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# Trump's "Deal of the Century" Is Not the Reversal of US Policy toward Israel–Palestine –The Reversal Is What We Need

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## ABSTRACT

The article analyzes President Trump's vision for a comprehensive peace agreement between Israel and Palestine, the so-called Deal of the Century announced on January 28. While the proposal uses the language of hope and prosperity and expresses support for the two-state solution, its provisions actually render the Palestinian "state" inviable. The plan does not empower the Palestinian state with full sovereignty over its territory nor does it recognize its internationally accepted borders, while at the same time nullifying the Palestinian right of return. In short, the plan seeks to legalize and legitimize the status quo by enabling Israeli expansionism and the systemic denial of Palestinian rights, which is a flagrant violation of international law and has no legal validity.

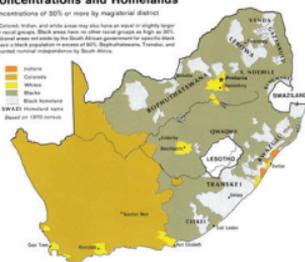
On 28 January 2020, the White House published its new plan for the solution to the conflict between Israel and Palestine. The proposal was given a bold informal title: "Deal of the Century." The Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has welcomed the proposal despite the objection of the extreme right wingers in Israel.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the Arab League has issued a statement calling the deal "a setback to peace."<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, thousands of people



**Racial Concentrations and Homelands**

Racial concentrations of 30% or more by magisterial district

NOTE: Homelands of Druze, Indian, and other races may also have a slightly larger percentage of other racial groups. Black areas have no other racial groups at high in 2011. Homelands are shaded green and under the Israeli foreign government's separate from other groups. All have a black population in excess of 30%. Black homelands, Tondino, and South have been granted colonial independence by Black Africa.



gathered in Amman, Jordan, to protest the plan, shouting “Palestine is not for sale,” alluding to Trump’s insistence on tying peace to economic prosperity.<sup>3</sup>

While it is presented as an honest attempt to help both Israelis and Palestinians, president Trump’s Deal of the Century is simply a statement of commitment to codify and entrench Israel’s domination over Palestinians and its denial of their basic rights. Further, in spite of the view of many liberals that this deal represents a U-turn in American policy toward Israel and Palestine, the historical record leaves no doubt that the Deal of the Century is a culmination of America’s long-standing determination to legalize Israel’s occupation of the West Bank and subjugation of Palestinians, which spans numerous administrations, both Republican and Democrat. In that sense, a U-turn in the American policy toward the Israeli–Palestinian conflict away from denying the basic rights of Palestinians and toward international law is actually what is needed in order to secure lasting peace and prosperity.

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President Trump's Deal of the Century is framed in the language of hope, prosperity, peace, and cooperation. It promises to ensure lasting peace, restore the national dignity of Palestinians, and create conditions for economic development. The suffering of many generations of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza leaves no doubt that peace, dignity, and prosperity are desperately needed and well deserved, on their part. However, president Trump's Vision, as this deal is also referred to in the text itself, does not spend a lot of words on the suffering of Palestinians. Meanwhile, there are a lot of references to how corrupt their leaders are and how dangerous Palestinian organizations are for the national security of Israel. By the same token, there is no mention of Israeli war crimes against the civilian population in the West Bank and Gaza that are too numerous to count, while there is no shortage of praise for Israel's commitment to peace. This praise sometimes acquires a somewhat tragi-comical dimension.<sup>4</sup> For example, the Vision states that "the State of Israel has also exchanged sizeable territories for the sake of peace, as it did when it withdrew from the Sinai Peninsula in exchange for peace with the Arab Republic of Egypt." However, it fails to mention that the same Sinai Peninsula had previously been occupied by Israel in a war of aggression.

In terms of the Vision expressed in the Deal of the Century, there is very little for Palestinian's to look forward to and a lot of support for the Israeli cause. The two-state solution is embraced in the text but with a qualifier: "realistic." What this qualifier entails is basically little more autonomy for Palestine, although nothing on the order of what is necessary for an entity to be considered a state, and a full annexation of Jerusalem and the illegal settlements in the West Bank including the Jordan Valley. The Vision is placed in the framework of the proposals of Yitzchak Rabin, a former Prime Minister of Israel and a staunch Zionist, who envisioned a solution for the Israeli–Palestinian conflict in the form of a settlement that would include

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“something less than a state for Palestinians” accompanied by the legalization of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and significant degree of control over Gaza.<sup>5</sup> President Trump’s Vision echoes this proposal by supporting the incorporation of the entire city of Jerusalem and the illegal settlements into Israel on the one hand and a semi autonomy for Palestinian authorities on the other, while allowing Israel to retain control over the airspace over Gaza and have access to defend all territory west of the Jordan River.<sup>6</sup> Israel will retain control of “air, sea, land and electromagnetic fields.” Therefore, once all the details are considered, “realistic” leaves the entire phrase “two-state solution” virtually devoid of any substance.

