



Forensic intelligence for those who act.

READER EDITION

October 23, 2025

MITZPE DOSSIER

Annexation on the Table

◇ URIEL ZEHA VI

CLASSIFICATION

Reader Edition

DISTRIBUTION

Open · Free to share with attribution

IN THIS EDITION

Field Dossier: Annexation on the Table	3
Sovereignty and Strategy: Israel's Annexation Dilemma	3
What Sovereignty Would Do on the Ground	3
Inside Israel: Who Wants Annexation, and Who Doesn't	5
Washington's Red Line: "Not Something We'd Support"	6
Arab States and the Specter of a Shattered Normalization	8
How We Got Here: From 1967 to 2025	10
The Islamist Factor: Hawks Waiting in the Wings	12
Scenarios Ahead: Four Paths and Their Perils	15
The Stakes and the Choices	17

Field Dossier: Annexation on the Table

Sovereignty and Strategy: Israel's Annexation Dilemma

Secretary of State Marco Rubio warned that advancing bills to apply Israeli law in Judea and Samaria “might be... threatening to the peace deal” emerging after Gaza conflict. Vice President JD Vance called the maneuver a “very stupid” political stunt. Days earlier, Trump told TIME magazine that annexation would cause Israel to “lose all support” from the United States.

Israeli lawmakers defied Prime Minister Netanyahu by advancing two sovereignty bills on preliminary readings. One comprehensive proposal to extend Israeli sovereignty to all Jewish communities narrowly failed after a Likud veteran broke ranks. A narrower bill to annex Ma'ale Adumim passed with broader support. Likud boycotted the votes, dismissing them as deliberate provocation aimed at damaging ties with Washington, then removed rebel MK Yuli Edelstein from the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee.

Israel confronts a difficult choice between Zionist conviction and political reality.

What Sovereignty Would Do on the Ground

Israeli annexation would replace the current military governance patchwork with full civilian rule. For over fifty years, the territory's status has remained suspended between two realities. Israel captured it from Jordan in 1967 and still governs it, but never formally incorporated it into the state.

Approximately 140 Jewish towns and villages currently operate under Israeli law through enclave arrangements, while neighboring Arab communities exist under Palestinian Authority control and Israeli military jurisdiction. This creates legal complexity: military governors, IDF Civil Administration, Ottoman land codes, British Mandate rules, Jordanian statutes, and Israeli regulations operate simultaneously.

Advocates of sovereignty propose clearing this confusion and establishing normal governance—courts, ministries, taxation, and infrastructure—under a unified framework. The precedent cited is eastern Jerusalem or the Golan Heights, where the Knesset in 1981 extended “the laws, jurisdiction and administration” without using the word annexation.

Practically speaking, sovereignty in Judea and Samaria would eliminate the IDF's civil authority and transfer its functions to Israeli ministries, police, courts, and regulators. Civil institutions would assume zoning, taxation, and utilities management. The divided systems separating Israeli and Palestinian residents would consolidate into a single system.

Proponents argue this terminates the legal gray zone subjecting Israelis to military decrees while neighbors remain under different frameworks. Critics contend it would entrench two classes of residents within one expanded state.

Jerusalem provides the clearest precedent. Following the Six-Day War, Israel extended its law eastward—Old City, Mount of Olives, and numerous Arab neighborhoods—integrating them into the capital. Arabs in these areas were not granted citizenship but rather “permanent resident” status, conferring individual rights without national ones. They may reside, work, and vote municipally, but not in Knesset elections. They must also demonstrate that Jerusalem remains their “center of life,” risking residency loss otherwise.

Whether identical frameworks would apply to Arabs in annexed Judea and Samaria represents the inflammatory question. Most Israelis reject extending full citizenship to hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in Area C, the region most likely to be annexed initially. Some propose permanent residency following Jerusalem’s model; others suggest autonomous Arab enclaves remaining under Palestinian Authority control.

Both concepts present substantial practical and ethical complications. Israel’s own eastern Jerusalem experience demonstrates how unstable “resident, not citizen” arrangements become.

No Israeli official has articulated a clear mechanism for absorbing significant Arab populations while preserving both the state’s Jewish majority and its democratic character.

The current sovereignty initiative bypasses this issue entirely, referencing applying Israeli law to Jewish communities while omitting any reference to neighboring Arab villages. This silence is purposeful. Proclaiming sovereignty is considerably simpler than administering it.

The Oslo framework remains essential to this discourse. Under Oslo II in 1995, Judea and Samaria were partitioned into Areas A, B, and C as a temporary arrangement.

- **Area A:** roughly 18 percent of land, under complete Palestinian Authority control, including major Arab cities like Ramallah and Nablus
- **Area B:** about 22 percent, with shared Israeli security and Palestinian civil authority
- **Area C:** over 60 percent, containing nearly every Jewish settlement and remaining under complete Israeli control

Designed to last five years, this framework persists decades later.

