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The "Deal of the Century" for Israel-Palestine and the Role of Israel-Lobby

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Keywords: *deal of the century, president trump, kushner team, israel-lobby.*

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The "Deal of the Century" for Israel-Palestine and the Role of Israel-Lobby

Awad M. Slimia [α], Muhammad Fuad Bin Othman [σ] & Nazariah Osman [ρ]

Abstract- The American "Deal of the Century" is unlikely to meaningfully contribute to resolving the conflict of Israel-Palestine. Instead, it is risking the further escalation of an already tensed situation and the acceleration of the erosion of joint conflict management. Even under intense pressure, the leadership of Palestine rejected the U.S deal along with any further mediation by Washington. However, more than 100 Congress-members joined leaders around the world opposed it. The Trump deal, which was negotiated with the Prime Minister of Israel Netanyahu in the absence of the Palestinian leadership, among others, include acknowledging Jerusalem (al-Quds) as the undivided capital of Israel and allows Israel to annex illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank involving about 600,000 settlers living in 122 settlements, Jordan Valley (Palestine's eastern borders with Jordan), as well as refusing the right of return for Palestinian refugees. It is not a "Peace Plan" by including a Palestinian state, but it is somewhat a roadmap to legitimize the policy of Israel for encroachment and land expropriation.Conveniently, the deal is presented at a time that detracts attention from the corruption charges of the current Israeli Prime Minister and the U.S President's impeachment. Examining the plan details, it is clear that there will not be an established Palestinian state. Instead, it is "archipelago" of enclaves, attached by a network of bridge and tunnels that would gradually lead towards the full Israeli control over the entire West Bank. Henceforth, with such announcement, the quest of Israel-lobby groups and its evangelical Christians allies in the U.S to create "Greater Israel", the "Zionist dream" will be fulfilled.

Keywords: deal of the century, president trump, kushner team, israel-lobby.

I. Introduction

The U.S administration around the past four decades was subjected to the significant influence of the Zionist-lobby over its Middle East policies specifically concerning Israel-Palestine conflict. Bishara (2018) argues that indeed, the "Deal of the Century" engineers or the 'Zionist trio' composed of Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, the U.S ambassador to Israel David Friedman and Jason Greenblatt are not ordinary diplomatic figures. They are ideological hitmen with a mission to kill all prospects of an independent sovereign state and the Palestinian national aspirations. At that point, Wermenbol (2019, p.3) argues the appointment of Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner as mastermind and chief of this deal in addition to Special Envoy Jason Greenblatt and Ambassador David Friedman, was indicative of the pro-Israeli stances within the Trump administration and the personal ties that existed between the Trump team and Israel. The implications of the policy to this closely convergent interest led to the far-reaching implementation of the pro-Israeli decisions on the ground that countered with a prior American Middle East policy, the Palestinian Authority's alienation, and further challenged the U.S ability to act as an impartial mediator.

There are at least three things in common among Greenblatt, Friedman and Kushner. First of all, they are all Orthodox Jews, and secondly, all of them have no diplomatic or political experience before their appointment as officials in the Trump team. Finally, they have connections to Israel, or particularly, to the illegal settlements in the West Bank (Al-Jazeera, 2019). Trump's foreign policy promised a more Israeli-concerned compliant policy as highlighted by Ron Dermer (the Israeli Ambassador to the U.S) who stated, "We saw the light at the end of the tunnel" (Entous, 2018). So, on four main issues such as settlements, Jerusalem, borders, balancing Israeli security needs towards the sovereignty of Palestine and Palestinian refugees being displaced in the 1948 war, the deal is clearly biased towards Israel (Beauchamp, 2020).

Therefore, in this paper, the authors argue that Trump's "Deal of the Century" is the master plan of an Israel-lobby in particular American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). The arguments are based on a review and analysis of relevant and most recent published input on the deal recently announced by the U.S president.

II. Elements of the Deal

On Jan 28, 2020, after three years in office, the U.S President Donald Trump launched his "ultimate deal" and he has announced a so-called "Deal of the Century" to resolve the conflict of Israeli-Palestinian. While the details of the plan suggest the initiative towards giving priority to the Israeli interests over the rights of Palestinian, it ignores the fundamental principles of international law and over 700 resolutions of the UN General Assembly and over 100 resolutions of the UN Security Council in connection to the conflict, and deviating from the Two-State solution idea (See, Peace to Prosperity, 2020).

