



The American Israeli Plan textual and political analysis

Muhannad Mustafa

Translated by: Muna Abu Baker

This paper discusses Israeli policies to conclusively resolve the Palestinian cause after the United States announced its settlement plan (“Peace to Prosperity” or more colloquially the “Deal of the Century”).¹ In recent years, and especially after the election of Donald Trump as president in 2016, the Zionist project led by Benjamin Netanyahu and the right has focused on resolving (or eliminating) the Palestinian cause, both politically and on the ground. The US plan is consistent with the Israeli approach to resolve the Palestinian issue, but in some respects even goes beyond the Israeli consensus; it proposes dimensions that were not a priority in the Israeli debate regarding the final resolution. The US plan reflects the political and moral surrender of the Palestinian national movement.

Implementation of the Plan Before Its Announcement

The US plan is based on the principle of might is right, meaning that you claim as right all facts on the ground even if they were illegally established. In this regard, the plan embraces the most extreme Israeli position on settlements and borders; it does not distinguish between government-sanctioned settlements and those established by rogue settlers at their own initiative. The rate of settlements has risen since the election of Donald Trump, especially in the past year. The current Israeli minister of defense, Naftali Bennett, has taken several measures to strengthen Israeli control over Area C, whose annexation he has demanded ever since he entered politics.² To strengthen Israeli sovereignty over these areas, Bennett announced the identification of seven new nature reserves in the West Bank, as well as the expansion of twelve existing reserves. The nature reserves policy aims to

¹ The White House, *Peace to Prosperity: A Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People* (Washington, DC: Author, 2020), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Peace-to-Prosperity-0120.pdf>.

² Muhannad Mustafa, “Annexation in the Current Israeli Debate: The Dialectic of Citizenship and Land,” *Israeli Affairs Journal*, vol. 66, 2017, 37–51.



prevent Palestinians from expanding in these areas and to restrict the Palestinian space under the guise of preserving nature. It is worth noting that some settlement outposts have been established within these reserves on Palestinian public and private land; Israel has not evacuated them.³ Fifty-one nature reserves in Area C cover 500,000 dunums, whereas the new nature reserves announced by Bennett cover 130,000 dunums.⁴

According to Peace Now data, 427,000 settlers lived in the West Bank (excluding Jerusalem) in 2018. They constitute 5 percent of the total population in the State of Israel. Moreover, 132 settlements have been established by government decision, whereas 121 outposts have been established.⁵

Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs published a report regarding settlements in April 2019 at the eve of the announcement of US plan. The president of this center is Dore Gold, Netanyahu's former consultant. According to this report, there are approximately 448,000 Israeli settlers in the West Bank (approximately 15 percent of the total population living in the West Bank). According to other estimates of the number of Palestinians in the West Bank used by the center, there are 1.7 million Palestinians in the West Bank, which raises the percentage of the settlers to 26 percent of the total West Bank population.⁶ The center data is consistent with Peace Now data, which puts the settlers at 4 percent of the total population in Israel. Seventy-seven percent of the settlers live in settlements clusters. The annexation of such clusters to Israeli sovereignty enjoys broad support inside Israel. Other settlers live deep within the West Bank. All settlers live in Area C.

³ The Israeli Supreme Court rejected a petition submitted by a group of Israelis (forty individuals) to cancel the nature reserve Em Zuka in which a settlement outpost was built because it discriminates between Palestinian and Jewish settlers. Moreover, Judge Menahem Mazuz called the lawyer who submitted the petition a provocateur. (Amira Hess, In the West bank settlers recruit nature to their mission- with the high court's consent, *Haaretz*, 17\1\2020,p:17.

⁴ *ibid*

⁵ "West Bank Population," Peace Now website, <https://peacenow.org.il/en/settlements-watch/settlements-data/population>.

⁶ *Ibid*.



The center's data is based on statistics from the Settlements Council, which undoubtedly played a role in determining the details of the Trump plan, including the idea of imposing Israeli sovereignty upon the lands in the West Bank.⁷

Table 1. West Bank Land

	Square kilometers	Percentage
Area A	982,000	17.1
Area B	1,035,000	18.1
Nature reserves	166,000	2.9
Area C	3,539,000	61.9
West Bank	5,722,000	100.0

Table 1 shows that Area C constitutes to almost 62 percent of the West Bank. The table also reveals the role nature reserves play in controlling areas in the West Bank and restricting Palestinian construction and agriculture development.

In 2019, settler policies continued in Area C as part of preparation efforts to annex this area even before the announcement of the US plan. These policies are consistent with the restriction placed on Palestinians in these areas and are in accordance with right-wing government plans to annex this area. A report published by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) regarding Israeli policies in these areas stated that Palestinian home demolitions and expropriations in Area C increased 45 percent in 2019; 393 buildings were demolished or expropriated in 2019, of which 116 buildings had been donated by international bodies, compared to 271 buildings demolished or expropriated in 2018 (see Table 2).⁸

Table 2. Demolition and Expropriation of Palestinian Buildings in Area C in 2019

	Buildings demolished	Buildings expropriated	Palestinians Made Homeless
--	-----------------------------	-------------------------------	-----------------------------------

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Reported in Hagar Shizaf, "United Nations: In 2019 the Number of Buildings Demolished or Expropriated in Area C Was Increased," *Haaretz*, January 7, 2020, p. 4.