Area C anchors the sovereignty debate. Approximately half a million Israeli Jews inhabit this region, alongside roughly three hundred thousand Arabs dispersed among villages and encampments.

Any currently realistic annexation effort would concentrate on Jewish population centers while avoiding Arab-majority Areas A and B. The legislation currently before the Knesset specifically references “areas of settlement in Judea and Samaria,” clearly signaling Area C.

The objective targets bringing populated settlement blocs fully under Israeli law while incorporating as few Arabs as possible.

Even incremental approaches, beginning with Ma'ale Adumim, would commence in Area C, which Israel already administers routinely.

This does not entail dispatching Israeli police into Arab cities like Jenin or Nablus tomorrow.

The mainstream Israeli proposal envisions extending sovereignty to territory Israel already controls, not occupying additional ground. Whether foreign governments—or Palestinians themselves—acknowledge that distinction remains uncertain.

Inside Israel: Who Wants Annexation, and Who Doesn't

The most vociferous annexation advocacy originates from Israel's right, though even within that faction the chorus lacks harmony. The existing government leans further rightward than predecessors and strongly backs settlement, but Netanyahu maintains distance from the recent sovereignty initiative.

The presently debated bills originated with the opposition. Avi Maoz of Noam, a religious hardliner previously aligned with the coalition, authored the comprehensive sovereignty bill. Avigdor Liberman of Yisrael Beytenu, a secular nationalist antagonistic toward Maoz's faction, crafted the narrower annexation bill. Their alliance represents situational alignment rather than ideological convergence. Both identified an opportunity to pressurize the government and generate attention.

They rapidly recruited cabinet allies. Itamar Ben Gvir of Otzma Yehudit and Bezalel Smotrich of Religious Zionism have championed annexation for years. Smotrich stated in September that Israel should annex "82 percent of the West Bank," encompassing nearly all of Area C. When voting occurred, Ben Gvir's faction characterized it as a "historic day" and informed Likud colleagues that worldwide disapproval could wait; "what is right for Israel is sovereignty now." For these factions, sovereignty would complete the Zionist enterprise. It would establish that Jewish history and law belong in Judea and Samaria, furnish security depth against future conflicts, and terminate what they characterize as the dishonesty of governing land indefinitely without formally claiming it. Maoz articulated this perspective on the Knesset floor: "The Holy One, blessed be He, gave the people of Israel the Land of Israel." Settlement, he maintained, constitutes redemption following two millennia of diaspora. Applying sovereignty, by his reasoning, rectifies a historical injustice belatedly.

That consensus dissolves beyond that point. Likud formally endorses eventual sovereignty, but not these specific bills. Netanyahu's faction exited the chamber rather than vote against and alienate their constituency. Likud leadership branded the votes as "opposition trolling... aimed at damaging our relations with the United States."

Justice Minister Yariv Levin and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant have expressed sympathy for the concept but maintain official positions.

Navigating a precarious equilibrium between competing political realities—domestic and international—Netanyahu cautions that annexation currently,

while Israel remains militarily engaged and sustains a fragile Gaza ceasefire, would provoke a Washington confrontation that Jerusalem cannot manage—which appears substantiated by statements from American officials.

Education Minister Yoav Kisch articulated this before voting: “I’m a great believer in applying sovereignty,” he informed the assembly, “but the government will lead toward sovereignty together with our American partners.” This translates to: refrain from provoking the White House.

Even the ultra-Orthodox caucuses divided. One United Torah Judaism faction voted affirmatively, another abstained, citing concerns that such discourse “puts us in conflict with the United States.”

Israel’s right embraces the annexation concept. Numerous leaders simply regard the present moment as unsuitable for executing that commitment.

The center and left pursued their own strategic calculations.

Yair Lapid and Benny Gantz both oppose unilateral annexation, characterizing it as a diplomatic catastrophe that would eliminate prospects for any future separation. Yet multiple lawmakers from their parties supported Liberman’s Ma’ale Adumim bill, not to advance it but to humiliate Netanyahu. They recognized his opposition to the timing. Their votes converted the chamber into theater: the far-right celebrated, Likud protested, and the premier occupied a wedge between his ideological affiliates and his American benefactors. Lapid’s group subsequently clarified they harbored no intentions of enabling annexation. The objective was mischief, not legislation.

Nevertheless, the episode illuminated a fundamental reality. Israel lacks consensus on annexation. Many believing Judea and Samaria constitute the Jewish people’s ancestral territory question the prudence of acting presently.

A recurring expression—“what happens the morning after?”—carries substantive weight rather than mere rhetoric. Who finances novel civil services? Who secures roads traversed by Israelis and Arabs? What occurs with thousands of Arabs inhabiting Area C? Proponents maintain the expenditures justify the investment. Others harbor skepticism.

Presently, the nation inhabits the tension between conviction in its historical entitlement and apprehension regarding implementing it immediately.