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This paper will explain the construction of the guiding and founding principles set towards this vision. We will explain how Israel-lobby was involved in making this deal. Nevertheless, before that, we will highlight how the deal is treating the final status issues which result in the increase of more problems rather than offer solutions.

a) Firstly: Jerusalem

Based on this deal, Jerusalem will remain as an undivided city and the Israeli sovereign capital while proposing that the Palestinians' capital could be established at the East Jerusalem's outer sections (that lie on the Israeli separation wall's on the eastern side), suggesting neighborhoods such as Kafr Aqab, the "eastern part of Shuafat" Shuafat refugees camp and Abu Dis. According to the plan, "Jerusalem should be internationally recognized as the capital of the State of Israel. Al Quds (or another name selected by the State of Palestine) should be internationally recognized as the capital of the State of Palestine" (Peace to Prosperity, 2020).

b) Secondly: Borders and Sovereignty

For borders issue, the Trump's plan proposes a "two-state" solution as "an unrecognizable version of the former solution of two-state proposed along the 1967 borders. The State of Israel and the United States do not believe the State of Israel is legally bound to provide the Palestinians with 100 percent of the pre-1967 territory. Instead, Palestinians will be given what has been described by some critics as an "archipelago" of enclaves, attached by a network of bridge, highways and tunnels. This would include a tunnel or highway connecting the Gaza Strip with the conglomerate of enclaves in the West Bank.

c) Thirdly: Annexation and Land Swaps

The proposal for land swaps has been one of the most controversial aspects between Palestine/Israel. The U.S support for the annexation by Israel of the large swaths of land consisting the existing settlements and the Jordan Valley where "Approximately 97% of Israelis in the West Bank will be incorporated into contiguous Israeli territory". The plan further stated that of "the estimated 600,000 Israeli settlers living in the West Bank illegally. As for the three percent of settlers living in settlements that will not be annexed to Israeli territory, they will have the choice to remain in settlements within the Palestinian state, surrounded by an Israeli security network". While, the plan proposes the annexation by Israeli of the Jordan Valley, it does not address the consequences for the thousands of Palestinians living in that place. The question on whether they will be provided the citizenship of Israel and have full rights according to the law or, will they remained as Palestinian citizens living under the current system to the already existed Israeli control and occupation are still unresolved.

d) Fourthly: Palestinian Refugees

When we highlight on the refugees issue (comprising around 6 million), the plan begins with an unquestionable rejection of the right of return for the refugees of Palestine as a right preserved under the Resolution of the UN 194. Instead of that, the plan "envisions three options for Palestinian refugees seeking a permanent place of residence:

1) Absorption into the State of Palestine.
2) Local integration in current host countries (subject to those countries' consent); or
3) The acceptance of 5,000 refugees each year for up to ten years (50,000 total refugees) in individual Organization of Islamic Cooperation member countries who agree to participate in Palestinian refugee resettlement (subject to those individual countries' agreement).

e) Fifthly: Palestinian Political Prisoners

The proposal calls for all the Palestinian prisoners to be released but with the exclusion of those convicted of the murder of Israeli citizens or conspiracy to commit murder. These Palestinian prisoners will become citizens of the Palestine state upon release even if they are citizens of Israel. It is yet unclear what would happen to those prisoners' families, and how the stripping down of the Israeli-citizenship would affect their community's life and home. Under this plan, it also requires the Palestinian's prisoners to sign a "coexistence oath" or else they would continue their stay in prison. However, it is a pity that the vision does no recognise those people as political prisoners and freedom fighters.

f) Sixthly: A Palestinian State and Rules of implementation

The plan says the Palestinian state can be established only when Palestinian leadership wholly accepts the conditions below:

1. Demilitarization.
2. Accept Israel's new borders.
3. End all of the education programs perceived to serve and incite or promote hatred or antagonism towards its neighbors.
4. End payments to the fund for martyrs and replace them with a welfare program.
5. Ensure no violence against U.S citizens or Israelis.
6. Suspend all the actions at the International Criminal Court (ICC) or contemplative charges against Israel at Interpol.
7. Controlling the Gaza strip, and Agrees to Israeli security oversight on all of its territories until a point in the future deemed suitable for withdrawal.

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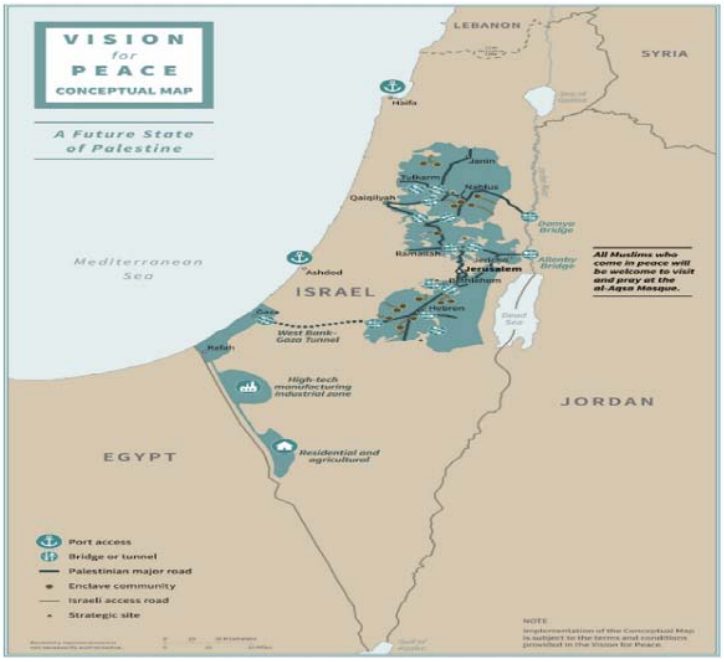
At this point and only at this point the Palestinians would receive USD 50 billion of investment promised by the U.S. although even then, the figure is misleading. As outlined in the economic part of the plan released in June, only USD 27.8 billion of that will go directly to the new Palestinian state over ten years, while the remainder will go to neighboring state. That USD 27.8 billion is around 27 percent less than the USD 38 billion ten-year military aid deal that the U.S made to Israel during the period of Obama in 2016.

