

Trump's Peace Plan Has Been Designed to Fail - Exactly Like Its Predecessors

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***Donald Trump's** supposed "deal of the century", offering the Palestinians economic bribes in return for political submission, is the endgame of western peace-making, the real goal of which has been failure, not success.*

For decades, peace plans have made impossible demands of the Palestinians, forcing them to reject the terms on offer and thereby create a pretext for Israel to seize more of their homeland.

The more they have compromised, the further the diplomatic horizon has moved away - to the point now that the Trump administration expects them to forfeit any hope of statehood or a right to self-determination.

Even **Jared Kushner**, Trump's son-in-law and architect of the peace plan, cannot really believe the Palestinians will be bought off with their share of the \$50 billion inducement he hoped to raise in Bahrain last week.

That was why the Palestinian leadership stayed away.

But Israel's image managers long ago coined a slogan to obscure a policy of incremental dispossession, masquerading as a peace process: "The Palestinians never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity."

It is worth examining what those landmark "missed opportunities" consisted of.

The first was the United Nations' Partition Plan of late 1947. In Israel's telling, it was Palestinian intransigence over dividing the land into separate Jewish and Arab states that triggered war, leading to the creation of a Jewish state on the ruins of most of the Palestinians' homeland.

But the real story is rather different.

The recently formed UN was effectively under the thumb of the imperial powers of Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union. All three wanted a Jewish state as a dependent ally in the Arab-dominated Middle East.

Fuelled by the dying embers of western colonialism, the Partition Plan offered the largest slice of the Palestinian homeland to a minority population of European Jews, whose recent immigration had been effectively sponsored by the British empire.

As native peoples elsewhere were being offered independence, Palestinians were required to hand over 56 per cent of their land to these new arrivals. There was no chance such terms would be accepted.

However, as Israeli scholars have noted, the Zionist leadership had no intention of abiding by the UN plan either. **David Ben Gurion**, Israel's founding father, called the Jewish state proposed by the UN "tiny". He warned that it could never accommodate the millions of Jewish immigrants he needed to attract if his new state was not rapidly to become a second Arab state because of higher Palestinian birth rates.

Ben Gurion wanted the Palestinians to reject the plan, so that he could use war as a chance to seize 78 percent of Palestine and drive out most of the native population.

For decades, Israel was happy to entrench and, after 1967, expand its hold on historic Palestine.

In fact, it was Palestinian leader **Yasser Arafat** who made the biggest, unreciprocated concessions to peace. In 1988, he recognised Israel and, later, in the 1993 Oslo accords, he accepted the principle of partition on even more dismal terms than the UN's - a state on 22 per cent of historic Palestine.

Even so, the Oslo process stood no serious chance of success after Israel refused to make promised withdrawals from the occupied territories. Finally, in 2000 **President Bill Clinton** called together Arafat and Israeli prime minister **Ehud Barak** to a peace summit at Camp David.

Arafat knew Israel was unwilling to make any meaningful compromises and had to be bullied and cajoled into attending. Clinton promised the Palestinian leader he would not be blamed if the talks failed.

Israel ensured they did. According to his own advisers, Barak "blew up" the negotiations, insisting that Israel hold on to occupied East Jerusalem, including the Al Aqsa mosque, and large areas of the West Bank. Washington blamed Arafat anyway, and refashioned Israel's intransigence as a "generous offer".

A short time later, in 2002, Saudi Arabia's Peace Initiative offered Israel normal relations with the Arab world in return for a minimal Palestinian state. Israel and western leaders hurriedly shunted it into the annals of forgotten history.

After Arafat's death, secret talks through 2008-09 - revealed in the Palestine Papers leak - showed the Palestinians making unprecedented concessions. They included allowing Israel to annex large tracts of East Jerusalem, the Palestinians' expected capital.

Negotiator **Saeb Erekat** was recorded saying he had agreed to "the biggest [Jerusalem] in Jewish history" as well as to only a "symbolic number of [Palestinian] refugees' return [and a] demilitarised state ... What more can I give?"

It was a good question. **Tzipi Livni**, Israel's negotiator, responded, "I really appreciate it" when she saw how much the Palestinians were conceding. But still her delegation walked away.

Trump's own doomed plan follows in the footsteps of such "peace-making".

In a New York Times commentary last week **Danny Danon**, Israel's ambassador to the UN, candidly encapsulated the thrust of this decades-long diplomatic approach. He called on the Palestinians to "surrender", adding: "Surrender is the recognition that in a contest, staying the course will prove costlier than submission."

The peace process was always leading to this moment. Trump has simply cut through the evasions and equivocations of the past to reveal where the West's priorities truly lie.

It is hard to believe that Trump or Kushner ever believed the Palestinians would accept a promise of "money for quiet" in place of a state based on "land for peace".

Once more, the West is trying to foist on the Palestinians an inequitable peace deal. The one certainty is that they will reject it - it is the only issue on which the Fatah and Hamas leaderships are united - again ensuring the Palestinians can be painted as the obstacle to progress.

The Palestinians may have refused this time to stumble into the trap, but they will find themselves the fall guys, whatever happens.

When Trump's plan crashes, as it will, Washington will have the chance to exploit a supposed Palestinian rejection as justification for approving annexation by Israel of yet more tranches of occupied territory.

The Palestinians will be left with a shattered homeland. No self-determination, no viable state, no independent economy, just a series of aid-dependent ghettos. And decades of western diplomacy will finally have arrived at its preordained destination.

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