2017	256	14	398
2018	226	45	218
2019	328	65	507

The report further indicates that the number of Palestinians left homeless as a result of demolishing or expropriating their homes has increased from 218 in 2018 to 507 in 2019. The restriction on house construction is also included in Resolution no. 1797, which enables Civil Administration supervisors to demolish or expropriate buildings built without a license within ninety-six hours of the first notice issued to the owners of such building; during this period, owners have no practical or procedural means to appeal such decisions. Since assuming the position of the Minister of Defense, Naftali Bennett has been working on developing a plan to freeze all Palestinian construction in these areas for two years.⁹ In talks with Bennett about Palestinian construction in Area C, the army presented data showing that this area constitutes 60 percent of the West Bank, in which approximately 200,000 Palestinians live in twenty-five organized, planned villages and hundreds of unrecognized clusters by the Israeli civil administration; moreover, they were starting to build more than 1,000 unlicensed units. Bennett asked the army and the Territories Coordinator in the government and the Civil Administration to strengthen Israeli supervision and prevent Palestinian construction; his plan includes stopping European funding for Palestinian construction in these areas. The army data indicates that most construction is funded by Europe; thus, strengthening supervision may deter such construction through financial and economic sanctions.¹⁰

Bennett's steps are part of the policy of restriction over Palestinian construction in Area C. According to Civil Administration data,, Palestinians submitted 1,485 construction requests in these areas between 2006 and 2008.¹¹ The Civil Administration approved

⁹ Ariel Kahana, "Bennett's Plan: 'We Will End the Palestinian Control'," *Israel Hayom*, December 19, 2019, <https://www.israelhayom.co.il/article/717217>.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ The Civil Administration did not disclose this information willingly, but only after the organization Bimkom requested this information from the Civil Administration through the Freedom of Information Law.



twenty-one requests (1.4 percent of the total requests). In the same period, the Civil Administration issued 2,147 demolition orders of Palestinian buildings in these areas. The Civil Administration revealed that it issued only fifty-six construction licenses for Palestinians during the same period, from which thirty-five licenses were not based on requests Palestinians have requested for construction, but rather given to them under the

framework of a plan to transfer members of Al-Jahaleen tribe who live near Ma'ale Adumim settlement to Al-Jabal neighborhood adjacent to Al-Eizariya.¹²

As for the data revealed by the Civil Administration regarding the issuing of licenses and construction in Area C, it was found that in the last two decades (2000–2018) Palestinians submitted 6,532 license requests, from which only 210 (3.2 percent) were approved (Table 3). The data disclosed by the Civil Administration shows that restriction of Palestinian construction has begun in the late 1980s (during the first intifada), particularly after the Oslo Agreement was signed. For example, in 1972, Palestinians requested 2,199 construction requests from which 2,134 were approved (97 percent), and in 1973 96 percent of the requests were approved, and in 1988 only 32 percent were approved.¹³ This indicates a relationship between strengthening settlements in the West Bank, Israel's interest in imposing facts on the ground during negotiations, and the restriction of Palestinian construction in the West Bank. Out of 240 Palestinian villages in Area C, only 27 villages have approved structural plans, and under the approved plans Palestinians are allowed to build on only 0.5 percent of the land of Area C, whereas settlements plans in Area C were approved for 26 percent of the land.

¹² Hagar Shizaf, "In Three Years, 98.6% of Palestinian Construction Requests in Area C Were Rejected," *Haaretz*, January 22, 2020, p. 3.

¹³ *Ibid.*



Table 3. Construction and Demolition Permits in Area C

	2018–2016	2018--2000	1972
Demolition orders	2,147		
Actual demolitions	90		
Construction permit requests	1,485	6,532	2,199
Number of approved permits (percentage of total)	%1.4) 21	(%3.2) 210	(%97) 2134

. The Civil Administration did not disclose this information willingly, but only after the organization Bimkom requested this information from the Civil Administration through the Freedom of Information Law.

The US Plan and Israel: Reformulating the Rules of the Conflict and the Solution

This study analyzes the solution proposed in the US plan and its link to the Israeli perception about the following central issues: Jerusalem, the refugees, the borders, and the Gaza Strip.