However. Figure 1 presents the map of a new Palestinian state based on Trump's deal of the century.



Source: Plan Peace to Prosperity, 2020.

Figure 1: A new map of a Palestinian state based on Trump's deal of the Century

While figure 2 presents the shape of the final geographic area of the Palestinian countries (The archipelago state).



Source: Various Media agencies.

Figure 2: Form of the final geographical area of the Palestinian countries (like archipelago)

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Indeed Figure 3 presents the Historical Map of Palestine before the occupation of Israeli in the 1948 war to Trump's deal of the century 2020.

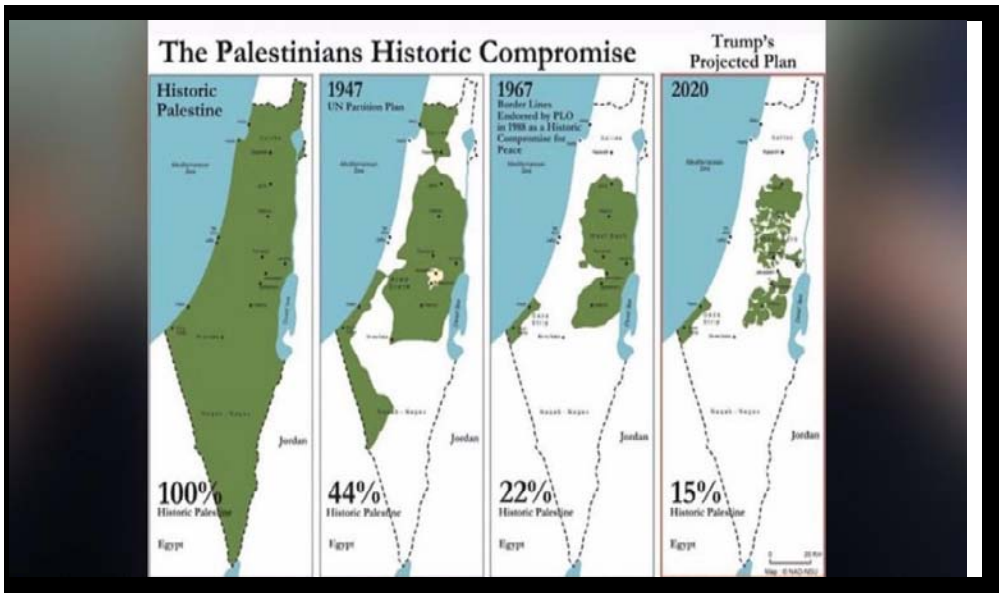

Figure 3: The changes on the Historical Palestine map before the occupation of Israeli in the 1948 war until Trump's deal of the century 2020.

III. Blind Deal and Blackmail

While Trump's deal takes all demands and aspirations of Israel but totally disregard the Palestinians where it does not take any account to the their demands and aspirations. The deal mostly consists of the basic demands of Israel, for instance, the Israel security border will be at Jordan River, a unified and united Jerusalem under the sovereignty of Israel, the complete demilitarization of the state of Palestine, and the Jewish settlements' annexation on the West Bank to Israel. Unfortunately the deal does not include a single one of the basic demands of Palestinian, for instance, East of Jerusalem should be the Palestinian capital, the end of the occupation by Israeli of all the Palestinian lands occupied in 1967 war, and reparations or the right of return for the Palestinian refugees in 1948 (Rolef, 2020).

However, within the midst of reactions negatively to the Trump plan, Black (2020) argued that the Trump deal has given the green signal for the Israeli sovereignty application to the settlements that was illegally built since the war in 1967 which now house 0.6 million jews of Israel. Trump has already controversially transferred the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. He suggested that the national capital of future Palestinian state will be located beyond the wall of Israel in Abu Dis, a suburb out of Jerusalem. However, Robert Fantina (2020) pointed out that, from one side, the Palestinian people's future is being decided without the Palestinians input itself. It seems very strange that the Palestinians in Palestine, and those in the camps of refugee and those around the world, do not have any say in their nation's future, at least as defined by Netanyahu and Trump. Nevertheless, when there is a goal to provide everything in accordance to the Israel's wishes, this "oversight" is easy to understand.

