

POLICY PAPER

Jordan and the Gradual Annexation of the West Bank: Threat Assessment and Policy Options

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This paper draws on the conclusions of a specialized discussion session convened by the Politics and Society Institute on the gradual annexation of the West Bank and its potential implications for Jordan, Palestine, and the region. The session brought together experts and researchers specializing in Palestinian and Israeli affairs and regional security. The paper also draws on research-based analysis of the current political and field context, moving from a description of ongoing developments to an assessment of their implications for Jordanian interests and a set of policy options for decision-makers.

Executive Summary

This paper argues that the most pressing threat to Jordan is the entrenchment of gradual de facto annexation, which is reshaping the political, security, and demographic reality west of the Jordan River. This process is manifested in settlement expansion, enhanced security control, restrictions on movement, the confiscation of land and resources, and financial and economic pressure on the Palestinian Authority (PA). Annexation is thereby transformed from an openly declared legal decision into an accumulating everyday reality.

The danger lies in the interconnected risks this process creates for Jordanian interests: the possible exhaustion or collapse of the PA, increased security pressure along the border, a greater likelihood of displacement or coerced population movements, heightened domestic polarization, and the erosion of the political environment that has governed Jordanian-Israeli relations since the peace treaty was signed.

Current Israeli shifts indicate a gradual move from managing the conflict toward attempting to settle it on the ground. This is taking place through intensified settlement activity, expanded settler influence, weakened Palestinian institutional and economic capacity, and the imposition of geographic and security realities that make any future political settlement more difficult. This trajectory intersects with the rise of right-wing and religious discourse in Israel and with a U.S. environment that supports, or tolerates, Israeli policies, limiting the prospects for effective international pressure in the near term.

Jordan's response should move from reaction to anticipation through a multi-level approach combining political and legal deterrence, domestic resilience, regional and international coordination, security and humanitarian preparedness, and support for Palestinian steadfastness in the West Bank. The paper recommends a gradual and proactive Jordanian course that treats de facto annexation as an existing threat requiring continuous monitoring, assessment, and action.

Introduction

This paper is written against the backdrop of growing Jordanian concern over the ongoing transformations in the West Bank and their direct implications for the Kingdom's security and political environment. It draws on the conclusions of a specialized discussion session convened by the Politics and Society Institute, with the participation of experts and researchers specializing in Palestinian and Israeli affairs and regional security issues. It also draws on research-based analysis of the field and political developments associated with the course of annexation.

The paper approaches annexation as a practical process that is gradually taking shape through a range of policies on the ground. These policies are reconfiguring the West Bank's political and security geography and transforming Israeli control from a series of fragmented measures into an accumulating reality. The significance of this paper therefore lies in examining this process at an advanced stage and assessing its potential implications for Jordan, as the regional actor most directly affected by developments in the West Bank.

The paper poses the following central question: How can Jordan address the process of gradual de facto annexation in the West Bank in a manner that protects its security, demographic, and political interests, while simultaneously supporting Palestinian steadfastness and preserving a minimum level of cohesion within the existing Palestinian institutional framework? To answer this question, the paper examines the nature of current Israeli and Palestinian transformations, assesses the sources of threat to Jordan, and presents several potential scenarios before proposing a range of possible policy options.

Problem Statement

The problem addressed by this paper is that the gradual annexation of the West Bank has evolved into an advanced process on the ground, driven by cumulative policies that reproduce Israeli control over the land, population, and resources. This process is manifested in

settlement expansion, the strengthening of the security presence, restrictions on movement, the encirclement of Palestinian communities, land confiscation, and the imposition of economic and financial pressure on the Palestinian Authority. Together, these measures are transforming annexation into an accumulating everyday reality that precedes any potential formal declaration.

For Jordan, the danger of this process lies in its reconfiguration of the political and security environment west of the Jordan River in ways that directly affect Jordanian interests. The continuation of gradual annexation could weaken or exhaust the Palestinian Authority, broaden the scope of violence and instability in the West Bank, increase pressure along Jordan's borders, and heighten the likelihood of displacement or forced population movements. It could also undermine the two-state solution and erode the political framework upon which Jordanian-Israeli relations have rested since the signing of the peace treaty.

In the same context, developments in Jerusalem point toward a higher level of escalation. The Hashemite Custodianship now faces more direct challenges than before, amid intensifying attempts to alter the status quo at Al-Aqsa Mosque and the growing prominence of Israeli religious and nationalist groups within the country's political debate. This trajectory intersects with gradual annexation as part of a broader attempt to redefine Israeli control over both the land and the holy sites. Jordan is consequently confronted with a dual threat: a political and security threat linked to the future of the West Bank, and a direct threat to its historical and legal role in safeguarding the Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem.

