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Equality and Human Rights

Whitewashing Apartheid:
How Netanyahu manipulated
language to hide the consequences
of unilateral annexation

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the consequences of unilateral annexation

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INTRODUCTION

In less than a decade, annexation of the territories has morphed from an unheard of notion held by the delusional fringes of Israeli society into the declared policy of the Israeli government, enjoying the support of the leaders of the Blue and White and Labor parties. There is no underestimating the consequences of this development: from an escalation in the Occupied Territories to entrenching apartheid policies in the Israeli legal code, from blatant violation of human rights to international sanctions on Israel. In spite of this, through a lengthy and calculated campaign, the right has succeeded in gift wrapping the annexation of the territories and marketing it to the Israeli public as a legitimate, reasonable, and almost inevitable move.

This report's focus is the laundering of the discourse, which has played a major role in the process of legitimizing and normalizing the idea of annexation among the Israeli public. It examines the political causes and actors that have been working in recent years to move the notion of annexation from the most extreme and messianic political fringes into the heart of the discourse of the moderate right and even the center-left.

There is a direct line connecting the whitewashing of the annexation discourse to the whitewashing of the occupation discourse that came into use immediately after the '67 war and has gotten more and more sophisticated over the years. Many in both the academic and the activist sphere touch on the important roll whitewashed language has played in the attempt to legitimize, conceal, and prolong the Israeli policy of occupation.¹ We in Zulat believe that 53 years of occupation constitute a grave, profound, and prolonged violation of human rights and that annexation through legislation will not only entrench it but also exacerbate it and transform Israel from a state enforcing an occupation regime with apartheid characteristics into a full-blown apartheid state.

"Apartheid" is a complex word, not only because of its elusive meaning but also due to the heavy baggage attached to it. In approaching the issue of annexation and the discourse around it, we take this complexity into account and address it, but we also believe it's important to tell it like it is and steer clear of the laundering of language that lies at the heart of this report.

This report seeks to characterize the components of the laundering process employed to normalize and legitimize annexation, in order to identify the modus operandi and

¹ Thus, for example, in 2015-2015, Breaking the Silence launched a campaign called Occupation Dictionary in which the organization exposed the public to terms used by soldiers sent to control the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, showing the gap between the positive and untainted nature of such expressions on the surface and the ugly and violent significance behind them within the context of the occupation: "[mapping](#)", "[dry out](#)", "[straw widow](#)", "[tampon](#)" and more.

understand its unique character. We also intend to expose the politicians and media figures who play an active part in this "laundromat" and contribute to the concealment of the true significance and implications of annexation: the establishment of an apartheid regime in the State of Israel.

The Political Establishment: Right-wing politicians have in recent years adopted a new language to prepare decisionmakers in the government and the Knesset, as well as the public, for unilateral annexation of the territories without giving political rights to Palestinians. While the word "peace" became a dirty word in the political lexicon long ago, the discourse has since continued to change: "Applying sovereignty" has replaced the two-state solution discourse or the political settlement discourse. Instead of calling it "retroactive decriminalization of land theft" we now use "regulation," and instead of saying "elimination of the separation of powers" we now use "governance."

The Media: The media, which plays a key role in the political arena, has embraced the right's laundered rhetoric and uses the government's vocabulary, thus taking part in the creation of a false reality and upholding the mechanisms of concealment. It now appears that the watchdog of democracy has stopped doing its job properly and that the mainstream Israeli media hardly bothers to state the obvious: that annexing the territories by dint of a government resolution spells the creation of an apartheid regime in the State of Israel, which by definition will deepen and perpetuate the violation of Palestinian human rights.

Quite a few organizations, think tanks, researchers, and other agencies are currently involved in the struggle against annexation. As their analyses and insights abundantly describe the dangers and repercussions of annexation, there is no need to elaborate on them any further. Instead, we have chosen to focus on how such a calculated and dangerous policy of human rights abuses has found its way into the heart of the Israeli mainstream. Furthermore, given that the normalization of annexation lies largely in the way we talk about it, the angle we decided to tackle is that of the public discourse.

The first chapter of this paper is devoted entirely to an examination of the term "apartheid" and offers an overview of its literal, legal, judicial, and regime-related meaning, directly addressing how these are reflected in the Israeli case study. This chapter is followed by the main thrust of our report: "The Laundromat," which outlines the seven laundering steps used by launderers of the annexation discourse to normalize it among the Israeli public. Coming after it is a brief overview of the meaning and implications of annexation, which the launderers seek to hide through the repeated use of this whitewashed terminology.

The terminological analysis in this report is accompanied by a quantitative study of the number of times that words and concepts in the annexation discourse, be they highly laundered or less so, appeared in various media outlets. The findings gathered for this report and presented throughout it support our central claim: that the annexation policy

is mediated for the public by Israel's politicians and media, primarily through the use of laundered terms that enable the normalization and legitimization of this dangerous policy.

The ease with which the political establishment and media have enabled the normalization of apartheid and their contribution to downplaying, disregarding, and ridiculing its meaning should give cause for concern to all those who care about Israel's future. The State of Israel may soon embark on a process that will reshape not only its borders but its very essence, a move that will have dramatic implications for the human rights of Palestinians as well as for Israel's security, foreign relations, economy, and constitutional nature. Therefore, we in Zulat have chosen to focus on the laundering process, because there comes a time when one needs to stop the washing machine in order to start listening and discuss the reality.

ANNEXATION WILL LEAD TO AN APARTHEID REGIME

Apartheid is a loaded term whose use people often resist or react to negatively. Nonetheless, it would be impossible and even dangerous to address the issue of annexation and the debate surrounding it without using the only term that describes the reality it will create in the region most accurately and comprehensively. This is of importance because our examination of the matter focuses on the discourse around the issue, and we consider it important to call a spade a spade and not have a hand in the laundering of annexation which this report aims to highlight and criticize. Therefore, this chapter is devoted to a review of the literal, legal, judicial, and regime-related significance of the term "apartheid" and an examination of them in the context of the reality of Israel's rule over the Occupied Territories and the lives of the Palestinians living there prior to, during, and following annexation.

According to the Apartheid Convention of 1973² and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, apartheid is a crime against humanity "committed in the context of an institutionalized regime of systematic oppression and domination by one racial group over any other racial group or groups and committed with the intention of maintaining that regime."

The Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, which marked its 53rd year earlier this month and which involves the blatant and ongoing violation of Palestinian human rights, has apartheid characteristics, primarily because of the settlement enterprise. The very presence of settlers in the Occupied Territories, which has led to a regime known as "settler colonialism," creates a reality in the West Bank in which two groups of people living in the same geographical area are each subject to a different system of law in many of the legal fields that regulate their lives: The settlers are subject to Israeli law (which applies to them personally, though geographically they live in an area outside the State of Israel), while the Palestinians are subject to military law. Furthermore, the apartheid reality in the Occupied Territories is strongly linked to the actions of the State of Israel, which are intended to perpetuate the status quo. These are reflected, among other things, in the development of separate infrastructures, the construction of the separation fence, the expropriation of land, the suppression of Palestinian development, and a variety of legal measures.

² International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid.

If so, why do we say that the upcoming annexation is what will create a reality of apartheid?

Given that the definition of an apartheid regime is a legal one, as long as it is possible to separate between the regime within Israel proper and the regime in the Occupied Territories, even though Israel is responsible for the territories and for establishing a reality that has apartheid characteristics, it cannot yet be considered an apartheid state. However, once a single legal system is applied to the entire area between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, and once the Israeli courts, institutions, and parliament are allowed to legislate in the Occupied Territories and the distinction between them and Israel is abolished, then one single regime will reign throughout the region. And, once the attributes of apartheid exist under the purview of this regime, then the State of Israel itself will become an apartheid regime.

Does it matter if we annex one square meter or the entire West Bank? Does size matter?

Even if we annex only one square meter, the State of Israel will be relinquishing its democratic pretensions and abandoning its 53-year declared intention to end the conflict, reach an agreed settlement with the Palestinians, and cease ruling over them. Annexation, even if very partial, will indicate that Israel is shifting to a policy of perpetuating its violent, thieving, and oppressive regime toward the Palestinians. However, even such a concession of intent and pretense does not yet mean a merger of regimes as described above, and in this sense, does not necessarily make Israel an apartheid state but rather preserves it as a state operating a regime with apartheid characteristics in the Occupied Territories.