In response, President of Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas strongly rejected the plan of the Trump administration, calling it the "the slap of the century" by firmly reiterating that "We say 1,000 times: No, no and no to the deal of the century". President Abbas confirmed that "Jerusalem is not for sale" and the people of Palestine "rights are not for sale or bartering" (Rasgon, 2020). Similarly, The Arab League has ultimately rejected the Middle East plan of U.S President Trump in an emergency meeting in the capital of Egypt, saying "it would not lead to a just peace deal". On 1 February 2020, the pan-Arab bloc said "rejects the U.S-Israeli 'deal of the century' considering that it does not meet the minimum rights and aspirations of Palestinian people" (Al-Jazeera & News Agencies, 2020). Moreover, the statement of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) comprising 57 countries came on February 3, 2020 was also aligned and in support of these views (Al-Youm, 2020).

In the same context, the UN has rejected the Trump's 'deal of the century' and restated that the conflict of Israeli-Palestinian should be resolved on the basis of international law and UN resolutions. In a statement, Stephane Dujarric, a spokesperson for the UN Secretary-General, said: "The position of the United Nations on the two-State solution has been defined throughout the years by relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions by which the Secretariat is bound." (Middle East Monitor & News Agencies, 2020).

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Besides that, in the statement, the foreign policy chief of Erupe Union (EU) Josep Borrell noted that "We are especially concerned by statements on the prospect of the annexation of the Jordan Valley and other parts of the West Bank. In line with international law and relevant UN Security Council resolutions, 'the EU does not recognize Israel's sovereignty over the territories occupied since 1967'. Steps towards annexation, if implemented, could not pass unchallenged." (MEHR. News Agency, 2020).

On the flip side, More than 100 Democrats in the U.S House of Representatives signed a letter rejecting the plan of Trump, dubbed the "deal of the century." Congress-members joined leaders around the world who have opposed the deal, saying that it is not a "peace" deal but the legitimization of land theft, which will only lead to more conflict and violence. The Congress members who signed the letter say the deal will "hurt Israelis and Palestinians alike, pushing them toward further conflict" (Adamczyk, 2020). While Jimmy Carter (the former president of the U.S) said that the Trump's plan for Middle East would violate the UN resolutions and international law, and he urged the UN to stop the Israeli annexation of Palestinian land. He further stated that "The new U.S plan undercuts prospects for a just peace between Israelis and Palestinians". His office stated that the plan of Trump, unveiled Tuesday, "breaches international law regarding self-determination, the acquisition of land by force, and annexation of occupied territories" (The New Arab & agencies, 2020). However, Trump's deal, drafted by advisers of his son-in-law Jared Kushner in close collaboration with Netanyahu, proposes that a series of enclaves spread across the West Bank and Gaza constitute a Palestinian state. This "Palestinian 'state' would not be contiguous and would be connected by a series of roads and bridges. These enclaves sound more like Bantustans than a free and independent state" (Everett, 2020). A Palestinian American legal scholar and human rights attorney, Noura Erakat, tweeted, "They want to put us in permanent, high-tech cages and call it peace."

Nevertheless, the U.S President Trump adviser, Kushner was quicker to provide more revealing insight into the plan. Rhetoric of Kushner was described to design the Palestinians as reactionary, unreasonable of their doom. He engaged in emotional blackmail when he was not victim-blaming. In his interview with Egyptian broadcaster, Amro Adib "MBC Masr" on Feb. 2, 2020, Kushner's claimed that "the ability of Palestinians to see themselves as victims, and as humans with rights, is contingent on accepting the U.S deal. Refusal to comply with the neo-colonial imposition of his vision of the Middle East voids any Palestinian claim to victimhood". For Kushner, "If the Palestinian undermine this plan, I think that they will have a tough time looking the international community in the face, saying they are victims, saying they have rights." Paternalistically, Kushner positioned himself as the eventual arbiter of the legitimate victim. Therefore, they have to obey the terms of Kushner and by refusing the deal they would lose their right to be treated as humans. If the Palestinians obey him, they would live as what Kushner condescendingly described as an "amazing life". Through the interview, he swiftly abandoned any attempts to attribute the both sides parity as no mention was made of the asymmetry in power of the occupation of Israeli, the Israeli snipers and bombs that killed thousands of peaceful Palestinians. It is obvious that in the view of Kushner, the Palestinians are aggressors by default and not the peaceful victims (Jones, 2020).

