

THE US ISRAELI ANNEXATION PLAN OF THE 21ST CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

During the years of mediation between Israelis and the Palestinians, the desires, restrictions, and stability of Israel have always been the top U.S. priorities. However, the successive the U.S. administrations have decided that the peace process e.g., a viable Palestinian state besides Israeli state, even though if they are reluctant. Yet, while a lasting settlement appeared feasible once, nearly 30 years ago. A series of secret talks in Norway became the peace process in Oslo, symbolized forever by a 1993 White House lawn ceremony presided over by a beaming President Bill Clinton. But President Trump is not missing any opportunity to boast about the power of America. He thinks the military and economic strength of America allows him to impose his will. With his “Century Deal” strategy, he wants to break U.N. peace efforts to settle Israeli-Palestinian dispute. In this paper, the authors argue that the annexing Israeli illegal settlements in the West Bank, along with the Jordan Valley. It would amount to the Israeli state stealing Palestinian land and smashing any hopes of a two-state solution to the conflict between Israel and Palestine.

Keywords: President Trump, Deal of the Century, Annexation, Israeli-Palestine conflict, Global.

INTRODUCTION

Since 1967 Six-Day-War, the Israeli occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, comprising the West Bank including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, has been characterized by a process of “*incremental*” or “*creeping annexation*”. This move towards annexation, particularly in the West Bank, has been achieved by implementing long-term, irreversible changes to the occupied territory in contravention of the main tenets of the international law, as well as in violation of the prohibition use of force to annex the occupied of territory. The annexation and international law are concepts that can sum up depictions of colonial greed, where states have been competing for the spoils of war. For instance, Israel annexed the majority of Palestinian East Jerusalem in 1980, annexing the Golan Heights taken from Syria one year later. In short, annexation is when a government decides that part of the State is a piece of land beyond its boundaries. It is mostly done during the military invasion and whether the people who live there want it or not. International law on annexation is clear- it is illegal (Holmes, 2020).

This term also generally applies to a one-sided action taken by the occupying force followed by the decisions of the government and the legislature, not an action taken by talks and peace agreements with the occupied party (Landau, 2020).

However, the UN Charter in article 1 and 2 (1 - 5) expresses that all Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations (P.7). The charter also demands that states respect peoples' right to self-determination (P.30). In addition of that the UN Security Council (UNSC) has affirmed the inadmissibility of territorial acquisition by force in its Resolution 242 on Nov 1967, including the Withdrawal of Israel armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict 1967. In resolution 662 (1990), the UNSC called upon States, international organizations, and specialized agencies not to recognize the annexation and refrain from any direct or indirect action that might be interpreted as annexation (UN Digital Library).

Based on Nir and Shushan (2020) viewpoint, the annexation is a unilateral action in which the occupied State integrates territories of another state into its jurisdiction by declaring sovereignty over it. By international law the acquisition of a territory gained by war is illegal. And instances of such violent, unilateral occupation were strongly condemned by the international community, from the occupation of Manchuria by Japan in 1932 to the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014. Likewise, Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem in 1980 and the Golan Heights in 1981 have been condemned internationally (Nir and Shushan, 2020).

The Failed Deal of the Century

On January 28, 2020, the U.S. President Trump's officially revealed his intention to settle the Israeli-Palestinian conflict -the so-called "*Deal of the Century*." Trump's claims he discovered a new way of bringing about peace between Israel and the Palestinians. Under the basis of its deal, Israel must annex Thirty percent (30%) of the territory of the West Bank and all 130 Jewish settlements there (Including 15 Israeli enclaves within the Palestinian state) and the Palestinian breadbasket Jordan Valley at the Jordan border (Makovsky, 2020).In this regard, Ambassador Peter Mulrean (2020) argues that the Trump administration has destroyed the façade of the Oslo Agreement, giving Israel more than it could have dreamed of four years ago and on a very quick timetable. The Palestinians earn nothing on Jerusalem issue or right of return for Palestinian refugees, and only a pseudo-state of minimal jurisdiction and scattered territories needing tunnels and highways to make them adjacent. Despite that, A U.S-Israel committee will hammer out the specifics. And if Palestinians come to the negotiating table, they can still negotiate, they said. Sure, they could maybe make a bargain for a little more of the Sinai desert to make up for the loss of all the fertile Jordan Valley. However, Robert Fisk (2020) - an Independent Middle East News correspondent-argues "*Believe It or Not*": The U.S. President Trump's gave Israel the right to occupy Palestine state territory forever. However, Figure 1. Reveals a potential future State of Palestine, is with geographically scattered territories, according to "*Trump Deal*".