Having said that, the greater the size of the annexed area that is joined to the State of Israel to form one regime, the harder it will be for the excluded territory to function sovereignly and sustainably. In our case, given that the plan is to annex all of Area C (that is, 30% of the West Bank), Areas A and B will seemingly remain under Palestinian control but will actually be neglected and will function as non-independent Bantustans or some kind of weak self-rule actually controlled by Israel.³

In addition, annexing of the settlement blocs, which were strategically set up over the years so that they surrounded and "strangled" the Palestinian population centers in the West Bank as much as possible, will necessary entail extending the damage to, dispossession of, and human rights violations against the Palestinians. In this sense, the larger the annexed area, the more we will be forced to admit that the result is one regime controlling both

³ Bantustans were residential areas designated for the rights-deprived Black population under the Apartheid regime in South Africa. Black enclaves, remote, barren, and neglected, that were established far from the areas where the Whites lived, as part of the policy of racial separation. The Bantustans were supposedly sovereign autonomous areas, but their terrain, their separation, and the legal restrictions imposed on them did not enable them to develop and made them unsustainable from the outset. In fact, the very existence of these "autonomous" enclaves enabled the South African regime to deny the Blacks who lived there their rights by claiming that they were citizens of the "autonomous" Bantustans and were not under South African's responsibility.

Israel and the West Bank, since the Palestinian entity remaining outside the area annexed by Israel will hardly be able to exist as an independent and functioning sovereign body.

Moreover, statements made by many officials dealing with the issue indicate that annexation is not intended to be carried out in one single move but will instead be a gradual process. Thus, the annexation of one square meter will only be the first in a series of similar steps, and it will constitute an acknowledgment on Israel's part of its intention to annex more territories unilaterally in the future.

In conclusion, even without Israel taking further steps toward annexation, the current nature of Israeli rule over the Occupied Territories has considerable apartheid characteristics. In this sense, the danger of the upcoming annexation cannot in any way detract from the reality of the existing occupation. Having said that, a decision to annex territory means that the State of Israel will be abandoning its 53-years-old pretense of planning to one day end the occupation and allow the Palestinian people to live sovereignly and to fulfill their national aspirations. The greater the annexed territory, the less possible a viable, functioning Palestinian state will be, not only on the declarative level but also because of the realities on the ground.

* This chapter was written under the supervision of Attorney Michael Sfard, an expert on international law related to human rights and warfare.

HOW TO LAUNDER YOUR APARTHEID IN 7 EASY STEPS

Step One - Stain Removal: Use of "Applying Sovereignty"

The discourse launderers make sure to use the seemingly non-threatening term "applying sovereignty" rather than telling it like it is - apartheid - in order to hide the dangerous and far-reaching implications of annexation from the Israeli public.



For years, politicians who wanted to promote annexation of territory talked about "applying sovereignty." The word "sovereignty" has positive connotations and brings to mind independence, freedom, and choice. More importantly, "applying sovereignty" is a relatively murky concept. Many do not understand its significance and view it as a mere question of semantics, notwithstanding the serious impact on the reality of its legal and diplomatic implications. This gap renders possible the interpretation of "applying sovereignty" in varied ways.

In the current context, applying sovereignty means that control of the territories occupied in the 1967 war will switch from the IDF commander to the State of Israel and that Israeli law will henceforth also apply to these territories and to the people living in them. So far, in the 53 years of occupation, these areas and their Palestinian inhabitants have been under military rule and subject to the rules of belligerent occupation ("occupatio bellica") under international law. In practice, this means that the IDF is the temporary sovereign administering the territory and, as such, serves as the executive arm of the State of Israel. If sovereignty is applied, the official sovereign in the Occupied Territories will be the State of Israel, and the IDF will cease to administer the occupied area.⁴

This dry description does not tell the whole story, as one might infer from it that the

⁴ See [Legal Ramifications If Israel Decided To Annex the West Bank](#), Prof. Yuval Shany, Israel Democracy Institute website, 16 May 2019.

application of sovereignty could have positive implications to the effect that a new reality will be created between the river and the sea where everyone will enjoy equal rights. The kind of sovereignty promoted by the Israeli right and the US Government, however, is one that envisions unilateral annexation of territory – that is, a forcible and nonconsensual one, contrary to Israel’s declarations to date, to the position of the international community, and to international law – while eliminating the two-state solution. All the proposals, declarations, plans, and scenarios on the agenda reflect a clear intention to perpetuate the inequality, expand the violation of rights and land theft, and further entrench Israeli-Jewish supremacy in the region at the expense of the Palestinians’ human rights and their future state. It goes without saying that neither do these plans entail any intention to grant civil rights to the Palestinians in the West Bank.

Annexation will not only perpetuate the violation of human rights that already exists in the Occupied Territories but will also result in the deportation and displacement of Palestinians living in dozens of villages in Area C which Israel considers illegal, as well as to massive expropriation of land in the West Bank.⁵

All the annexation plans are to some extent based on a division of the territory according to the Oslo Accords. This means that while citizens of the new Israel will enjoy equal rights, the Palestinians will live in Areas A and B, which will function as non-independent Bantustans deprived of autonomous viability and which Israel will administer by remote control or through incursions into their territory. Moreover, the State of Israel’s plans is to unilaterally apply its law to an area outside its jurisdiction. Such annexation runs counter to international law, just as would annexing London or Paris without asking Parisians and Londoners for their opinion on the matter.

Using “applying sovereignty” instead of the word “annexation” aims to conceal this moral blight. It is intended to shift the debate from the harm to Palestinians and their rights to the fulfilment of our national aspirations and the realization of the Zionist dream, using the collective sentiment evoked by these goals in order to raise support for the idea, or at the very least reduce the opposition to it.

⁵ [The Three Most Commonly Held Misconceptions About Israel’s Annexation Plan](#), Michael Sfard, Haaretz.com, 3 June 2020; [The potential impact of West Bank annexation by Israel on the human rights of Palestinian residents](#), 20.04.20, Yesh Din

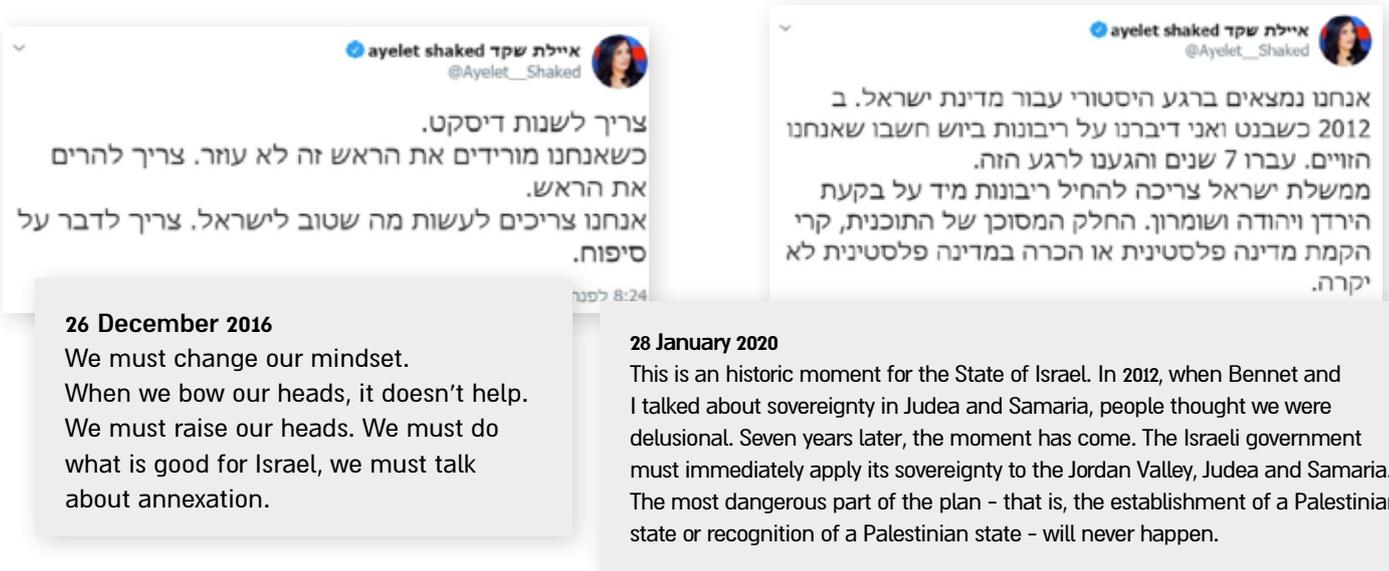
Table 1: Increase in Use of Different Terms Following Launch of the Trump Plan

Term	Month	Mentions in Ynet	Mentions in Israel Hayom	Mentions in Haaretz	Average
"Applying sovereignty"	December 2019	2	4	2	2.666
	January 2020	101	150	31	94
	Increase	+4,950%	+3,650%	+1,450%	+3,425%
"Annexation"	December 2019	162	136	438	245.333
	January 2020	218	162	616	332
	Increase	+34.5%	+19%	+40.5%	+35.3%
"Apartheid"	December 2019	6	3	140	49.666
	January 2020	7	5	137	49.666
	Increase	+17%	+67%	%-2	No increase

The table above shows the change in the discourse surrounding the publication of the Trump plan at the end of January 2020. Although the plan clearly involves the annexation of some Palestinian territory, and its implementation will inevitably lead to the establishment of an apartheid regime, this is not necessarily reflected in the media-public discourse in Israel. It was a very topical issue in December 2019-January 2020, and media coverage did increase accordingly. It is interesting to note, however, that while use of the laundered "applying sovereignty" increased considerably (3,425%), use of the term "annexation" increased only slightly (35.3%), while use of the most loaded but accurate concept "apartheid" did not increase at all.