All extremists from right-wing were all in the same line in Washington when Netanyahu landed. The settler leaders were waiting for him like "the tail that wags the dog" and chased him to America. They are alike of his mouthpieces in the media, not to say drooling and panting, ecstasy the Jordan Valley immediate annexation, the northern part of Dead Sea, and 150 settlements at West Bank. They started even before the paced of Trump, and Netanyahu ceremoniously into the White House East Room. The room was full of billionaires Jews, evangelical Christians and other elderly, so that everyone falls in line and recites: "This is a historic step and an unprecedented achievement, whose fruits can be picked here and now" (Verter, 2020). During the announcement ceremony in the White House, main supporters of Trump such as Sheldon Adelson, a gambling tycoon and his wife, Miriam Adelson, who were there in the front row "this was yet another win." These days, it is people like the president's evangelical base, along with Adelson, wealthy conservative donors to the Trump campaign, who are calling the shots in Jerusalem and Washington. They always stand there in the front row. They looked beaming and satisfied at the U.S Embassy in Jerusalem inauguration in 2018 (Eldar, 2020).

The money's corrupt symbiosis, media and power is no secret. In an opinion piece of June 2019 in Israel Hayom newspaper, the most significant endowment of Adelson to political right of Israel, Miriam Adelson gushed, "Trump is a man of his word and, he has kept all of his promises", "By rights, Trump should enjoy sweeping support among US Jews, just as he does among Israelis. That this has not been the case (so far; the 2020 election still beckons) is an oddity that will long be pondered by historians". Bible scholars will no doubt note the sages, prophets, and heroes of antiquity who were in the same way spurned by the very people they came to raise. Would it be too much to pray for a day when the Bible gets a "Book of Trump," much like it has a "Book of Esther" celebrating the deliverance of the ancient Persian Jews (Adelson, 2019). In the Trump administration, pro-Israeli friends of Netanyahu, among them David Friedman (the U.S Ambassador to

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Israel) and senior adviser Jared Kushner to the U.S president, assisted to sow the numerous landmines among the pages of the "plan" to make sure that the leadership of Palestinians will not even be drawn to discuss it (Eldar, 2020).

IV. Israel- Lobby's Drafted the Deal

During an AIPAC speech in 2016, Trump stated, "When I become president, the days of treating Israel like a second-class citizen will end on day one," he said, "I will meet with Prime Minister Netanyahu immediately" (Schaefer, 2016). Indeed, the Trump administration did not waste time to advance the unbalanced agenda of the pro-Israeli. In an overt departure from the traditional foreign policy of the U.S. on December 6 2017, President Donald Trump formally recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and, along with, directed the shifting of the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem (Landler, 2017). Trump called it "a long-overdue step to advance the peace process and to work towards a lasting agreement". Trump did what he had pledged all over the time during his election campaign and recognized formally Jerusalem as the capital of Israel (Underwood, 2018). However, Trump had done what predecessors had promised; Presidents Obama, Bush, and Clinton all pledged to formally recognize as Jerusalem is the capital of Israel, however eventually they did not fulfil the promise, citing concerns of national security.

Furthermore, "under the 1995 Jerusalem Embassy Act, the president was required to move the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem or sign a waiver [every six months] to avoid doing so" (Landler& Davis, 2017). In this point, Trump base also worked hard to lobby the move. That consisted of the right-wing American Jews as well as devout evangelicals whose voice and message were amplified by the conservative orthodox Jews dominating the inner circle of Mr Trump in the White House, the devout evangelical Christian, Vice-President Mike Pence stated "God decided Jerusalem was the capital of Israel more than 3,000 years ago during the time of King David" (Usher, 2018).

It is worth noting that the "Jerusalem embassy act" in 1995 was supported by AIPAC (Pileggi & Ahren, 2016) to undermine the Oslo agreement in 1993. Therefore, the "Jerusalem Embassy Act" was passed in both Houses of Congress overwhelmingly in October 1995. As anticipated, the Congress members, enthusiastic to determine their support for Israel, consistently produced a stream of letters and resolutions demanding the transfer of the embassy. This led to a strain on the Oslo peace process (Massing, 2006).