Source: Donald J. Trump Twitter.

FIGURE 1 DEAL OF THE CENTURY

Nevertheless, When Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu recently announced his new unity government with Benny Gantz, he promised to annex illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank and the Jordan Valley. The highly contentious move could begin on the first of July after the Secretary of state Mike Pompeo made an important declaration of American support during his recent visit to Jerusalem (Ghosh, 2020). To Netanyahu, it is a “*historic opportunity*” to annex vast sections of the occupied West Bank long coveted by right-wing Israelis, probably giving Israel a permanent eastern frontier for the first time. And although he has not revealed the nature of his strategy, he vowed to declare it out as soon as July 1st (Halbfinger & Rasgon, 2020).

The Israeli settlements in the West Bank are currently home to as many as 500,000 Israeli settlers, according to Euro News website, 18Jun, 2020. The annexation would, therefore, scupper negotiations the so-called two-state solution allowing for the Israel and the State of Palestine to exist side by side in security and peace. It is the lonely realistic solution to end the conflict between Israel and Palestine and, has been the target of the entire international community for decades. But Israeli Prime Minister has a different outlook through Trump's plan, saying he would impose sovereign power over the strategically vital Jordan Valley and all Israel's West Bank settlements. However, this transfer will take up to Thirty percent (30%) of the occupied West Bank (Halbfinger & Kershner, 2020).

If the Prime Minister had his way, that means, it is the first opportunity to create what leaders of Israel have desired since occupying the Palestinian territories during the 1967 war, delineation of Israel border along the Jordan River, recognised by the U.S government (Halbfinger & Kershner, 2020). Also, the settlements and circumjacent areas are will become permanent components of Israel State. However, one of the most important annexations will possibly allow is the building of settlements-long one of Israel's most thorny problems with the

Palestinians -while the new Construction of the settlements and zoning in the West Bank currently require Israeli Prime Minister's and his Defence Minister's approval, and can take some time. But after annexation, building there would become a domestic Israeli issue and thus easier for Israel. According to BBC News, 16 Jun, 2020.

Behind the facade, Handelman (2020) revealed the annexation is indeed an entrance to the religious-Zionist project to attain dominion over the entire Jewish biblical homeland. He said that, the dream of a “*Greater Israel*” (Eretz Israel Ha'Shelema, as it is called in Hebrew) is the political ideology of the Zionist revisionist movement, the “*mother*” of the governing Likud party headed by Netanyahu. The revisionist-Zionist party's national anthem, written by mythological leader Ze'ev Jabotinsky, was “*Two Banks to the Jordan*” signification to the lands comprising the Israel and Jordan States of today will be one “*Greater Israel*”.

Indeed, Netanyahu was even more politically indebted to the Israeli right-wing, as they took his side on three corruption charges in his court. The settlers got a stronger voice from an emboldened Israeli right-wing. Around 466,000 Israeli settlers now reside in the West Bank. They are now united with the more ideological settlers who opposed the two-state solution and supported the annexation (Makovsky, 2020). It has, therefore, become fashionable to argue that the move by Netanyahu will, once and for all, clarify that a two-state solution is a fantasy that serves only as a fig-leaf for the creeping annexation of Israel that has been underway since 1967 and has accelerated in the last two decades. Therefore, the current, “*one-state*” reality has long been in place (Black, 2020).

