

Part B: Ramifications of Annexation Security–Military Ramifications

Security cooperation with the PA is vital for Israel's security. Annexation steps leading to the termination of security coordination and hence, to the military seizure of the West Bank, will force the IDF to conduct extensive military operations and policing tasks in the area. The scale of forces needed for this purpose will impair preparedness for war on other fronts and will require the establishment of security and civilian infrastructures on a large scale.

Since the Oslo Accords, the IDF's and Shin Bet's operational approach in the West Bank has assigned significant weight to cooperation with the PA security agencies. This cooperation was created under the Accords and is the main component of the agreements that is still strictly observed by both sides. The cooperation includes the exchange of intelligence and relatively close operational coordination in counter-terrorism activities. It has been credited with saving countless Israeli lives.

Any step toward annexation by legislation, however limited, will significantly impair security cooperation with the PA for several reasons. First, halting security cooperation is one of the few means the Palestinians have to respond to hostile moves by Israel. **In the past, the Palestinian leadership reduced the level of security cooperation in response to far less significant events than legislated annexation. Consequently, responding to annexation by going further, even to the point of terminating the cooperation, cannot be ruled out.** Second, annexation will erode the motivation of Palestinian security personnel to cooperate with Israel, so that even if cooperation formally continues, in practice it will no longer be as effective. Third, Israel's actions will demonstrate its determination to prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state, thereby positioning the Palestinian security agencies as collaborators with the occupation, rather than as the defenders of Palestinian national interests. In these conditions, peer and public pressure to end security cooperation is liable to lead to threats, demonstrations, and even physical attacks against members of the security agencies.

Annexing a significant part of Area C is liable to lead to a violent uprising characterized by extensive terror activity. The Palestinian security forces and the *Tanzim* may join the armed struggle. Hamas will certainly be there.

Annexation will raise the level of motivation among Palestinians to use violence against Israel. The organizations that advocate continuous terror actions against Israel, particularly Hamas, will enjoy greater legitimacy and freedom of action; recruitment to these organizations will rise as will the number of volunteers to partake in terror actions. This will apply both to Palestinians inside the annexed areas and elsewhere. Accordingly, it will be necessary to prepare for a rise in attempted terror attacks from all parts of the West Bank as well as East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. In addition, **an increase can be expected in less violent popular resistance** in the form of demonstrations, stone throwing, and so forth.

One of the unknowns in this situation is the extent to which the well-trained and armed Palestinian security forces and the *Tanzim* will be involved. The greater the shock the annexation causes to the Palestinian public, the greater the probability that they will join the armed struggle. Just as it was impossible to predict the character and timing of the First Intifada, and as the Second Intifada had a different and more violent character than the first, so too the nature and timing of future uprisings cannot be predicted. One thing is certain: if the Palestinian security forces and *Tanzim* join the uprising, it will be more violent than both its predecessors.

The IDF will be forced to double its presence in Judea and Samaria. IDF training will be cut dramatically, and preparedness for confrontation on the Northern, Eastern, and Southern fronts will be severely impaired.

In an annexation scenario, the IDF will have no alternative but to reinforce its presence in Judea and Samaria significantly, perhaps even doubling it, in order to compensate for the termination of security cooperation with the Palestinian security agencies, including in the intelligence field, and in order to confront the entire spectrum of heightened threats detailed above.

IDF training programs will be cut dramatically, and its preparedness for confrontation on the Northern (Syria and Lebanon), Eastern, and Southern (Gaza) fronts will be severely impaired. The expected rise in violence and the escalation on the ground will require the IDF to scale up its activities and to create physical separation between the two populations, including by means of segregated roads, checkpoints, and otherwise, similar to its modus operandi during the Second Intifada. It will also be necessary to move Border Police companies (part of the Israel Police) from inside the Green Line in order to reinforce police work in the Jerusalem District. This will impair the level of security along the Security Fence and inside Israel.

The collapse of the PA and the absence of an alternative government authority will force Israel to seize control of Areas A and B and to impose upon them a Military Administration regime.

In our assessment, it will not be possible to implement a *quiet seizure* of control. Israel will have to engage in combat in order to take the cities and villages in Areas A and B. This process may be quite protracted. The assumption is that the seizure of control by force will follow the pattern of Operation Defensive Shield (2002). Accordingly, regular and reserve forces on a scale of 3–5 divisions will be required, including the drafting of approx. 30,000 reserve soldiers, in order to complete the task and stabilize the situation. This process will take up to three months, including some 45 days of combat, with all the security, diplomatic, and economic ramifications that this would entail.