On Nov. 21, 2017, the Wall Street Journal unveiled part of Special Counsel Robert Mueller's investigation about the involvement of Mr. Kushner, through Contacts With Foreign Leaders for lobbied UN Security Council members to sabotage a resolution denouncing Israeli settlements (2334 Resolution). This took place during the transition before Mr. Trump took office. The investigators scrutinized Mr. Kushner for his primary omission of any foreign contacts from a government form required to obtain a security clearance. The Wall Street Journal reported (citing a public letter from congressional investigators) that Kushner later updated the form at least three times to include what he has said were more than 100 contacts with more than 20 countries. The Israeli officials admitted they were in touch with Mr. Kushner (Nicholas et al, 2017). That was certainly what Kushner did in this case: Netanyahu, who initiated the request for Trump's intervention in the UN affair wanted to fend off the resolution at all costs, the fake cry of the Israel-lobby is that there is no difference between Israeli and U.S interests. In other words as highlighted by Silverstein, 'when you work on behalf of Israel's interests, you are also advancing America's' (Silverstein, 2017). Then, Kushner received public praise on Dec. 3, 2018, from Haim Saban, a billionaire of Israel-lobby for his possibly illegal attempts to derail a U.N. Security Council vote condemning Israel's settlements (Ali Abunimah, 2018). Kushner, whose family has made over USD100 million donations to Israeli illegal settlements (Tribune Wire Reports, 2016) was already known to be heavily pro-Israel in his approach. What Kushner did was to violate a cardinal rule of American life when he showed dual loyalty (like a spy who betrays his country). However, today, given the eagle-clawed grip the Israel- lobby holds over aspects of American politics, dual loyalty is once again a claim raised (Silverstein, 2017).

On the eve of his inauguration, Trump informed the attendees of a dinner that "despite decades of strife and years of failed attempts by people with deep expertise on the matter, I had finally found the guy who was going to bring peace to the Middle East" referring to his son-in-law, Jared Kushner of the New Jersey and further stressed to his favorite kid's husband that "If you cannot produce peace in the Middle East, nobody can,". He continued his optimism of Kushner's ability by stating that "All my life, I have heard that is the toughest deal to make, but I have a feeling Jared is going to do a great job." (Levin 2019). According to the Middle East, the Monitor report published on April 10, 2019. In his task, Kushner would come to rely on the support of his assistant, Avi Berkowitz, who is the cousin of Howard Friedman, the first Orthodox president of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC).

With the Kushner team, Jason Greenblatt, an Orthodox Jewish attorney was appointed to lead the American negotiating team (Maltz, 2016). However, Greenblatt, the U.S envoy for international negotiations and Trump's special adviser on Israel, has admitted that his primary sources of information about the Israel-

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Palestine conflict come from daily email alerts, the powerful Israel-lobby group American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and a weekly Jewish radio program. Greenblatt said, "I also speak to people that I would say are involved in the Israeli government at certain levels and hear their thoughts" (Al-Jazeera, 2019). The Jewish radio program has always been hosting Malcolm Hoenlein, the CEO of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations" (CoP). Though he would help President Trump to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Greenblatt has no Palestinian contacts as he was a yeshiva student in the mid 1980s at Yeshivat Etzion, settlement bloc in a West Bank. Greenblatt's positions on Israel are similar to those of his boss Trump that does not believe Jewish settlements in the West Bank have been a core part of the problem (Heilman, 2016).

During an informal Security Council meeting Oct. 2019, Greenblatt said "the council's "obsessive" focus on Israeli settlements is a 'farce'. Settlements, which under international law are illegal and have been a significant roadblock in peace talks are not keeping Israel and the Palestinians from negotiating peace. He has also blamed the leading UN Palestine refugee work agency (UNRWA), for prolonging the Palestine refugee problem (Y net News & Al-Jazeera, 2019). However, in an exclusive interview with Asharq Al-Awsat in Washington on 13 July 2019, Greenblatt stated, the plan would not feature the phrase "two-state solution" because using that language would lead leads to nothing. When asked about the fate of Israelis living in settlements in the West Bank, Trump said he prefers to call them "neighborhoods and cities" instead of "settlements" as the word is seemed as a pejorative term that is used as a biased form of putting the finger on the scale of one side of the conflict. Moreover, regarding the right of return for Palestinian refugees, he totally ignored the relevant UN resolutions regarding the matter (Anderson & El-Koudsy, 2019).

In the same respect, in an interview published by the New York Times Jun 8, 2019. The U.S ambassador to Israel, David Friedman said that Israel has the right to annex parts of the West Bank by stating that "Under certain circumstances, I think Israel has the right to retain some of the West Bank" (Halbfinger, 2019). Ambassador Friedman also said in a follow-up call with reporters that Israel would also get "overriding security responsibility and control over entire territory from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean" (Dolsten, 2020). Also, he lobbied Washington to refer to the occupied West Bank by its biblical name used by Zionists, "Judea and Samaria" (Al-Jazeera, 2019). According to the Palestinian chronicle website dated 28 March 2019, Friedman, in an AIPAC conference in Washington told that the plan would provide Israel full control of security over the occupied West Bank. Friedman, who has been the strong supporter of illegal settlements of Israel across the occupied Palestinian territories added that the deal would give permission that Israel seek to sustain a permanent security presence in the Jordan Valley.

