



The Trump Plan versus a Realistic Plan

A Paper by the Geneva Initiative

For years, we at the Geneva Initiative have been tirelessly pushing for a two-state solution – a solution that many have unjustifiably eulogized and have claimed to be bereft of life. Peace and the two-state solution are finally back on the public agenda, headlines are bursting with analysis about what a real solution looks like, many are picking holes in the substance of the American (/Israeli) plan and new waves of engagement have been generated on an issue that seemed temporarily shelved. However, a return to the debate is simply not enough.

Looking through one prism, and taking the American plan purely at face value, one might initially interpret it to be something of a positive development. Consistent references to viable Palestinian statehood, territorial compromises, legitimizing aspirations of both peoples, and more, lead one to believe that the plan may have been crafted with reciprocity. Delving deeper, it becomes clear that the plan lacks the very basic tenets of a peace agreement which is contingent on the two conflicting parties' interests, coming to the negotiation to launch a fair process, facilitated by an impartial mediator.

It is precisely for this reason that we must use this opportunity to emphasize the importance of the Geneva Accord: a credible, negotiated model for a peace agreement founded upon mutual trust, dialogue and compromise between both parties. To this day, it continues to be the best model and a true exemplar of negotiation, illustrating that an agreement can be reached between Israelis and Palestinians serving the real interests of both parties.

The limits of the American Plan:

This is an annexation plan, not a peace plan. At every level, the plan ignores the internationally acknowledged declarations (including binding UN Security Council resolutions) and the longstanding Palestinian positions on all of the aforementioned issues and therefore, at its very core, is a non-starter. Even before negotiations begin, whilst the timeline still remains ambiguous, Israel is granted the power to undertake unilateral steps. Meanwhile, the Palestinians are bound by five practically insurmountable and unachievable pre-conditions that need to be overcome before “statehood” can be granted.

Conditions include the realization of democratic institutions and the establishment of the rule of law with an independent judiciary, freedom of press, free and fair elections and credit-worthy “western-style” financial institutions; a territory and population that has been fully demilitarized; and an education system that has *“ended all programs, including school curricula and textbooks, that serve to incite or promote hatred or antagonism towards its neighbors.”*

Moreover, the precise verdict on whether the above criteria have been met is to be determined by Israel and the United States. It is hard to ignore the subjectivity of this decision, which grants Israel the veto power to decide on every single issue – from the interpretation of the term “demilitarized” to the decision about which text might “promote antagonism.” The latter, incidentally, raises important ethical questions about the notion of historical recounting, national-identity and culture, which should

of course be decided upon by the state itself, and not be vetoed by the country the conflict was fought against.

With this in mind and the unfeasible stipulations set, it is hard not to interpret the document as a 181-paged pretext from which to cement Israeli control over settlements and unilaterally extend Israeli law, i.e. sovereignty, to areas of the West Bank. Most significantly, the move could pave the way to the formation of a binational state and, in turn, threaten the Zionist vision of a democratic state for Jewish people with equal rights for all.

The Palestinian state, that is intended to emerge from the deal, does not resemble a state at all and does not even come close to a “state-minus”; it can be described as a limited autonomy at best. At every level – from the outside and from within – the Palestinian entity is constrained by Israel. Externally, the State of Israel “*maintains overriding security responsibility*” over Palestinian territory, which includes international crossings, the movement of people and the regulation of goods along its borders. Amongst other components, Israel also continues to supervise Palestinian airspace and the electromagnetic spectrum. Internally, Israel “*maintain[s] the right to dismantle and destroy any facility in the State of Palestine that is used for the production of prohibited weapons or for other hostile purposes.*” Such open-ended terminology leaves space for a limitless interpretation of what constitutes “*other hostile purposes*” which could go as far as encompassing certain media outlets, educational institutions or perhaps cultural sites deemed to be malignant. The Palestinian “state” rests on three pillars: dependency on, subservience to, and domination by Israel.

And, on each of the **core issues termed to be ‘final status matters’**, the proposal does not even begin to scratch the surface of the zone of possible agreement.

