

DEAL OF THE CENTURY AND IT'S IMPLICATIONS

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 Analysis

Israel and members of the international Jewish Zionist movement continue to dig as much as they can to 'prove' their history-hence-claim of Palestine, but it is obvious that they still continue to have doubts about their legitimacy after more than 70 years of their occupation. The US and other key policymakers have given Israel full unconditional support to legitimize all actions taken and help rewrite international laws in its favor; however, all that has failed to change the fact that Palestine is Palestine and will remain as Palestine.

US President Donald Trump accelerated assault on Palestinians on behalf of Israel, muzzling their political aspirations, with his latest move in the so-called "Deal of the Century," which was cooked up by his son-in-law and Middle East envoy Jared Kushner, to solve the Israeli problem, and not the Palestinian-Israeli issue, because there was no Palestinian in attendance

of the announcement of the plan; after all, no one would think that Palestinians whose land Trump is giving away would invited to the ceremony anyway! This plan is based on Netanyahu's previously proposed economic peace plan, whereby Palestinians are expected to give up their demands for freedom and self-determination in exchange for economic inducements.

Both Kushner and Trump, with backgrounds in real estate business rather than diplomacy, seem to be approaching this hitherto insoluble conflict as a transaction. Kushner proposed a \$50bn investment fund during a workshop called Peace to Prosperity aimed at boosting the Palestinian and neighboring Arab economies, arguing that this approach could generate prosperity in the occupied Palestinian territories as well as Jordan, Egypt and Lebanon.



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This idea however is unlikely to come by as easy as they might think. It is a delusion to think that the legitimate hopes of Palestinians for political dignity and statehood can be bought off by economic incentives. If this problem could have been reduced to dollars, it would have been solved a long time ago!

Nevertheless, there is no absolute shortage of support for the plan; there are countries that secretly support the so-called “deal of the century” to varying degrees and the factors that drive this hidden support are complex and intertwined. Until recently, the issue of Palestine had been left behind in terms of its urgency, probably due to the poignant distress in the Middle East such as the Syrian, Iraqi, Afghanistan and Yemeni wars, not to count the existing internal political calculations. Some leaders in the region want to move on from the Palestinian conflict, which they believe has held back the Arab World for too long.

The fact that the Ambassadors of Jordan, Bahrain and the UAE to the US were present at the White House during the announcement of the plan, and how many Arab diplomats were consulted in the preparation process, not to mention the fact that many Arab countries are in a tactical silence right now on the issue of the “Deal of the century” speaks loud about their positions in this matter.

Countries that have shown the strongest opposition to this plan are Turkey and Iran. Turkey has stated that the plan is a complete annexation project aimed at destroying the two-state solution and extorting Palestinian lands, and the authorities have announced Jerusalem as a “red line” that should never be crossed, adopting a very strong position politically. Given the hidden support for the plan

from various countries, Turkey might need to brace itself for a tight and challenging process of diplomacy, given the situation.

Politically, the deal would expand Gaza into part of northern Egypt, making its people to come under Egyptian control. Palestinians would be left with a smaller share of the West Bank and some areas on the outskirts of Jerusalem and no control over their borders. Around six million Palestinian refugees would be stripped of their rights of return; the Jewish sovereignty over the area excludes the rights of citizenship of the people residing there. Israel would classify these Palestinians as “illegal aliens” subject to deportation in which they would be “returned to their original homeland” in Ukraine or Poland or Moldavia. They would be deemed “foreign”

with the status that would allow Israel to ethnically cleanse them from their own towns and villages. With this plan, the existence of Jewish settlements in the West Bank would be comfortably preserved.

What is Important to remember is that Israel has made it a tradition to bomb Gaza, the already strained region, at least once a month, their ultimate aim being to make the enclave uninhabitable for the two million Palestinians trapped there, weaken their economy and force the inhabitants to migrate. In 2019 alone, as much as 108 Palestinians were killed by Israeli forces in Gaza, according to the Al Mezan Center for Human Rights.

Since 1956, Israel has constantly been making moves to claim Gaza, suggesting to have its inhabitants relocated

to a region in the Sinai Peninsula. The issue of relocating Gazans regained momentum when Trump became president. Palestinians in Gaza

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continued to protest against Israel's 14 yearlong siege and naval blockade of the tiny coastal strip. The people of Gaza also demand for the realization of the internationally recognized legal rights of Palestinian refugees to return to the very lands they were expelled from during Israel's establishment in 1948. The siege has been repeatedly condemned by the UN and human rights organizations as a form of collective punishment against the entire population of Gaza, which is prohibited under International Law. About 1.3 million of the nearly 2 million Palestinians in Gaza are refugees originating from what is called Israel today, prevented from returning to the homeland they were expelled from for the sole reason that they are not Jewish.

The plan to relocate Palestinians does not appear to be an easy possibility either. For it to materialize, Israel needs to form an official alliance with Egypt (which was a condition

attached to allowing Abdel Fattah al-Sisi to seize power through a coup in Egypt) and regional actors must also acknowledge their inability to solve the Palestinian issue, which would at this point square in Iran, whose military ideology and expansion in the Middle East strongly builds on the Palestinian issue.

The so-called "Deal of the Century" promoted by Trump to the international audience as "the last chance for Palestine" and Israel's intensified pressure and military operations in Gaza and other occupied Palestine territories does not mean that only the people living there will have increasingly difficult days, but it means that those increasingly difficult days are awaiting the entire region in general. The implementation of the plan is more likely to trigger tremors in the region and beyond. Would the proposed \$50bn investment fund cover all the dire consequences?