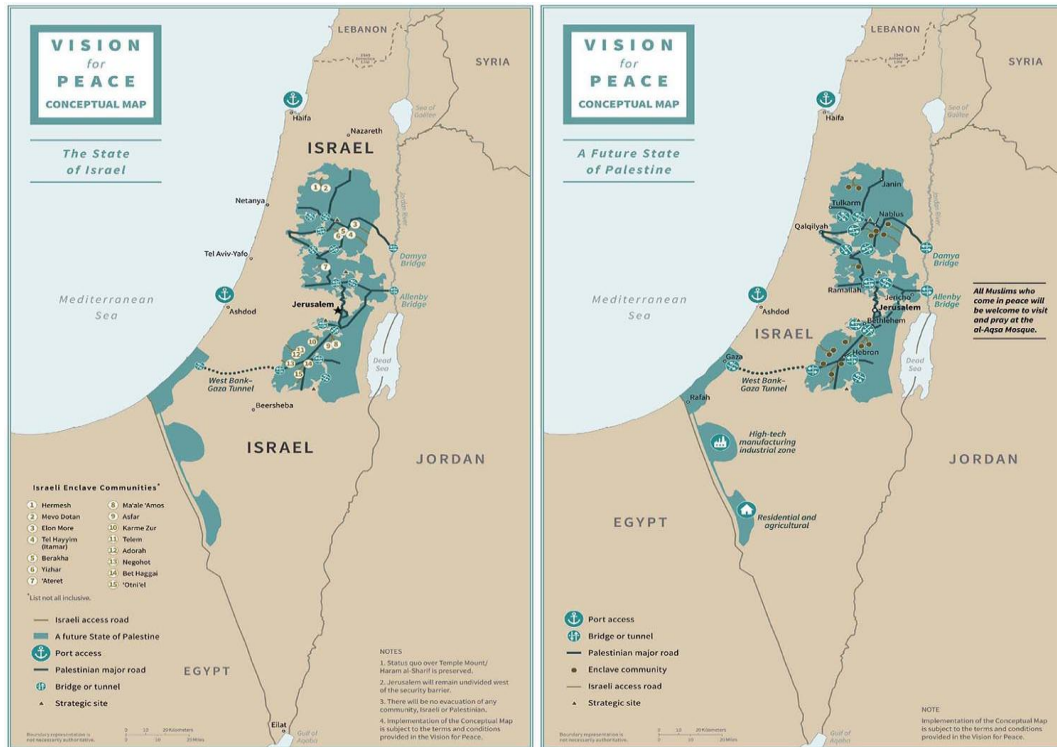
Source: AP

President Trump unveiled his so-called “Deal of the Century” on January 28, 2020 to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Both the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and opposition leader Benny Gantz were present at the ceremony held at the White House. Introducing his plan, President Trump said, “Today, Israel takes a big step towards peace...my vision presents a win-win opportunity for both sides, a realistic two-state solution that resolves the risk of Palestinian statehood to Israel's security.”¹ Ambassadors from Bahrain, UAE and Oman were also in attendance.

President Trump's peace plan known as ‘*Peace to Prosperity: A Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People*’ has two components: a political framework; and an economic framework. The latter was revealed in June 2019, and if put into practice, it expects to double Palestinian GDP, create more than a million employment opportunities and decrease poverty rate by half.²

¹ “Trump Unveils Mideast Plan, Hailing ‘Big Step towards Peace’,” *Dawn*, January 29, 2020. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1531057>

² “Peace to Prosperity: Economic Framework,” *The White House* (The United States Government). <https://www.whitehouse.gov/peacetoprospersity/economic/>



Source: The White House

Some of the pertinent proposals included in the "Conceptual Map" of the peace plan include the following:³

- Palestinian leaders must adopt peace by accepting Israel as the Jewish state, eradicating terrorism in all its forms and authorizing for special arrangements that deal with Israel's and the region's crucial security needs.
- The plan asserts that Israel will retain security responsibility west of the Jordan River.
- Jerusalem "will remain Israel's undivided capital".
- The plan will more than double Palestinian territory and provide a Palestinian capital in Eastern Jerusalem, where the US would open an embassy. Essentially, the capital of the Palestinian state would lie in what is currently a huge refugee camp in the outskirts of Shuafat. As compensation, the proposal suggests that the Palestinians rename this area as "Al-Quds".

³ For detailed proposals see "Peace to Prosperity," *The White House* (The United States Government). <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Peace-to-Prosperity-0120.pdf>

- **There will be a four-year settlement freeze.** Existing Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank will be part of Israel. The US plan also gives consent for the annexation of the Jordan Valley and territories occupied by Israel since 1967.
- The future Palestinian state would comprise of land in West Bank and Gaza, connected by roads and tunnels. The Gaza Strip's maritime borders also come under Israeli control. Meanwhile, Palestinians residing in Gaza, which is currently ruled by Hamas, would be offered land swaps in Israel close to the Egyptian border, but remain largely excluded from planning until a ceasefire and the removal of Hamas.
- Territory allotted to Palestinians in the map issued by the White House, "will remain open and undeveloped for a period of four years." During that time, Palestinians can study the deal and try to "achieve the criteria for statehood". The latter refers to implementation of the peace plan by Israel, only if Gaza is fully demilitarized and in control of an authority acceptable to the State of Israel. Essentially, the Palestinians have to prove that they are worthy of a two-state solution.
- Along with Jordan, Israel will work to safeguard the status quo of Al-Aqsa Mosque/ Temple Mount.