The annexation of significant areas will make it clear to the Palestinian public and leadership that the two-state solution is no longer viable. With this, the primary justification for the continued functioning of the PA will be gone. This will fatally damage whatever is left of the PA's legitimacy, accelerate its weakening, and in all probability lead to its collapse – whether through a decision by the Palestinian leadership or as a result of a popular uprising against it.

In the absence of a central government authority in the form of the PA, the burden and responsibility of running all affairs of the 2.3 million Palestinians (in Areas A and B) will fall on Israel, specifically on its Civil Administration. We expect that following several months dominated by resistance and adaptation, some government units will resume functioning despite the PA collapse.

This scenario will require a significant change in the current Civil Administration's organization and its substantial reinforcement, including the establishment of Military Administration functions, infrastructures, and facilities. In addition, the Shin Bet, the Israel Police, the military justice system, and the Israel Prison Service will also require enhancement, the scope and duration of which will depend on the security situation and will be liable to continue over the years. We anticipate that the transitional period, pending stabilization on the ground, may take several months. During this period, the Civil Administration will be reinforced by Military Administration units, and recruiting permanent officers and personnel for the government ministries will begin, along with the acquisition of equipment and the establishment of various enforcement bodies. The scope of this enhancement will be a function of the extent to which public order is restored.

With time, government intervention in the form of a Military Administration will be needed to ensure law and order and a reasonable routine for the 2.3 million Palestinians.

This process will comprise two stages. The first will include securing control over vital facilities, reviving the functioning of local systems according to an order of priority based on their importance in meeting humanitarian needs, providing humanitarian support with the cooperation of international organizations (though it is doubtful that they will cooperate), and activating vital infrastructure systems. The second stage will include recruiting local personnel, developing employment and economic sources, running the education system; maintaining and rehabilitating infrastructure systems, reviving the management of the Population Registry, and ensuring control and management of land and assets. As a rule, public services will be provided by local personnel whenever possible.

It can be assumed that the Palestinian civilian police will cease functioning, whether because of the collapse of the Palestinian system that operates the force or due to concern that its personnel would be regarded by the Palestinian public as collaborators with the occupation.

It should be noted that it is unreasonable to expect the Israel Police, which will be forced to confront various new challenges throughout Israel, to be able to allocate forces for deployment in law and order functions in Areas A and B. Once the security system in these areas stabilizes, the Military Administration will seek to recruit local police personnel to this end. It is uncertain how many, if any, will agree.

A violent uprising will seep into Jerusalem, the Arab sector inside Israel, and possibly the rest of the country, siphoning off all the capabilities of the Israel Police and its Border Police units.

As the situation stabilizes, it is reasonable to expect that the Judea and Samaria Division's and the Regional Brigades' organizational frameworks will prove adequate to the new reality. However, it will be necessary to deploy a greater number of combat formations across the West Bank. It is difficult to estimate the scale of the required reinforcement, which will depend on the scope of the threats, but it could be as high as dozens of companies, in addition to the force needed to maintain the new border fence. This will have ramifications for the defense budget, the IDF's preparedness to meet overall security challenges, the scope of IDF training, and the degree of combat readiness of the standing army and reserves.

Over time, the increased friction between the Israeli and Palestinian populations will exacerbate security threats and impede preventative and defensive actions. If the Palestinian population in the annexed area enjoys the status of permanent residents and thus cannot be separated from the Israeli population, this will enable hostile segments of the population to exploit their unfettered interface with the Israeli population, including for the purpose of violence and terror.

The annexation will force the IDF to relax passage arrangements across the current Security Fence between the annexed territories and Israel. Until a new obstacle (if at all [see below]) is built to separate those annexed (and enjoying free movement as permanent residents) from the 2.3 million inhabitants of Areas A and B, the latter will enjoy unauthorized yet equally easy entry into Israel, with a potentially dramatic increase in security threats.

Absent a new border fence around the annexed area, millions of Palestinians from within the Military Administration zone will enjoy unfettered access to the heart of Israel.

A decision to create a physical barrier between the annexed area and the remainder of the West Bank will require the relocation of the existing Security Fence to a new line, over twice as long (1,787 km compared to approximately 766 km planned of the Security Fence).

It will also require the introduction of numerous routine and functional arrangements, incurring enormous costs in budget and personnel.

