



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu speaks before a map of the Jordan Valley, vowing to extend Israeli sovereignty there if reelected, during a speech in Ramat Gan on September 10, 2019. ● MENAHEM KAHANA/AFP

there are a number of steps that would have to be taken in order to implement the policy correctly from the Israeli point of view. Some Israeli ministers, like Bezalel Smotrich and Itamar Ben Gvir, may speak of imposing de jure annexation over the territory as a simple matter, yet for the more shrewd political and military actors behind the scenes, they understand the potential pitfalls involved. This is why the strategy inside the West Bank has been to impose the occupiers' domination gradually over time, which can be explained by the old adage about boiling a frog: The theory is that tossing the frog into boiling water will trigger an immediate reaction whereby it jumps out to save itself, opposed to adding the frog to water and slowly turning up the heat to the point where it traps the amphibian. The Palestinians in the West Bank have been subjected to the boiling frog strategy for decades, with the slow encroachment of settlements, seizures of land, and limited military action. If Israel simply decides to annex the entirety of the territory at once and force the people out, this will awaken a large-scale uprising and resistance. Yet, thus far, Israel has managed to successfully subdue the population of the occupied West Bank, and it would be a grave mistake from their perspective to flush all of their work down the drain in one foul sweep. Instead, there will likely be an attempt to annex portions of what is called Area C of the West Bank, constituting 60% of the total land mass there and home to 350,000 Palestinians. The other two portions of the land, constituting just a little under 40% of

it (due to settlements, the wall, and land seizures), are called Area A and B, which are home to the majority of the West Bank's 3.2 million Palestinians. For context, the Area A, B, and C model was a product of the Oslo Agreements between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel in the 1990s. Area C is under full Israeli military control, while Area B is under Palestinian Authority (PA) administrative control. Then, there is Area A, which is the smallest portion of the territory and is supposed to be under full PA security and administrative control. Of course, this is not actually the way it works in practice. The PA effectively acts as a subcontractor for the occupying army and manages its dirty work for it. In the most heavily populated area of the territory, it also exerts its power to subdue resistance. This aside, all serious annexation proposals in the past had focused on seizing the Jordan Valley region — located in Area C — while also including plans to declare the major illegal settlements as formally annexed. However, more recent initiatives have gotten a lot greedier and push for a total takeover of Area C, in addition to some parts of Area B. If the initial annexation proposals are the roadmap set forth, then this will mean that Israel will be forced to either give tens of thousands of Palestinians citizenship, granting special ID status like is the case for Palestinians living in occupied Al-Quds (Jerusalem), or ethnic cleansing. In the event of a maximalist approach, then we are talking about a mass expulsion program for hundreds of thousands of people, who have the option of fleeing to Jordan or heading towards PA-controlled areas.

Either way, this will eventually lead to the collapse of the Palestinian Authority. This was always the ultimate goal: to complete the ethnic cleansing of the territories occupied in 1967 once and for all, something that the Israelis now clearly have in mind. Many analysts have posited that Tel Aviv's annexation strategy will trigger a Third Intifada in the West Bank. This prospective development is based upon a series of assumptions, which may or may not lead to the conclusions they draw. The West Bank population has not moved an inch, as a collective, since the beginning of the Gaza genocide. In fact, when the Jenin refugee camp and Nour al-Shams Camp were being bombed, their people were displaced, and civilian massacres occurred throughout the last 22 months, the rest of the West Bank did nothing. But why? It is quite simple. The people of the West Bank are truly the frog in slowly boiling water. To begin with, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in the West Bank work for Israeli businesses, and many of them quite literally live in the settlements that are built on top of their own land. There is also no Palestinian leadership in the West Bank as the PA is an agent of Israel and the US. A big segment of the West Bank population is also on the payroll of the PA. Keeping these two things in mind, a large portion of the population is dependent upon the Israeli occupiers and their subcontractors to sustain their standard of living. Then there are the plethora of Western NGOs working in the occupied territory, giving conditional grants to Palestinians for everything from planting vegetables, non-violent protest movements, to

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How is this all possible while the West Bank people are surrounded by checkpoints, under the gun of occupying soldiers, witnessing their homes being invaded as a normal part of life, and enduring settler violence? It's very simple, they came to accept their reality and chose to focus on distractions, telling themselves that the price of resistance is too expensive.

women's empowerment or something as harmless as weightlifting. This is how the EU, UK, and US have managed to NGOise the territory, changing the territory even on a cultural level, shaping the way the people see resistance, turning their goals away from the liberation of the homeland. If you want to get a grant from international organizations as a Palestinian trying to do anything, there are requirements in the way. What these NGOs also do is turn villages, towns, refugee camps, movements, tribes, and cities against each other over access, status, travel, and money. This is not to mention what is perhaps the worst form of entrapment: loans and credit cards. Yes, Palestinians in the West Bank are handed out loans with almost no restrictions. Why? So that they can trap themselves in pools of debt, from which they can never rid themselves. In addition to this, access to huge loans and credit cards was paired with an influx of foreign cars, luxury items, and the emergence of cafe culture. In other words, young impressionable people are roped into caring about material things like their cars, clothes, or handbags, to chase material goods, not to care about resisting an occupation. How is this all possible while people are surrounded by checkpoints, under the gun of occupying soldiers, witnessing their homes being invaded as a normal part of life, and enduring settler violence? It's very simple, the people came to accept their reality and chose to focus on distractions, telling themselves that the price of resistance is too expensive. Despite all of this, there are still many West Bank Palestinians who refuse to bow down and seek to resist. This often comes in the form of lone wolf attacks on soldiers or illegal settlers, or in the small resistance groups that emerge throughout the territory. Almost every Palestinian supports these brave people, but most refuse to follow their path because of the immense cost. So, is it hopeless? Absolutely not. An uprising is always possible, and the population of the West Bank is being squeezed today in a way we haven't seen since the Second Intifada. Yet the trigger for a mass mobilization is relatively unpredictable; It could quite literally be anything. If the PA falls, however, this would certainly accelerate the process. When it eventually does happen, then the divided population will experience major challenges as they do not have a well-trained and prepared armed resistance like Gaza does. In the worst-case scenario, the population will begin to be expelled into Jordan, which could very easily translate into the toppling of the Hashemite Kingdom, not least because of the economic and social burden such a mass ethnic cleansing would cause. The fall of Jordan would inevitably lead to resistance groups using it as a launching pad for action against Israel.

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Palestinian protesters hold up placards as they demonstrate against the US-brokered peace proposal, the Deal of the Century, in the West Bank city of Ramallah, on February 11, 2020. ● ABBAS MOMANI/AFP



People stand in front of luxury cars and a mural of the late Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh on the Palestinian side of the Israeli separation wall, in the West Bank city of Bethlehem. ● ABED AL HASHLAMOUN/EPA