The 'Peace to Prosperity' plan also offers three non-binding solutions for the millions of Palestinian refugees spread across the world. It clearly states that the State of Israel will not allow any refugee returnees. Instead, it proposes the following:

- Palestinian refugees can return to the future state of Palestine, given that this will not threaten Israeli security.
- Subject to host country consent, the refugees can integrate into the country where they already reside.
- Member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), should accept 500 refugees per year for the next ten years.⁴

Unlike the previous initiatives like the Oslo Accords and the Camp David negotiations to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the recently released peace plan only takes Israeli demands into account and leaves no room for negotiations. Moreover, it also encourages Arab countries to begin normalizing their relations with Israel and abandon all anti-Israel rhetoric. This of course includes the

⁴ Ibid.

Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement led by Palestinians which promotes boycott against Israel until it meets its obligations under international law. The 181 pages of the plan end with the following statement: "While the vision is ambitious, it is achievable. The future of the Palestinians is one of huge promise and potential. The Palestinian story does not end here. Their story is just being written."⁵

International Reactions

Up till now, 23 governments including Australia, India, Italy, France, and Morocco have applauded the peace plan - seven of those governments are in the Middle East.⁶ As expected, in the aftermath of the announcement, protests erupted in the West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon and Jordan. Turkey's President Erdogan called the deal "still-born", while Iran's official statement described it as "treason of the century". The African Union's chairman, Moussa Faki, stated that the deal was prepared without any consultation with the legitimate representatives of the Palestinian people." The European Union's foreign policy chief reiterated the EU's commitment to a two-state solution⁷ and encouraged that both parties in the conflict 're-engage' in dialogue.⁸ The Arab League and the OIC also rejected the plan stating that it did not meet the "minimum rights" of the Palestinians. Suffice it is to say that Palestinian leaders have said that there will be no relations with Israel and the US following their "disavowal of signed agreements and international legitimacy." Israeli opposition figures have also suggested that the timing of the proposal's announcement was intended to help Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Israeli elections which will be held on March 2, 2020.⁹

Conclusion

President Trump's advisor Jared Kushner presented the 'Peace to Prosperity' plan in a closed-door session of the United Nation Security Council (UNSC) session on the 6th of February. His presentation was met with much scepticism. While some applauded the 'hard work' Kushner had

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ "Twenty-Three Nations Embrace Trump Peace Plan, 7 in Middle East," *Washington Examiner*, January 30, 2020.
<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/washington-secrets/23-nations-embrace-trump-peace-plan-7-in-middle-east>

⁷ "Palestine Praises African Union, EU's Rejection of Trump's Unworkable 'Deal of the Century'," *The New Arab*, February 5, 2020.
<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2020/2/5/palestine-praises-african-union-eu-for-rejecting-trumps-deal>

⁸ "EU Slams Trump's Middle East Peace Plan," *Deutsche Welle*, February 04, 2020.
<https://www.dw.com/en/eu-slams-trumps-middle-east-peace-plan/a-52256384>

⁹ "World Leaders React to Trump's Middle East Plan," *Israeli-Palestinian conflict News | Al Jazeera*, January 29, 2020.
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/01/world-reaction-trump-middle-east-plan-200128173439574.html>

put into the initiative, others questioned the proposal's viability in the absence of Palestinian support.¹⁰ On the occasion, Kushner also blamed President Mahmoud Abbas for the sharp increase in violence in Israel since President Trump's announcement.

On February 11, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas briefed the UNSC and demanded that the principles of international law be adhered to. He reaffirmed his rejection of President Trump's proposal and called for alternate negotiations with Israel.¹¹ The UN meanwhile underlined the necessity for direct negotiations between Palestine and Israel to resolve the conflict.¹² It should be noted that had any draft resolution been floated at the UNSC meeting, it would have amounted to nothing. Case in point, in December 2017, when Palestinians presented a resolution condemning the US's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, US overturned the 14 opposition votes with a veto.

Through his announcement, President Trump has given open blessings for the status quo of Israeli annexation and occupation. The proposed plan does not bring in peace. On the contrary, it has formalized the existing apartheid and given a legitimate cover for further Palestinian cleansing. The neutral response of many Arab states only serves to highlight the inability of the Muslim world to take a unified stance. Lack of agreement on the Palestinian issue should come as no surprise, since it has long been on the backburner for many Muslim countries. The Palestinian Authority (PA) is itself blighted by internal divisions. Apart from consolidating international support it does not have many options left at the moment.

The voice of the UN has long become an echo-chamber within its own walls. What the veto power has ineffectually done is provide a legal cover for what its permanent members deem as being right. It is about time that changes be brought to how the UN functions so further abuse of power is stopped.

Questions have also been raised on how sustainable the plan is.¹³ While the plan seems to benefit Israel in the short term, for any economy to succeed, a stable political system needs to be in place.

¹⁰ "Kushner Peace Plan Collides Into Wall of Skeptical Envoys at UN," *Bloomberg*, February 8, 2020. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-02-07/kushner-peace-plan-collides-into-wall-of-skeptical-envoys-at-un>

¹¹ "Palestinian President Abbas rails against Trump peace plan at UN meeting," *The New Arab*, February 11, 2020. <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2020/2/11/palestinian-president-abbas-rejects-trump-peace-plan-at-un>

¹² "UN underlines need for dialogue to resolve Israel-Palestine conflict," *UN News*, February 11, 2020. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/02/1057181>

¹³ "Trump Plan for Palestine Could Deal Blow to Israel's Economy," *Israel News | Al Jazeera*, January 29, 2020. <https://www.aljazeera.com/ajimpact/trump-plan-palestine-deal-blow-israel-economy-200129173508294.html>

All this said, diplomacy can achieve little without substantial change on ground. What should be of grave concern for countries like Pakistan is that President Trump's plan has set a precedent for countries like India to proceed with their present policy of illegal annexation which is in essence a sure pathway to increased devastation, destruction and carnage against oppressed people of Indian occupied Kashmir.