Step Two - Rinsing: Notion of Annexation Shifts from Fringes to Center of Discourse

Until not too long ago, the idea of annexing the Occupied Territories was confined to the most extreme, messianic, and loony political fringes. In recent years, mainly due to Netanyahu’s legal troubles, the center-right in Israel increasingly accorded legitimacy to these extreme ideologies and their supporters, which brought them into the heart of the mainstream political discourse and set them as normative.



These two tweets by Ayelet Shaked, written approximately three years apart, best illustrate the shift made by the notion of annexation from the margins to the center of the discourse and the way it has been addressed by Israeli politicians. In the first tweet, dating back to December 2016, Shaked calls on the public to “raise our heads” and “talk about annexation.” Three years later, around the time the Trump plan was launched, Shaked urges actions rather than words, directly addressing the change in discourse on the issue: “When Bennett and I talked about sovereignty in Judea and Samaria, people thought we were delusional. Seven years later, that moment has come.” Although this process was influenced by political and geopolitical changes, it was also directed, shaped, and planned by right-wing elements.

At the beginning of the decade, when the notion of annexation began to appear in the public discourse, it was primarily the domain of the extreme right and messianic settlers. In 2012, shortly after quitting his position as executive director of the Yesha Council, Naftali Bennett launched a program to annex Area C and the settlement blocs.⁷ Two years later, in his capacity as economy minister and chairman of the Jewish Home party, he proposed a plan “to annex the settlement blocs”⁸ and even published an article in The New York Times detailing its main points.⁹ In 2013, MK Tzipi Hotovely (then deputy transportation minister)¹⁰ and MK Miri Regev (then chairperson of the Knesset’s Lobby

⁷ [‘Israel Should Annex 60% of Area C’](#), Moran Azulay, Ynetnews.com, 23 February 2012
⁸ [Bennett to Netanyahu: Israel Must Annex Settlement Blocs in Response to Palestinian Move](#), Barak Ravid, Haaretz.com, 9 April 2014
⁹ [For Israel, Two-State Is No Solution](#), Naftali Bennett, NYTimes.com, 5 November 2014
¹⁰ [Hotovely: Annex Judea and Samaria](#), Elad Benari, Israelnationalnews.com, 24 June 2013

for Applying Israeli Law in Judea and Samaria)¹¹ also addressed the issue, long before they had established their status as senior government officials. In 2017, Bezalel Smotrich (then chair of the Eretz Israel Lobby and a Jewish Home MK) also proposed a bill to apply Israeli sovereignty and published his "decisive plan."¹²

Since then, the concept of annexation has undergone a rapid and radical process of normalization and assimilation into the mainstream discourse in Israel, first among a growing number of factions in the Knesset and later also in the media and public discourse. To illustrate this point, here is what then Justice Minister Tzipi Livni stated in response to Bennett's proposal in 2014: "They just want to win points with those who do not want an agreement, who do not understand the significance of these proposals and the tragic consequences they will have on Israel as we want to keep it."¹³ Similarly, when Smotrich sought to pass the aforementioned law, he encountered opposition from MK David Bitan, chair of the coalition at the time, who asked him not to raise the bill and to postpone its presentation.¹⁴ As opposed to the waning number of those endorsing Livni's position, however, Bitan and his ilk not only got used to the idea of annexation and the special vocabulary devised for it but also adopted it completely in recent years and started promoting it themselves.

This mainstreaming of the notion of annexation can be seen in two parallel but inseparable processes. The first is related to the discourse itself, which in the past was characterized by an attempt to whitewash certain concepts that were perceived as undemocratic or immoral but today is largely stripped of this pretense and says it directly, unashamedly, and unapologetically. The second process is related to the political actors who take part in it: If in the past annexation was considered an extreme and violent idea confined to minor and messianic elements - such as Bennett in his earlier and less "statesmanlike" version, Smotrich, and those settler parties that are often seen as pariahs - these ideas seem to come nowadays not only from the ruling right-wing Likud party¹⁵ but also from parties and politicians considered centrist, first and foremost Benny Gantz.

¹¹ [Likud MK's Bill Would Annex the Jordan Valley](#), TOI staff, Timesofisrael.com, 26 December 2013

¹² [MK's Controversial Plan Nixes Two-State Solution, Calls for Annexation](#), Gil Hoffman, Jpost.com, 11 September 2017

¹³ [Livni Blasts Bennett Over Annexation Suggestion](#), Ido Ben Porat and Elad Benari, Israelnationalnews.com, 23 May 2014

¹⁴ [Ma'ale Adumim Annexation Vote Delayed To Avoid Clash With Trump Envoy](#), TOI staff, Timesofisrael.com, 14 March 2017

¹⁵ [Likud Party Calls for De-Facto Annexation of Israeli Settlements](#), Ynetnews.com, 1 January 2018

Step Three - Sorting: Full or Partial Annexation

Discourse launderers take pains to emphasize that annexation will be partial rather than full and make sure to put the spotlight on the areas that are intended to be annexed at this time: the Jordan Valley, settlement blocs, and Area C. This is because they identify the blind spot that exists in the minds of many Israelis, whereby there is a crucial difference between full or partial annexation of the Occupied Territories, as the latter would involve granting citizenship to a relatively negligible number of Palestinians. This public perception is based on limited familiarity with the annexation plans on the agenda and meager understanding of the far-reaching implications of annexation, be it partial or full. Discourse launderers know this and make use of this fact.

There is an argument in the book "Conversations about Israeli hope." That's exactly what this country was founded upon - the ability to argue and build. We argue about the Nation-State Law, about the radicalization of the Arab sector, about the tribes versus the melting pot that I believe in, about partial or full annexation. He who can argue can prosper. And He who cannot will lose. The book is out in the shops today.



If annexation was initially laundered by meticulously adhering to the phrase "applying sovereignty," in the following stages the whitewashing mechanism went up a notch, and the bulk of the effort was devoted to voiding the concept of its actual substance and refilling it with a softer, more moderate, and tolerable meaning.

One of the key methods used to this end was to constantly emphasize the difference between full and partial annexation. For many, the idea of full annexation of the West Bank is associated not only with enormous injustice toward the Palestinians but also with the undoing of Israel's democratic character. In contrast, partial annexation is rather digestible. As part of the discourse shift from the fringes to the mainstream, a growing number of voices started to be heard in Israeli politics and in the media - much of it coming from the center-left - whereby the implications are not disastrous if it involves only partial annexation of settlement blocs or of the Jordan Valley.

However, there is no difference between full and partial annexation in everything that matters - and here are 5 reasons why:

1. The Israeli regime:

Whether the upcoming annexation applies to the entire West Bank or only to certain

parts of it, the act is substantively identical: Anchoring annexation in legislation will lead to the creation of apartheid in terms of regime, law, and substance.

2. Feasibility of Palestinian State:

All the plans proposed so far, first and foremost the Trump plan, have dealt with partial annexation. A brief glance at the proposed geographical distribution between areas to be annexed and those that will not, however, exposes the severe damage to the territorial contiguity of the Palestinian state and makes clear its unfeasibility. Indeed, most of the proposals distinguish between Area C, which is slated for annexation, and Areas A and B, which will remain part of the Palestinian Authority. However, there is no ignoring the fact that the latter will be made up of enclaves which, although not under Israel's responsibility, won't be able to become a single functioning political entity due to the restrictions on movement, the presence of settlers, security bans, and more. Furthermore, the Trump plan transfers control over entry and exit from the Palestinian "state" to Israel, forbids the Palestinian "state" from signing certain agreements and treaties, and subjects to Israel's veto even the authority for planning and construction in areas abutting the border.

3. Security:

Due to the severe damage to the feasibility of a future Palestinian state, as well as the fact that even partial annexation will worsen the Palestinians' dispossession and deprivation of rights, there is every reason to expect a harsh Palestinian response even in the case of partial annexation. Top defense establishment officials have more than once cautioned that annexation might ignite an escalation in the West Bank, and in effect, that is the scenario that the defense establishment is gearing up for. In this sense, fear of an outbreak of a third intifada, violence, demonstrations, and unrest persists whether we annex the entire West Bank or only the "settlement blocs." And, as it is obvious to anyone who has perused the map of the areas to be annexed, partial annexation will create a very long and winding border between Israel and the Bantustans earmarked for the Palestinians, which will dramatically expand the areas of friction between the two sides.