The need to act now stems from the cumulative way gradual annexation is advancing, without necessarily producing a clear political moment that can be awaited or responded to. Every delay in addressing this process gives the realities on the ground a greater opportunity to become entrenched, raises the cost of reversing them, and narrows the room for maneuver available to Jordan, the Palestinians, and the concerned Arab states. Accordingly, this paper

treats de facto annexation as an existing threat that requires a proactive approach, rather than merely a reaction to a potential formal declaration.

First: Gradual Annexation as an Accumulating Reality on the Ground

The term “gradual annexation” refers to a cumulative process of policies and measures that reshape the reality in the West Bank without requiring a direct legal declaration of annexation. Rather than taking the form of a single, explicit political decision, annexation advances through successive developments on the ground, including settlement expansion, reinforced security control, restrictions on movement, and the reorganization of geographic space in ways that serve long-term Israeli control. Reports issued by the United Nations and other international bodies support this characterization. OCHA has documented a significant increase in obstacles to movement within the West Bank, while joint European statements have warned of the accelerating reclassification of Palestinian land and the deepening of Israeli administration in the West Bank¹. Annexation thus becomes a continuous, everyday process rather than a single political decision that establishes it as a *fait accompli*.

The danger of this process lies in its transformation of Israeli control from a form of occupation that is theoretically subject to negotiation into a reality that is difficult to reverse in practice. The expansion of settlements, their connection through networks of bypass and military roads, and the encirclement of Palestinian communities with checkpoints and security infrastructure are all instruments that divide the West Bank into separate cantons with restricted movement. Over time, the question of annexation becomes increasingly concerned with the extent to which Palestinians can continue to live, move, and work within an increasingly shrinking geographic space.

¹ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), *Movement and Access in the West Bank* | April 2026, 2026-04-23, [Movement and Access in the West Bank | April 2026 | United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - Occupied Palestinian Territory](#)

Gradual annexation also extends into the economic and institutional spheres. Measures such as the confiscation of land and resources, pressure on Palestinian workers, the withholding of Palestinian Authority revenues², and restrictions on the ability of Palestinian institutions to provide services weaken the population's living conditions and narrow the Palestinian Authority's scope of action. This gradually exhausts the Palestinian institutional framework from within, without the need to dismantle it directly.

This process has gained greater momentum since 7 October, as Israeli policy has shifted from managing the conflict toward attempting to resolve it on the ground. This shift is being pursued through intensified security control, the expansion of settler influence, and the weakening of the Palestinians' ability to remain within a coherent political and geographic space. Gradual annexation has therefore become part of a broader vision for restructuring the West Bank in a manner that reduces the prospects for a political settlement and transforms Israeli control into a permanent reality.

Gradual annexation is consequently more complex than formal annexation because it advances through fragmented measures that may appear, on the surface, to be security-related, administrative, or settlement-related, but collectively produce a profound political transformation in the West Bank. This paper treats this process as the most pressing threat because it creates an accumulating reality on the ground before a clear political moment emerges that can be addressed or responded to.

Second: The Political Context of Annexation: Israeli Transformation and Palestinian Fragility

The process of gradual annexation in the West Bank intersects with a state of internal Palestinian fragility that strengthens Israel's ability to impose new political realities and facts on the ground. The Palestinian arena is currently facing a multidimensional crisis in which

² Arab Center Washington DC 'Running on Empty: The Deepening Financial Crisis of the Palestinian Authority' 12 February, 2026 [Running on Empty: The Deepening Financial Crisis of the Palestinian Authority](#)

economic and social pressures overlap with declining institutional effectiveness, a crisis of legitimacy, political division, and a limited capacity to build a unified national position in response to escalating Israeli policies. This creates a more conducive environment for gradual annexation to advance, as it unfolds within an exhausted Palestinian context that struggles to produce an organized political and institutional response.

1. Internal Palestinian Fragility as an Entry Point for Advancing Annexation

Discussions concerning the Palestinian arena indicate that the economic and social deterioration in the West Bank has become a significant factor in reshaping the priorities of Palestinian society itself. As living pressures intensify, employment opportunities decline, and the cost of living rises, broad segments of the Palestinian population have become increasingly preoccupied with securing a minimum level of day-to-day stability. This limits their capacity for political and civic engagement and weakens the prospects for an organized societal response to the process of annexation.

