

How they see us: Mideast peace plan is a gift to Israel

The Trump administration lifted the curtain on its long-awaited Middle East peace plan this week, said Marwan Bishara in Qatar's *AlJazeera.com*, and the final product is nothing less than "an assault on peace." Standing next to a gleeful Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the White House, President Trump presented his "deal of the century," which will give Israel some 30 percent of the majority-Palestinian West Bank. The Palestinians are offered not a state but an eventual pathway to limited sovereignty over an archipelago of disjointed territories speckled with Jewish settlements. Israel would get all of Jerusalem, while the Palestinian capital would sit on the far fringes of East Jerusalem, physically isolated from the holy city by the separation barrier. To receive this poisoned gift, Palestinian refugees would have to renounce their internationally recognized right to return to their homeland. As if to underscore the bad faith of the deal, "its unfit author," Trump's son-in-law and adviser Jared Kushner, said that if Palestinians reject the offer, they will only hurt themselves, "like they've screwed up every other opportunity that they've ever had in their existence."

Palestinians must unite in opposition, said Palestinian newspaper *Al Quds* in an editorial. Iran and Turkey have condemned the plan, but some Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia and Egypt, are pressuring us to negotiate. With protests erupting across Palestinian territories, it is vital that Hamas—the Islamist group that



Netanyahu and Trump: A serious proposal?

controls Gaza—and the West Bank-based Fatah party "consolidate national ranks to undermine the deal."

This deal simply recognizes the reality on the ground, said Dan Schueftan in *Yisrael Hayom* (Israel). For decades, the international community has envisioned a two-state solution, with a pragmatic Palestinian government controlling most of the West Bank. But no such government exists, and Palestinian children continue to be raised on "delusions of destroying the Jews." Trump understands

this and has created a plan that guarantees Israel's security. Yet his deal was written to be rejected by one crucial party: the Palestinians, said David Brinn in *The Jerusalem Post* (Israel). That's because, for Trump, this isn't a serious peace plan but "a strategic election ploy to shore up his support among evangelicals and right-wing Jewish voters." For Netanyahu, it's a diversion from the Knesset's vote to allow his indictment on corruption charges and is a way to court right-wingers ahead of March elections.

Israel now has a "once-in-a-lifetime chance," said Shimrit Meir in *Yedioth Ahronoth* (Israel). Trump has effectively given Israel "carte blanche" to "annex the Jordan Valley and apply Israeli sovereignty over all its settlements in the West Bank." Netanyahu says he will do that as soon as next week, never mind the backlash he'll surely receive from Europe, the U.S. Democratic Party, and the Palestinians. "If it isn't done now, it will never be done."

BURUNDI

Bribing the president to go away

Zowenmanogo Zoungwana
Aujourd'hui au Faso
(Burkina Faso)

What a shakedown, said Zowenmanogo Zoungwana. Burundian President Pierre Nkurunziza sparked bloody protests in 2015 when he bulldozed past constitutional limits and successfully ran for a third term in office. He has promised not to run in this year's election—but there's a price. To get him out, Parliament passed a law giving each future ex-president \$530,000 and a "palatial villa" built at taxpayer expense. Nkurunziza, 55, will also receive a vice presidential salary for the first seven years of his retirement, and thereafter, for the rest of his life, a lawmaker's stipend. Oh, and he'll enjoy lifetime immunity from prosecution for the many crimes he committed in office. It's

a "golden parachute" for Nkurunziza, a former leader of an ethnic Hutu rebel group who has "imprisoned or killed his opponents." During his 15-year tenure, the president repeatedly flouted and effectively abolished the treaty that had ended the Burundian civil war by guaranteeing the safety of ethnic minorities and power-sharing among parties. He surely knows that without a guarantee of money and protection, he will always be "a target for all those who suffered martyrdom under his yoke." Proponents in Parliament say that this generous retirement package will guarantee that future presidents will leave office on time. If it gets Burundi free of Nkurunziza, it may be worth it.

PAKISTAN

Is there a difference in overlords?

Aasim Sajjad Akhtar
Dawn

America has a lot of gall trying to push Pakistan away from China, said Aasim Sajjad Akhtar. China has invested heavily in Pakistani industry and infrastructure as part of its Belt and Road Initiative, but U.S. diplomats warn that such investments will bring us only "dependency and despair." How ironic. "We have been on Washington's payroll since at least 1954," and what has it got us? Pakistan's oppressive national security state, which is dominated by the military, was shaped by American patronage. China, by contrast, at least claims to be stimulating development in Pakistan by building roads, power plants, and

industrial parks. Beijing says those investments will "trigger productivity and growth," whereas American military aid does not. But ultimately, we should be just as skeptical of Beijing as we are of Washington. We are stuck in thrall to "rent-a-state logic," through which developing countries are supposed to offer cheap labor to global financial overlords and pay them interest for the privilege. At this point, "it scarcely matters whether the patron is the U.S. or China." We are allowing economic decision-making to be "dictated by the interests of a parasitic establishment rather than by the welfare of our 220 million people."