4. Relations with Jordan and Regional Stability:

One of the areas designated for annexation, even in the event of a very limited and partial annexation, is the Jordan Valley. This move is bound to trigger harsh opposition from Jordan, given that this is where many Palestinian refugees are ultimately expected to relocate and due to the unilateral nature of the Israeli move. King Abdullah has warned of a major clash with Israel if annexation goes ahead,¹⁶ while experts have cautioned that annexation of the Jordan Valley might undermine stability throughout

¹⁶ [Jordan's Abdullah Warns of 'Major Clash' With Israel If Annexation Goes Ahead](#), Jacki Khoury and Amir Tibon, Haaretz.com, 15 May 2020

5. International Community and Israel's Global Standing:

International law explicitly prohibits unilateral annexation of occupied territory, be it extensive areas or a mere square meter. Accordingly, a large number of European countries have strongly come out against the move, stating that such annexation could lead to heavy sanctions and exact a price.

Discourse launderers seek to conceal from us the true meaning of annexation, but we must insist on telling it like it is: Annexation is an aggressive act involving unilateral seizure of territory, while enshrining the move in legislation means entrenching regime discrimination and creating apartheid rule in place of Israeli democracy, which is anyway weak.

Step Four - Soaking: Habituation of Israeli Public to Concept of Annexation

Discourse launderers have for years been consistently working to lower public standards with regard to good governance, proper leadership, compliance with the law, and preserving the systems of democracy, and are now using the same grinding mechanism to accustom the Israeli public to annexation and accept it with indifference. Among other things, laundering of the annexation discourse has been enabled by the laundering of the occupation discourse that has been going on for 53 years, distancing the Israeli public from the injustices and ongoing abuse of the Palestinians. Along with the general rightward shift of the entire political spectrum, the discourse launderers benefit from the increased public indifference that contributes to normalizing annexation.

To think that until a few years ago anybody talking about annexation would have been considered delusional, while today 40 percent of Israel's Jewish public supports it over all of Judea and Samaria. Amazing!



In order to understand the mainstreaming and normalization of ideas that until not too long ago were associated with the most extreme fringes of the political spectrum, one must look not only at the actions of the messengers but also at the process undergone by the message recipients. The relative indifference that characterizes the Israeli public's attitude toward the upcoming annexation must be seen against the backdrop of the general political reality in Israel, taking into account the nature of the political discourse that dialectically emerges from it and shapes it at the same time.

Following are 3 factors that have played, and are still playing, a major role in the habituation of the Israeli public to the current political situation, specifically with regard to annexation:

1. General Erosion of Governance Norms and Compliance with Law by Elected Officials:

It seems that thanks to the rising level of corruption and delinquency among Israeli politicians in recent years, the Israeli public has learned to come to terms with phenomena it would not have tolerated in the past. There is a marked discrepancy between the backlash against past leaders caught in improper conduct (e.g., the Rabin dollar bank account affair in the 1970s) and the unimaginable ease with which contemporary

politicians dismiss the importance of such cases. In recent years, the Knesset and the government have been filled with an unprecedented number of convicted felons, people charged with criminal misconduct, and officials involved in improper affairs who refuse to pay a political, public, or criminal price for their actions.

Even with regard to the various corruption cases in which Netanyahu is involved, there is no ignoring the fact that the public has undergone a slow process of habituation. Current moves by Netanyahu and his associates that go by relatively quietly would probably not have been accepted by Israeli society five years ago, and certainly not a decade ago. For many years, Netanyahu and his partners have been lowering expectations and lowering the standards of good and proper governance, slowly but surely accustoming the Israeli public to nonchalantly accepting acts that a few years ago would have been perceived as inconceivable and deplorable.

Similarly, the public has grown used to the escalating violation of the mechanisms of democracy in Israel. If until not too many years ago disparaging statements against the institutions of democracy (such as Moti Yegorov's call to bulldoze the Supreme Court) aroused astonishment and distaste, it seems that a lot more is needed these days to rattle the Israeli media and public. Consequently, a vicious cycle has emerged whereby the more the standards of good governance and democratic conduct erode, the greater the number of anti-democratic measures that take place. These steps further intensify the erosion, and so on.

2. Shift Rightward in Israeli Politics:

The "annexation race" undertaken by leading candidates for the premiership joins a clear shift rightward of the entire political system in the last two decades, within which positions that were previously considered centrist, moderate, and normative - as well as their supporters - have become identified with the left (one glaring example is the two-state solution and the pursuit of a political settlement with the Palestinians). At the same time - in direct connection to the criminal charges faced by Netanyahu, his attempts to evade them, and the coalition games he pursues to this end - extreme right-wing fringes have ceased being ostracized and have become major political players enjoying vast power and influence. Naftali Bennett and Bezael Smotrich, who made their way from the political fringes to the Cabinet and to the top of senior government ministries, are just two of many whose legitimization has normalized the discourse they represent, however extreme and insane. The most obvious example, of course, is Netanyahu's legitimization of the Kahanist party and his effort to merge it with the religious Zionist parties, which nearly succeeded.¹⁷

¹⁷ [Netanyahu Warns Right-Wing Parties Must Unite or Risk Leftist Government](#), JNS and Israel Hayom staff, 6 January 2020

3. Normalizing the Occupation and Accustoming Israeli Society to It:

The most important component of the erosion and normalization of the annexation discourse is the 53 years of occupation. It is no secret that Israel's military control over the Palestinians has been perfected over the years to the point that the occupation has become almost invisible to many Israelis and the Palestinians have become inhuman and transparent. The moral threshold and the sense of disapproval have continued to erode, along with a slow and imperceptible loss of real acquaintance with the realities on the ground.

In his article "Vocabulary and the Discourse on the 1967 Territories," Nadir Tzur addresses the important role that language plays in shaping our collective state of mind and mutual perception of reality: *"The messages that flow in the social and political communications networks compete with each other for the ear of the majority, enlist it and impel it to prefer particular standpoints and opinions over others and to follow those who voice them. [...] In the unceasing competition to fashion reality, to define it and to confer meaning on its various components, in which the social and political agents of influence participate, language has a central place."* The article is based on the notion that *"the more that time passes since the Six Day War, the further the language connected to the territories is stretched in structure, in accordance with the security, State, international, internal-political, socio-economic and, of course, ideological-religious circumstances."* Regarding the discourse surrounding the occupation in Israel, Tzur writes: *"It seems that even after more than 40 years, what is treated as an occupied territory, what appears to be an occupied territory, and from within which arise voices identified with an occupied territory, is not always called such; and for ideological, political, security, social or religious purposes, has been given names and labels that have stripped it of its significance over the years."*¹⁸

In addition to the erosion and normalization of the occupation discourse, Israel has taken a series of de facto annexation steps during these 53 years, such as building settlements and outposts, setting up firing zones and the separation fence, enforcing restrictions of movement, and more. These steps are meant to establish facts on the ground in order to consciously and deliberately create a reality that will be impossible to ignore in the future.

The ongoing occupation policy and its consequences, along with the aforementioned additional elements, have led to the current reality where a dangerous, immoral, and disturbing notion such as annexation has made its way into the heart of the political-media-public discourse in Israel and has established itself as reasonable and normal.

¹⁸ Tzur, N. (2013). Vocabulary and the discourse on the 1967 territories. In D. Bar-Tal D., & I. Schnell (Eds.). The impacts of lasting occupation: Lessons from Israeli society (pp. 471-506). New York: Oxford University Press.

Step Five - Bleaching: Media Embraces and Echoes Right's Laundered Annexation Discourse

When reporting on the annexation issue, most Israeli media figures embrace the right-wing's laundered discourse, and instead of challenging it and exposing its false and deceitful components, echo it in a way that legitimizes it. Thus, the media itself becomes part of the laundering process: It creates the false impression that annexation is indeed on the public agenda, but it uses terminology and framing that normalizes it and legitimizes its architects.

The media debate about annexation is between Riklin and Haetzni, as if this were an internal settlers' issue. However, Riklin and Haetzni do not differ on the main point: Both of them believe that the Palestinians do not have, as we do, the basic right to self-determination, to be the masters of their own destiny. And both of them agree that it is our duty to keep the Palestinians in this condition forever, under our boot.