Washington’s Red Line: “Not Something We’d Support”

The sovereignty bills dividing Israel generated unified international opposition.

Washington’s reaction proved swift, unmistakable, and forceful. It emerged from a government Israelis anticipated would never voice objection. This is not an Obama or Biden administration offering criticism. It is Trump’s. The same administration that relocated the embassy to Jerusalem, acknowledged Israeli control of the Golan, and characterized the Jewish state as an unqualified ally. Yet on annexation, the demarcation could not be sharper.

“It won’t happen,” President Trump recently told Time magazine. “I’m not allowing Israel to annex the West Bank. I gave my word to the Arab countries. Israel would lose all of its support from the United States if that happened.” From the most pro-Israel American president in recent history, that pronouncement reverberated powerfully. It reflected less ethical indignation than strategic calculation. Trump has wagered his legacy on Gaza stabilization and concluding an expansive normalization arrangement with Saudi Arabia. Annexation discussion jeopardizes both.

Washington operates to secure Israel’s battlefield achievements and transform them into regional stability—and aspires to manufacture and strengthen a Trump peacekeeping legacy. Jerusalem’s abrupt annexation consideration appeared sabotaging. American representatives expressed this directly.

Trump’s firmness regarding this matter stems from nothing resembling Palestinian sympathy or reverence for international law. He dismisses UN resolutions dismissively. His preoccupation is transactional.

Following Hamas’s assault on Israel and the ceasefire Trump negotiated—what he characterizes as the “Comprehensive Plan to End the Conflict in Gaza”—Trump conceptualizes himself as the architect of stability.

“It could have gone on for years,” he conveyed to Time. The president now anticipates Israel adhering to his roadmap for subsequent phases: diplomacy, reconstruction, and Arab engagement.

Unilateral annexation would constitute, in Trump’s perspective, an act of disloyalty. That explains the visceral rhetoric. Washington’s financial support, weaponry, and diplomatic assistance operate under an unspoken condition: avoid sabotaging the arrangement. Vance clarified it. “The West Bank is not going to be annexed by Israel. That will continue to be our policy,” he declared.

That sentence permits no interpretation ambiguity.

Should Netanyahu transgress this boundary, repercussions could emerge promptly—deferred armaments deliveries, diminished financial packages, and uncommon congressional objection.

Trump has previously entertained privately curtailing fighter jet shipments if Jerusalem acts independently. Israelis registered this—particularly considering Trump’s permitting Qatar, a principal Hamas financier, to construct a facility at a US Air Force base in Idaho for jet instruction (and acquisitions).

For Israel to encounter such warnings from Trump, of all leaders, feels extraordinary.

Throughout his initial term, Israel’s right regarded him as a political marvel. He acknowledged Jerusalem as the capital, declared the Golan Israeli, decreased Palestinian Authority resources, and introduced a peace proposal explicitly facilitating Israeli sovereignty over 30 percent of Judea and Samaria.

In July 2020, Netanyahu readied implementation of that commitment, until Abu Dhabi's proposition offered superior compensation. Annexation was suspended in exchange for UAE and Bahrain diplomatic relations.

Five years subsequent, circumstances have shifted dramatically. Trump's second term centers on diplomacy, not cartography. He assured Gulf nations that Israel would exercise restraint. Those pledges currently characterize American credibility within the Arab sphere.

The paradox merits recognition. The identical Israeli right previously viewing Trump as its liberator now experiences restraint from him. The most pro-Israel president in contemporary history now cautions Jerusalem "no."

He acts without hostility but because his grand bargain framework excludes fresh demarcations. The instruction for Israel's hardliners carries painful directness. Alliance with Washington, even under Trump, possesses boundaries. Annexation, minimally presently, transcends them.

Arab States and the Specter of a Shattered Normalization

The Arab world, encompassing states that established peaceful relations with Israel, expresses fury.

Annexation constitutes a threshold touching profound pan-Arab and Islamic sensibilities concerning Palestine.

The United Arab Emirates, previously spearheading the Abraham Accords, has raised its voice most forcefully. In 2020 the UAE negotiated: normalization only accompanied by Netanyahu's annexation moratorium in Judea and Samaria. That suspension enabled Abu Dhabi to communicate to its population that it had blocked Israel from "seizing Palestinian territory" in return for diplomacy. Currently, with sovereignty resurfacing in Israeli discourse, Emirati representatives indicate their assurances have been violated. One prominent official cautioned that extending Israeli law to the territories represents a "red line" terminating regional cooperation. The terminology carried literal weight rather than figurative.

Confidential discussions within Abu Dhabi intimated that the UAE might restrict financial operations or lower diplomatic standing should Jerusalem proceed. Emirati media outlets previously publishing favorable Israeli coverage now distribute critical settlement editorials. The implication is plain: normalization carried stipulations, and annexation contradicts them.