In this context, the Palestinian Authority faces pressure on two fronts. On the one hand, it is subjected to direct Israeli pressure through the strangulation of the economy, the withholding of clearance revenues, restrictions on movement and employment, and the undermining of its capacity to deliver services. On the other hand, it faces internal constraints associated with declining political legitimacy, weakened political-party, trade-union, and youth pluralism, a shrinking public sphere, and the continuation of the Palestinian political division. These factors have weakened the Authority's ability to represent an inclusive national project or develop an effective strategy for addressing the ongoing transformations in the West Bank.

The danger of this fragility lies in the more favorable environment it creates for gradual annexation to advance. Israel does not necessarily need to dismantle the Palestinian Authority directly; rather, it benefits from exhausting the Authority and keeping it in a functionally limited position—capable of administering certain day-to-day affairs, yet unable to formulate

an effective political, legal, or field-level response. In this sense, weakening the Palestinian institutional framework becomes an integral component of gradual annexation. It transforms the Authority from a political framework expected to lead a national project into an administrative body constrained by the conditions imposed by the occupation and by its own internal crises.

Internal Palestinian reform therefore becomes an essential condition for any serious approach to confronting annexation. Such reform requires rebuilding the relationship between the leadership and society, expanding the public sphere, restoring political-party, trade-union, and youth pluralism, ending the Palestinian division, and formulating a national political project capable of addressing the new reality. For Jordan, supporting the cohesion of the Palestinian institutional framework means safeguarding an essential condition for stability west of the Jordan River and preventing Palestinian fragility from developing into a direct threat to Jordanian national security.

2. Security and Settlement Control as Instruments of De Facto Annexation

Gradual annexation is advancing through overlapping security, settlement, and economic instruments that are reshaping the West Bank without the need for a direct legal declaration. Israeli control over movement, mobility, and geographic infrastructure has grown increasingly entrenched through the encirclement of Palestinian cities and villages by networks of settlements, bypass roads, checkpoints, and military bases. As a result, connectivity between Palestinian governorates has become almost entirely subject to Israeli security decisions.

This process also extends to the economic and livelihood dimensions. Land confiscation, control over resources, restrictions imposed on Bedouin communities, pressure on Palestinian workers, and the withholding of Palestinian Authority revenues are all instruments used to weaken the Palestinians' ability to remain steadfast on their land. In this sense, gradual

annexation operates by restructuring the conditions of everyday life in a manner that makes the Palestinian presence increasingly vulnerable and costly.

Settlement expansion represents the clearest instrument for transforming annexation from a political vision into a reality on the ground. Settlements function as advanced structures of sovereignty, connected to road networks, military protection, and service systems, while dividing the West Bank into separate Palestinian cantons. As these realities accumulate, the possibility of establishing a geographically and politically contiguous Palestinian entity becomes increasingly difficult, and annexation evolves into a process of gradually fragmenting Palestinian space.

Israeli control over Palestinian movement within the West Bank has deepened through the proliferation of checkpoints, road gates, and physical restrictions on roads. At the beginning of 2025, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs documented 849 movement obstacles across the West Bank, including 288 road gates. By the end of the year, the number had risen to 925 obstacles—the highest level recorded in twenty years and approximately 43 percent above the annual average during that period. These obstacles affect Palestinians' ability to reach workplaces and access healthcare and educational services, while placing movement between cities and governorates under shifting Israeli security restrictions.³

This process cannot be separated from the escalation of settler violence and the expansion of unauthorized settlement outposts. These practices have become part of an environment of daily pressure aimed at driving Palestinians out of the areas surrounding villages and Bedouin and agricultural communities. More extremist settler groups have become increasingly

³ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 'Movement and Access Update in the West Bank' 27 May 2025 [Movement and access update in the West Bank | May 2025 | United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - Occupied Palestinian Territory](#)

prominent in this context, including the “Hilltop Youth,”⁴ networks of young settlers engaged in establishing outposts on hilltops and in open areas and employing violence and intimidation against Palestinians and their property. These groups transform small outposts into forward pressure points. Such outposts often begin as unauthorized sites or pastoral farms but gradually develop into instruments for controlling the surrounding land and severing connections between Palestinian communities.