In Zionist Ideology, the Jewish Institute for National Security of America (JINSA) published a report on June 26, 2020 claiming that, annexation of the Jordan Valley will have long-term security benefits for Israel, the U.S, and Jordan. It is believed that this is a crucial time to enshrine Israel's permanent occupation of the Jordan Valley and the strategic benefits for Israel, Jordan, and the U.S outweigh any real costs” said JINSA President and CEO Michael Makovsky (Nahmias, 2020). However, based on the report of Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP) on 15 June 2020, three possibilities of annexation seem most probable, all based on the hypothetical map included in the Trump plan, if Netanyahu, alternate Prime Minister Benny Gantz, and the foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi all follow the same line:

First Scenario: Total Annexing

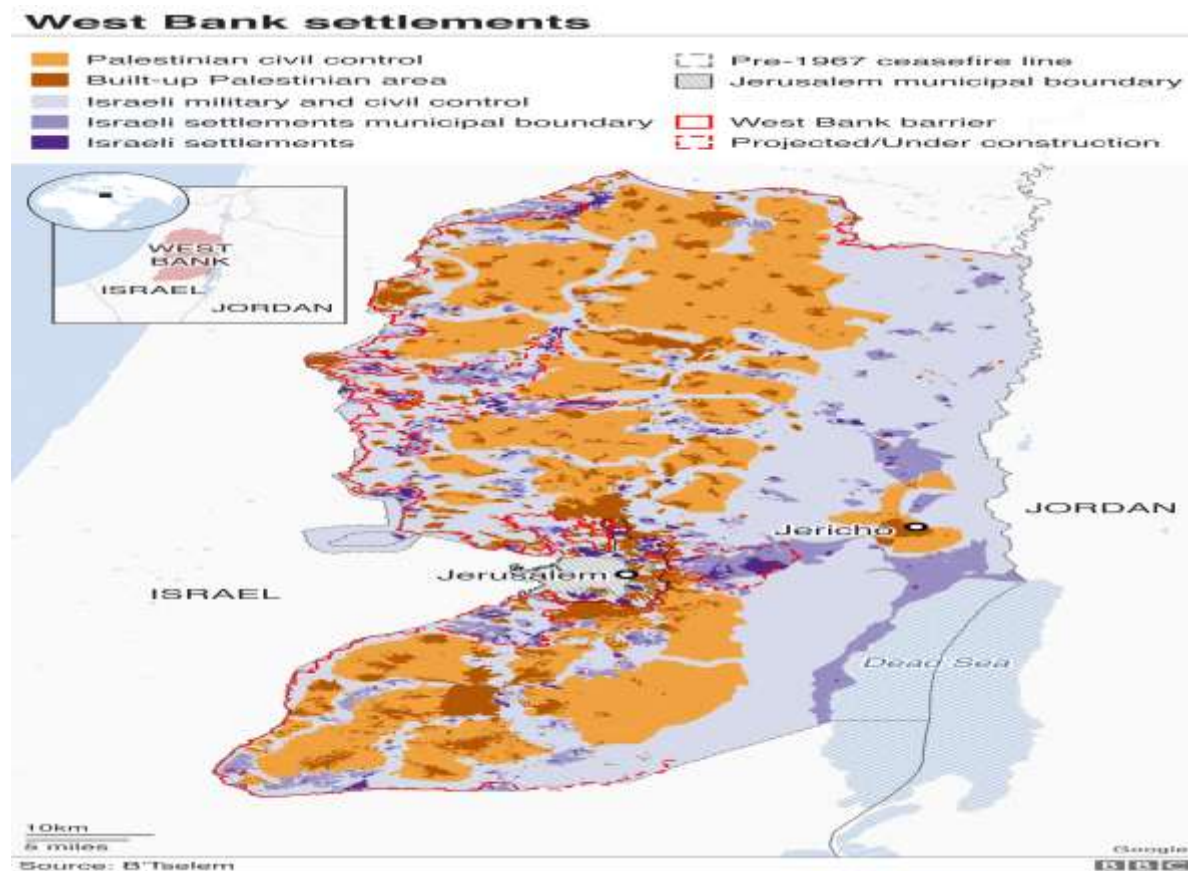
Israel will annex all 130 West Bank settlements totalling 466,208 settlers as set out in the Trump’s plan. In fact, fifteen of them will be in the future Palestinian state (enclaves), but they would be under full Israeli control.