The US plan fully embraces the Israeli Zionist narrative. Words such as "occupation" and "occupied" do not appear in the plan at all (see Table 4). Israel is portrayed as the victim of repeated attacks since 1948 and as willing to compromise constantly for peace; according to the US narrative, Israel has already ceded 88 percent of the lands that it "captured" or "controlled" since 1967. The plan completely obscures the Palestinian narrative; any term or concept that is relevant to Palestinian demands is completely absent. The plan aims to change the internationally accepted conflict resolution paradigm, or even the paradigm accepted by previous US administrations. The plan corresponds with Benjamin Netanyahu's approach to defeat the Palestinian national movement, to impose his perceptions of the conflict,¹⁴ to portray it as a criminal terrorist organization, and to portray Israel as victimized by a Palestinian terrorist movement that tries to prevent Jews

¹⁴ To review more of Netanyahu's perceptions, see Antwan Shulhut, *Benjamin Netanyahu: The No Resolution Doctrine* (Ramallah: Madar— The Palestinian Forum for Israeli Studies, 2015).



from implementing their right of self-determination in their historical, biblical, and legal homeland.¹⁵ Aluf Benn, editor of *Haaretz* newspaper, describes the deal as Trump saying to the Palestinians, in effect,

you have lost the war and it's time you realize it. The Palestinian national movement which relied thus far on rejecting Zionism as a colonial, racist, and criminal movement, is requested now to change its national ideology, and teaching curriculums, and articles in the official newspaper, in order to build a new narrative that grasps Zionism as a just movement that brought back the Jewish people to the country after 2000 years in exile. The Palestinians are the poor neighbors of the Jewish state, and they can enjoy imperfect freedom if they accept a land amputated by settlements and controlled from every direction as well as from the air.¹⁶

Table 4. Terms of Israeli Narrative in the Plan

Term	The alternative term
Occupation	Captured territory, seized territory
Israeli wars	Defense wars
Occupied	Captured, took control
Palestinian struggle	Terrorist attacks
Palestinian movements	Terrorist groups
Israeli prisoners	Captive

Michael Herzog, a retired Israeli military leader and researcher in Washington Institute for Near East Policy and the Jewish People Policy Institute, describes the US plan as a new paradigm for dealing with the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.¹⁷ The paradigm that guided Israel in previous negotiations rounds was that the conflict is between two national movements that carry historical narratives and conflicting political demands. Both

¹⁵ Aluf Benn, “History of the Victors,” *Haaretz*, January 30, 2020, p. 3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Michael Herzog, “Such a Bet on the Future of Israel Requires a Referendum,” *Haaretz*, February 14, 2020, p. 23.



struggled for the same land with clear and visible demographic realities. According to this paradigm, the Palestinian side will not throw away its narrative. Therefore, to preserve Israel as a Jewish democratic state, it must reach an agreed-upon compromise between the two sides based on separating the two political entities, including dividing the land between them. According to Herzog, "the Trump paradigm proposes a different paradigm. For the first time, in coordination with Israel, the United States proposes a separate plan accompanied by a map for a comprehensive resolution for all the issues relating to the ultimate solution. This plan is biased towards the historical narrative of the national movement of the Jewish people, as it does not only define facts relating to the needs of every party, but also defines who is the right party." The plan not only revisits issues raised by the 1967 war but also issues raised by the 1948 war, including the recognition of the Israeli sovereignty over the Holy Haram, elimination of the right of return, re-opening the file of borders determined by the 1948 war through dealing with 1967 and 1948 as one unit, and proposing to move the Triangle area to the Palestinian state as a historical correction.

We agree with Herzog's analyses. However, the paradigm based on the events of 1948 was proposed by Netanyahu in his famous Bar Ilan speech, which posited that the problem was not what happened in 1967, but rather in 1948, embodied by Palestinians' refusing to acknowledge Israel as a Jewish state; Netanyahu considered such acknowledgment a prerequisite to progress toward a political compromise with the Palestinian national movement.¹⁸ The US plan embraced this narrative by stipulating that a Palestinian state will not emerge unless it recognizes Israel as a Jewish state (Table 5).¹⁹

¹⁸ Muhannad Mustafa, *Benjamin Netanyahu, Re-producing the Zionist Project Within the Clash of Civilizations System* (Istanbul: Vision for Political Development, 2019).

¹⁹ The plan mentions this stipulation on pp. 4, 7, and 37.



Table 5. Demintions from Bar Ilan Speech (2009) and the US Plan (2020)

	Bar Ilan speech²⁰	The US plan
The Jewish state	The Palestinian leadership must rise and simply say: "we have had enough of this conflict. We recognize the right of the Jewish People to a state its own in this Land. We will live side by side in true peace."	Palestinian leaders must embrace peace by recognizing Israel as the Jewish state. (p. 4)
Demilitarized state	If we get a guarantee of demilitarization, and if the Palestinians recognize Israel as the Jewish state, we are ready to agree to a real peace agreement, a demilitarized Palestinian state side by side with the Jewish state.	The State of Palestine shall be fully demilitarized and remain so. (p. 22)
Political narrative	Whoever thinks that the continued hostility to Israel is a result of our forces in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza is confusing cause and effect. The attacks on us began in the 1920s, became an overall attack in 1948 when the state was declared, continued in the 1950s with the fedayeen attacks, and reached their climax in 1967 on the eve of the Six-Day War, with the attempt to strangle Israel. All this happened nearly 50 years before a single Israeli soldier went into Judea and Samaria.	Since the moment of its establishment, the State of Israel has not known a single day of peace with all of its neighbors. It has fought numerous defensive wars, some existential in nature, as well as asymmetric battles with terrorist groups. (p. 44)

²⁰ See Bar Ilan speech in English on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the following link: <https://ecf.org.il/issues/issue/70>