Indeed, Trump administration has already started implementing the deal of the century prior it being announced. They have made several historic decisions in total contradiction with previous U.S policy where all seemed to be supportive of Israel and damaging to the Palestinians. The long list includes the U.S recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel in December 2017 and the transfer of the U.S embassy there; closure of the PLO office in Washington in September 2018; and U.S funding cut to UNRWA in September 2018. Moreover, the U.S position toward the Jewish settlements stands in sharp contrast to all previous administrations which saw the settlements as an obstacle to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process (Podeh, 2019). Moreover, within the framework of U.S exclusively consulted with the Israeli side only over its peace plan. One of the moves was the participation of Greenblatt and U.S Ambassador to Israel Friedman inaugurating a settler tunnel running under a Palestinian village (Silwan) in East Jerusalem (Hasson, 2019).

Keeping in mind the closest relationship of Israeli Prime Minister to the Trump family, and the long friendship with Charles Kushner, the father of Ivanka Trump's husband, Jared Kushner. In recent years, the Kushner's have donated large sums of money to Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Also, Ron Dermer, Israel's Ambassador to the U.S, communicate regularly with Jared Kushner and even got some of his talking points included in Trump's first major policy speech on Israel. Dermer saw the election of Donald Trump as an opportunity (Entous, 2018). With his 181-page document, backed by Netanyahu's full-throated endorsement, Trump cemented the support of his two most critical pro-Israel constituencies–evangelical Christians and Orthodox Jews. Moreover, as a bonus, Trump got a short reprieve from dealing with his ongoing impeachment trial in the Senate, and Netanyahu, who had been formally indicted for bribery and fraud the same day, was able to shift the focus of Israeli public discourse away from his criminal charges and on to his statesmanship capabilities (Guttman, 2020).

V. Israel-Lobby Groups Reactions

Reactions to President Trump's deal took a predictable path, with Jewish groups praising the much-anticipated proposal and AIPAC supported the plan, saying that we appreciate for Trump's effort and noted that both political leaders see the plan in Israel as an acceptable framework for negotiations (Guttmann, 2020). AIPAC said in a tweet, we "appreciate[s] the efforts of President Trump and his administration to work

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in consultation with the leaders of the two major Israeli political parties to set forth ideas to resolve the conflict in a way that recognizes our ally's critical security needs." (Dolsten, 2020). At the same time, AIPAC bemoaned that "the Palestinian leadership has continually refused direct talks with Israel for the last several years." AIPAC called for "Palestinians to re-join Israelis at the negotiating table," adding that "a lasting, genuine peace will inevitably require agreement between the parties themselves and tough compromises from both sides" (Richman, 2020).

In response to the Trump Administration's Middle East peace proposal, the Christians United for Israel (CUFI) founder and chairman John Hagee gave a statement, "President Trump has shown time and again that he is the most pro-Israel president in U.S. history. This plan reflects that tradition and is the best peace proposal any American administration has ever put forth. The President's vision ensures Israel's defensible borders, a united Jerusalem, sovereignty over biblical holy sites, and provides an opportunity for the Palestinians to choose peace" (CUFI. website, 2020).

The Republican Jewish Coalition (RJC) also recommended the plan as stated by its Executive Director, Matt Brooks who said, "The President and his team have put together a bold and nuanced proposal that is deeply rooted in America's core values of liberty, opportunity, and hope for the future" (Dolsten, 2020). Meanwhile, the organization's national chairman, former Senator Norm Coleman said, that it creates a "realistic path" for the Palestinians to have a state while not compromising on "the requirements that the Palestinians reject terrorism, stop inciting violence, stop their indecent 'pay for slay' program that pays terrorists for their crimes, and end corruption and human-rights abuses" (Richman, 2020). Moreover, The American Jewish Committee (AJC) said on Twitter that it "welcomes President Trump's serious effort to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, assuring Israel's security & Jerusalem's uncontested status, while creating a path to Palestinian statehood" (Dolsten, 2020). Malcolm Hoenlein, the executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations (CoP) declared that Tuesday as a 'historic day,' saying he was encouraged by the proceedings. We saw the U.S.-Israel relationship in its full expression a great moment of opportunity for Palestinians and Israelis" (Richman, 2020). Additionally, Israel-lobby groups in Canada also responded positively to the plan stating that "The proposed U.S peace plan is a creative solution balancing the need for independent/prosperous Palestinian state with a safe and secure Israel," B'nai Brith Canada wrote on Twitter (Ross, 2020).

VI. Discussion and Conclussions

The Deal of the Century is the unilateral U.S moves with Israeli Prime Minister without the Palestinians. This deal led to undermine decades of international consensus about how to resolve the world's most intractable conflict involving the status of Jerusalem, the legality of Israeli settlements and the ever-emotive question of Palestinian refugees. It ignores the Oslo accords of 1993, countless UN resolutions, the Arab peace initiative of 2002, and the fundamental idea that Palestinians have the inalienable right to self-determination.