Saudi Arabia communicated its own admonition. The kingdom's Foreign Ministry censured the Knesset's sovereignty proposals as efforts to legitimize "colonial settlement" and indicated such measures would end peace prospects. Riyadh reaffirmed dedication to Palestinian statehood along 1967 demarcations with East Jerusalem as its capital—a framework fundamentally incompatible with Israel extending sovereignty across those identical territories. Saudi representatives privately informed Washington that should Netanyahu fail managing his right coalition, normalization negotiations terminate. For Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who has circumspectly arranged his

population for Israeli relations, annexation would characterize him as an Arab cause traitor. He declines that vulnerability.

That exact dynamic transcends the Gulf region. Egypt and Jordan submitted official denunciations. King Abdullah allegedly contacted Netanyahu cautioning that Jordan's domestic balance—his nation's majority comprises Palestinians—relies on restraint in Judea and Samaria.

Bahrain and Morocco, more recent Abraham Accords signatories, similarly survey the situation tensely. Bahrain's authorities endured street disturbances in 2020 by emphasizing Israel's annexation suspension as their principled foundation. Should that guarantee evaporate, their domestic political space collapses similarly. Morocco, which reinstated Israeli relations following Washington's Western Sahara acknowledgment, has remained quieter yet sustained Palestinian rights statements.

Annexation would dismantle the fundamental rationale enabling the Abraham Accords' success. The UAE-Israel arrangement demonstrated that pragmatic Arab administrators could emphasize security and commercial advancement if the Palestinian question remained dormant. Annexation resurrects it. It furnishes hardliners vindication—that normalization consistently signified capitulation to Jewish territorial growth.

Emirati and Saudi representatives have attempted cultivating imagery of a contemporary Middle East directing focus forward, not retroactively to 1948. Unilateral Israeli initiative would revert them to that historical entanglement. The Emirati foreign minister even entreated the UN in September: "Do not return to the bleak days of conflict, do not ruin what we have built together." It constituted simultaneously caution and sorrow.

Should Israel disregard that message, repercussions would extend significantly beyond Palestinians. The Gaza arrangement, presently unstable, would crumble, Gulf commercial cooperation with Israel could stagnate, and Trump's cherished Saudi-Israeli understanding—the arrangement he characterizes as Nobel-worthy—would dissolve. Trump himself conveyed uncertainty whether Riyadh would finalize agreements should Israel annex. For someone measuring legacy through media moments, forfeiting that publicity opportunity proves unbearable. Consequently, uncommon Washington-Abu Dhabi-Riyadh unanimity crystallized around this query.

Outside the locale, disapproval intensifies. The European Union has pronounced annexation "illegal under international law" and declared it "will not be recognized." EU diplomatic chief Josep Borrell condemned even "applying sovereignty" terminology, characterizing it as movement toward "illegal annexation" demolishing peace viability.

European diplomats are revisiting contingency arrangements from 2020: financial consequences, ambassador withdrawals, possibly UN censure. Even Israel's amicable European companions would struggle impeding such measures. At the United Nations, criticisms would proliferate. This occurrence might not produce Washington intervention. Should Israel disregard explicit American guidance, its conventional diplomatic protection could deteriorate.

Culmination: isolation unparalleled in Israel's recent chronicle—though preceding climates have been weathered.

The worldwide judicial apparatus already treats annexation as sacrilege. Russia's Ukrainian territory seizure fortified that consensus. In present ethical frameworks, Israeli movement resembling that would incinerate international goodwill earned through a decade. Western diplomacy recites decolonization rhetoric; Israel would occupy that narrative unhesitatingly. Jerusalem can dismiss the contradiction, though cannot dismiss the consequences. Annexation would simultaneously inflame the Arab populace—it would threaten dismantling the delicate diplomatic architecture that Israel itself substantially constructed.

How We Got Here: From 1967 to 2025

The annexation momentum in Judea and Samaria did not materialize spontaneously. It has persisted in Israeli political discourse since June 1967, when the Six-Day War reshaped territorial boundaries and the Jewish population regained dominion over their historical territories. In that brief defensive engagement, Israel triumphed over Jordan, Egypt, and Syria and seized territories they had maintained since 1948—Judea and Samaria from Jordan, Gaza from Egypt, and the Golan Heights from Syria.

Conversation regarding these territories' disposition commenced promptly. Jerusalem represented the preliminary maneuver. During late 1967 Israel expanded municipal demarcations eastward, instituted Israeli legal code, and consolidated the capital, encompassing the Old City and the Western Wall.

Judea and Samaria's residual territory remained under Israeli military control. Whether it would persist, be exchanged, or be partitioned remained unresolved. The Arab League's reaction in Khartoum that September presented its renowned "three no's": no diplomatic engagement, no direct talks, no recognition. Israel interpreted the communication and remained.

Throughout the seventies a Jewish resettlement movement materialized. Dozens of neighborhoods appeared across Judea and Samaria, constructed by Israelis regarding return to those territories as ethically and historically mandatory.