The construction cost is estimated at \$7.6 billion, while maintenance will cost approximately \$1.1 billion a year and will require some 90 companies (doubling present deployment), on top of additional personnel that will be required (see next section). Israel will not be able to meet these personnel and budget costs without substantially damaging other spheres of life. Accordingly, it is unlikely that a new border fence will be built. This, in turn, will have serious ramifications for preventing unauthorized Palestinians from entering Israel.

Annexing Area C will affect Palestinians living in Areas A and B.

Area C, which encircles the 169 isolated *islands* of Areas A and B, includes land, infrastructure, and other property belonging to Palestinians who live in Areas A and B. Family ties, commercial links, and other needs also require passage through Area C, since there is no way to get from one point to another within Areas A and B without crossing Area C [see Map 1]. Denying Palestinian rights in the area and restricting their movement will disrupt the basic fabric of life, raise frustration and anger – all **fueling agitation for violence** and provoking **substantive claims of human rights violations**.

The annexation of Area C will require numerous routine and functional arrangements. Movement by Palestinians from one city or village to another, that are separated by Area C – whether for employment, commerce, or family ties – will require special permits, since it constitutes passage through sovereign Israeli territory. Palestinian farmers in need to work land in parts of Area C that are annexed to Israel will also require special permits. Hundreds of crossings (including agricultural gates) will be needed, requiring permanent staffing and control. **Staffing these crossings and gates will require over 2,000 operators, along with hundreds of security personnel.**

As noted, **if Israel refrains from building a fence around the new border, the result will be freedom of movement for all Palestinians from across the West Bank into the heart of Israel, without inspection and control – a situation that constitutes an unacceptable security risk.**

Israel's security cooperation with neighboring countries will be jeopardized and is liable to reach crisis points, including destabilizing the regime in Jordan.

Security cooperation with Egypt and Jordan has reached an unprecedented level. It is based on common interests in fighting terror, maintaining stability, and confronting Iran. Ensuring security and stability with the PA, while maintaining the feasibility of the two-state solution, makes it easier for Egypt and Jordan to maintain this security cooperation, despite public hostility toward Israel in both countries.

Any annexation step will spark a diplomatic crisis with both countries, severely impairing this ability to sustain security cooperation. The move might destabilize Jordan due to the reaction among its Palestinian population and may also raise the level of threat faced by Israel from Islamic and Palestinian elements in Jordan.

An extreme scenario in which the annexation destabilizes the Hashemite regime presents a major security threat for Israel. In the distant past (Black September, 1970), Israel took forceful action to protect the regime in Jordan, and all Israeli governments since have been careful to strengthen the regime, based on the realization that **Israel's eastern security border is effectively the Kingdom's eastern border with Iraq.**

All US administrations have also followed this approach. US forces are stationed in the east of Jordan, providing deterrence both against Iran and against terror organizations such as the Islamic State.

Civil war?

In the most extreme scenario, in which Israel ends up annexing the West Bank and granting *permanent residency* status to its 2.6 million Palestinians (in addition to over 300,000 East Jerusalemites), **Israel will face a domestic security problem on a scale never previously experienced.**

Historical precedents around the world leave little room for optimism concerning cases when one people is forced to accept the dominance of another, to acquiesce to the oppression of its national aspirations, and to show loyalty to the state that imposed it.

This reality is as acute in the Israeli-Palestinian context. The two populations have experienced a bloody conflict lasting over a century. **The Jewish population faces the possibility of losing its majority in a binational state,** leading to the loss of control over government institutions.

In these conditions, **the likelihood that the Jewish public, or the government institutions under its control, will actually grant equal rights to Israel's new citizens – residents of the annexed territory – however egalitarian the legislation on this matter, is extremely low.**

Thus, the need to enforce Israeli sovereignty throughout the area between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, and to impose Israeli law and order on millions of embittered and even hostile Palestinians, is likely to prove too demanding. In a reality in which **the populations and their communities are intertwined to an extent that makes security separation impossible,** it will create security friction and is bound to ignite [see Map 3]. **This reality is liable to confront the Israeli defense establishment (and the Jewish population as a whole) with the challenge of a civil war.** As neither side is likely to abandon its identity or its national aspirations, such a war could last for years, with varying degrees of intensity. It would cost the lives of thousands of people on both sides, and – absent a powerful international intervention that imposes an alternative solution – **would end only when the two sides are resigned to the need for – and accept the price associated with – separation.**

Some of Israel's strategic allies are liable to downgrade security ties with Israel.