<p>Historical– religious narrative</p>	<p>The connection of the Jewish People to the Land is more than 3,500 years old. Judea and Samaria, the places where our forefathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob walked, our forefathers David, Solomon, Isaiah and Jeremiah—this is not a foreign land, this is the Land of our Forefathers.</p>	<p>Jerusalem became the political center of the Jewish people when King David united the twelve tribes of Israel, making the city the capital and spiritual center of the Jewish people, which it has remained for nearly 3,000 years. (p. 15)</p>
<p>Peace and prosperity</p>	<p>Let us join hands and work together in peace, together with our neighbors. There is no limit to the flourishing growth that we can achieve for both peoples—in the economy, in agriculture, in commerce, tourism, education—but, above all, in the ability to give our younger generation hope to live in a place that's good to live in, a life of creative work, a peaceful life with much of interest, with opportunity and hope.</p>	<p>There has been a false notion that the lack of opportunity for the Palestinian people is Israel's sole responsibility. Solving the final status issues, in the manner described in this Vision, would create the necessary conditions for investment to start flowing into the region. We estimate that combining this political solution with the economic vision for investments and government reforms that we have laid out will lead to historic economic growth. (p. 4)</p>



<p>Refugees</p>	<p>We need a clear agreement to solve the Palestinian refugee problem outside of the borders of the State of Israel. For it is clear to all that the demand to settle the Palestinian refugees inside of Israel, contradicts the continued existence of the State of Israel as the state of the Jewish People... Therefore, justice and logic dictates that the problem of the Palestinian refugees must be solved outside the borders of the State of Israel. There is broad national agreement on this. I believe that with good will and international investment of we can solve this humanitarian problem once and for all.</p>	<p>Proposals that demand that the State of Israel agree to take in Palestinian refugees, or that promise tens of billions of dollars in compensation for the refugees, have never been realistic. (p. 31) The Israeli–Palestinian Peace Agreement shall provide for a complete end and release of any and all claims relating to refugee or immigration status. There shall be no right of return by, or absorption of, any Palestinian refugee into the State of Israel. (p. 32)</p>
<p>"Jewish refugees"</p>	<p>We must solve the problem of the Arab refugees. And I believe that it is possible to solve it. Because we have proven that we ourselves solved a similar problem. Tiny Israel took in the hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees from Arab countries who were uprooted from their homes.</p>	<p>The Arab–Israeli conflict created both a Palestinian and Jewish refugee problem. Nearly the same number of Jews and Arabs were displaced by the Arab/Israeli conflict. Nearly all of the Jews have since been accepted and permanently resettled in</p>



		<p>Israel or other countries around the world. (p. 31)</p> <p>The Jewish refugee issue, including compensation for lost assets... Additionally, the State of Israel deserves compensation for the costs of absorbing Jewish refugees from those countries. (p. 31)</p>
--	--	--

The US plan was inspired by the proposal of an economic peace that Netanyahu developed in the early years of his rule, a proposal that considered the economic aspect an integral component of the central political and national question; the plan failed because of Palestinian, Arab, and international rejection. The US plan revives the idea of an economic peace, however more progressively, through positing a detailed economic component, one which is able to predict the economic turnouts for the next decade. The plan tries to appeal to Palestinians with an economic plan by promising that the Palestinian GDP will double itself within a decade and a million new job opportunities will be created, and unemployment will be reduced to less than 10 percent, thus lowering the average poverty rate within Palestinian society.²¹ The plan is crammed with economic promises as it allocates US\$27 billion of the total amount that will be recruited to the Palestinian state over ten years, that is, US\$2.7 billion a year, in exchange for abandoning the Palestinian national project. The plan proposes privileges to the Palestinian state, with the help and assistance of Israel, like using Haifa and Ashdod ports for export and import (which Palestinians currently use), establishing a free commerce zone between Jordan and the state of Palestine, and so on.²² Israel does not oppose any of the economical components in the plan because these components are not new; they are already in place. Although the plan somewhat broadens the economic privileges of the Palestinian state, the essence of what is

²¹ *Peace to Prosperity*, p. 4.

²² *Ibid.*



currently being carried out will remain according to the plan. Israel will benefit greatly from the economic component of the plan, but eventually, this economic component will keep the Palestinian state economically dependent on the Israeli economy. We discuss the current economic reality and relations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, especially during 2019.

Writing about borders as proposed in the US plan, Israeli researcher Shaul Arieli argued that the plan is a proposal for apartheid.

The Deal must vanish; it does not have and will never have an Arab partner. The international reactions indicate that annexation will not be legitimized. The Deal will reflect a great damage to Israel. It is based on legitimizing the current reality, in which two different judicial systems are practiced over the same land-based on an ethnic criterion. Adding the idea of annexation will transform this reality into apartheid, or according to the definition of David Ben Gurion from 1949, to a *dictatorship of the minority*. . . . the Deal will cause tremendous damage to Palestine Liberation Organization that is attempting since 1988 to lead a diplomatic praxis over the armed struggle to reach a resolution of the conflict, and it will be pushed to stop the security coordination with Israel. [The Deal] violates the principle of citizenship as it proposes transferring Arab citizens in Israel to Palestine. It also violates the rule of law and the right to property by legitimizing illegal outposts built on stolen Palestinian lands.²³

Borders and Settlements

The plan includes an unprecedented detailed border plan, based on the assumption that the adoption of this plan must include two things: mutual recognition of the two political entities, both Israel and Palestine, and recognition that Israel is the state of the Jewish people; and an end to requests from both sides regarding the ultimate resolution, that is, reaching the endpoint of the conflict.²⁴

In the above-mentioned article, Arieli observes:

²³ Shaul Arieli, "15 Years Backwards," *Haaretz*, February 21, 2020, p. 23.