Nevertheless, formal annexation remained off the legislative calendar. Even Prime Minister Menachem Begin, who championed the Likud shift in 1977, redirected concentration elsewhere. He concentrated on the Golan Heights, the defensible highland overlooking the northern region. In 1981 the Knesset ratified the Golan Heights Law, applying Israeli "law, jurisdiction and administration" without terminology of annexation. Washington objected—President Reagan momentarily suspended a partnership framework—and the UN branded the legislation "null and void." The legislation persisted. Israel has supervised the Golan since, and in 2019 the Trump administration acknowledged that circumstance.

Emboldened by that precedent, certain Begin-era government figures appealed to him to undertake comparable action in Judea and Samaria. A 1982 initiative to institute Israeli law there failed. The Golan encompassed limited

Arab inhabitants; Judea and Samaria housed multitudes. Begin, having just achieved Egyptian peace, declined further jeopardy. The subsequent course proved cautious: construct and incorporate, yet withhold sovereignty assertion.

The nineties presented the Oslo Accords. In 1993 Israel and the PLO negotiated an arrangement generating the Palestinian Authority and dividing territories into Areas A, B, and C. Area A experienced complete Palestinian governance, Area B operated under joint management, and Area C—representing 60 percent of geography—stayed under total Israeli dominion. The framework carried a five-year design expectation.

The aspiration for conclusive peace dissolved with the Second Intifada in 2000. When hostilities diminished, annexation discourse surfaced anew. Certain Israelis contended that, absent PLO capacity for peace delivery, Israel ought to establish its boundaries independently. The 2005 Gaza departure solidified that conviction. Once Hamas captured the Strip and transformed it into a missile launching infrastructure, populations comprehended that territorial surrender invites violence; holding jurisdiction preserves both stability and protection. Many commenced articulating that, absent territorial surrender, Israel loses security; maintaining authority retains both.

In 2012 administrators commissioned examination titled the Levy Report. It established that Judea and Samaria were “not occupied” under international legislation since Jordan’s preceding governance lacked legitimate standing, therefore Jewish settlement retained legitimacy. Although Israel never officially embraced the assessment, it reinforced proponents asserting sovereignty would be permissible, ethically justified, and postponed excessively.

Subsequent years witnessed Knesset participants proposing sovereignty initiatives practically yearly—emphasizing the Jordan Valley, Ma’ale Adumim, or the Etzion Bloc. Netanyahu, ever the tactical operator, postponed every single initiative. He communicated that appropriateness would materialize, merely not presently.

That juncture appeared materializing with Donald Trump. Trump introduced his Middle East peace approach, the inaugural American blueprint embracing Israeli sovereignty throughout portions of Judea and Samaria—up to 30 percent, encompassing all settlements. Netanyahu’s government demonstrated enthusiasm. Throughout several quarters he discussed initiating sovereignty within timeframes, diagrams were produced, and committees convened. Subsequently came Abu Dhabi’s proposition.

The United Arab Emirates presented complete normalization contingent on annexation suspension. Under significant American insistence, Netanyahu deferred the initiative and embraced the offer. The Abraham Accords were executed that August, fundamentally transforming Israel’s Arab nation partnerships.

Netanyahu assured allies that annexation remained postponed, not terminated. “There is no change in my plan to apply sovereignty in Judea and Samaria in coordination with the United States,” he communicated. They

accepted this. However, Trump experienced electoral defeat, and Joe Biden shelved the substance. For quadrennium, sovereignty discussion remained dormant.

By 2023 it reemerged. Subsequent to the October Hamas assault, Israel entered what possibly constitutes its most devastating armed engagement. Meanwhile, Judea and Samaria simmered but did not fully erupt. The Palestinian Authority maintained cooperation with Israel. However, within the governing arrangement, officials reopened the sovereignty inquiry. Should global institutions contemplate Palestinian statehood recognition, they contended, Israel should execute self-recognition ahead.

Subsequently the clamoring escalated. Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich demanded Israel annex 82 percent of the geography—nearly all of Area C—declaring that European governmental Palestinian acknowledgment served as the impetus. “If they can recognize a Palestinian state,” he proclaimed, “we can recognize our sovereignty over our homeland.” The Gulf states cautioned against this. The UAE and Bahrain transmitted directives that annexation would obliterate their developing friendships. Saudi Arabia expressed parallel concerns. Netanyahu appeared accepting those cautions. Throughout the summer, he sustained the concept dormant, momentarily.

Then the current week occurred. While Israel navigates a precarious cease-fire with Hamas and a complicated negotiation framework encompassing Americans, Qataris, Saudis, and Egyptians, a Knesset contingent compelled the matter. Their objective was apparent: pressure Netanyahu to select between his constituency and his international sponsors. He selected to abstain from voting. The legislation progressed preliminary phases nevertheless, facilitated by opposition participants aiming to undermine the premier. Likud punished its dissenters, the opposition ridiculed the tumult, and the far-right announced accomplishment. Nobody implied the votes would reshape approach. Three supplementary phases, a committee procedure, and a premier’s authorization persisted undone. Still, metaphor carries significance in Israel.