Second Scenario: All Settlements inside the Wall

Israel would annex the large settlements just inside the Wall (it is 52 block settlements makeup the most of Israeli settlers: (seventy-seven percent (77%) of the total or 358,405 settlers).

Third Scenario: Minimum Annexation

This scenario may include only one big settlement or block, like Gush Etzion (in the south of Jerusalem), and/or Ma'ale Adumim (East of Jerusalem) possibly. A few settlements adjacent to the 1967 war Line can also be annexed, it includes twelve (12) settlements (Ten inside and two outside the Wall). Nearly 27 years ago, however, The Palestinians and the Israelis thought they had found the lost path to peace. Nowadays, While Israeli Prime Minister preparing to annex land that the Palestinians envisage their future independent state, their aspirations for a future, with two states coexisting side by side, seem to fall further apart in any specific scenario (Smith, 2020). Moreover, proponents of a two-state solution in the world raised the alarm that Israel's a unilateral occupation of vast parts of the Palestine territories would destroy this prospect once and for all (Ahren, 2020). However, figure 2. Illustrates a future Palestine state as it seems, if the International Community allowing annexation to pass.



Source: BBC Website. www.bbc.com

FIGURE 2
THE MAP OF THE WEST BANK AND THE JORDAN VALLEY AFTER ANNEXATION

On the flip side, there are Thirteen of Palestinian Villages; around 80,000 peoples live in the Jordan Valley that will become enclaves surrounded by new Israeli borders under Trump's plan. But on the contrary of that, the fifteen Israeli settlements that were planned to become “enclaves” which were clearly listed on the conceptual map of the plan, while Trump's “*Vision*” makes no mention of the fate of the Thirteen (13) Palestinian Villages and its residents situated in the Jordan Valley land that Israel government prepare to annex (Magid, 2020). However, figure 3 is showing map of the Jordan Valley that Netanyahu planning to annex based on Trump plan.



Source: BBC.

FIGURE 3
MAP OF THE JORDAN VALLEY

However, the New Straits Time says Jun7, 2020. As part of a recent agreement to form a majority government with Benny Gantz, Netanyahu may apply the Trump plan as early as July 1st, for potential approval of his cabinet and parliament. While the plan envisages the Foundation of a Palestinian State on Stenographic land and isolated communities without meeting any key Palestinian demands. Yet in June 2020, Netanyahu said. “*The annexation plan does not include the creation of a Palestinian state and will definitely not be accepted by the Government,*” (Yildiz, 2020).

Netanyahu can take the move, disregarding of Twenty-two hundred (220) including (retired Israeli commander, naval admirals and, officers of the Israeli intelligence agency, and police men) who signed page advertising in many Israeli Newspapers on April 3 calling their

former government colleagues - Benny Gantz and Gabi Ashkenazi - to undermine the unilateral annexation of the West Bank land. And they warn of the negative effects of a move like this (Ayalon, et al. 2020).

On the flip side, the right-wing in the U.S. and Israel is the main proponent. That includes Evangelical Christians who have a religious advantage in the West Bank territory, many politicians, and Organizations leaders in the U.S. support the move as well. The matter places the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) in an accurate status (Friedman, 2020).

Israel is a Strategic Asset of U.S

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee, AIPAC, has recently allowed the U.S. lawmakers that they are “*free to criticize the proposed annexation plans of Israel-just as long as the criticism ends there.*” However, in recent, the political division between both parties (Democrats and Republicans) on Israel policy has widened. New House Representatives have been more strongly critical of Israeli policy since the 2018 mid-term elections (Telhami, 2020). According to the Palestinian News and Info Agency (WAFA) report on June 25, 2020, around 189 members of the U.S. Congress sent a letter to the Israeli Prime Minister expressing concern over potential efforts to annex land of the West Bank unilaterally and urging Israel to reconsider its annexation plan (Telhami, 2020).

