

Trump's Middle East Peace Plan Has the Potential to Enrage the Gulf States

Persian Gulf countries have cautiously reacted to Trump's "deal of the century," which is hardly a departure from their usual approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and will likely become more hostile toward the plan should Jerusalem launch unilateral moves, including annexation.

by [Yoel Guzansky](#) [Ari Heistein](#) / March 1, 2020

Following President Donald Trump's presentation of his peace plan on January 28, 2020, many Gulf State officials found themselves speaking out of both sides of their mouths and engaging in mental gymnastics. They have said that they support Trump's efforts to promote peace between Israelis and Palestinians but they do not appear to endorse the fruits of those labors, which have culminated in a peace plan. While the positions of the Gulf States toward the U.S. peace initiative are not uniform or coordinated, they all reflect efforts to strike a balance between maintaining a good relationship with Washington in order to cope with regional threats while not embracing Washington's pro-Israel positions, which could expose them to domestic and regional charges of undermining the Palestinian cause.

The Saudi case is perhaps the most interesting among them due to the ostensibly strong interpersonal and bilateral relations that the White House and Riyadh share. These relations have failed to yield a full-throated official endorsement of the U.S. plan. Saudi officials flirted with support for the proposal (after refraining from attending its release) by issuing statements of appreciation for U.S. efforts and encouraging a return to bilateral negotiations. More recently, Saudi foreign minister Adel al-Jubeir noted in vaguely affirmative terms that, "There are positive elements in Trump's peace plan. These elements may establish the basis for negotiation between the two sides." One might also infer from the official Saudi response, which mentioned the Arab Peace Initiative as one of several peace plans on the table rather than the single legitimate approach, that perhaps Saudi Arabia has adopted a more pragmatic and flexible approach to resolving the conflict.

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