The Islamist Factor: Hawks Waiting in the Wings

Each reference to sovereignty in Judea and Samaria reverberates through the communication channels of Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah, and Tehran’s religious authorities. They self-identify as Jerusalem custodians, though their “struggle” has continuously centered on dominion—not emancipation.

Their objective involves a reality where Jewish individuals experience subjugation, not parity, or optimally, erasure. Regime leaders negotiating with Israel become transgressors inside their doctrinal system, beneficial merely to the following double-cross. In their teaching, fabrication advancing jihad represents righteousness, not transgression. The notion is *taqiyya*—deception

advancing the cause. Consequently, “diplomacy” with Islamists requires perpetual suspicion. Israel witnessed this again on October 7, when Hamas fractured an arrangement it had solemnly pledged. Accords with entities venerating deception demand caution, because for them, authenticity concludes where circumstance commences.

Whenever Israel discusses sovereignty, these entities celebrate. They interpret it as confirmation—their proof that peaceful engagement constitutes falsehood and exclusively brutality produces outcomes. Momentarily following the parliamentary ballot, Hamas broadcast that “resistance” must persist, encouraged an emergent uprising, and admonished that Arab leadership cooperating with Israel “is complicit in the theft of Palestinian land.”

It represents the identical rhetoric they employed in 2020, when annexation initially became discussed, the equivalent assurance that they would make Israel “regret this decision.” They recycle the performance perpetually. Their approach runs on violence, not dialogue. Should sovereignty advance, Hamas and Islamic Jihad will activate again—missile deployments from Gaza, assassinations across Judea and Samaria, revitalized assassination squads, teachings endorsing Jewish murder articulated liturgically. They will just seize the justification—not that they require justification; their publicly available messaging reveals the narrative stays consistent.

Hezbollah communicated that annexation embodies a “Zionist scheme” its “resistance axis” shall neutralize violently. Iran’s Supreme Leader assured that Tehran would “eliminate the evil threat” of Israeli annexation. Iran prospers through chaos. It requires Arab populaces inflamed to circumvent its collapsing finances and the brutality it executes domestically. Its representatives already instruct its Judea and Samaria subdivisions to organize a “day of rage.”

Annexation furnishes Iran and its delegated factions a scenario prepared: Israel desires “boundaries not harmony,” the Jewish nation constitutes thievery, and Palestinians possess a sacred obligation to retaliate.

The threat transcends paramilitary organizations. Islamist administrative structures—the Muslim Brotherhood particularly—have created a whole business structure around inflammatory messaging. They weaponize whatever occasion to unsettle their nations’ Israeli cooperation. When America transferred its embassy to Jerusalem in 2018, those apparatus orchestrated demonstrations. Annexation presents their subsequent windfall.

Egypt’s President Sisi and Jordan’s King Abdullah sustain Israeli arrangements while controlling agitated populations and preventing assassination attempts. Cairo’s Brotherhood membership would mobilize massive gatherings. Jordan’s predominantly-Palestinian populace might detonate and further jeopardize monarchic steadiness. Each proclamation would erode the intelligence and commercial cooperation currently connecting Israel to its neighbors.

Subsequently exists the Western theater—the cerebral dimension. Islamists have invested decades training European and American societies to regard Jewish governance as illegitimate. They denominate it “occupation.” They

categorize returning Jewish communities as “colonizers.” They accomplished this through UN resolutions, academic institutions, international NGOs, and repetitive communication becoming knee-jerk behavior. The Western world presently echoes its opposition’s language. Numerous authorities who cannot identify Judea cartographically insist that Jewish occupation there breaches “international legislation,” despite this remaining nonexistent. The League of Nations Mandate of 1922 acknowledged the Jewish authorization to inhabit the geography. Zero Arab nation possessed it. Jordan’s occupation persisted nineteen years, terminating in 1967. Sovereign “Palestine” has never existed. Yet Islamist manipulation has infiltrated diplomatic discussion so thoroughly that multitudes of individuals presume Jews constitute the usurpers of their indigenous territory. This transpires through strategic design. It constitutes prolonged ideological confrontation. It transforms persecuted communities into perpetrators and recasts combatants as sufferers. The West, perpetually pursuing uncomplicated narratives, embraced it completely.

That an equivalent Arab-Islamic faction now denouncing “annexation” would preclude a Jewish nation regardless were they empowered. Their difference is not territorial—it concerns existence. They rejected partition in 1947, diplomacy in 1967, and peaceful relations throughout because a self-governing Jewish authority contradicts Islamic-dominance ideology. In their perspective, Jewish peoples merit *dhimmi* rank—sheltered yet marginal—not equivalence or governance. Annexation activates that anxiety. It pronounces explicitly what they repudiate: the Jewish nation is indigenous and no longer seeking approval.

