

Analysis | Trump's Plan to 'Save' Gaza Means Killing the Palestinian Nation and Dismembering Its Body

Saturday 15 February 2025, by [SCHEINDLIN Dahlia](#) (Date first published: 6 February 2025).

Trump's ideas could turn out to be terribly clever or terribly dumb. But there's no doubt that they're inconceivably cruel. That cruelty is manifested in the fact that in declaring that the United States will take over Gaza, no one bothered to ask Palestinians at all

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*Palestinians walk along Gaza's coastal al-Rashid Street to cross the Netzarim corridor from southern Gaza northwards after the cease-fire between Hamas and Israel*Credit: Omar Al-Qattaa/AFP

It's not entirely clear whether U.S. President Donald Trump actually has a coherent policy for Israel, Palestine and the Middle East. He rolled out his most detailed ideas yet in a joint press conference with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Tuesday.

[His plan](#) calls to teleport two million Palestinians to as many [as 12 different locations](#), all of them beautiful in his telling, while America rebuilds a sparkling new Gaza, which it will own.

The proposal would be loopy if it hadn't been uttered by the U.S. president (and in most ways, it still is). As it was, his words left the key actors in this miserable drama gasping - or gushing, if they happened to be the ultranationalist mullahs who double as ministers in Israel's governing coalition.

Trump's ideas, for their part, could conceivably turn out to be any one of the following: terribly clever, terribly cruel or inconceivably dumb.

"Clever" is actually a basket term that contains other qualities, such as "thinking outside the box," which was Netanyahu's noncommittal but apparently deeply satisfied initial response; or "remarkable ... the first good idea that I have heard," as he said Wednesday on Fox News; or "very [bold, fresh](#)," as U.S. National Security Advisor Mike Waltz commented.

*A billboard showing U.S. President Donald Trump and the words "Thank you, Mr. President," in Tel Aviv on Wednesday.*Credit: Jack Guez/AFP

Israel's foreign minister, Israel Katz, thought it was clever enough to make a showy statement instructing the Israeli army to prepare a plan to facilitate Palestinians' "voluntary" departure.

Or perhaps, in another popular theory, it's an opening gambit for strategic bargaining: The plan is

intended to threaten the adversary with such an explosive punishment that just avoiding that fate becomes the main “win,” instead of the opponent’s original demands.

*Palestinians take shelter in tents set up amid heavily damaged buildings in Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip on February 5, 2025*Credit: AFP/BASHAR TALEB

Translated into Palestinian terms, the plan is designed to convince them to settle for much less than grandiose visions of a state. Their big win would be avoiding Trump’s gilded expulsion (it’s gilded in his sales pitch, at least), even if it means remaining under Israel’s postwar boot. Or as former Israeli Prime Minister [Ehud Barak has suggested](#) in interviews, maybe Trump is floating terrible scenarios to jolt Arab states into proposing better ones.

In a generous reading, the “clever” basket includes a long-overdue smashing of the wretched notion that conflict and occupation could truck along unresolved, popularly known as “conflict management.”

A [sound analysis in The Economist](#) as Trump entered office advised that “the path to regional stability is to end the region’s oldest conflicts,” by putting a stop to the feckless American policy of tolerating such management. Trump is known for his short attention span, so even if, for the sake of argument, he started reading the article before meeting Netanyahu, he clearly didn’t make it two sentences further, when the author suggested Trump “present a fair-minded peace plan.”

*U.S. President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in the Oval Office on Tuesday, when Trump starting dropping his Gaza bombshells.*Credit: Andrew Caballero-Reynolds/AFP

Total indifference to Palestinian needs

In fact, Trump’s plan is incredibly cruel to the Palestinian national cause. That’s clear from the way Israel’s [fundamentalist, religious, extremist ministers are lauding the almighty](#) for his messenger, Trump.

The cruelty is manifested in the idea of ripping apart Gazan society, which has just lost over 47,000 people, with hundreds of thousands wounded, with homes, cities and communities wrecked, forced to move many times over to save their lives or leave altogether - while Israelis told themselves that everything was justified because everyone there was guilty.

The cruelty is manifested in the fact that to generate this game-changing proposal, no one bothered to ask Palestinians at all.

“Can we contemplate finding a way forward with a U.S. president who shows near total indifference to what Palestinians want for ourselves?” commented Omar Dajani, a Palestinian-American law professor who has been a legal adviser to several rounds of Israeli Palestinian negotiations. He called the plan “fantastical, unlawful, and deeply immoral.” Moreover, “did [Trump] talk to even a single Palestinian about these ideas? ... Does he have any sense of what it would mean for these people to be pressured to leave their country?” Dajani wrote in a message.

