



The Second Deal of the Century: Equally Non-Viable, Much More Dangerous

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Last Wednesday, Donald Trump rocked the entire diplomatic community when he announced that the US would take over Gaza after a mass transfer of the Palestinian population from the Strip.

White House officials have already walked back significant aspects of the Trump plan, but there are significant and immediate consequences to the repeated advocacy for population transfer. The critiques of Trump's statements have focused primarily (and justifiably) on the morality, international legal parameters, or feasibility of the proposal. Here, we will examine the direct consequences of the proposal itself upon the immediate conflict context:

1. Hamas Gains Time and Support: The proposal makes no provision for replacing Hamas in the Gaza Strip. In the unspecified period for developing and implementing a population transfer plan, Hamas remains the organizing and de facto governing entity in the territory. It will be significantly easier for Hamas to recruit new members if there is a widespread perception that Israel and the United States are implementing a second Nakba. With this perception already spreading throughout the entire Arab world, Hamas's status and legitimacy will rise both in Gaza and in the West Bank as the defender of the Palestinian connection to their land.

2. Hardened Saudi positions: One interpretation for Trump's policy pivot is that the President is trying to soften Saudi Arabia's requirements from Israel in normalization negotiations. The rationale is that removing the population transfer threat could allow the Saudi government to normalize relations with Israel without receiving concrete steps towards Palestinian statehood in return. If this was the rationale, the approach has quickly backfired. The Saudi Arabia Foreign Ministry [response](#) to the proposal conditions normalization with Israel on the establishment of "an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital." This is a shift from previous language calling for a "pathway" to Palestinian statehood. Instead of encouraging the Saudis to back away from their insistence on progress towards a two-state solution, the Trump proposal has made them double down.

3. Egyptian and Jordanian governments fear instability: The Egyptians and Jordanians have repeatedly refused to bear the brunt of Palestinian refugee

dislocation, with [reports](#) of an intensive campaign by Egyptian officials to push back against the proposal and warnings that any expulsion of Gazans could threaten Israel's peace treaty with Egypt. Palestinian communal traumatic memories and fears of repeated displacement have unified the Arab world against any country that would facilitate a mass population transfer. Destabilization of the Egyptian and Jordanian governments is not in Israel's short or long-term security interest.

4. Boost for Israeli Radicals: The proposal, in addition to strengthening Hamas, has already emboldened extremist political actors in Israel, who are public and explicit in their desire to replicate aspects of destruction and displacement in Gaza throughout Palestinian population centers of the West Bank. The plan to bring the Gazan war to the West Bank has new appeal for the Israeli hard right, as they now have reason to expect US support for a West Bank population transfer if they are successful in making the West Bank uninhabitable for Palestinians.

5. Public support for ending the conflict through the “disappearance” of the other side: Trump's statements grant new legitimacy to mainstream public discourse about population transfers as a means of solving or ending the conflict. This impacts willingness for compromise, readiness for negotiations and respect for international law in both societies.

Like the last Deal of the Century, the new Trump plan has little chance of success: it presents a right-wing Israeli position, without consulting or considering Palestinian sensitivities, and offers no basis to believe that it is viable or implementable. Unlike the first Deal, however, the current plan has immediate and grave consequences for the stability of the entire region, the popularity of Hamas, the severely deteriorating and combustible situation in the West Bank, and the public mindsets of Israelis and Palestinians. It will take significant efforts by a combination of international, regional, and local actors to counteract the damage.



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