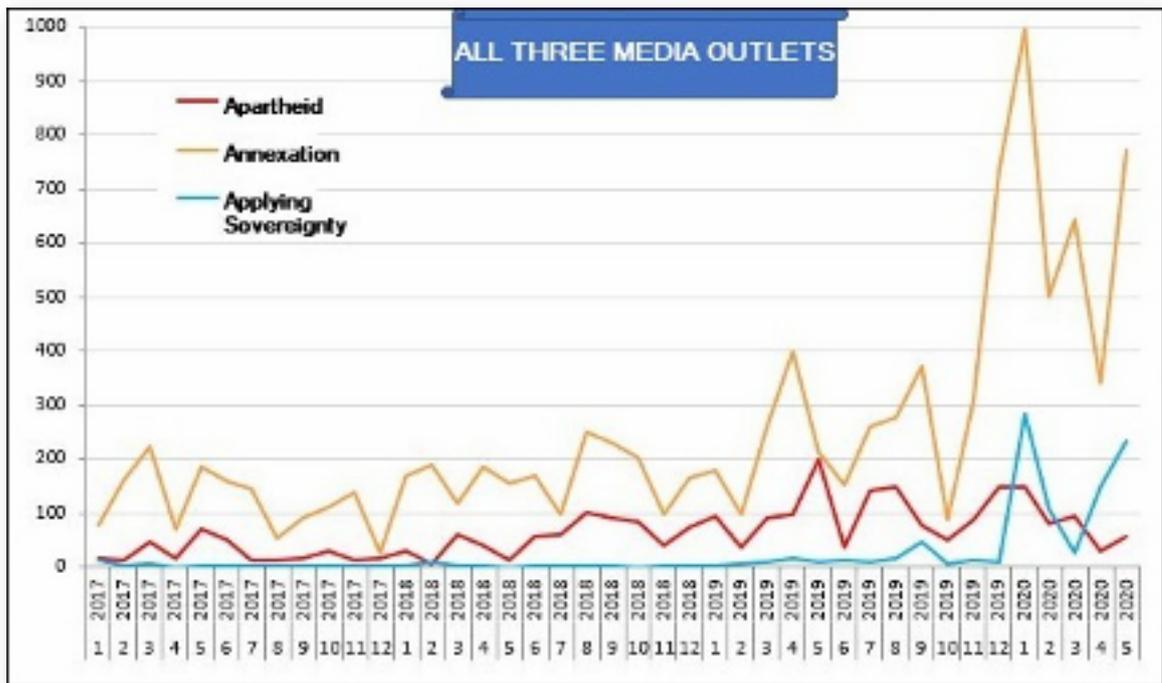


The power of the media lies not only in reflecting but also in creating reality as it sets the agenda, frames the discourse, and shapes the language. Similar to the Israeli public at large, the mainstream media in Israel over the years underwent a process of habituation to the right's laundered discourse. As a result, it adopted the misleading vocabulary, echoed and normalized it, and ultimately played an active role in the laundering process.

Initially, when the annexation discourse was whitewashed by talk of "applying sovereignty," most mainstream media outlets appeared to favor this phrase instead of telling it like it is, even though "applying sovereignty" was clearly a whitewashed term. It was intended to "cleanse" the implications of unilateral annexation, which would not only fail to solve the existing discrimination and inequality but would actually deepen them. But even later, when the word "annexation" entered the discourse and its launderers largely devoted their efforts to separating it from its meaning and implications, the media made little effort to clarify the concept of annexation and dwell on all its implications.

Mostly, what stands out in the media discourse is the scant mention of the word "apartheid," which, as mentioned, best describes the meaning and implications of annexation. The chart below shows the number of times each of the three terms "applying sovereignty," "annexation," and "apartheid" appeared in the media (the monthly number of mentions

in the websites of Haaretz, Israel Hayom, and Ynet) from January 2017 to May 2020.

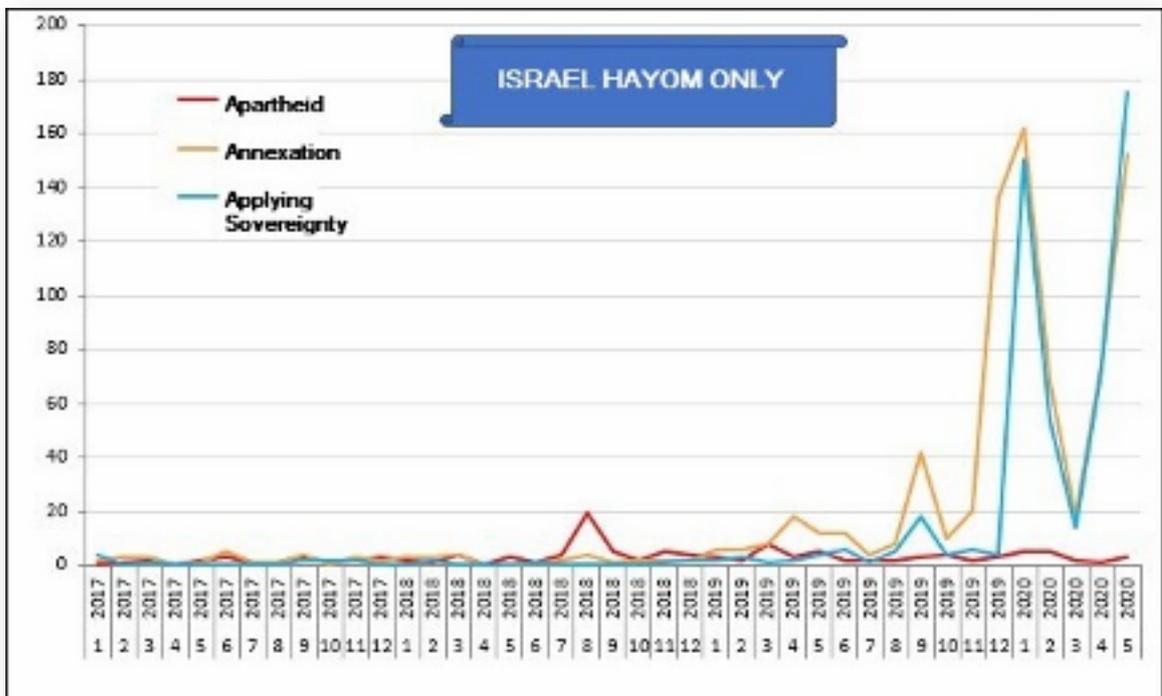


The graph shows that use of the laundered term "applying sovereignty" began to grow more or less around the publication of the Trump plan in 2019. This means that as the notion of annexation became more imminent, there was a corresponding increase in the need to use laundered language to help with its digestion.

It's also notable that upon the release of the plan in January 2020, which was accompanied by Netanyahu's and Gantz's official visits to the White House to demonstrate their support for it, use of the laundered phrase "applying sovereignty" for the first time surpassed use of the non-laundered term "apartheid," and not without reason. As the annexation plans became more concrete upon the publication of Trump's blueprint, discourse launderers had a greater need to present those plans in a positive and sympathetic light. "Applying sovereignty" fit the bill perfectly.

The graph also shows that upon the release of the Trump plan, a dramatic increase occurred in the number of references to "annexation" and "sovereignty" as opposed to the word "apartheid," whose use remained more or less unchanged even though the issue topped the public-political-media agenda.

Also noticeable is the fact that from the date of publication of the plan until May 2020, use of the word "apartheid" declined, hitting the lowest number of mentions in April-May 2020 upon the signing of the coalition agreement and the establishment of the Likud-Blue and White unity government.



The graph above shows the number of monthly mentions of each of the three terms, but this time looking only at the website of Israel Hayom, a daily with a clear right-wing bias. It shows the same trends as the previous chart (which presented the findings in all three media outlets), only more strongly so. Use of the word "apartheid" by Israel Hayom clearly remained almost nil even in the face of new developments, such as the launch of the Trump plan or the signing of the coalition agreement that brought the danger of apartheid to the agenda.

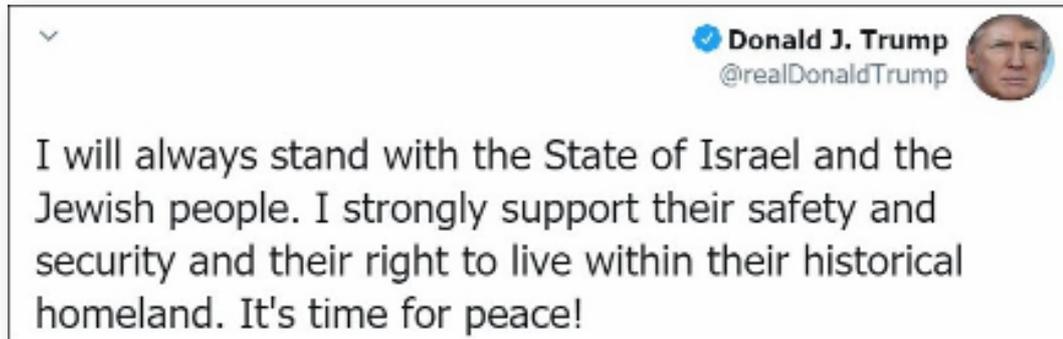
The chart also shows that use of "applying sovereignty," the most laundered term to describe annexation, is particularly high in Israel Hayom and numerically similar to use of the word "annexation" (which suits the situation a little bit more but still fails to convey the danger of apartheid).