On territory: The future Palestinian state would constitute about 84% of the pre-1967 area (this is 18% of the whole of Israel-Palestine). Bear in mind, that all serious proposals from the past, including the Geneva Accord, have designated more than 90% of the area to the Palestinian state. Even the current route of the separation barrier set unilaterally by Israel leaves 92% of the area on the Palestinian side.

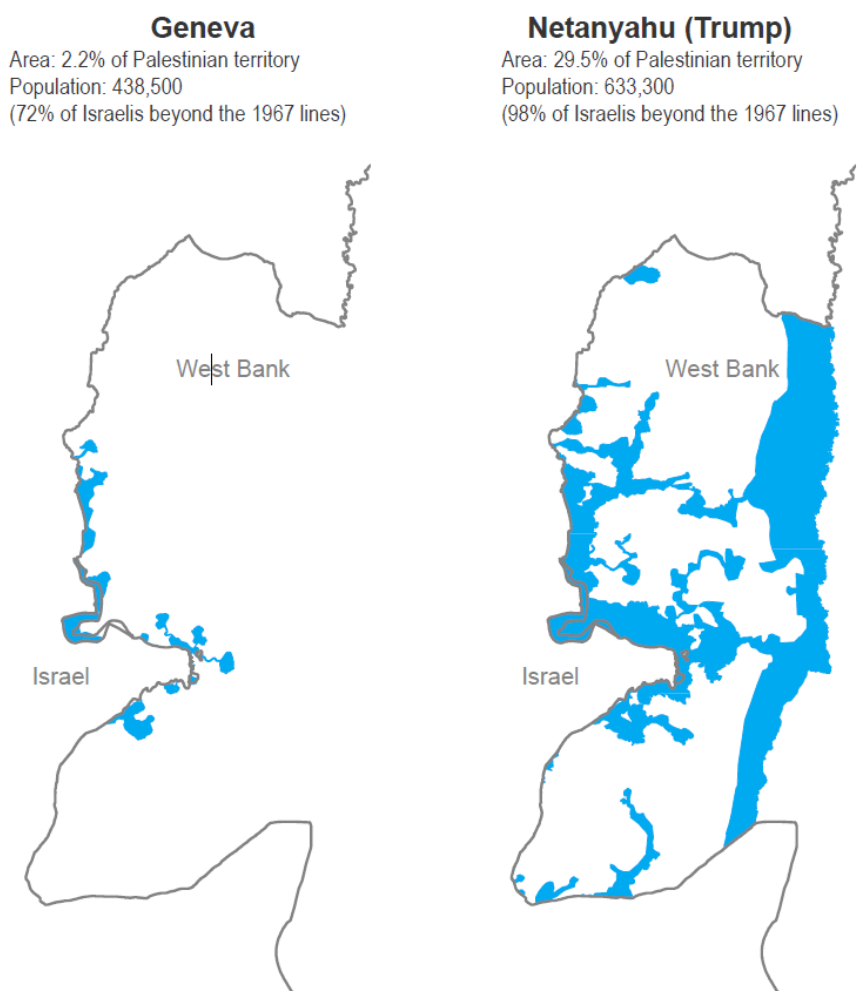
- **Land swaps:** Exchanges proposed by the plan amount to 30% vs. 14% in Israel’s favor and are imbalanced in terms of quantity and quality. Of the land annexed to Israel, this includes 54 Palestinian villages with an estimated 140,000 residents, in addition to 220,000 East Jerusalemites as well as a narrow line of land inside the Gaza Strip. At the same time, 15 settlements housing 15,000 settlers will remain as enclaves in Palestine.
- **Population transfer:** The proposal for the inclusion of “The Triangle” in this land-swap raises ethical concerns about ethnic-focused transfer of a population (which could constitute approximately 300,000 citizens of Israel) and the perception of Arab citizens of Israel as a fifth column in Israel, reigniting negative undertones related to the nation-state law that was passed last year and likely inflaming tensions.

