



US-Israel Talks on West Bank Annexation

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Why in News

Recently, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo met Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to discuss **Israel's plans to annex parts of the West Bank**.

- Pompeo's visit was exempted from **Israel's mandatory two-week quarantine** for arrivals and shut borders due to the **Covid-19** pandemic.
- For Israel, this visit was an **indication of the strength of its alliance with the USA** and the talks focused on discussions on **annexation, shared concerns about Iran**, the **battle against the coronavirus, Israel's incoming government** and **threats from Israel's ties with China**.

Israel-China Ties: The **US** has reportedly been **pressuring Israel to rethink** a bid by a **Hong Kong company to build a massive desalination facility**.

Key Points

Plans for Annexation of West Bank



- **Israeli hard-liners** are eager to unilaterally redraw the **Mideast map** before November's US Presidential Election.

- The **presumptive Democratic nominee**, Joe Biden, is in the **opposition of unilateral annexation plans** by Israel.
- Annexation would **give Donald Trump an accomplishment** to shore up his **pro-Israel base**, particularly politically influential **pro-Israel evangelical** (of or according to the teaching of the gospel or the Christianity) **Christian voters**.
 - These voters **believe in the notion that God promised the land to Jews** and it **should be returned** to them.
- **Background**
 - The **Israel-Palestine Conflict** can be traced back to **1917**.
 - **Mideast War, 1967**: It is also known as the **six-day war** or **Third Arab-Israeli war**. **Israel captured the West Bank, east Jerusalem and Gaza Strip** in the war. The Palestinians seek these territories for a future independent state. In the decades since, Israel has built settlements in the West Bank and east Jerusalem that now house nearly 700,000 Israelis. Most of the **international communities** consider these settlements a **violation of international law and obstacles to peace**.
 - **Mideast Plan or Middle East Peace Plan**: It was **unveiled by Trump** in January, 2020. Under it, the **Palestinians** would have a **limited statehood contingent on a list of stringent requirements** while **Israel would annex some 30% of the West Bank**.
 - The Palestinians rejected the plan and **threatened to withdraw from** key provisions of the **Oslo Peace Accords**, which are a **series of agreements between Israel and the Palestinians** signed in the **1990s**.
 - The **Trump administration believes** that Israel's West Bank settlements are **consistent with international law** and **supports the annexation** of West Bank territory, as long as Israel agrees to enter peace talks with the Palestinians.
- **Criticism**
 - The annexation will trigger widespread **international condemnation** because it will **crush already faint Palestinian hopes of establishing a viable state** on the lands captured by Israel in the Mideast war.
 - The **Arab League** has mentioned the annexation as a **war crime**.
 - The **European Union** (EU) and other individual member states, have warned of tough consequences if Israel moves forward in the annexation process.

- **India's Stand**

- India was one of the few countries to **oppose the United Nations' partition plan in November 1947**, echoing its own experience during independence a few months earlier.
- India **recognised Israel in 1950** but it is also the **first non-Arab country to recognise Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO)** as the sole representative of the Palestinians. India is also one of the first countries to **recognise the statehood of Palestine in 1988**.
- In **2014**, India favored the **United Nations Human Rights Council's** (UNHRC) resolution to probe Israel's human rights violations in Gaza. Despite supporting the probe, **India abstained from voting against Israel** in UNHRC in **2015**.
- As a part of **Link West Policy**, India has **de-hyphenated its relationship with Israel and Palestine in 2018** to treat both the countries mutually independent and exclusive.
- In **June 2019**, India **voted in favor of a decision introduced by Israel** in the **UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)** that objected to granting consultative status to a Palestinian non-governmental organization.

Source: IE