Policy Proposal: Recommendations on the Palestine-Israel Conflict for President Donald Trump's Second Term

To: President Donald J Trump

From: Special advisor on Israel-Arab relations

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Subject: Strategic Policy Recommendations for the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict

Executive Summary

This proposal presents a comprehensive approach to address the Palestinian-Israeli conflict during your second term in office. The recommendations aim to uphold US strategic interests, alleviate alliances, and navigate the complexities of the ongoing war in Gaza, regional security dynamics, and domestic political challenges. The proposed policies seek to balance humanitarian concerns, security imperatives, and the pursuit of sustainable peace while strengthening your administration's legacy in the Middle East.

Furthermore, this policy brief also recognises that while continuing to support Israel as a vital US ally, it is essential to balance this alliance with growing international scrutiny over Israel's handling of the ongoing 2023-2024 Israel-Gaza war. The war has brought unprecedented global backlash, with accusations of genocide against Palestinians sparking widespread protests and diplomatic challenges. These criticisms threaten US credibility and alliances, especially with Arab states. Therefore, this proposal incorporates your administration's unwavering support for

Israel while acknowledging the need for nuanced adjustments to protect broader US strategic interests.

Background and Context

Your administration had previously demonstrated unwavering support for Israel as a cornerstone of US foreign policy. The Trump administration had previously made a commitment to relocate the US Embassy to Jeruslaem and also recognised Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights. This approach aligns with the zionists perspective as shared by numerous members within your newly appointed team. A team where the majority prioritizes the preservation and strengthening of Israel as a key biblical and geopolitical mission. However, since your last term in office a lot has changed. Therefore, any policy formulated and implemented must be well thought out and executed, keeping all parties of this conflict in consideration.

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict remains one of the most volatile and prolonged challenges in the Middle East. It is settled within decades of territorial, political and ideological dispute. The ongoing 2023-2024 Israel Gaza war has deteriorated humanitarian conditions in Gaza. It has increased civilian deaths and heightened tension in the region. Simultaneously, the expansion of Jewish-Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem continues to complicate prospects for a two-state solution and provoke international condemnation.

On the domestic forefront, Israel continues to face significant political turmoil. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's judicial reform proposals have invoked widespread unrest. Similarly, his ongoing corruption trial also threatens his leadership. Meanwhile, the Palestinian Authority (PA) in fundamental terms ceases to exist. The PA faces declining legitimacy, which has been exacerbated by the longstanding divide between the Fatah in the West Bank and Hamas

in Gaza. The conflict is also equally interwoven if not more in terms of international involvement. Iran and Hezbollah remain emboldened. They continue to leverage the crisis to destabilize the region further. In addition to these events, there have also been further developments which may prove to be crucial in this context. For instance, the recent fall of the Assad regime in Syria and Israel's. Therefore, essentially these developments highlight the urgency for the US to respond in a well calculated manner that can curb further deterioration and pursue viable pathways towards a cordial environment.

Policy Recommendations

1. Reframe US-Israel Alliance amid growing criticism

Your administration's strong support for Israel has been a defining feature of US Middle East policy. However, the growing international backlash and sentiments against Israel's handling of the Gaza war presents risks to US credibility. To address these concerns while maintaining the alliance, the US should continue providing military aid and security assistance but introduce measures to ensure accountability. By implementing oversight mechanisms on how military aid is used, the US can signal it;s commitment to international norms while preserving Israel's ability to defend itself. However, given how there is distrust and questions about Israel's intention and motivations behind the bombings, the providence of arms should be limited if not completely stopped.

While the stance of the country is to limit arms transfer given seeing some progress within aid boost in Gaza, it is not a concrete enough reason for such a decision. Essentially, this conflates two separate issues- military support for Israel and humanitarian aid for Gaza. This implies equivalence between arms transfers and humanitarian aid. It suggests that progress in

boosting aid to Gaza justifies or neutralizes the decision to continue unrestricted arms transfers to Israel. However, these are distinct issues. Military aid to Israel facilitates its ability to conduct operations in Gaza. Thus, this in itself contributes to the very humanitarian crisis that aid seeks to alleviate.

Furthermore, the continuation of unrestricted arms transfers without clear accountability measures fails to address concerns regarding the ways in which US weapons are utilised in military operations. This is especially controversial given the international backlash over civilian casualties and alleged war crimes in the ongoing war. Moreover, in the long run such a statement can also label humanitarian aid as a band-aid solution which does not resolve the origins of the conflict. Hence shielding the world from the actual issues regarding lack of political rights, blockade of Gaza as well as the expansion of Israeli settlements which also acts as the main reason for which many Palestininans are dispersed and/or cannot return to their homes.

2. Strategic considerations regarding Israeli Expansion into post-Assad Syria

In the wake of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's recent ousting, Israel has initiated military operations in Syria (Mick Krever). Prominently, they have advanced into Syrian territories, notably the Golan Heights where 300 airstrikes were made targeting military assets (Mick Krever). The occupation of Golan Heights is an apparent action which has been done because of imperative strategic intentions. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has hinted at a permanent Israeli presence within these newly occupied areas. The UN has condemned these actions as grave acts of violence which go against the 1974 disengagement agreement. Under the Biden administration, US state department spokesperson Matthew Miller acknowledged Israel's security concerns but emphasized the expectation that such measures remain temporary.