*An activist dressed as the Statue of Liberty is pulled in shackles at the 'Arrest Netanyahu at the White House Rally' in Washington, DC, on February 4, 2025*Credit: AFP/MANDEL NGAN

Arab Americans for Peace - formerly known as Arab Americans for Trump, now smarting after

having rallied voters to support him - [was no less injured](#): “The president has yet to meet with key Arab leaders, including the Palestinian president, to hear their views regarding the acceptable path to a permanent peace process.”

The Palestinian national movement has been battered almost to death. Decades of the most desperate acts of public diplomacy - such as numerous declarations of statehood (1988, 2011, 2012), winning observer status at the United Nations, joining international courts, winning recognition from over 100 other countries - have been fruitless to the point of farce.

In my academic research on other disputed entities insisting on their independence, including Kosovo, Northern Cyprus, Somaliland (coincidentally, [one of the destinations floated for Gazans](#)) and even the now-decimated Nagorno-Karabakh, still none were as powerless, or as far from anything resembling a sovereign state, as Palestine. The use of violence against Israeli targets, historically and at present, is sadly consistent with many liberation struggles, but when aimed at civilians it is never moral, never legal and rarely effective.

*Displaced Palestinian children sit on the back of trucks waiting along Salah al-Din road in Nuseirat as people make their way to northern Gaza*Credit: AFP/EYAD BABA

The problem with Palestine is that the occupation and longer-term denial of Palestinian self-determination have simply gone on so much longer than nearly all other modern unresolved conflicts (Kashmir comes close, depending on when you start counting). Not that Palestinians are passive actors, and there have been political mistakes as well. But time is the under-appreciated driver of the alternating employment of diplomacy or force. Now Trump seems to want to kill the Palestinian nation for good and dismember the cadaver.

Trump plan - bad for the world

Trump’s cruelty extends to the world itself. The idea that America take possession of Gaza follows his trial balloons to take over Greenland and/or Canada. Does it sound fanciful for a country to simply crash other sovereign countries and help itself to their land? It’s actually the way things worked for the overwhelming length of human history, save for the postwar international system.

That postwar phase has been a revolution of the highest order of magnitude. Maybe it was too audacious - and a historic blip. This order of respecting sovereign states has never been perfect, and in 2022 was profoundly threatened in a deeper way by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Israel has never adhered to the prohibition on acquiring territory by force, and has also demonstrated regressive [imperial tendencies lately](#), as I’ve argued.

*A woman walking on debris at a market that was hit by a Russian drone strike in Kharkiv, Ukraine, on Thursday.*Credit: Sofii Gatilova/Reuters

The Gaza disaster has also exposed the European Union, a great and peaceful manifestation of that new world order, as inconsequential on this issue. Trump is proving yet again that this fine postwar alliance has been left in the dust.

What if the policy - if indeed it becomes one - is simply boneheaded, epic stupidity? To get an idea of how stupid, for one thing it could undermine the next stage of the hostage/cease-fire deal, and destabilize the countries expected to take part in the population transfer “plan,” [writes Zvi Bar’el](#).

And consider this: The idea that a Saudi-Israel normalization deal might still be in the offing has

become the target of fevered speculation once again. Israel had hoped Saudi Arabia would ask for a symbolic cost, such as a fuzzy “pathway” for Palestinian statehood. In other words, lip service. But on Wednesday, the kingdom responded icily to Trump’s proposals, [stating that there would be no normalization without a Palestinian state](#).

*President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the fateful press conference in the White House*Credit: Alex Brandon,AP

It’s hard to fudge that one and if that means postponing the Saudi deal until a Palestinian state exists, that probably means neither will happen, which may not really trouble the Saudis.

So far, Hamas issued a categorical rejection and called for all factions to unite against the plan, even as [additional reports indicated](#) openness to talking with the Americans. It’s a confusing time; but we’ve already seen what Hamas is capable of doing when it feels threatened.

Dajani noted that Trump was in fact right that the United States should take responsibility for what it has done in this war, by helping to rebuild Gaza. But if the price is the death and burial of Palestinian self-determination, how long before the next Palestinian insurgency directly targets America, repaying all of that “made in the USA” ordnance in kind?

Israelis were delighted to learn that Netanyahu gifted the U.S. [president a golden pager and a regular one](#) – a nod to Israel’s stunning [exploding pagers attack](#) on Hezbollah operatives in Lebanon last September. Trump seemed to like it too, reportedly responding that “it was a great operation.” But when you get things wrong in the Middle East, they have a way of blowing up in your face.

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P.S.

• HAARETZ. Feb 6, 2025:
<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2025-02-06/ty-article/.premium/trumps-plan-to-save-gaza-mean-s-killing-the-palestinian-nation-and-dismembering-its-body/00000194-db65-df08-a3bc-df7d039c0000>

• Dahlia Scheindlin’s articles in Haaretz:
<https://www.haaretz.com/ty-WRITER/0000017f-da25-d494-a17f-de27a1400000>