The term “Monsters of the Hills”⁵ refers to groups that emerged from the Hilltop Youth milieu and is used to describe the more violent, extremist, and organized wings operating within this broader landscape. Their emergence reflects the shift of some groups from maintaining an unauthorized settler presence to carrying out organized attacks, including setting fire to property, assaulting farmers, vandalizing land, and intimidating Palestinian communities to force them to withdraw from their surrounding areas. These groups are guided by extremist religious and nationalist conceptions based on the claimed right of the Jewish people to the “Greater Land of Israel.” They reject any political or security settlement that could restrict settlement expansion or redefine Israeli control over the land.

In this sense, settler violence becomes an integral component of the logic of de facto annexation rather than a separate, peripheral phenomenon. It generates direct pressure on the ground that precedes any official decision and helps expand the scope of Israeli control by imposing new realities. These realities are subsequently treated as established facts requiring security protection or administrative regularization. Settlement outposts and extremist settler groups therefore perform a functional role in the process of gradual annexation by pushing the boundaries of control forward and reshaping the relationship between Palestinians and their land through fear, restrictions, and daily attrition.

⁴ U.S. Department of the Treasury, *Treasury Designates Extremist Settler Group in West Bank*, 2024-10-01, [Treasury Designates Extremist Settler Group in West Bank | U.S. Department of the Treasury](#)

⁵ Al Jazeera Net, “The ‘Monsters of the Hills’: A Terrorist Group That Terrifies Palestinians and Alarms Israel,” November 10, 2025, [جماعة إرهابية ترعب الفلسطينيين وتقلق إسرائيل | سياسة | الجزيرة نت .. "وحوش التلال"](#)

The danger of this process is further heightened by proposed projects that go beyond conventional settlement expansion and seek to re-engineer the West Bank's political and social structure. These include proposals to fragment Palestinian space into separate local or regional arrangements, alongside the E1 project, which is intended to accelerate the incorporation of Ma'ale Adumim into Jerusalem, isolate Bedouin communities, and deepen geographic and demographic separation.⁶ The danger of these proposals lies in their targeting of the unity of Palestinian representation and the Palestinian political narrative, thereby transforming the West Bank from a unified national issue into fragmented local spaces that are easier to control.

Annexation in the West Bank is therefore advancing today through action rather than declaration. It is accumulating through security control, settlement expansion, economic restrictions, the weakening of the Palestinian Authority, constraints on movement, and the fragmentation of Palestinian space. This form of annexation makes the threat more complex for Jordan because it imposes an incremental reality that could, over time, become the basis for any future political or security arrangement.

Third: Ideological Discourse: From Legitimizing Annexation to Threatening Jerusalem and the Hashemite Custodianship

The process of annexation intersects with the growing influence of the religious-nationalist current within the Israeli government and state institutions. This current views settlement in the West Bank as an extension of a religious and national right to what it refers to as "Judea and Samaria." Representatives of the settlement movement have moved from exercising influence outside government to holding ministerial portfolios and government positions that enable them to shape the Civil Administration, planning, settlement activity, and security policy within the West Bank. Israeli official discourse also regularly employs the term "Judea and Samaria,"

⁶ Institute for Middle East Understanding (IMEU), *Fact Sheet: Israel's E1 Settlement*, 2021-12-09, [Fact Sheet: Israel's E1 Settlement](#) | [ALL RESOURCES](#) | [Resources](#) | [The Institute for Middle East Understanding \(IMEU\)](#)

reflecting a political and historical conception that goes beyond treating the West Bank as occupied territory whose future remains subject to negotiation.⁷

The danger of this discourse lies in the theological and mobilizational dimension it gives to Israeli policies, extending beyond immediate security considerations. When the West Bank or Jerusalem is framed through religious and messianic conceptions, relinquishing control, freezing settlement activity, or preserving the status quo at the holy sites becomes more difficult within the Israeli political environment. This discourse also contributes to normalizing the idea of annexation among segments of Israeli society and presenting it as part of an enduring religious and national project rather than as a violation of international law or a threat to regional stability.

The impact of this ideological dimension extends particularly to Jerusalem, where attempts to alter the status quo at Al-Aqsa Mosque intersect with the growing influence of religious and nationalist movements seeking to redefine the relationship with the holy site. For Jordan, this process directly affects its historical and legal role in safeguarding the Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem and increases the likelihood of political and religious friction over an issue of considerable sensitivity at both the domestic and regional levels.

At the same time, it is not in the interest of the Palestinians, Jordan, or the Arab parties to transform the conflict into an open religious confrontation, as this would provide the most extremist currents within Israel and their supporting circles with greater scope to justify their policies. Addressing this discourse should therefore be based on affirming the Palestinian question as one of national, political, and human rights and emphasizing the legal status of Jerusalem and its holy sites. This approach is preferable to entering a religious contest that would weaken the Arab and Palestinian position and provide the other side with additional instruments of mobilization.

