

**"Critics have said the real intention could be to change the start point of future negotiations — the Palestinians will begin with a disadvantage, and be forced to fight to simply hold on."**

President Donald Trump's Middle East plan, Peace to Prosperity: A Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People, has been praised by Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as a "realistic path to a durable peace", but rejected by President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority as a "conspiracy deal" to which "we say a thousand times over: no, no, no".

Observers have said that the deal, which was drawn up without any meaningful Palestinian participation, is loaded in Israel's favour. It gets unified Jerusalem as its capital, and it does not have to dismantle any of its illegal settlements in the West Bank. To the Palestinians, the deal offers the possibility of a US-recognised quasi sovereign state that will not, however, have a standing army; they will also have to give up violent resistance to Israel, and ensure the disbandment of Hamas, which governs Gaza.

Trump has claimed that "it is only reasonable that I have to do a lot for the Palestinians, or it just wouldn't be fair", but also warned that "this could be the last opportunity they will ever have". Presidential son-in-law Jared Kushner, the main architect of the plan, has said that the Palestinians should "stop posturing" and fall in line, because "it's a big opportunity" for them "and they have a perfect track record of blowing every opportunity they've had in their past".

Democratic presidential hopefuls Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren have de-

nounced the plan as "unacceptable" and a "sham". Critics have said the real intention could be to change the start point of future negotiations — the Palestinians will begin with a disadvantage, and be forced to fight to simply hold on.

### Status of Jerusalem

Both Israel and the Palestinians make non-negotiable claims over Jerusalem. The plan says Jerusalem will not be divided, and it will remain "the sovereign capital of the State of Israel". The capital of Palestine can occupy far-flung



eastern neighbourhoods lying beyond “the existing security barrier”, which can be renamed Al Quds, the Arabic name for Jerusalem.

According to the plan, “Jerusalem’s holy sites should be subject to the same governance regimes that exist today”, and “should remain open and available for peaceful worshippers and tourists of all faiths”.

During the 1967 war, Israel seized control of East Jerusalem, which has Temple Mount, home to the Western Wall, the al-Aqsa mosque and Dome of the Rock. To Israel, Jerusalem is its undivided capital, and the US moved its embassy to the city from Tel Aviv in May 2018 — but very few countries recognise it as such. The UN has condemned the Israeli annexation of East Jerusalem.

President Abbas has declared that “Jerusalem is not for sale”. This proposal alone has enough potential to make Trump’s plan a non-starter.

### **Change of borders**

The White House has released a “conceptual map” that it says meets Israel’s security requirements, allows Palestinians “significant territorial expansion”, and “avoids forced population transfers of either Arabs or Jews”.

However, the plan says that Israel “will not have to uproot any settlements, and will incorporate the vast majority of Israeli settlements into contiguous Israeli territory”, and that “Israeli enclaves located inside contiguous Palestinian territory will become part of the State of Israel and be connected to it through an effective transportation system”. The idea that illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank should become legal and permanent will be difficult for the Palestinians to agree to.

The plan says the Jordan Valley, “which is critical for Israel’s national security, will be under Israeli sovereignty”. It also says that Israelis will observe a four-year “land freeze”, during which time the Palestinians can reconsider whether to engage in negotiations. However, Netanyahu has said that he would seek cabinet approval on Sunday to annex the Jordan Valley and all Jewish settlements in the West Bank — a move that will likely be seen by the Palestinians as an escalation.

### **Economic package**

The plan says it has the “potential to facilitate more than \$50 billion in new investment over 10 years”, and could “fundamentally transform the West Bank and Gaza”. It includes constructing essential infrastructure including “high-speed transportation links” between the West Bank and Gaza, promoting private sector growth, upgrading education, and improving the healthcare sector and the overall quality of Palestinian life.

The New York Times quoted a White House official as saying the plan would create 1 million new jobs for Palestinians over 10 years, double the size of the Palestinian economy, cut poverty in half, and reduce unemployment to below 10%. The money would be supplied by international donors, chiefly in Arab nations, the report said.

### Expected Questions (Prelims Exams)

**Q. Recently, the US has introduced the much-awaited plan to establish peace in the Middle East. Consider the following statements in the context of this plan.**

1. It will give some territory to Palestine to build the capital in East Jerusalem.
2. This plan has been accepted by both countries Israel and Palestine.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) Only 1                      (b) Only 2  
(c) Both 1 and 2              (d) None of these

**Note:** Answer of Prelims Expected Question given on 29 Jan., is 1 (a)

### Expected Questions (Mains Exams)

**How could Donald Trump's proposed new Middle-East plan affect West Asia? Comment (250 words)**

**Note:** - The question of the main examination given for practice is designed keeping in mind the upcoming UPSC main examination. Therefore, to get an answer to this question, you can take the help of this source as well as other sources related to this topic.