As mentioned, the international community can be expected to object forcefully to acts of annexation. **The annexation will seriously affect Israel's relations with key countries, including security cooperation.** An example of this is Germany, which is Israel's sole source for maritime military platforms, including **submarines** of strategic importance. Germany even contributes to the cost of these platforms. The relationship between Chancellor Angela Merkel, a prominent supporter of Israel, and the Netanyahu government is already poor, due to a loss of confidence in Netanyahu's willingness to move toward a two-state solution. An annexation step during Merkel's tenure, and even more so in its wake, is liable to lead to a change in Germany's position and to have a grave impact on these Israeli security capabilities.

The Trump administration is an exception in the sense that it is difficult to predict its reaction to a limited annexation. However, **future administrations are liable to exhibit hostile reactions to annexation, undermining Israel's most important security relations.**

Diplomatic Ramifications

Annexationists are trapped in a dangerous misconception about a historic opportunity. They underestimate the international and regional reaction to an act of legislated annexation.

External factors accelerating the annexation plans include the noted exceptional support of the Trump administration for Israeli government policies, as well as its overall foreign policy orientation. Current US policy on the Middle East features sweeping declarations without the strategy to implement them. Regarding the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, too, Trump's campaign slogan of a “Deal of the Century” still drives policy. However, the transfer of the US Embassy to Jerusalem, the cut in aid for the PA and UNRWA, the closure of the PLO Mission in Washington, DC, and attempts to shape a negotiation course that is clearly biased in Israel's favor, have combined to entrench the diplomatic freeze. This has weakened the PA and the Oslo–derived infrastructure and has created room for radical initiatives such as a Hamas–controlled Palestinian mini state in Gaza or the annexation by Israel of parts of the West Bank.

The shockwaves of the Arab Spring that have divided the Arab world are also perceived as providing a tailwind for the annexation initiatives. Arab rulers are concerned mainly with bolstering domestic control and preventing further waves of revolution and are less interested in the Palestinian issue. Moreover, the challenge presented by destabilizing elements such as Iran and the Islamic State has created a confluence of interests and a desire to forge security cooperation between Israel and leading Arab countries. This interest, which is perceived as existential, has accelerated the tendency to sideline the Palestinian issue. At the grassroots level, too, under the influence of social networks, the goals of improving living conditions and defending rights under authoritarian regimes is a higher priority than protecting Palestinians' rights. **As a result, the Israeli–Palestinian conflict has become a much less important issue for the leadership and much of the public in the relevant Arab countries.**

This combination of circumstances invites annexationists to argue that Israel faces substantially fewer regional constraints than ever before.

In the broader international arena, too, various trends ostensibly favor the annexationists. The shifting of the global economic center of gravity to China and other Asian markets has opened up opportunities for Israel, enabling it to diversify its export markets and attract investments from countries for whom the Israeli–Palestinian conflict is a secondary consideration. Europe is less inclined to engage meaningfully with the Palestinian issue as it struggles with waves of immigration, economic crises in some EU countries, the need to protect the integrity of the EU following Brexit, and the challenge posed by the rise of illiberal regimes in Hungary and Poland as well as by Russian strategic subversion. As if all these were not enough, Israeli foreign policy success in securing the support of several EU members (Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic) has prevented consensus on decisions that might be challenging for Israel and has paralyzed the EU structure, which along with several of its key members (e.g. Germany, the UK, and France) longs to be involved in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

Israeli annexationists identify these trends and (wrongly) conclude that even though Europe is hostile to Israeli annexation, its ability to prevent it or to impose meaningful sanctions is and shall remain weak.

When viewing the UN and other international organizations, here, too, annexationists can ostensibly draw encouragement from current trends. The Trump administration regards the UN as a wasteful, ineffective, and biased body, and has dramatically cut its contribution to its institutions. This approach, combined with the overtly pro–Israeli approach of the US ambassador to the UN, has largely paralyzed the Security Council and other UN institutions. Abu Mazen's consistent attempts to internationalize the conflict by securing UN recognition of Palestine have secured only symbolic gains. **Warnings that Israel would face a diplomatic tsunami have proved exaggerated, encouraging the annexationists, who simplistically assume that anything that has not happened will not happen.**

The annexationists prove unable to distinguish between the current situation, in which players respond to creeping annexation, and the situation that would emerge once any of the annexation plans are legislated.