Considering that, AIPAC, the pro-Israeli lobby group, said it would be a “*mistake*” for the U.S to change its relationship with Israel if the Israel state were to go through plans to annex West Bank territory. According to a letter recently sent by AIPAC to its backers, published by the Israeli daily Haaretz on 14 May 2020, says, “Some have suggested decreasing our relations with Israel because they object to the Israeli possible decision to expand Israeli sovereignty to parts of the West Bank. It would be a mistake to do something to undermine that critical partnership” (Tibon, 2020). Here, AIPAC's message to Congress is significant; it says a sustainable peace is “achievable only if the U.S continues to help ensure Israel’s qualitative military edge” (Lake, 2020). According to the Haaretz Newspaper report on 14 May 2020, AIPAC has not taken an official stance on annexation, but if Netanyahu and Trump's administration plan to step ahead on “applying sovereignty” to parts of the West Bank, they will not oppose.

Yet, since America and Israel see eye to eye on all strategic issues closely, no doubt American lawmakers will be lowering the critical rhetoric towards Israeli steps, as both bipartisan seeking to gain American-Jewish supporting, particularly Israel-lobby groups in the re-election campaigns. Therefore, no choices for opposition U.S. lawmakers, solely sit on the fence.

Consequences of Annexation

The annexation would have significant and enduring consequences reaching far beyond Israel and the Palestinian territories; According to several experts, journalists, and diplomats like Stefan Priesner (2020), Zahava Galon (2020); Ido Vock (2020), Udi Dekel and Noa Shusterman (2020) et al. revealed that, there are four primary consequences:

The First would be to affirm Israel's perception that it is an apartheid regime; so far Israel has not made this claim a significant issue. Although the Israeli government's formal line since 1967 is that the occupation of the Palestinian Territories is a temporary affair that will finally be resolved with the creation of an independent state of Palestinian.

The second consequence of the steps will be to destroy the two-state solution, which vestige as the formal policy for most world countries.

The third consequence will be to further normalize land seizure by force, which would not only be illegal under international law but also close the negotiating door. It would have negative impacts throughout the region and seriously undermine peace opportunities.

Finally, annexation would eventually speed the end of the demographic character of Israel, because it would mean speeding the descent into a "one-state" reality. Ethnic distribution on the land of historic Palestine is approximately half Jewish, half Palestinians (about Two million Palestinians reside inside Israel).

Even so, the Israeli Prime Minister's decision on July 1st to annex parts of the West Bank has triggered increased international pressure on Israel. To date, criticisms, and questions about the annexing came from the UN, also, nearly every Member State of the European Union (EU), and the Arab League countries, especially Jordan and Egypt, both of which have durable peace agreements with Israel (Handelman, 2020). Indeed, annexation accepted by the U.S will certainly have significant negative impacts for both U.S. Middle East policy and long-standing bipartisan support for Israel in the U.S internal politics, Satloff (2020) argues that Netanyahu's steps also would threaten to escalate tensions with Palestinians, break its peace agreement with Jordan and, end the gradual normalization of the Israel state with Arab States, particularly the Gulf states.

The first blow against Netanyahu's unilateral steps came from Palestinian President Abbas. Mr Abbas announces end to agreements with Israel and U.S. including security agreements. President said the Palestinian Government has 'absolved' all the agreements and understandings with the American and Israeli Governments and all the obligations based on those understandings and agreements, including the security ones (Daily Sabah, 2020).

The Global Rejection of Israel's Annexation Plan

Many senior diplomats and UN officials raise serious concerns about these moves, UN Secretary-General António Guterres cautioned that, the annexing parts of the West Bank and the Jordan Valley by Israel, will kill the two-state solution and have significant severe for the peace and security in the Middle East. However, based on BBC News on 24 June 2020, over One Thousand of European parliamentarians signed a letter that strongly opposes Israel's steps to seize parts of Palestinian land in the West Bank. The letter raises significant questions about the plans and calls for "*commensurate consequences*" against Israel. Additionally, more than 240 signatories are British lawmakers. However, the letter parliamentarians sent to the European Foreign Ministries states that the unilateral occupation of the territories in the West Bank may be "*fatal to the prospects of Israeli-Palestinian peace and would challenge the most basic norms that govern international relations, including the UN Charter.*" The letter signed by 1080 MEPs from 25 countries, Warnings of a "*potential destabilization*" for the region (Scribd, 2020).

