

Annexation, International Law and Duplicity

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Israel and the territories Israel occupied in the Six-Day War. (Wikipedia)

The Jordan Valley annexation project has attracted much international reaction. What are the issues?

Some historical data

In 1967, Egypt drove out the UN peacekeepers stationed at the Israeli border, blocked the Strait of Tiran, and introduced large quantities of heavy weapons to Sinai. At the end of the Six-Day War, Israel captured the Sinai Peninsula. Israel captured, as well, the Golan Heights from which the Syrian army fired against Israel's towns and villages. Jordan, who joined the war, lost the West Bank that it had occupied since 1948. UN Security Council resolution 242 called for a return to secure and recognized borders as part of a peace agreement.

President Lyndon Johnson had asked his staff to define Israel's security borders; his advisors told him that apart from the Golan Heights, the West Bank hills and

the Jordan Valley were essential to Israel's security. This analysis was defended by Yigal Alon, who was one of the leaders of the Israeli left. However, Defense Minister Moshe Dayan decided otherwise and opted to conserve the conquered territories and wait for a telephone call from the Arab countries. That call did not come; instead, the 1967 Khartoum conference concluded with three resounding no's: no recognition of Israel, no negotiations and no peace.

It wasn't until Egyptian President Anwar Sadat concluded a peace agreement with Israel in 1979 that Egypt recovered the Sinai Peninsula. In 1994, King Hussein of Jordan signed a peace agreement with Israel. Six years earlier, he had renounced the West Bank. Syria continued its irredentist policy towards Israel. When Israel annexed the Golan in 2019, the world criticized the move, well aware that any peace deal would include the strategic Golan Heights' incorporation into Israel. The world was aware as well that the Jordan Valley will be part of Israel as it would serve as a buffer against the entry of heavy weapons into the West Bank. Recall that a distance of ten miles separates the West Bank from the Mediterranean.

The Palestinian card

The League of Nations is the body that preceded the United Nations. League of Nations Resolution 22 passed in San Remo entrusted Great Britain with the mandate over Palestine; it mandated Great Britain to re-establish the Jewish national home there (Article 6 of the mandate). Mandatory Palestine included Transjordan on the east bank of the Jordan river (present-day Jordan).

In 1921, the administration of Transjordan was offered to the king of Arabia ousted by the Saoud family. Transjordan became independent in 1946. The United Nations voted to partition the West Bank in 1947. Israel approved the resolution while the Arabs didn't. Instead, five Arab states attacked Israel, but Israel survived, nonetheless. Part of the West Bank, including the old city of Jerusalem was occupied by Jordan (formerly Transjordan) the following year.

Note that there was never a Palestinian state entity. The High Arab Committee's representative to the United Nations declared in 1947: "Palestine "is part of the province of Syria. Arabs living in Palestine are not independent in the sense that they are not a separate entity."

The representative of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations declared in 1956: "It is general knowledge that Palestine is nothing other than southern Syria; for Syrian President Hafez el Assad 'there is no Palestinian people; there is no Palestinian

entity.” He bluntly declared that the goal was “to pave the Arab roads with Jewish skulls and saturate this land with the blood of Jews and throw the rest of them into the sea.”

When Egypt occupied the Gaza Strip and Jordan occupied the West Bank (from 1948 to 1967), there was no question of creating a Palestinian state. It was mainly after the Six-Day War that the Arab League discussed the need for a Palestinian state.

Furthermore, refugees from the West Bank have enjoyed privileged status over other refugees worldwide, including Jewish refugees from Arab countries. Unlike other refugees in the world, refugee status is passed from father to son for Palestinians only. Since 1993, 45 years after the 1948 conflict, UN agencies dedicated to the Palestinians have received more than \$31 billion.

The Palestinian question served as a pretext for the region’s dictators to subjugate their populations, leaving it to the international institutions to deal with the Palestinians’ condition.

The Palestinian cause

The editor-in-chief of the influential leftist magazine *Le Nouvel Observateur* Jean-Daniel admitted that when the Vietnam War was over, there was fear of the left’s demobilization. Therefore, it was decided to support the Palestinian cause publicly to maintain this unity. This decision was too much for journalist Elizabeth Shemla who resigned from the newspaper’s editorial staff to found the online journal *Near East info*.

Benefiting from the sympathy of the left and incited by the neighbouring countries, who presented themselves as victims of wars they initiated, the Palestinians have excelled in media propaganda to the point that its staging of conflicts between them and the IDF qualified as Pallywood. The film *Décryptage* by Jacques Tarnero presents an enlightening sample of such scenography.

As it turns out, the Palestinian cause is championed by many who refuse to systematically criticize human rights abuses by Hamas or the Palestinian Authority and remain blind to the teaching of systemic hatred and the glorification of suicide murders.

The erosion of peace

Since the failure of the Oslo agreements ratified in 1993, the Israeli left had steadily declined after Palestinians' responded to Israel's peace offers with a deluge of suicide murders against Israeli civilians. Even if the separation barrier stabs at the hearts of liberal souls, the fact remains that the erection of this barrier ended these murders.

For many Israelis, the senseless bludgeoning of Israel in international forums and the hatred against Israel promoted in the Palestinian media and educational institutions (often funded by European institutions) are all nails in the coffin of peace. How can one trust entities who speak of peace to the outside world and demand territorial concessions, they ask? Note Israel's unilateral evacuation of Gaza: Under the control of the Palestinian Authority and later Hamas, Gaza became an Iranian missile base. At the same time, Palestinian leaders continued to brainwash their population to hate Israel. This reality was a motivating factor in young Israelis settling in Judea and Samaria's barren hills.

The world attaches much weight to this conflict, which takes place on biblical land. There have been endless peace plans offered: the Madrid Conference, the Oslo Accords, Wye River, Sharm el Sheikh, Camp David (2000), Taba, Quartet roadmap, Aqaba, Annapolis meetings, and now Trump's plan. The Palestinians' constant refusals diminish their opportunities as they remain faithful to the motto of never missing an opportunity to miss an opportunity.

The Taba peace plan provided a far more advantageous arrangement than the Palestinians demanded, with bipartisan territorial agreements. However, the Palestinian leadership had very wrongly interpreted the withdrawal of Israel from Lebanon in 2000. Long obsessed with the radiophonic harangues of neighboring states promising the extinction of the Jewish state, and spurred on by Iranian propaganda, the Palestinian leadership voted for the status quo that it officially deplors. Today, there are signs of dissatisfaction with Palestinians in the Gulf States and even in Saudi Arabia.

The duplicity of the UN

The timing of the annexation can be awkward: Will it do a disservice to the electoral chances of President Trump, who relies on an Evangelical electorate? Will it endanger the thaw in relations with the Gulf countries? Will it give Turkey and Iran an unexpected propaganda boost? Will it jeopardize the peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan? Will it alienate part of the American Democratic Party?

International bodies continue to victimize Israel in the name of international law that they flout all year long by ignoring miseries existing worldwide while obsessing about Israel.

On the other hand, the annexation is a disavowal of the UN. It puts on hold resolution 242 of the Security Council of the UN, which envisaged an evacuation to secure and recognized borders – not yet defined – within the framework of a peace agreement. Reforming the United Nations which is a cradle of automatic anti-Israel votes would be part of the solution to the conflict. Ending the teaching of hatred on the part of the Palestinians is also essential to creating an atmosphere that is conducive to reciprocal concessions.