Washington filters the equation through distinct circumstances. America endeavors constructing a bloc to supervise postwar Gaza—Arab financing, Arab deployments, Arab moral authorization. Nothing persists absent annexation. Arab administrators will withhold backing for reconstruction programs while populaces chant about usurped geography. American agents have communicated frankly with Jerusalem: Israel may obtain restrained demarcations and heightened Arab cooperation, or experience an annexation confrontation. Opt for one. That represents why Trump’s group, irrespective of its Israeli leanings, maintains urging Netanyahu to exercise restraint.

Israel’s adversaries have organized civilization for this instant. They have reformulated language, chronology, and standards to characterize Jewish governance as transgression. They have acclimated the West to perpetuate their distortions. The annexation discussion therefore arrives in a reality already systematically deceived.

Should Israel progress immediately, it travels directly into the apparatus they engineered. Sovereignty constitutes an entitlement. However, approach represents strategic calculation. Providing the Islamists their subsequent promotional triumph prior to worldwide recalibration would constitute miscalculation compensated through bloodshed.

Scenarios Ahead: Four Paths and Their Perils

The sovereignty conversation has disclosed Israel's impending complication. Where proceeds the nation subsequently? Four alternatives materialize, each demanding distinct compromise.

1. The first is full annexation. This would entail extending Israeli law across every Jewish neighborhood in Judea and Samaria and, realistically, encompassing most of Area C. It embodies the objective outlined in the extensive sovereignty proposal staying in legislative review. For completion, Netanyahu would require succumbing to domestic pressure or witnessing his governing structure transformed by actors insistent on implementation.

The condition would subsequently confront the execution of incorporating substantial populations and geography. The Justice sector would need spreading Israel's complete regulatory framework. Police jurisdictions would substitute military brigades.

The preliminary difficulty manifests rapidly: managing Arab neighborhoods encompassed by recently annexed geography. Would they persist under Palestinian Authority governance as detached pockets, or experience Israeli governance? Lacking transparent specifications, annexation could deteriorate into governmental disorder, nightmarish for regulatory bodies.

The diplomatic and military ramifications would demonstrate considerably harder. President Trump has currently stated annexation would erase U.S. backing—it constitutes speculation whether developments will materialize that direction, yet represents substantial hazard genuinely. Abraham Accord nation partnerships would rupture. Europe would impose financial discipline. The Palestinian Authority would terminate agreements and terminate collaboration, potentially rendering Israel answerable for multitudes across areas A and B.

Military command has communicated concern that annexation might provoke extensive instability and surpass Israeli capacity still weakened from Gaza. A subsequent uprising remains not predetermined, though constitutes hazard IDF command approaches cautiously.

The “thorough annexation” option positions Israel contrary to practically everybody concurrently, recurrently. Even internal nationalist advocates admitting in Israel's historical entitlement to that geography concede that accelerating development carries considerable consequence.

2. The second path is limited annexation—the bloc-by-bloc approach. Israel might choose singular territory to investigate. Ma'ale Adumim, the urban zone of forty thousand neighboring Jerusalem's eastern boundary, represents the most obvious selection. Multitudes of Israelis perceive it as constituting Jerusalem's geographic expansion, and basically every worldwide diplomatic arrangement has implicitly conceded its persistence as Israeli. Extending governance to Ma'ale Adumim would permit Israel to maintain that it merely validates present circumstances. Even this diminished initiative would produce ramifications: Gulf administrators have indicated that any annexation breaches their limitations. Nonetheless, Israeli policy specialists note that

a bloc-initial approach would prove more justifiable internally. It incorporates basically no Arab demographic expansion into the nation and gratifies constituencies desiring observance of sovereignty implemented somewhere. The vulnerability manifests as trajectory. Following incorporation of single metropolitan area, additional municipalities will petition identical standing.

3. The third option is quiet integration—sovereignty achieved without public declaration. Israel has presently initiated this development. Administrative responsibility of portions of Area C has migrated from military command to municipal administrations. Bezalel Smotrich, functioning as finance administrator, oversees settlement architectural authority. Settlements have become sanctioned. Police engagement in territories has broadened. Framework budgets handle numerous settlements equivalent to Israeli zones. Nothing is pronounced, merely methodical habituation. Individual modifications traverse without worldwide attention. Collectively, they obliterate distinctions between Israel and Judea and Samaria. For Netanyahu, this measured approach has continuously demonstrated utility. It satisfies nationalist constituencies by demonstrating advancement while forestalling the upheaval of direct annexation. External detractors characterize it as gradual territorial acquisition. Israeli adherents call it pragmatism: entrench your dominion, expect the uproar to diminish, progress further. The rhythm repeats. The jeopardy for the executive becomes electoral. His governing collaborators desire noticeable accomplishment, not private modifications. Their constituents anticipate a ceremony, not administrative notation. Should Netanyahu disappoint in transmitting a visible accomplishment, pressure for apparent annexation will intensify.