^{7 7} ACLED, *Civilians or Soldiers? Settler Violence in the West Bank*, June 10, 2024, [Civilians or Soldiers? Settler violence in the West Bank | ACLED](#)

Confronting the ideological dimension of annexation consequently requires the development of a more coherent political, legal, and cultural narrative. This includes supporting Palestinian and Jordanian discourse that connects the Palestinians' right to their land with the protection of the holy sites, the rejection of annexation, and respect for international law. Such an approach would strengthen the legitimacy of the Arab position and prevent the conflict from being reduced to an open religious confrontation.

Fourth: Implications for Jordan: Sources of Threat and Limits of Action

Jordan views gradual annexation in the West Bank as a process that directly affects its security, political, and demographic interests. Jordan's geographic location, the connection between its national security and the future of the West Bank and Jerusalem, and its historical and legal role in safeguarding the Muslim and Christian holy sites mean that any fundamental change in the political reality west of the Jordan River could develop into a direct challenge to Jordan's domestic and regional environment.

The Jordanian position is particularly sensitive because gradual annexation generates a range of overlapping threats. On the one hand, the weakening or collapse of the Palestinian Authority could create a political and security vacuum in the West Bank, increasing pressure along Jordan's borders and heightening the risk of instability or forced population movements. On the other hand, the consolidation of Israeli control over the Jordan Valley, or its extension across the entire West Bank, would bring the Israeli security presence into even closer proximity to the Jordanian border and redefine the security environment along the Kingdom's western frontier.

The demographic threat lies in the possibility of displacement or the indirect pressure exerted on Palestinians to pursue forced or involuntary options as living and security conditions in the West Bank deteriorate. This does not necessarily imply a scenario of direct and immediate forced displacement. Rather, it may take the form of cumulative economic, security, and social

pressures that make remaining on the land increasingly difficult and turn population movement into the gradual outcome of a prolonged process of restriction. Any Jordanian approach to annexation must therefore address the demographic threat as a cumulative risk rather than solely as a sudden event.

The political threat is linked to the undermining of the two-state solution, the weakening of the Palestinian institutional framework, and the erosion of the political environment that has governed Jordanian-Israeli relations since the signing of the peace treaty. The continuation of de facto annexation could place Jordan in a difficult position: maintaining its commitment to the peace treaty as a legal and political framework for managing crises and protecting its borders while simultaneously confronting Israeli policies that deprive this framework of its political substance, particularly if the West Bank is transformed into an area under permanent Israeli control.

This intersects with the threat to Jerusalem and the Hashemite Custodianship, as escalation in Jerusalem cannot be separated from the process of annexation in the West Bank. Attempts to alter the status quo at Al-Aqsa Mosque and the growing influence of religious and nationalist currents on Israeli decision-making confront Jordan with a challenge to its historical and legal role in Jerusalem. The threat thus becomes twofold: geographic and political annexation in the West Bank, and religious and sovereignty-related pressure in Jerusalem.

Economically, Jordan faces the additional challenge of its limited capacity to absorb new waves of pressure, whether arising from displacement, declining border stability, or the growing need to provide humanitarian and political support to the Palestinians. Jordan's domestic economic vulnerability means that any escalation in the West Bank or Jerusalem could affect the Kingdom's resources, state priorities, and capacity to manage the crisis without clear regional and international support.

In response to these threats, Jordan appears to be moving toward the development of a proactive, multi-level approach. This begins with raising the political and legal cost for Israel by establishing clear red lines against forced displacement, annexation, and changes to the status quo in Jerusalem, and by working to translate these red lines into publicly declared international positions in Washington, Brussels, and at the United Nations. It also requires stronger Arab coordination, particularly with Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf states, to ensure that Jordan does not face the consequences of developments in the West Bank and Jerusalem alone.

At the security level, Jordan needs to strengthen its border and humanitarian preparedness without accepting any displacement scenario or treating it as a *fait accompli*. This includes developing early-warning mechanisms, monitoring developments within the West Bank, and tracking Israeli projects related to the Jordan Valley, Jerusalem, and vulnerable Palestinian communities. It also requires supporting Palestinian steadfastness in the West Bank, as the Palestinians' continued presence on their land and the preservation of a minimum level of cohesion within the Palestinian institutional framework constitute the first line of defense for Jordanian interests.

