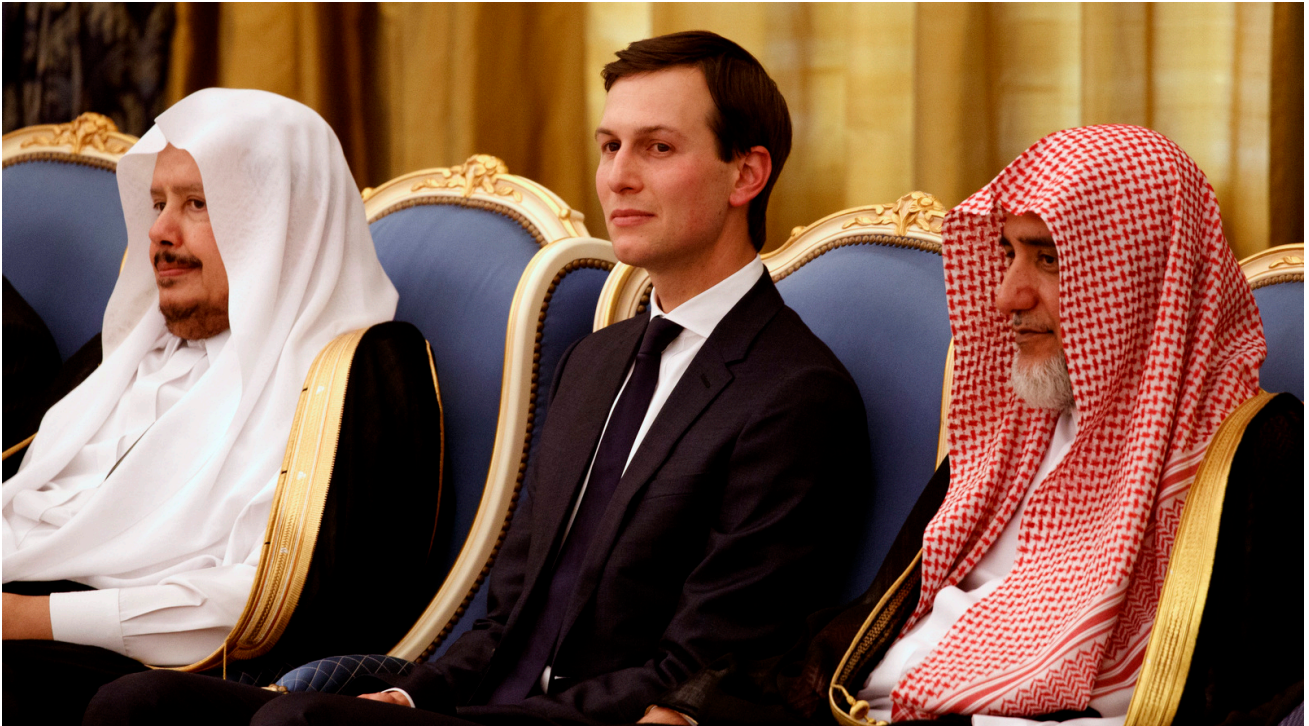


Will President Trump extinguish the two-state delusion?

by Matthew Hausman



During his first two years in office, President Trump has worked to repair a relationship with Israel that was severely damaged by Barack Obama and to make respect for the Jewish State an essential component of US Mideast policy. He demonstrated this commitment by moving the American embassy to Jerusalem, taking the lead in the fight against global antisemitism, and recognizing Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights. These actions illustrate a shift in US policy back towards Israel, America's strongest ally in the region, and away from the radical regimes that were enabled by the previous administration. Perhaps most significantly, Mr. Trump appears to have changed the approach to Mideast peace by rejecting the theory of linkage and eschewing the much vaunted two-state solution.

Though Trump has yet to disclose the terms of his Arab-Israeli peace initiative – and despite reservations about what it may contain – his demonstrated regard for Israel suggests the faulty assumptions legitimized by the Oslo Accords no longer apply. Unlike Presidents Obama, Bush, and Clinton, Mr. Trump seems not to expect Israel to continue making concessions despite Palestinian rejectionism or to relinquish all territory liberated from Jordan and Syria in 1967. Moreover, he recognizes that antisemitic rejectionism is the obstacle to peace – not Jewish settlements or an “occupation” that exists only in the minds of Israel’s detractors. Leaks regarding his “deal of the century” suggest his administration does not regard a two-state solution as the resolutorial goal. Such conjecture is consistent with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo’s comment during the Israeli elections that Bibi Netanyahu’s pledge to extend Israeli sovereignty in Judea and Samaria would not undermine Mr. Trump’s initiative.

The improvement in American-Israeli relations has not stopped progressives from putting the onus for compromise on Israel or imploring the President to restrain Israeli sovereignty across the Green Line. Indeed, the signatories to a letter asking him to prevent annexation in Judea and Samaria included, the Central Conference of American [Reform] Rabbis and Union for Reform Judaism, the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism and its Rabbinical Assembly, and the ADL, among other nontraditional and/or progressive organizations. It seems ironic that some are attempting to solicit him in this way after years of constant criticism. Liberals and Democrats have chastised his policies and blamed him for rising antisemitism, though Jew-hatred appears far more prevalent among the politically-progressive and identity communities with whom they typically find common cause than among Republicans or conservatives.

Past US presidents, the European Union, and United Nations have all advocated two-state scenarios with preordained

borders and a divided Jerusalem. However, they never contemplated that Israel would reject their preconceived assumptions that she would willingly pull back to indefensible borders or agree to an Arab “right of return.”

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