However, such a response only acts as a filler and vague response which leaves much to interpretation. Therefore, while your administration has historically endorsed Israel's security measures, it is crucial to assess the broader implications of supporting further Israeli territorial expansion in Syria.

First and foremost unconditional US support for Israel's territorial acquisitions could potentially strain relationships with Arab partners, including those involved in the Abraham Accords. Key allies like Saudi Arabia and Egypt have condemned Israel's actions. Essentially, these countries view a variety of Israeli actions as violations of international law. Endorsing or legitimizing such actions can only hinder efforts to expand normalization agreements and could lead to a realignment of regional alliances away from the interests and influence of the US. Moreover, an occupation of Syrian land is a breach of the UN charter. Hence such a stance from the US perspective can undermine America's moral authority. Most importantly, not to mention Israeli expansion into Syria risks provoking military responses from regional actors such as Iran and Hezbollah. This could potentially lead to broader conflicts that could draw the need of more US resources and forces. Such escalations would divert attention from other strategic priorities and could result in significant human and economic cost. Therefore, it is only imperative that your administration is not any more involved in this war than it already is. Therefore, it would be advisable for the current administration to limit its operations in Syria to immediate security needs, with a concrete and short timeline for withdrawal.

3. Recognise the Risks of Overreach in Regional Conflicts

To further add onto the collapse of the Assad regime and Israel's efforts to exploit the instability in Syria caused by the collapse, it is only imperative that this will pose risks of broader

regional escalations. Therefore, your administration should encourage Israel to coordinate closely with the US on these issues to avoid destabilizing the region any further than it already is. It is known knowledge that the US is supporting Israel in its security operations against Iran. However, it is crucial to mitigate any possible hostilities these actions may create with Turkey and other actors in the Middle East. Especially given the fact that Turkey has recently severed all diplomatic relations with Israel due to Israel's reluctance to end the war in Gaza. Therefore, the US should maintain a strong advisory role toward Israel in this war.

4. The Risks of Politicizing Religion in US policy on the Israeli-Palestine Conflict

The Trump administration is heavily aligned with Christian Zionist beliefs (DeRose and Martinez). In fact, this belief particularly supports the Israeli claims to biblical lands. Hence, justifying Israel's illegal occupation of land on the basis of ideologies that are inexperienced and amateur. It is apparent that your administration frames US foreign policy around these religious ideologies. While it is an aspect which appeals to a large number of Christian Evangelicals in the States, it might not be the greatest approach. Politicization of religion in foreign policy risks undermining US credibility, complicated alliances in the Middle East, and fuels the ongoing Israel-Palestinian conflict.

Critics argue that religious rhetoric risks alienating US allies, inflaming regional tensions, and undermining the US's ability to mediate the Israeli-Palestine conflict. Articles from The New York Times emphasize that framing foreign policy through the ideologies of Christian Zionism could limit flexibility, polarize discussion, and reduce US influence in a region where religion is already a central and sensitive factor (Dias, "Trump's Religious Ambitions: Christian Power across U.S. Life and Government"). At a time when the Gaza war has only escalated and is

escalating, with accusations of genocide, overly religious framing of US policy risks deepending divides rather than fostering solutions. Your administration has an opportunity to reaffirm its strong support for Israel while adopting a more pragmatic and inclusive approach that considers the border implications for US interests and regional stability.

To contribute more on the issue of polarization of the US alliance in the Middle East, this would directly go against the intentions of the Abrahan Accords. Even though Arab states have engaged in normalization agreements through the Abraham Accords, excessive religious framing of US support for Israel will only strain these relationships. Jordan, Saudi Arabia as well as other critical partners of the accord cannot and will not support policies publicly that appear to favor one religious narrative over the other. Therefore, such perceptions erode trust and may limit efforts to expand normalization agreements or develop future security frameworks that include Israel.

Moreover, religious rhetorics also work to fuel extremist narratives on both sides of the conflict. For instance, Israeli far-right fractions often interpret such rhetoric as a signal to pursue maximalist policies, such as settlement expansion and annexation. All of which further destabilizes the region and forces peace initiatives to be even less viable. Lastly, while evangelical voters support Christian Zionist policies, many other Americans of differing ideologies believe otherwise. These include, Jewish Americans, progressives, and centrists who view these statements and positions as overly ideological and counterproductive. Therefore, a strong US support for Israel can exist without invoking religious justification. more pragmatic approach would maintain

Conclusion

The Trump administration has been historically known for its unwavering support towards Israel. It has taken bold steps to reinforce Israel's sovereignty, security, and regional integration, while gaining substantial domestic support from key constituencies such as the Christian Zionists of America. However, in the light of the ongoing Gaza war, increased international backlash, and regional dynamics, it is important that the upcoming administration refines its approach to maximise US strategic interests, preserve it's global credibility as well as domestic credibility. As Abraham Lincoln once quoted democracy through the lines, "government of the people, by the people, for the people". Therefore, the same nation that ensures you into power, can snatch said power away.

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