Moreover, as progress was made in the coalition negotiations, including on the annexation steps, "applying sovereignty" surpassed the use of "annexation" and became the main term used by Israel Hayom in its coverage of the political situation, which attests to the extent of the laundering operation conducted by Netanyahu's mouthpiece.

Hence, while the media debate deals with the security and diplomatic difficulties that annexation poses, it hardly touches on its profound implications for the democratic nature of the State of Israel. While there is ample reportage on the international opposition to annexation, it is much more difficult to find a discussion on the reasons for this opposition. Even today, after the establishment of the government, there aren't enough Israeli media figures dealing with the issue who bother to dwell on the repugnant and perturbing nature of the idea and to remind the public of the simple and dangerous truth: Annexation means apartheid.

Step Six - Boiling: Trump-Led US Administration's Role in Promoting Annexation

One of the biggest annexation launderers is Donald Trump. The US president and his administration have played a crucial role not only in putting annexation on the agenda, but especially in framing this aggressive, hawkish, and dangerous step as a peaceful solution that will benefit all parties. The Trump plan is indeed a product of long and intense lobbying by the settlers, but its architects are the ones who turned annexation into a concrete, immediate, real, and most of all normalized idea.



One of the factors that has most legitimized annexation is the radical change in the position of the US leadership upon Donald Trump's election as president. In recent years, the Trump administration has taken a number of steps that have made crystal-clear where it stands regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the occupation: It relocated the US Embassy to Jerusalem, recognized Israel's annexation of the Golan Heights, ended UNRWA's funding, closed the Palestinian Embassy in Washington, and most of all, legitimized annexation of parts of the West Bank under the heading "Peace Plan."

All these measures are the product of many years of intensive lobbying by the settlers, as well as far-reaching political collaboration between Israeli right-wing figures and "pro-Israel" officials appointed by Trump, such as Ambassador David Friedman, Jared Kushner, and others.¹⁹ A right-wing lobby has been working for years to attain legitimacy for annexation, first in the United States and later in Israel, much like the way in which Netanyahu's immediate political interests pushed the annexation notion to center stage and helped legitimize it in the eyes of the Israeli public.

The rise of the extreme right is not a phenomenon confined to the United States, however, as rising nationalism, the breakdown of democratic values, and radicalization of racism has been occurring in recent years all over the world, and especially in Europe. This global shift has directly contributed to the erosion of the political discourse in Israel and has affected the norms of good governance, democracy, and human rights.

¹⁹ [For Israel To Give Up Hebron and Beit El Is Like the US Giving Up the Statue of Liberty](#), Ariel Kahana, Israelhayom.com, 8 May 2020

Step Seven - Spinning: Political Crisis in Israel and Lack of Alternative to Netanyahu

The signing of the Likud-Blue and White coalition agreement was the launderers' topmost achievement. Throughout three election campaigns in the past year, not only was no real governmental alternative presented, but neither was an ideological alternative to the right-wing solutions for dealing with the conflict. The enfeebled center-left announced its support for the Trump plan, embraced the annexation discourse, and echoed it. The signing of the coalition agreement and the adoption of the right's discourse positioned annexation as a legitimate and reasonable step and did away with the acknowledgment of its dangerous consequences.



21 January 2020

Why wait until after the elections if sovereignty can be applied to the Jordan Valley already now, with broad approval in the Knesset? Benny Gantz, I'm waiting for your answer already tonight, unless Ahmad Tibi sticks you with a veto.



Blue and White leader Benny Gantz:

"I'm in favor of applying our sovereignty in the Jordan Valley and other settlement blocs. Trump's plan is the right reference for an agreement between us and the Palestinians." He made these remarks in the "Shabbat Newsreel" with Hila Korach.

It seems that in recent years, and more so in recent months due to three election campaigns and the massive amount of electioneering they entailed, a kind of race began in Israeli politics. As part of this race, the degree of a candidate's electability is largely measured by their statements and plans to deepen Israel's rule over Palestinian territory, entrench its control over the entire area from the river to the sea, establish Jewish supremacy in it, and in general take an increasingly nationalist and aggressive line. This is how it came to pass that Benny Gantz - leader of the "centrist" Blue and White party and the only real alternative to Netanyahu and his policies, with more moderate views on the Israeli political scale - completely embraced the rightist-settler discourse on annexation.

Defense Minister and Alternate Prime Minister Gantz has never expressed any opposition to Israel's policy of military control over millions of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, as attested to by his decision to launch his first-ever election campaign for the premiership by highlighting the death toll in Operation Protective Edge in Gaza in 2014, when he was IDF chief of staff.²⁰ Nevertheless, the shift made by Gantz and his men from this point to concrete declarations about annexation appears to have been the result of political pressure "to fall into line" in order to get elected. In August 2019

²⁰ ['Parts of Gaza Sent Back to Stone Age': Gantz Videos Laud His IDF Bona Fides](#), Raoul Wootliff, Timesofisrael.com, 20 January 2019

he published a video praising the Jordan Valley and emphasizing its importance,²¹ and in January 2020 he published another video where he pledged to apply Israeli sovereignty to it.²² That same month, Gantz traveled to Washington to meet with Trump prior to the US president's meeting with Netanyahu to discuss his peace plan,²³ thereby effectively voicing his support for it and the policy it outlines.

The shift was finalized when, under the guise of the coronavirus pandemic and through the manipulative use of the disenchantment of Israeli citizens with the prolonged political crisis, Netanyahu succeeded in bringing into his annexation government not only Gantz but also two of the three MKs (Amir Peretz and Itzik Shmuli) from Labor, a party traditionally identified with the Israeli left. The result is a misrepresentation wherein annexation seems like something that both candidates for the premiership, who allegedly came from opposite sides of the political map, agree on, thereby creating the false impression that annexation is a consensual, legitimate, and normalized idea across parties and political affiliation.

Thus, the laundering process was completed: from carefully avoiding talk about "annexation," through detaching it from its real meaning, all the way to its re-legitimization by the political "center."

²¹ ['I was raised on the stories of hot pursuits in the Jordan Valley, our eastern defense wall. When we'll be in power, we will see to strengthening the Jordan Valley. We will market more land plots, increase agriculture grants, and inaugurate a new urban center. The strength of the Jordan Valley is the strength of us all,' Benny Gantz on Twitter, 5 August 2019](#)

²² ['The Jordan Valley is the eastern defense wall of the State of Israel under any future scenario. After the elections we will work toward applying sovereignty within a consensual national move and in coordination with the international community,' Benny Gantz's Facebook page, 21 January 2020.](#)

²³ [In Wake of Trump Plan, Netanyahu Moves on Israeli Sovereignty Over West Bank](#), Ynet and News Agencies, Ynetnews.com, 28 January 2020.

THE REAL SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPLICATIONS OF ANNEXATION

What does annexation actually mean?

1. It means moving from a "temporary" situation to a permanent reality. The violation of the human rights of millions of Palestinians living under occupation may be going on for 53 years but is still defined as a temporary situation that will one day culminate in a solution. Once we annex, this "temporary" situation will be perpetuated as the founding principle of the Israeli regime. Any separation that would have been possible between Israel proper and its rule in the Occupied Territories will be completely eliminated. **Israel will officially become an apartheid state that operates under a formal system of discrimination and racism.** The occupation may have created an apartheid reality on the ground, but anchoring annexation in legislation will accord it legal validity and create an apartheid regime.

2. It means that Israel is ready to **abandon the security guise that served as a justification for the occupation** and admit to its citizens and to the international community that its policy in the territories during these 53 years was not an inevitable necessity stemming from the security situation. It was rather a tyrannical rule aimed at buying time until annexation became possible, in a bid to ensure that no entity other than Israel would ever exist between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.²⁴ The lack of coordination with the defense establishment and the exclusion of security personnel from the debate amply attest to the minor importance that annexation advocates attach to the security aspect and contribute to substantiating this claim.²⁵

3. It means that the State of Israel **has no intention of reaching a future settlement with the Palestinians in the spirit of a two-state solution** and that the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that is acceptable to most of the world's political actors will be off the agenda.

4. It means a **blatant violation of international law**, which prohibits a country from annexing occupied territories or making any change liable to harm the local population, consequently seriously hurting the status of Israel and its institutions within the international community and endangering its foreign relations.²⁶

5. It means **torpedoing any feasibility of a Palestinian state with real sovereignty and territorial contiguity.** In this respect, it is important to understand that from a legal, diplomatic, governmental, and substantive point of view, partial annexation will have the

²⁴ [Avoiding a Small Annexation Will Not Prevent the Larger Occupation](#), Elie Podeh, Jpost.com, 15 June 2020.

²⁵ [Unprecedented: Defense Establishment Excluded From Sovereignty Enforcement Process](#), Tal Lev Ram, Maariv.co.il, 6 June 2020 (Hebrew).