²⁴ *Peace to Prosperity*, p. 38.



the proposed Palestinian state will be a region without any geographical continuum or external borders, thus becomes one big enclave with borders that reach 1400 kilometers, i.e., 1.5 times the current Israeli borders. Within this enclave, there will be 15 Israeli enclaves (settlements), and within Israel, there will be 54 Palestinian enclaves (Palestinian villages). . . . the international experience indicates that aside from Holland and Belgium, such enclaves are not an implementable solution between parties who share a history of violence and hard feelings. The army will transform into an army that protects such enclaves, and the overlapping borders will prevent the establishment of separate economic systems, and it will not allow the Palestinians to get rid of the suffocating taxes it currently abides by . . . half of the lands that will be annexed to Israel are privately owned, which forces Israel to compromise to keep it, and the proposition to declare the neighborhoods outside the wall in Jerusalem such as KafrAqab, Samiramis, Shu'fat Refugee Camp, in addition to the town Abu Dis as the Palestinian capital is not appropriate altogether. In these neighborhoods, the construction is without planning or regulated maps, it lacks infrastructure and institutions, and it is far from central routs or relevant economic centers.²⁵

The map that accompanied the plan did not provide details and did not shed light on the different percentages of annexation or the number of settlements and enclaves within the Palestinian state or Israel. According to the plan, Israel will annex the Jordan Valley and areas with a geographic continuum with the settlements that constitute approximately 30 percent of the West Bank. Fifteen settlements will become enclaves within the Palestinian state.²⁶

These small settlements deep in the West Bank are a stronghold of the terrorist settler religious right. Trump and his work team were unwilling to disassemble these settlements within the proposed Palestinian state. On the other hand, the Palestinian state will lack any geographical continuum; twelve tunnels and bridges will connect its different regions, and two bridges will link the West Bank and Jordan. (The Allenby Bridge and the inactive

²⁵ Arieli, "15 Years Backwards," p. 23.

²⁶ They are: Otniel, Hermesh, Mevo Dotan, Elon Moreh, Itamar, Har Brakha, Yitzhar, Ateret, Ma'ale Amos, Metzad, Karmeit Tzur, Telem, Adora, Negohot, Beit Haga



Adam Bridge will be cut off as a result of the Jordan Valley annexation.) A tunnel will connect the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Shaul Arieli drew a new map by pasting Trump's map to the map of Israel. The new map indicates that Israel will annex 30 percent of the West Bank, and the state of Palestine will be given 14 percent of the Israeli area, which are not inhabited by anyone. The map revealed that the presumed map would divide the West Bank twice, once by road no. 1, and again by the route that leads to Ariel. Both routes completely amputate the West Bank.²⁷ Malkiel Balas, the former Deputy Legal Advisor of the Israeli government, affirms that Israel's desire to annex the settlements and keep Palestinian islands with special legal status to prevent the Palestinian citizens from becoming Israeli citizens will eventually fail. And experience suggests, Balas noted, that the little legal parts are bound to unite and merge with the surrounding, more significant island in the future. Balas concludes that any "legal wall that will be built to prevent the Palestinians living in areas surrounded by Israel to prevent them from becoming Israeli is destined to fall down."²⁸

The plan states: "the State of Israel will benefit from having secure and recognized borders. It will not have to uproot any settlements and will incorporate the vast majority of Israeli settlements into contiguous Israeli territory. Israeli enclaves located inside contiguous Palestinian territory will become part of the State of Israel and be connected to it through an effective transportation system."²⁹ This paragraph taken from the plan means that Israel will maintain most of the settlements in the West Bank. Thus, it distances itself from the Israeli hegemonic perceptions that were expressed in previous negotiations rounds regarding the annexation of central settlement clusters and evacuating the rest of the isolated settlements in the West Bank. However, this announcement is in line with Netanyahu's position that he repeatedly expressed after the demolition of Amona settlement, declaring that Jews and settlements will not be uprooted under his rule.³⁰ Indeed, the US plan is fully aligned with Netanyahu's position, which he laid out years ago.

²⁷ Hagar Shizaf, "Exchanging Regions in the Negev, a Debate About the Triangle: Israel According to Trump's Plan," *Haaretz*, January 30, 2020, p. 3.

²⁸ Malkiel Balas, "This is Not How You Annex," *Haaretz*, January 30, 2020, p. 13.

²⁹ *Peace to Prosperity*, p. 12.