Accordingly, the most realistic option for Jordan is to develop a gradual course of action that combines active diplomacy, legal action, domestic resilience, Arab coordination, and security and humanitarian preparedness. Gradual annexation is an existing and accumulating threat, and Jordan should not wait for a formal declaration before responding, as such a declaration may come only after the realities on the ground have already become firmly entrenched.

Fifth: The Regional and International Environment: Opportunities for Pressure and Their Limitations

The crisis of gradual annexation in the West Bank is unfolding within an increasingly complex regional and international environment following 7 October, as the Palestinian question has

become part of a broader reconfiguration of security arrangements and alliances in the region. The war in Gaza has exposed the limitations of the previous international approach, which was based on containing escalation and maintaining a merely nominal political process without addressing the profound transformations taking place on the ground in the West Bank and Jerusalem.

At the international level, the positions of the major powers vary between clear political support for Israel and more critical European positions that have had limited practical impact. The United States tends to grant Israel broad latitude in managing security issues and its policies toward the West Bank and Gaza. U.S. political, military, and diplomatic support for Israel has remained one of the factors limiting the ability of international institutions to impose immediate costs on Israeli policies. Nevertheless, at certain points, U.S. policy has included measures targeting extremist settlers and settler groups, including sanctions against the “Hilltop Youth,” individual settlers, and outposts accused of violence against Palestinians. Meanwhile, some European states have pursued symbolic or political measures, such as recognizing the State of Palestine or adopting stronger rhetoric in their criticism of settlement activity. Despite their political significance, however, these measures do not necessarily translate into direct instruments of pressure unless they are accompanied by practical actions that constrain settlement expansion or raise the cost of de facto annexation.

At the regional level, the Arab position faces a complex set of considerations. On the one hand, the Palestinian question continues to retain its political and popular significance, particularly amid opposition to forced displacement, annexation, and changes to the status quo in Jerusalem. On the other hand, some Arab states are increasingly acting according to broader regional and security calculations related to Iran, Red Sea security, the future of Gaza, normalization initiatives, and post-war arrangements. Building a unified Arab position toward the West Bank and Jerusalem is therefore essential, yet remains difficult given the differing priorities among Arab capitals.

Politically and legally, international action remains important for Jordan and the Palestinians, particularly through the United Nations, the International Court of Justice, other relevant courts and legal mechanisms, and the growing recognition of the State of Palestine. The impact of these instruments, however, remains cumulative and long-term, and they cannot be relied upon alone to halt the rapid establishment of realities on the ground in the West Bank. Their importance therefore lies in providing legal and political support for the Jordanian and Palestinian positions and raising the cost of annexation for Israel, rather than in producing an immediate change in Israeli conduct.

The regional and international environment consequently provides Jordan with important opportunities for action, but does not in itself offer sufficient guarantees. International support may remain moral or political unless it is translated into tangible pressure, while the Arab position may remain fragmented unless it is organized around clear red lines concerning forced displacement, annexation, Jerusalem, and the Hashemite Custodianship. Jordan must therefore make active use of this environment rather than wait for it to produce results. This requires transforming international and regional divisions into a platform for coordinated diplomatic and legal pressure, while simultaneously supporting the cohesion of the Palestinian domestic front as an essential condition for any effective external action.

Sixth: Potential Scenarios

In light of the preceding analysis, several potential scenarios can be identified regarding the trajectory of gradual annexation in the West Bank and its implications for Jordan and the regional environment. These scenarios are not necessarily separate from one another; they may overlap, or one may serve as a pathway toward a more dangerous scenario.

1. The Gradual De Facto Annexation Scenario

This is the most likely scenario in the short term, as Israel continues to impose cumulative realities on the ground in the West Bank without issuing a direct formal declaration of

annexation. This process is manifested in settlement expansion, strengthened security control, the construction of bypass roads, restrictions on movement, land confiscation, and the imposition of economic and financial conditions that place pressure on the Palestinian Authority and Palestinian society. The danger of this scenario lies in its ability to enable Israel to change the reality gradually without incurring the political and legal costs that might result from an explicit formal declaration.

For Jordan, this scenario represents a continuous and accumulating threat because it creates a reality on the ground that becomes more deeply entrenched over time. Addressing it therefore requires continuous monitoring, assessment, and action rather than waiting for a formal declaration of annexation.

2. The Partial or Large-Scale Formal Annexation Scenario

Under this scenario, Israel would formally declare the imposition of its sovereignty over parts of the West Bank, such as the Jordan Valley, or over broader areas encompassing strategic parts of the territory. Although this scenario is less likely in the near term than gradual de facto annexation, it would be more dangerous and costly if it occurred, as it would shift annexation from the level of realities imposed on the ground to that of an openly declared legal and political decision.