4. The fourth path is a freeze. Netanyahu, constrained by Trump's threats and Arab cautions, might shelve the matter. He could barter concessions elsewhere—heightened Palestinian Authority consequences, religious education financial supplements, or commitments regarding potential sovereignty deliberations—exchanged for coalition restraint. Washington might enhance the proposal through supplementary financing or military pledges. Trump might furnish a partnership understanding, Iran-related assurances, or authorization for supplementary armaments. Riyadh could supply the premier incentive: peace discussions. Should the prince pursue overt Israeli connection, Netanyahu could characterize restraint as patriotic action guaranteeing Arab globe conciliation. That perspective has produced results previously. The complication concerns sustaining coalition balance when Netanyahu's collaborators represent constituencies anticipating concrete outcomes. They articulate inhabitants believing Jewish dominion across Judea and Samaria constitutes ethical and chronological imperative. Should they conclude Netanyahu exchanged that obligation for supplementary diplomatic positioning, they might destabilize the administration.

Should a postponement stabilizes, Israel would return to the established rhythm characterizing Netanyahu's tenure: continuous settlement expansion, slight worldwide friction, no official territorial modifications. The Washington and Gulf crisis would normalize, concentration would shift to Gaza and Iran. It

signifies momentary quietude, not conclusive settlement. The fundamental question—harmonizing Israel's chronicle entitlement to its geography with contemporary statecraft realities—continues unresolved. The executive's competency has continuously concentrated on continuation via postponement. Whether that competency can still stabilize his existing governing arrangement stays an outstanding examination.

The Stakes and the Choices

For numerous Israelis, extending governance in Judea and Samaria constitutes not innovation. It represents straightforward assertion: Shiloh and Hebron participate in the nation identically to Tel Aviv. It eliminates atypical governance and prevents emergence of a belligerent Palestinian administration next door.

This week demonstrated the difficult underpinning that assertion. Annexation transcends administrative adjustment. It provokes diplomatic complications. Execute it presently and Israel threatens destabilizing its diplomatic foundations and protective frameworks. In 2020 Israel exchanged annexation deferral for UAE and Bahrain partnership, establishing the Abraham Accords' core. Demonstrate restraint subsequently, obtain regional networks. In 2025 that supply approaches reversed. Washington and essential Arab partners transmit: advance annexation and Gaza restoration and normalization initiatives disintegrate; practice restraint and we facilitate both.

The sovereignty legislation presently under examination represents indicator instead of substance. It constitutes articulation from a sizeable Israeli grouping concluding they have waited sufficiently for Palestinian partnership and seeking to actualize historic entitlement. That articulation carries legitimacy. The worldwide obstruction proves more forceful, presently. Uncommon examination manifests observing Israeli executives externally restrained by a favorable White House, substantially more singular when that White House represents Trump's.

This constitutes the complexity. Pursue foundational purpose, or conserve vital partnerships and the stability attained through significant toll. Netanyahu has constructed authority protecting Israeli protective capacity and occidental standing. That reflex guides him toward shelving annexation repeatedly. His rightist collaborators anticipate finality, not assurances. They desire scheduling, not phrasing. The collision among those inclinations nears.

Pullback involves payment. Frustration intensifies, and interior fragmentation widens. Proceeding compels Israel accepting consequences plainly. It would trade an antiquated assertion for modern institutional foundations: transatlantic partnership, unspoken Arab cooperation, prevailing territorial tranquility.

The discussion extends past parliamentary discussion: into executive chambers, into princely residences across Riyadh and Abu Dhabi. Aftermath extends decennially. As Education Minister Yoav Kisch conveyed parliamentary, "I believe in sovereignty... but how we do it matters." That represents the

friction currently. Not question of Israeli territorial legitimacy, but whether this instant's expenditure merits acceptance.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Uriel Zehavi

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR · MITZPE INSTITUTE

Uriel Zehavi is the executive director of Mitzpe Institute, where he writes the daily Israel Brief and co-directs its Institutional Intelligence practice with Modi Zehavi. He is the author of four books from Mitzpe Press and advises Israeli and allied clients on strategic communications for Western audiences.



ABOUT MITZPE INSTITUTE

Mitzpe Institute is an intelligence and strategy organization focused on Israeli security, diaspora threat assessment, and the strategic challenges confronting the Jewish people and the West. We produce daily intelligence, forensic analyses, strategic assessments, and tactical briefings read by policymakers, military leaders, and institutional decision-makers across more than 90 countries and all 50 US states — from the Knesset and the US Congress to allied governments, major policy institutions, and Jewish organizational leadership worldwide.

PASSED ALONG TO YOU?

The daily Israel Brief is free at mitzpe.org. The operational layer — Closed Dossiers, Vantage, and Watchwords — is members-only. Become a member, gift a membership, or book a briefing at mitzpe.org.

Reader Edition · Free to share with attribution to Mitzpe Institute.