³⁰ "Netanyahu: As Long as I am the Prime Minister No Jew Will Be Uprooted From His Home," *Srugim*, December 11, 2018, <https://www.srugim.co.il/295942-בבני-התנועה-לעומסי-הפתרון-לעומסי-התנועה-בבני-295942>



The plan proposes to incorporate about 97 percent of the Israelis living in the West Bank in contiguous Israeli lands and to incorporate 97 percent of the Palestinians living in the West Bank in contiguous Palestinian lands. The Palestinian enclaves that will remain within the borders of the new Israeli state will have residents who are Palestinian citizens under Palestinian civil responsibility, but Israel will assume the security responsibility in these enclaves, whereas the Israelis living in enclaves within the Palestinian state will be Israeli citizens and fall under the jurisdiction of Israel's civil and security administration. This means that Israel will remain in these enclaves inside the Palestinian state and will have responsibility for civil and security matters.³¹ This also means that the plan is consistent with the Israeli security perception of continuously violating the proposed Palestinian state, as it does now; in fact, the Israeli army forces have entered the Palestinian Authority's territories without interruption since 2002.

Regarding the Jordan Valley, the plan is clear: It deems the Jordan Valley to be crucial to Israel's national security and thus places it under Israeli sovereignty. In this regard, the plan is consistent with the Israeli consensus about the importance of keeping the Jordan Valley under Israel's control. Within this consensus, there are differences of opinion: one group demands sovereignty; and another group demands control; a third group wants control through negotiations and agreement by all parties, especially Jordan; and a fourth group wants to annex it unilaterally, which is Netanyahu's stated position. The plan embraced the most radical position.³²

The Jordan Valley includes thirty settlements and eighteen outposts with approximately 12,000 settlers, whereas the number of Palestinian citizens is approximately 54,000 citizens. Data indicates that according to the US plan, about 5,000 Palestinians in the valley area and within Area C will be annexed to Israel.³³ According to Peace Now data, the

³¹ *Peace to Prosperity*, p. 12.

³² Yehuda Schlesinger, "Netanyahu's Goal: Imposing Israeli Sovereignty over Jordan Valley Within Six Months," *Israel Hayom*, December 1, 2019, <https://www.israelhayom.co.il/article/712033>

³³ Hagar Shizaf, "Netanyahu and Gantz are Talking About Jordan Valley Annexation, But What Does It Mean?" *Haaretz*, January 24, 2020,



annexation plan for the Jordan Valley proposed by Netanyahu will include 1,236 square kilometers that constitute 22.3 percent of the West Bank area, in which 13,000 settlers and approximately 4,500 Palestinians live. Countries that support the two-states solution will not consider that annexation as preventing negotiations with Israel in the future. This is what happened after the annexation of Jerusalem in 1967 and the Golan Heights in 1981.

Since the Alon plan, and especially after negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization were initiated, the Israeli discourse focused on the idea of security control over the Jordan Valley. For example, in his famous speech two weeks before his assassination, Yitzhak Rabin presented general conditions for an ultimate resolution and identified the Jordan Valley as the security border of Israel. In his book *Border Between Us and You*, Arieli notes that during Camp David talks, Ehud Barak presented a very narrow view of safe borders, and accordingly proposed that a narrow strip of the Jordan Valley would be annexed, and a quarter of that area would be leased for a limited period of time. Arieli adds that the first time the Jordan Valley appeared in the Israeli maps was in the Taba Conference in 2001; it did not appear in the Israeli maps during the talks between Ehud Olmert and Mahmoud Abbas in the Annapolis Conference in 2007. Israel proposed that it be present in the Jordan Valley for several years, after which security control will be transferred to a third party. In talks with US Secretary of State John Kerry in 2014, Netanyahu proposed that Israel have a presence (and not sovereignty) in the valley. The annexation of the Jordan Valley has reappeared on the agenda after Bennett's plan to annex Area C, including the Jordan Valley, in addition to the attempts made by several members of the Knesset from the Likud Party to propose laws to annex the valley.³⁴

The US plan revived the idea of annexation of the Triangle area to the Palestinian state.³⁵

The Triangle Communities consist of Kafr Qara, Ar'ara, Baqa al-Gharbiyye, Umm al Fahm, Qalansawe, Tayibe, Kafr Qasim, Tira, Kafr Bara and Jaljulia. These

³⁴ Shaul Arieli, *Borders Between Us and You: The Israeli Palestinian Conflict and the Ways of its Settlement* (Tel Aviv: Yideot Publication and Hemed, 2013), 406–7. (Hebrew)

³⁵ To read more about the development of the idea to annex the Triangle to the Palestinian state, see “Muhannad Mustafa, "Um Al Fahem First": Proposals for Geographic/Population Swap of Palestinians in Wadi Ara/the Triangle,” *Israeli Affairs Journal*, vol. 71, 2018, 30–71.



communities, which largely self-identify as Palestinian, were originally designated to fall under Jordanian control during the negotiations of the Armistice Line of 1949, but ultimately were retained by Israel for military reasons that have since been mitigated. The Vision contemplates the possibility, subject to the agreement of the parties that the borders of Israel will be redrawn such that the Triangle communities become part of the State of Palestine. In this agreement, the civil rights of the residents of the triangle communities would be subject to the applicable laws and judicial rulings of the relevant authorities.³⁶