The timing of the announcement of the Trump initiative suits the political and legal needs of Mr. Trump and Mr. Netanyahu as both men are facing elections. Besides that, Mr. Trump gets a distraction from his impeachment and his trial in the U.S Senate for high crimes and misdemeanors. Mr. Netanyahu is also facing criminal charges of corruption, bribery and breach of trust. The release of a plan so tilted to Israeli priorities helps the right-wing prime minister sell himself as the man best positioned to handle the vital U.S-Israel relationship. Furthermore, it does not seem like a coincident that the plan was released on the same day that Israel's attorney general formally indicted Netanyahu on bribery and corruption charges.

The proposal is missing a signature feature of every prior peace plan i.e., a path to a viable Palestinian state. It would divide the Palestinian territories up and surrounds them with Israel thus would give Israel total control over Palestinian security. This would also mean that a future Palestinian government would not be allowed to exercise full control over its land but only limited to what Israel deems acceptable. It is a kind of state-minus: a Palestine without much of its land and subservient to Israel for essential functions. Needless to say, the Palestinians cannot and will not agree to such humiliation and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has already firmly ruled it out.

The Trump plan is a gamble that has been immediately rejected by the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. Palestinian President emphasised that that Palestinian rights and hopes "were not for sale." and the proposed plan was not planned for peace is seen as a surrender document that dictated the Palestinians to accept that Israel has won and that would let Israel with its American friends to shape their future. Moreover, more insidiously, it is a plan to legitimize Israel's ongoing effort to seize additional Palestinian land and in a combustible part of the world and that could be very dangerous.

Trump's Deal has been perceived to be much like his presidency i.e., a morbid joke. Sadly, however, the punch line running center stage in this theatre of the absurd is set to come at the expense of the Palestinians. This is because of the culmination of the architecture of exclusion that has for close to a hundred years, denied the Palestinians their agency and undermined their quest for self-determination, justice and freedom. This deal is reflective of the irrelevance of the very notion of

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Palestine and the Palestinians in the eyes of Kushner, Trump and Netanyahu that the asymmetry in the dynamic crafted by this trio's proposal deceivingly titled "Peace to Prosperity" was done without consultation or involvement from the side of the Palestinians.

As for the status of Palestine and Palestinian rights in their occupied city, East Jerusalem, rebranding a few neighborhoods (Kafr Aqab), the eastern part of Shuafat and Abu Dis as al-Quds or East Jerusalem had been an old Israeli plan that had already failed in the past. The late Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat had enough political sagacity to reject it, and neither President Abbas nor any other Palestinian official would think to compromise on the historical and legal Palestinian rights in the city. Thus, the deal of the century died before its announcement.

Plan of Trump will fail to resolve the conflict. Worse, it will exacerbate it even further for Israel now seemed to be given absolute freedom to speed up its colonial venture, to entrench its military occupation and to further oppress Palestinians, who will undoubtedly continue to resist. Indeed, this deal planned by the U.S would benefit Netanyahu, right-wing coalition and Trump thus the the Zionist discourse that predicated maximum territorial gains with minimal Palestinian presence has finally succeeded. This is evident when every Israeli request has been met to the last one. Meanwhile, Palestinians received nothing aside from the promise of chasing another mirage of a Palestinian state that has no territorial continuity and no real sovereignty.

Time and time again, the UN has clearly made it that it pursues a different political trajectory than the one followed by Washington, and that all decisions of the U.S regarding the Jerusalem status and the illegal settlements are void and null. Only in the matters of international law, as none of Trump's actions in recent years have succeeded in considerably altering Arab and international agreement on the Palestinians rights.

According to Trump's plan, Israel has rights over all the land between the Jordanian river and the Mediterranean. This would mean that now, the Israel-lobby group will snatch a congressional resolution to the recognition of any areas that Israel decides to annex formally. That means the veteran American Jewish groups lobby like the American Jewish Committee (AJC), the Conference of Presidents (CoP) and the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) won. They warmly welcomed the plan and they participated in the funeral of the two-state solution. In other words, these groups, along with the right-wing American-Jews conservative, were like "casino magnate" and pro-Israel mega-donors like Sheldon Adelson, Haim Saban, Ronald Lauder (billionaire and the president of the World Jewish Congress (WJC), Senior advisor Jared Kushner, and U.S. Ambassador to Israel David Friedman, necessarily endorsed the settlers right's dream of "Greater Israel" wherein Jews are the sole sovereign.

Trump's "deal of the Century" could somehow be perceived as sending a clear message to all of the nations that creating unilateral facts on the occupied land through power and money in the hand of bullies and bandits is legitimate, upending the international legal order which is crying for Justice. In Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad's words at the third conference of The League of Parliamentarians for Al-Quds that "This deal will only bring more conflict to the region, and will antagonize billions of people around the world."

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