This scenario could severely weaken the Palestinian Authority or accelerate its collapse and heighten tensions with Jordan, particularly if annexation were to include the Jordan Valley or generate population and security pressure eastward. It would also subject the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty to a difficult political and legal test, as formal annexation would undermine the political foundation upon which the peace arrangements were established and redefine Jordan's western border as an increasingly tense and sensitive area.

3. The Exhaustion or Collapse of the Palestinian Authority Scenario

This scenario is not solely linked to a formal declaration of annexation. It could result from sustained financial, security, and political pressure on the Palestinian Authority, the deterioration of its ability to provide services, and the widening trust deficit between the Authority and Palestinian society. Under these circumstances, the Authority would gradually be reduced to an administrative body with limited capacity, unable to formulate a political position or effectively manage developments on the ground.

This scenario poses a direct threat to Jordan, as the collapse or severe exhaustion of the Palestinian institutional framework could transform the West Bank into an open arena of security and social disorder. This would increase pressure along Jordan's borders and confront the Kingdom with more complex security, humanitarian, and political challenges. Supporting a minimum level of cohesion within Palestinian institutions must therefore form part of Jordan's approach as an element in safeguarding its national security.

4. The Reform of the Palestinian Political System within an International Process Scenario

This scenario involves initiating a process to rebuild the Palestinian political system, whether through reforming the Palestinian Authority, renewing its legitimacy, reactivating representative institutions, or establishing a new political framework capable of addressing the post-war phase. It could present an opportunity if it emerged from an internal Palestinian consensus and were based on a clear national project that preserved fundamental Palestinian rights.

However, this scenario also carries risks if it is designed according to external or Israeli conditions intended to produce a Palestinian Authority that is more acceptable as an administrator of the existing reality, rather than to end the occupation or halt annexation. Any Palestinian reform process must therefore be linked to the restoration of political and

national legitimacy and should not be limited to rehabilitating the Authority as an administrative partner in restricted security and economic arrangements.

5. The Relative Stability under External Pressure Scenario

This scenario assumes the continuation of international and diplomatic pressure, including the growing recognition of the State of Palestine, initiatives within the United Nations, and European pressure. Such developments could lead to the partial or temporary suspension of certain Israeli measures without producing a fundamental change in the reality on the ground. This may result in a form of crisis management or a return to limited negotiations without fully halting the process of de facto annexation.

The danger of this scenario is that it could give international actors a sense that political progress is being achieved while realities continue to accumulate on the ground. Jordan must therefore approach this scenario cautiously and use any international pressure to help stop annexation rather than settle for a superficial calm that postpones a broader crisis and allows existing realities to become further entrenched.

6. The Security or Border Escalation Scenario

This scenario remains less likely in the near term, but its costs would be high if it occurred. It could result from a large-scale security collapse in the West Bank, major waves of violence, attempts to induce indirect population displacement, or a significant change in the situation in the Jordan Valley or Jerusalem. Under such circumstances, Jordan could face mounting security and humanitarian pressures even without becoming involved in a direct military confrontation.

A large-scale war between Jordan and Israel does not appear likely in the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, this does not eliminate the need to prepare for border instability, limited displacement, or intermittent security escalation. Jordan's interest lies in preventing this

scenario through early political and diplomatic action while maintaining the security and humanitarian preparedness required to respond to any sudden development.

Based on the above, the most likely scenario is the continuation of gradual de facto annexation. The most dangerous scenario, however, would involve a combination of formal annexation, the exhaustion of the Palestinian Authority, and escalation in Jerusalem or the Jordan Valley. The danger therefore lies in the accumulation and convergence of multiple trajectories that could create a new reality that would be difficult to contain at a later stage.

Seventh: Jordanian Policy Options and Recommendations

Addressing gradual annexation requires Jordan to adopt a multi-level approach that combines political and legal action, domestic resilience, regional coordination, security and humanitarian preparedness, and support for Palestinian steadfastness in the West Bank. In this context, annexation must be treated as an existing threat that is advancing incrementally through the imposition of facts on the ground.

Option One: Diplomatic and Legal Escalation

This option is based on intensifying Jordan's efforts at the United Nations, international courts, and diplomatic forums to increase the political and legal costs for Israel. It includes linking any steps towards annexation or changes to the status quo in Jerusalem to firmer international positions, as well as documenting violations related to settlement expansion, settler violence, land confiscation, and restrictions imposed on Palestinians.