Although the plan proposes that Israel yield the Triangle area, it does not appear in the attached map as part of the Palestinian state. Indeed, an Israeli political source confirmed that Netanyahu had not formulated his opinion on this matter, but that he does not rule out ceding the Triangle to the Palestinian state.³⁷ Netanyahu proposed this idea to compensate the Palestinian over the annexation of the settlements, as he put this idea on the negotiations table in 2017 too.³⁸

Jerusalem

The US plan endorsed Trump's previous recognition of Jerusalem as the unified capital of Israel and his transfer of the American embassy to Jerusalem. The US plan mentions the religious and biblical aspects on the one hand, and as a result of the actual political reality in the city that was annexed to Israel right after the war in 1967 on the other hand, in addition to the Israeli claim that it maintains the holy city as a city of tolerance between the different religions. So, the plan is based on three claims: adoption of the Israel religious–historical narrative about Jerusalem; acceptance and legitimization of the settler political colonial control of Jerusalem; and support of the Israeli propaganda about equality, peace, and tolerance between the three religions that consider Jerusalem a holy

³⁶ *Peace to Prosperity*, p. 13.

³⁷ Itamar Eichner, “Senior Political Source: We are Considering the Possibility of Exchanging Population With Towns in Wadi Ara,” Ynet, January 28, 2020, <https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5668148,00.html>.

³⁸ Amir Tibon and Noa Landau, “Transfer of the Triangle to the Palestinian Territories Was Initiated by Netanyahu,” Haaretz, February 4, 2020, <https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/.premium-1.8493680> (Hebrew)



city. Accordingly, the approach of the plan is "to keep Jerusalem united, make it accessible to all and to acknowledge its holiness to all in a manner that is respectful to all."³⁹

Regarding the political solution, the plan says this:

we believe that returning to a divided Jerusalem, and in particular having two separate security forces in one of the most sensitive areas on earth, would be a grave mistake. While a physical division of the city must be avoided, a security barrier currently exists that does not follow the municipal boundary and that already separates Arab neighborhoods (i.e., Kafr Aqab, and the eastern part of Shuafat) in Jerusalem from the rest of the neighborhoods in the city... This physical barrier should remain in place and should serve as a border between the capitals of the two parties... Jerusalem will remain the sovereign capital of the State of Israel, and it should remain an undivided city. The sovereign capital of the State of Palestine should be in the section of East Jerusalem located in all areas east and north of the existing security barrier, including Kafr Aqab, the eastern part of Shuafat and Abu Dis, and could be named Al Quds or another name as determined by the State of Palestine.⁴⁰

As for the Palestinian citizens who will be living in the capital of Israel, the plan posts three choices for them to choose:

First: to become citizens in the state of Israel.

Second: to become citizens in the state of Palestine.

Third: to maintain their status as permanent residents in the state of Israel.

The second choice is the most complicated. The plan does not detail the procedures that need to be taken if a Palestinian chooses this possibility, and only indicates that "privileges, benefits and obligations of Arab residents of these areas who choose to become citizens of Palestine will be determined by the laws of the State of Palestine and the State of Israel, as applicable."⁴¹ Regarding the religious status in Jerusalem, the plan for all practical purposes breaks the current status agreement in Jerusalem by allowing all religions to pray in the holy Haram.

³⁹ *Peace to Prosperity*, p. 15.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 18.



The Refugees

The US plan drops the refugee issue from negotiations and as a final status issue, in line with US steps to end US aid to the Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).

The Israeli narrative on the issue of the Palestinian refugees consists of the following components:⁴²

1. Israel is not politically or ethically responsible for the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem.
2. Israel will not accept under any circumstances the return of Palestinian refugees to its sovereign borders. In some cases, Israel accepted the return of a limited number of refugees to the 1948 area. For example, during the Annapolis talks it agreed to the return of 5,000 refugees.
3. Israel does not recognize the permanence of the Palestinian refugee issue because it does not consider the descendants of refugees to be refugees and considers only those who have left the country during the 1948–49 war to be refugees.
4. Israel believes that the solution to the refugee problem must be by granting them citizenship in the countries where they have taken refuge. (A moderate Israeli position accepts a selective and controlled return of refugees to a Palestinian political entity.)
5. Israel will not take part in compensating Palestinian refugees because it is not historically responsible for the creation of this problem.
6. The Israeli government has lately started to build a narrative around Jewish refugees from Arab countries. A special team was created for this matter under the Ministry of Social Equality led by Gila Gamliel, a Likud minister. According to this narrative, there is a Jewish refugee problem, not only a Palestinian one, and the Jewish refugees must be compensated because they left many of their physical and financial assets in their original homelands. The Israeli discourse about the Jewish refugees has emerged as part of a local conflict to insert the narrative of the Eastern Jews and their victimization in the shrine of Israeli memory. However, the US plan

⁴² Shaul Arieli, *Borders Between Us and You: The Israeli Palestinian Conflict and the Ways of its Settlement* (Tel Aviv: Yideot Publication and Hemed, 2013), 406–7. (Hebrew)



took what had been an internal Israeli debate and transformed it to become a part of the compromise of the Palestinian Israeli conflict.