²⁶ [EU Countries Mull Slapping Sanctions on Israel To Deter West Bank Annexation](#), Noa Landau, Haaretz.com, 12 May 2020; U.K. [Lords Committee Calls To Limit Israel's Economic Access If Annexation Goes Ahead](#), Noa Landau, Haaretz.com, 13 May 2020.

same meaning and implications as full annexation.

6. It means that the delinquent policy of establishing facts on the ground will be rewarded, that there is in fact no difference between the State of Israel and the last of the Hilltop Youth, and that **Israel is willing to adopt the practices of the illegal settlement movement** and align with its violent and abusive conduct, not only on the ground but officially and declaratively.

7. It means **removing any current oversight on settler institutions**²⁷ that stops them from promoting their interests at the expense of their Palestinian neighbors, and even at the expense of Israeli citizens living within the Green Line.

8. It means that **Israel relinquishes what little remains of its commitment to the rights of the Palestinians in the territories**. Under international occupation laws, Israel is subject to oversight and restrictions over its actions as an occupier. Annexation will leave the Palestinian population without any legal umbrella to safeguard its rights.²⁸

9. It means that the Palestinians will get a final and clear message from Israel to the effect that it has no intention of ever giving them political sovereignty and that Israel is about to ditch the only mechanism that still obliges it to uphold their rights. The result, as many defense establishment officials warn, may be yet **another round of violence that will endanger the lives of both Israelis and Palestinians as well as the stability of the entire region**.²⁹

10. It means that Israel, which might find itself facing a deep recession as a result of the corona crisis, will be required to spend huge sums to be able to tackle the new security demands and the international sanctions. The Defense Ministry is already demanding an addition of billions of shekels "to prepare for the repercussions of annexation," while the European Union is mulling the possibility of freezing research and economic cooperation plans worth billions of shekels.³⁰

²⁷ [Full-Blown Israelis: How Life of Residents of Judea and Samaria Will Change After Sovereignty Applied](#), Assaf Golan, Israelhayom.co.il, 29 January 2020 (Hebrew); [What Will Be the Impact of Annexation? Depends on Whether You Are Israeli or Palestinian](#), Whistle Team, Globes.co.il, 5 June 2020 (Hebrew).

²⁸ The potential impact of West bank annexation by Israel on the human rights of Palestinian residents, 20.4.20, Yesh din; [The Dark Side of Annexing the Jordan Valley: Whitewashing Land Theft](#), Akiva Eldar, Haaretz.com, 6 May 2020; [Annexation Is the Israeli Settlers' Real Estate Dream Come True](#), Michael Sfard, Haaretz.com, 23 May 2020.

²⁹ [Annexation: Real Opportunity or Danger](#), Ehud Yaari, Mako.co.il, 11 May 2020 (Hebrew); [West Bank Annexation Will Be the End of Israeli-Jordanian Peace](#), Marwan al-Muasher, Ynetnews.com, 11 May 2020; [Annexation: A Disaster in the Making](#), Amnon Reshef, Commanders for Israel's Security's website, 9 April 2020.

³⁰ [Economic Sanctions in the Billions: EU To Discuss Response to Annexation](#), Tal Shalev, Walla.co.il, 15 May 2020 (Hebrew); [Defense Ministry: Annexation To Cost IDF Billions of Shekels](#), Themarket.com, 16 May 2020 (Hebrew).

CONCLUSION – UNDERMINING ISRAELI DEMOCRACY BY LAUNDERING THE DISCOURSE

This report reveals how the annexation policy was laundered and the ways through which discourse launderers succeeded in blurring its implications and re-marketing it into the center of normative political discourse in Israel. The laundering of the discourse plays an important part in promoting measures that will not only perpetuate the ongoing violation of human rights and deepen the apartheid characteristics of Israel's rule over the Occupied Territories, but will also establish a de facto apartheid regime in the State of Israel.

Use of Laundered Term "Applying Sovereignty": Many discourse launderers use the term "applying sovereignty" to get rid of the moral stigma attached to an aggressive unilateral annexation and in order to conceal its dangerous and far-reaching meaning from the Israeli public. The associations triggered by this turn of phrase make it more digestible and legitimize it as a reasonable step.

From Extreme Right to Center of Discourse: Prime Minister Netanyahu's legal troubles in recent years have forced him and many of his supporters within the moderate right to introduce radical personalities and ideas into the center of the discourse and give them legitimacy in order to survive politically. Thus, within a few years, the idea of annexation shifted from the fringes and became a pillar of the mainstream discourse in Israeli politics.

Emphasizing Difference Between Full and Partial Annexation: Discourse launderers seek to create a mental separation between full and partial annexation, thereby framing partial annexation as plausible and acceptable. This stems from the realization that most Israelis are not well versed in the details of the planned partial annexation and its implications and, therefore, are not aware that in all important aspects - substantive, legal, governmental, regional, diplomatic, international, and more - there is no difference between a full and a partial move.

Moral Erosion After 53 Years of Occupation: Normalization of the idea of annexation has primarily been enabled by 53 years of occupation, which have not only perpetuated a kind of status quo and created Israeli indifference to the suffering, dispossession, and violations of the human rights of the Palestinians but also allowed the right and the settlers to set facts on the ground that constitute the best launching pad for annexation.

Erosion of Israel's Democratic and Legal Characteristics: Just as Israelis have learned to live with a violent day-to-day rule over millions of people, in recent years they

have also grown used to the constant lowering of public standards with regard to good governance, and in particular to the ever-increasing attacks by the government on all of Israel's democratic institutions. Such habituation processes greatly contribute to the erosion that allows lunatic and dangerous ideas such as annexation to penetrate the heart of the discourse and position themselves as reasonable and logical.

Media's Adoption of Laundered Discourse: The media, which adopted the right's laundered discourse and echoed it almost without challenging it or demanding a truthful portrayal of reality, became part of the laundering process over time. Throughout the past year, as the annexation discourse grew more intense, and even around the launch of the Trump plan and the formation of the unity government, the media continued for the most part to use laundered terminology and rarely insisted on telling it like it is.

Laundering Deepens With Trump Plan: Discourse launderers use the Trump plan launched in January and present it as a peace plan. The US president and his administration, who will be seeking re-election in the coming months and need the support of "pro-Israel elements,"³¹ have made a major contribution to framing the aggressive and unilateral annexation as a path toward a peaceful solution that will benefit all parties.

Embrace of Right's Discourse by Center-Left: The laundering process was finally completed when, as part of the political crisis in Israel and after three very painful election campaigns, the center-left, which had sought to replace Netanyahu's right-wing rule even though it never offered any substantive or ideological alternative, adopted the laundered discourse and finalized the legitimization of annexation without posing any challenge.

Most Notable Is the Absence from the Discourse of the Term "Apartheid": This word, however complex and loaded, is the one that best describes, most faithfully and accurately, the implications of all the plans currently under consideration to anchor annexation in legislation. Whenever a politician or journalist dealing with annexation fails to use the word "apartheid" - that is, fails to call a spade a spade - they throw sand in the eyes of the public and help deepen the laundering process that enables the normalization of this dangerous and warped notion.

Thus, within a few years, the public discourse on annexing the territories, which had been confined to the most extreme fringes of the right, became commonplace and normative. Although the promoters of annexation took advantage of the opportunities afforded by developments in the national and international political arena, they would never have succeeded in legitimizing annexation without an orderly and calculated campaign to launder the language.

³¹ "Pro-Israel elements," the term used to describe Trump administration officials advancing annexation and apartheid programs, itself is part of the word-laundering designed to legalize such measures. In fact, these are pro-settler US elements who have been influenced by the intensive and years-long lobbying of the Yesha Council and their partners and whose political activity includes steps that often hurt rather than advance Israel.

These claims are demonstrated in this report through extensive quantitative analysis and metrics, too. The results are presented using tables and charts that most clearly show the laundering process. Now, further aided by the examples and quotes included in it, we can no longer pretend that we do not know.

The annexation campaign succeeded in concealing the true meaning of far-reaching steps and imbuing them with a different and softer meaning, to the point that it is now almost impossible to discuss the annexation of the territories without being suspicious of the language in which this idea is packaged, sold, and marketed.

This requires us to constantly examine the discourse, parse its true meanings, and expose the annexation lexicon "laundromat" and its key agents. But most of all, it requires us to discuss the concrete implications of annexation and the realities on the ground, because even sleek language and laundering of blatant and far-reaching injustices have a limit.

Attached to this paper is a glossary that offers an alternative language more faithful to reality to replace the whitewashed annexation discourse. We believe that in order to fight the laundered discourse and its promoters, both in the media and in the political arena, an alternative vocabulary must be offered that insists on using more accurate, frank, and realistic terminology. As far as we are concerned, this is the best answer to the annexation discourse launderers, who seek to undo in the public mind the direct link between annexation and the establishment of an apartheid regime in the State of Israel.