The importance of this option lies in its ability to provide Jordan's position with broader legal and political support and to transform annexation from a Palestinian-Israeli issue into one that directly affects regional security and international stability. However, the impact of this

approach will be cumulative and long-term, requiring it to be combined with other, more immediate options.

Option Two: Strengthening Jordan's Domestic Resilience

This option focuses on strengthening Jordan's domestic front and preventing developments in the West Bank and Jerusalem from creating polarisation within Jordan. It involves developing a clear political and media discourse that links the protection of Jordanian national interests with support for Palestinian rights, while preventing the Palestinian issue from becoming a source of internal division or identity-based conflict.

This option also requires enhancing institutional, economic, and public-service preparedness and developing contingency plans to address potential humanitarian, security, or economic pressures. The more cohesive Jordan's domestic front is, the greater its ability to manage the crisis externally from a stronger position.

Option Three: Regional and International Coordination

This option is based on building a regional and international support network to ensure that Jordan does not face the repercussions of developments in the West Bank and Jerusalem alone. It includes closer coordination with Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and other Gulf states, as well as with the European Union and the United States, to align positions regarding displacement, annexation, and changes to the status quo in Jerusalem.

Such coordination entails seeking to distribute burdens, establish shared red lines, and develop mechanisms for providing economic and political support to both the Palestinians and Jordan should the crisis escalate. This option is particularly important because Jordan cannot independently bear the political, economic, and humanitarian costs of a large-scale deterioration in the West Bank.

Option Four: Security and Humanitarian Preparedness

This option focuses on enhancing preparedness for worst-case scenarios without accepting them politically or treating them as inevitable. It includes strengthening border surveillance, developing early-warning mechanisms, and closely monitoring developments in the West Bank, particularly in the Jordan Valley and areas near the Jordanian border.

It also requires the preparation of contingency plans to address the possibility of limited displacement, border unrest, or the collapse of essential services in nearby Palestinian areas. This should be accompanied by strengthening civil defence and humanitarian response capacities in cooperation with national institutions and international organisations. Such preparedness must be governed by a clear principle: preparing to respond to crises does not imply accepting any scenario involving forced displacement.

Option Five: Supporting Palestinian Steadfastness in the West Bank

Supporting Palestinian steadfastness in the West Bank represents the first line of defence for Jordanian interests. The greater the Palestinians' ability to remain on their land and sustain their economic, social, and institutional life, the lower the likelihood of displacement, institutional collapse, and the transfer of resulting pressures to Jordan.

This option includes supporting small and medium-sized economic projects; strengthening the agricultural, healthcare, education, and local-service sectors; supporting municipalities and community-based institutions; and facilitating assistance aimed at enabling residents to remain in their communities. It also requires supporting Palestinian civil society organisations, trade unions, universities, and local media as instruments of societal resilience that are no less important than political and diplomatic tools.

Option Six: Supporting the Reform of the Palestinian Institutional Framework

This option is linked to the need to preserve a minimum level of cohesion within the Palestinian political system while promoting reforms that rebuild trust between the leadership

and society. It includes supporting efforts to end internal divisions, broaden political participation, strengthen transparency, and restore the role of representative institutions, thereby enabling Palestinians to formulate a more unified and effective political position in confronting annexation.

For Jordan, this option represents an investment in stability west of the Jordan River. The weakening or collapse of the Palestinian Authority would turn the West Bank into a direct source of security threats, whereas a more cohesive and legitimate Palestinian institutional framework would help reduce the risks of disorder, displacement, and escalation.

Final Recommendation

The paper recommends adopting a proactive and gradual Jordanian approach that treats incremental annexation as an existing threat rather than a deferred possibility. This approach should combine efforts to increase the political and legal costs of annexation; establish clear red lines concerning forced displacement, Jerusalem, and the Hashemite custodianship; strengthen Jordan's domestic front; build a regional and international coordination network; enhance security and humanitarian preparedness; and support Palestinian steadfastness in the West Bank.

The priority of this approach is to prevent de facto annexation from becoming an irreversible reality and to contain its potential security, demographic, and political repercussions for Jordan. Jordanian action should therefore begin with continuous monitoring of the cumulative developments on the ground, regular updates to risk assessments, and a shift from crisis-driven responses towards a sustained preventive policy. The longer annexation is left unaddressed as an existing reality, the more limited the ability of Jordan and the Palestinians to influence its trajectory will become, and the greater the future cost of containing its consequences.