The US plan adopts the Israeli narrative about the issue of refugees, and includes the issue of Jewish refugees on an equal footing with the Palestinian refugees. However, the political solution for both issues will not be equal. According to the plan, the Jewish refugees became citizens in Israel, and the Palestinian refugees must integrate and become citizens in the countries in which they live. In addition, the return of refugees to the Palestinian state must be approved by Israel and determined in light of its security considerations.⁴³ The plan also links the issue of Palestinian refugees with refugees as an international phenomenon and neutralizes the specificity of the Palestinian experience. Thus, the plan is fully consistent with the Israeli narrative and discourse. The plan notes: "proposals that demand that the State of Israel agrees to take in Palestinian refugees, or that promise tens of billions of dollars in compensation for the refugees, have never been realistic and a credible funding source has never been identified."⁴⁴ Therefore, compensation is impossible because "the world struggles to find sufficient funds to support the over 70 million global refugees and displaced persons."⁴⁵

The Gaza Strip

In the US plan, a separate section is devoted to the Gaza Strip. The plan adopts the Israeli political narrative regarding the Gaza Strip. According to the plan, "Israel's withdrawal from Gaza nearly 15 years ago was meant to advance peace. Instead, Hamas, an internationally recognized terrorist group, gained control over the territory, and increased attacks on Israel, including the launching of thousands of rockets. Under the leadership of Hamas, the residents of Gaza have suffered extreme poverty and deprivation."⁴⁶ The plan naturally does not mention a word about the blockade on the Gaza Strip or Israel's attacks on it. A newly published book written by Israeli social and military researcher Yagil Levy shows that Israel is more willing than US and UK armies to strike a civil population. Levi

⁴³ *Peace to Prosperity*, pp. 31–32.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.



compared the three armies and focused on Israel's attacks on the Gaza Strip. He refutes the Israeli narrative that the Israeli army is more sensitive to harming civilians compared to the United States and Britain in their war in Afghanistan.⁴⁷

The US plan proposes a solution for the Gaza Strip. It conditions the implementation of the agreement by Israel on a compromise relating to the Gaza Strip, which includes "first, the Palestinian Authority or another national or international body acceptable to the State of Israel is in full control of Gaza. Second, Hamas, [Islamic Jihad], and all other militias and terror organizations in Gaza are disarmed, and third, Gaza is fully demilitarized."⁴⁸ Additionally, as the negotiations begin over these clauses, and upon the signing of the Israeli–Palestinian Peace Agreement, all Israeli captives and remains must be returned. If Hamas is to play any role in a Palestinian government, it must commit to the path of peace with the State of Israel by adopting the Quartet principles, which include unambiguously and explicitly recognizing the State of Israel.

The US Israeli Plan: Conclusion

In 2019, Israel facilitated the implementation of the US plan through the following steps:

- a. Strengthening the settlements in the West Bank by enlarging the settlements and the routes leading to it and escalating house demolition in Area C in line with the horizon proposed by the Deal of the Century.
- b. Politically and economically pressuring the Palestinian Authority and attempting to belittle its political and social role in the West Bank, in line with the role Israel is designating to the Palestinian Authority in this stage, which consists of only three central issues: security coordination, provision of civil services to the population in its areas, and continuation of the economic cooperation which mainly serves the Israeli market.
- c. Working on reaching a long-term compromise with the Gaza Strip, aiming to achieve a state of calm and security, to separate the issue of the Gaza Strip from the

⁴⁷ Yagil Levy, *Whose Life Is Worth More? Hierarchies of Risk and Death in Contemporary Wars* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019).

⁴⁸ *Peace to Prosperity*, p. 26.



- issue of occupation in the West Bank, and to maintain the state of division in the Palestinian scene.
- d. Israel and its supporters abroad worked on tagging any criticism to Zionism or to Israel as the national home of the Jews as anti-semitic. European countries, including the French Parliament, adopted the broad US definition of anti-semitism, aiming to empty the moral power of the Palestinian political and critical discourse and the Palestinian supporters, manifested in rejecting occupation and controlling an entire people and preventing it from its right of self-determination.⁴⁹
 - e. Israel has worked on strengthening its relations with Arab countries. The strategic reports of Madar Center detailed this matter in previous reports. Israel does not only aim to normalize its relations with the Arab world and build a regional Arab–Israeli alliance against Iran, it also aims to marginalize the Palestinian cause and to push it to the bottom of the Arab world's priorities. Israel also seeks to find with some Arab countries a somewhat common perception of the political compromise with the Palestinians.
 - f. Israel is working in complete cooperation with the United States to delegitimize international organizations that may constitute an outlet to the Palestinian politics in pressing Israel or putting it on trial or condemning it; Israel has done this with UNESCO, it has recently been trying to delegitimize the International Criminal Court and describing it as anti-semitic, and it has cut off US aid to the Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) serving Palestinian refugees.

⁴⁹ Anna Bresky, “The French Parliament Decided: Anti-Zionism is a Form of Anti-Semitism,” *Maariv*, December 3, 2019, <https://www.maariv.co.il/news/world/Article-733213>.