Geneva Initiative on land swaps: In return for the annexation of land beyond the 1967 border, Israel will hand over alternative land to the Palestinians, based on a 1:1 ratio. The area of land annexed and exchanged will amount to 2.2% and will be of equal quality and quantity. The vast majority of Israelis living beyond the ‘67 line will stay on the land annexed to Israel (with 0 Palestinian presence), and the land transferred to Palestine will be an unpopulated one.

On borders: The plan abandons the 1967 lines as a basis for the borders between Israel and the prospective Palestinian state. Instead, the Palestinian entity is non-contiguous and is comprised of a set of six islands severed by pervasive fingers of Israeli annexation that protrude deep into the West Bank

from all angles. Connected by a network of roads, bridges and tunnels, the fragmented Palestinian archipelago will be born with an inherent economic social disadvantage, disconnected populations and a lack of external access. The geographic composition serves neither states' best interests. The Palestinian state encircled by Israeli territory has no outlet or breathing space, restricted at every point. Meanwhile, the 1,370 km serpentine border (4 times longer than the border comprising the '67 lines) twisting around the Palestinian state will far from serve Israel's security interests, leaving it exposed at every point.

Geneva Initiative on borders: The demarcation of the border is based on demographic, security and historical parameters important for both sides, ensuring the contiguity of the Palestinian state and minimizing the number of Israeli settlers who will have to return to Israel. The border will constitute the permanent, secure and recognized international boundary between the two states based on the 1967 line (see map below).



Comparative maps by Dan Rothem

On Security: According to the plan, Israel becomes the ultimate arbitrator of Palestine's security performance and, through a set of benchmarks, is responsible for measuring its progression towards statehood. Israel's security needs take precedence, with Palestinian sovereignty paying the price. As per the plan, Israel retains explicit and exclusive responsibility for everything west of the Jordan River. With the territories practically enmeshed, and an Israeli state encircling the Palestinian one, security concerns are likely to be exacerbated, not eased.

Geneva Initiative on security: Palestine and Israel shall each recognize and respect the other's right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from the threat or acts of war, terrorism and violence. The Palestinian state will be non-militarized; the Palestinian Security Force will maintain border control and a multi-national force will be established to provide security guarantees to Palestine while special long-term temporary arrangements will address Israel's needs.

On Jerusalem: There is no Palestinian sovereignty over any part of Al-Quds, and a total absence of Palestinian status on the Temple Mount. This, rather than maintaining the status quo, actually overturns it. The area offered to the Palestinians as a capital constitutes non-contiguous Palestinian villages annexed by Israel to Jerusalem, separated by the security barrier, that fall beyond East Jerusalem. Even if the plan permits the Palestinians to call this area "Al-Quds," it does not of course change the fact that it is geographically unrelated to the Palestinian definition of Al Quds. There is little sensitivity or recognition of the Palestinians' connection to the city of Jerusalem.

Geneva Initiative on Jerusalem: The parties shall have their mutually recognized capitals in the areas of Jerusalem under their respective sovereignty; Jewish neighborhoods of Jerusalem will be under Israeli sovereignty, and Arab neighborhoods of Jerusalem will be under Palestinian sovereignty; parties will commit to safeguarding the character, holiness, and freedom of worship in the city. Special arrangements for the Old City will allow free access, with entry and exit staffed by the authorities of the state under whose sovereignty the point falls.

On Refugees: The plan serves to reaffirm Israel's narrative and position regarding refugees and fails to provide adequate or fair solutions on acknowledgment, choice of residence or matters of compensation. It equates the suffering of Jewish refugees from Arab countries to that of the Palestinians who fled from their homes in 1947-8 and 1967 and also assigns blame to other Arab countries for not absorbing Palestinians in the past. Not only does the plan fail to provide even a symbolic entry of some refugees into Israel, the entry of refugees into the prospective Palestinian "state" is limited and subject to an Israeli veto.

Geneva Initiative on refugees: Refugees will be entitled to compensation for their refugee status and for loss of property and will have the right to return to the State of Palestine. The refugees could also choose to remain in their present host countries, or ask to relocate to third countries, among them Israel (which will be decided in accordance with a previously agreed upon number submitted to the International Commission, and in line with the average number accepted by third party countries).

To read the full Geneva Accord click [here](#).