The lack of concern for the basic rights of Palestinians that characterizes this plan has been criticized as the betrayal of the two-state solution by many of president Trump’s opponents. Mainstream Democrats have correctly pointed out that the Deal of the Century does not amount to anything but the legalization of the Israeli Occupation and the creation of a defective Palestinian state without the basic components of national sovereignty such as the control of its airspace and borders.

While this criticism is essentially correct in exposing president Trump’s plan for what it is, the idea that it represents a betrayal of American foreign policy toward Israel and Palestine is an illusion. The Vision expressed in this text is perfectly in line with the spirit of Oslo Accords sponsored by then-president of the United States, Bill Clinton. The Oslo Accords paved the path for the legalization of the Israeli Occupation by recognizing the Gaza Strip and the West Bank as Palestinian territories and establishing Palestinian control over these areas. However, Israel did not cede control over the Palestinian territories it had occupied for more than two decades and where it had established illegal settlements. Nonetheless, the Oslo Accords did not give Palestinians full statehood. In effect, then, these agreements laid

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out the groundwork for the legalization of the illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank and their incorporation into the state of Israel. Meanwhile, Palestine became a discontinuous pseudo-state. President Clinton led another initiative toward the legalization of the status quo in Israel–Palestine when he was leaving office in 2000, thereby demonstrating his disregard for the international law and the fact that Palestinians have the right to their own state, part of which territory had been illegally occupied by the state of Israel.<sup>7</sup>

It is a dangerous illusion to think that president Trump's plan is an aberration from mainstream US foreign policy when it comes to the conflict between Israel and Palestine. The United States has isolated itself from the rest of the world in terms of its support for Israel's violations of international law and the war crimes it has committed against the civilian population of the West Bank and Gaza. While president Trump's Vision aims at making the status quo permanent, previous administrations have also done their part in perpetuating it and creating the conditions for their legalization. The most alarming aspect of this approach is that both the Republicans and the Democrats are ignoring the reality on the ground, which is that Palestinians are living in dire poverty with no prospect of ensuring decent lives and futures for their children. It is difficult to accept that president Trump's administration genuinely believes that a lasting peace and prosperity can be built on the basis of a plan that neglects that basic reality.

Adding insult to injury, the Deal of the Century simply ignores the consequences of Israel's ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from large swathes of the territories that are legally designated as Palestine. The plan expects Palestinians to forfeit refugees' right of return to the lands they were expelled from.<sup>8</sup> In return, they are promised a proto-state that not only lacks control over its airspace but will also be dependent on Israel for crucial resources such as water.<sup>9</sup> On top of this, the precarious state of Palestine would have

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to refrain from any attempt to join any international organizations without the consent of the state of Israel.<sup>10</sup> It is hard to fathom how an entity without coherent territory, internal and external sovereignty, or control over essential resources could be considered a viable state.

A U-turn in American foreign policy toward Israel–Palestine is indeed necessary, and it has to start with the United States joining the rest of the world in accepting the fact that the human rights of Palestinians have to be protected and that Israel cannot be exempt from international law with impunity. To be clear, this is not just about Palestine but about international legal order as we understand it—as Israel pushes ahead with the annexation of the West Bank and the Jordan Valley, it will compound its existing violation of international law and commit a flagrant violation of United Nations Security Council resolutions, preventing the emergence of Palestinian statehood, which would deal a death blow to the prospect of a two-state solution. Nevertheless, the Palestinians will abandon neither their inalienable right of return, equality, and freedom nor their demand for self-determination. The Palestinian cause is not a struggle to be liquidated by lucrative foreign investments or promises of economic development. A solution or a plan that fails to encompass fundamental human rights, and dismisses a generational aspiration for a sovereign national homeland for the Palestinian people, would be deemed unworthy and stillborn.

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## Endnotes

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- 7 "The Clinton Parameters," The Jewish Peace Lobby, archived 8 September 2019, [https://web.archive.org/web/20150117011736/http://www.peacelobby.org/clinton\\_parameters.htm](https://web.archive.org/web/20150117011736/http://www.peacelobby.org/clinton_parameters.htm).
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