In this way, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia also firmly opposes and refuses Israel's proposed occupation of the Palestinian lands in the West Bank and the Jordan Valley, according to a press release on the official website of the Ministry on 22 May 2020. Any annexation by Israel of the Palestinian Territory as the Occupying Power constitutes an outright violation of international law (the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention, as well as UN Resolutions resolution 2334 (2016) of the Security Council). Israel's conduct flagrantly contravenes the peace deal it signed with Palestine, namely the 1993 and 1995 Oslo Accords. The Israeli action clearly calls into question its sincerity towards a peaceful and lasting solution to the longstanding conflict between Israel and Palestine. It further diminishes the prospect of a two-state solution which the international community supports. Also, the King of Jordan warned Israel of a "*huge confrontation*" if it pursues plans to annex significant parts of the West Bank. The King stated: "*I don't want to make threats and create an atmosphere of loggerheads, but we are considering all options. We agree with many countries in Europe and the international community that the law of strength should not apply in the Middle East.*" (Al-Jazeera, 2020).

For his part, Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit said the annexation would "destroy any prospect of future peace", while Nickolai Mladenov - U.N. Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process - said. The annexation may irreversibly alter the nature of the relationship between Israel and Palestine, He added that there should be an opening for diplomacy, calling for a resumption, "*without preconditions,*" of the Quartet's work, which brings together the U.S, Russia, the European Union and the UN on the Israeli-Palestinian case, to find a way out of the crisis (Sayed, 2020).

CONCLUSION

The only viable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the two-state solution that proposes the state of Israel living in harmony with a state of Palestine based on U.N resolutions related. In fact, the latter already represents a large Palestinian renunciation. But Trump's deal with Netanyahu's steps makes ability for a Palestinian state impossible. Therefore, if Israel annexes the illegal settlements in the West Bank and the Jordan Valley, a viable Palestinian state would not have enough land left. This suggests that an Israeli step as envisaged by the "*Century's Deal*" will probably erode the international consensus supporting the Two-state solution and may lead the world to begin accepting the concept of "*One State Solution*" in which Israelis and Palestinians have equal rights.

However, many observers see that Trump's plan is the final nail in a two-state solution's coffin. So, while some policymakers are now willing to break from the tens-year-old political orthodoxy that sanctifies the two-state solution, there is growing evidence that they may accept a one-state outcome sooner or later because they believe the annexing at the long-term will make a potential separation from the Palestinians impossible, which will inevitably turn Israel into an apartheid regime in which Israelis and Palestinians share the same venue but not same rights. Israel is unlikely to consider such a proposal anyway.

Implementing annexation would constitute a new significant breach of international law by Israel that would also deliver a "*devastating blow*" to the principle of two-state. In addition, it

would close the door to renewed talks and challenge attempts to advance both regional and international peace and security. Nevertheless, Israel has so far survived any major punitive action by the international community, thanks to the protection offered by the U.S. in the international arena so, the Palestinians are eager to see the U.N and the world punish Israel for its violations the international law.

The Palestinian leaders seeing that the deal of the century way does not bring them an independent state on 1967 border based on International law and U.N resolutions, yet many experts and analysts in the Middle East affairs recognize that while security case is still in the dark regarding when and how is Israel implement the annexing over the local Palestinian populations, but the moment that the curtain of uncertainty is lifted, the violent conflict with the Palestinians will surely rise to levels seen during the First and Second Intifadas.

Palestinians are opposed to the Trump Agreement, as well as growing resistance from Arab states and other free world nations. Netanyahu also faces domestic opposition, not only from the Israeli left to the plan which argued that annexation would lead to deeper international isolation and violate international law but also from Israeli retired generals, So, does Netanyahu is therefore serious about implementing one of the provisions of President Trump's plan-unilateral annexing parts of the West Bank and the Jordan Valley area - or it is only a tactical manoeuvre for the next election campaign against rival Benny Gantz?

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