GLOSSARY OF ANNEXATION TERMS

"Bogdim" - Traitors, Don't Talk Abroad: By labeling them as traitors or haters of Israel, the government tries to delegitimize the activities of human rights organizations seeking to reveal to the international community its violent policies in the Occupied Territories, the ongoing abuse of Palestinian human rights, and the violation of international law. While left-wing activists are accused of treason, right-wing activists working abroad to justify the occupation and obscure the violence enjoy the government's distinct endorsement. What settlers are allowed to do abroad, leftists are forbidden to do.

"Gushey Hitnachluyot" - Settlement Blocs: A strategy of the Yesha Council to establish facts on the ground and to create an irreversible practical and political reality. It aims to block any possibility of evacuating settlements by creating a numerical and territorial Jewish Israeli mass.

"Hachalat Ribonut" - Applying Sovereignty: "Clean" and "positive" words used by the right to cover up Israel's forceful act of unilaterally annexing territory and eliminating the hope for an end of the conflict and peace. A violent Israeli move designed to perpetuate the status of millions of Palestinians as stateless, inferior human beings deprived of rights. Therefore, it portends the crime of apartheid that the Israeli government intends to commit in the West Bank.

"Hasdara" - Regulation: What is being regulated? The annexation and the apartheid regime. The High Court of Justice rejected the Regulation Law, which was the first attempt by the government to apply Israeli law to the territories (extraterritorially). The attempted de facto legal annexation, in contravention of international law and Israeli court rulings, tried to legitimize a political annexation in the Israeli public's mind by attacking/bypassing the High Court. In other words, if the High Court rejects the law, we will amend it. How? We will annex through legislation.

"Tzorech Bithoni" - Settlements Are a Security Need: A remnant of the outdated "Allon Plan." Not only does the settlement enterprise not contribute to Israel's security, it creates security risks and complications. This false security argument is intended to divert the discussion from the fact that the settlements constitute an obstacle to achieving an agreement with the Palestinians and thereby maintain both the Palestinians' struggle for a sovereign state and the repressive military regime whose mission it is to suppress this struggle.

"Halon Hizdamnuyot Histori" - A Historic Window of Opportunity": This refers to the six months between the establishment of the fifth Netanyahu government and November 2020. The words "historic" and "opportunity" are a cover for the attempt to justify the annexation bomb that Netanyahu dropped during the height of the economic crisis

that resulted from the Covid-19 pandemic out of personal interests (his efforts to avoid prosecution). Why November? Because November is the date of the US presidential elections, and Netanyahu is worried that Trump may not be reelected and knows that the man who will replace him has already said that he is opposed to annexation, which he described as dangerous. In other words, Israel could lose Washington, its most important strategic ally, because of Netanyahu and the criminal proceedings against him. In fact, Netanyahu is endangering Israel's security and hurting its international standing.

"Yedideinu be'America" - Our US Friends: A moniker for the right-wing government's alliance with President Trump and his evangelical partners that has destroyed Israel's long-standing bipartisan policy and led it to become involved and be a "political player" in the US elections. As a result, it is also a controversial concept in the United States in general and in the Jewish community in particular.

"We Left Gaza and Got Hamastan": An intimidating phrase commonly used by the right in its propaganda to drive into Israel's collective consciousness the notion that evacuating settlements would lead to Palestinian violence and terror against Israel, just as it did in Gaza after the disengagement. Israel evacuated the settlements in Gaza but never actually left the Strip. It continues to control the area and many aspects of the lives of the people living there by controlling the land, sea, and air. The recurring rounds of fighting on the southern border that have turned the lives of residents of Gaza-abutting localities into a never-ending nightmare are not preordained but rather a deliberate policy of the right-wing government to stoke fear and thwart a political arrangement in the West Bank. The government whose agenda is annexation has no real desire to find a political solution in Gaza or the West Bank, which is why during every round of fighting Netanyahu hastens to reach an agreement with Hamas rather than with Abu-Mazen.

"Yitaron Demografi" - Demographic Advantage: A term describing the desire of the Israeli mainstream to preserve Israel as a Jewish majority and democratic state due to the trauma of World War II. Over the years, however, this expression has become a "moral justification" for institutionalized Jewish supremacy and racist pronouncements, both by the government and Jewish society, regarding the Arab-Palestinian minority in Israel.

We Don't Talk With a Terrorist Organization: The right tells us that Hamas is a murderous terrorist organization that seeks to eliminate Israel and that if we leave the West Bank, Hamas will enter the area and wreak terror on Tel Aviv and Ben-Gurion Airport. What is interesting in this context is that Netanyahu, the right-wing prime minister for the past 10 years, is the one who has conducted numerous negotiations with them, consistently sending envoys to hold "indirect" negotiations with Hamas whenever there is a round of fighting in order to reach understandings with them on a temporary truce.

"A Future Palestinian State": These words in the Trump plan conceal the truth: that it is not intended to lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state but to crush the two-state solution. The "Palestinian State" foreseen under the plan is a disabled, inferior, and defective entity devoid of any territorial horizon and doubtfully sovereign, which would be

comprised of fragmented bits of territory that remain following Israeli annexation of 30 percent of the West Bank. The Palestinian entity that could be established there would be devoid of the characteristics of a state exercising its right to self-determination.

"A Historic Move": Annexation is indeed a historic move that will change the face of Israel, lead to the victory of the messianic settler minority over liberal, democratic Israel, and turn it into an apartheid state. When Netanyahu and his cronies use this phrase, however, that is not the message they intend to convey. "Historic move" is a phrase intended to enhance the sense that not only is this a move that will solve a complex, ongoing, and unsolvable problem but that it is also a unique opportunity that won't come again and therefore shouldn't be missed.

"The War on BDS": An attempt to blur and erase the Green Line as well as the distinction between the Occupied Territories and the State of Israel, thereby silencing any criticism and objection to the occupation/annexation by turning it into a discourse on anti-Semitism. In other words, resistance to the occupation = anti-Semitism. This is a political-strategic move by the right-wing government to erase the Green Line from the collective consciousness in Israel and the world by, among other things, abolishing it on the ground (settlements, legitimization of illegal outposts, annexation). This obliteration does away with the two-state solution as well.

"Meshilut" - Governance: A concept describing the right-wing government's desire to entrench and perpetuate its power and rule by suppressing regulatory and public criticism of its policies and by dismantling the defense mechanisms of liberal democracy. The word sounds positive and democratic in order to hide and whitewash its true opposite meaning: tyranny of the majority. Taking place under the guise of "governance" is a systematic violation and weakening of the rule of law and the justice system (particularly the High Court of Justice and the State Attorney's Office), undermining of the gatekeepers, and substantially sabotaging the separation of powers, ultimately leading to the government gaining the strength to implement its annexation policy and enforcement of the future apartheid regime.

"Annexation of the Jordan Valley": A diplomatic and political trap for the Israeli political mainstream designed to prepare public opinion for accepting full annexation by creating consensus while blurring the danger of the move: gradually taking Israel into an apartheid reality. Annexation of the Jordan Valley was part of the attempt to create a false distinction between full and partial annexation. Moreover, the immediate result of annexing the Jordan Valley is harm to the peaceful relations between Israel and Jordan.

"Sipuah Helki" - Partial Annexation: A big annexation, but in stages. Put differently, full or partial annexation is still a unilateral move (without the other party's consent) and is therefore considered a fundamental violation of international law which is intended to perpetuate the status of Palestinians as inferior people devoid of rights. In other words, apartheid in stages.

"Sipuah Be'Haskama" - Consensual Annexation: Whose consent? With whom? It means unilateral Israeli annexation of the territories while totally dismissing and erasing the other side to the conflict (the Palestinians on the other side of the Green Line) with the approval and consent of a third party (Trump and the evangelicals). In other words, an agreement with the Trump administration on unilateral annexation of West Bank territories.

The Left Fuels BDS: The right sees the global activities of human rights organizations and left-wing activists, as well as those of various boycott movements, as an obstacle that must be eliminated because they expose the injustices of the occupation, perpetuate the Green Line, and interfere with the right in its messianic journey toward a state stretching from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River. Here is the truth, and it should be said loud and clear: If there is no occupation, there is no BDS; if there is no annexation, there's no BDS; if there are no settlements, there's no BDS. In other words, the boycott on Israel is fueled by the right-wing government that annexes land and perpetuates the occupation, not by the leftist organizations struggling to end it.

"Trump's Peace Plan": A one-sided blueprint that serves the interests of Israeli settlers by paving the way for the annexation of the Occupied Territories. According to this plan, a territorially split and demilitarized Palestinian entity ("enclaves") will be established, while Israel will be able to apply its laws in the settlements and their surroundings and preserve security control over the entire West Bank. This is not a peace plan but rather a one-sided plan for annexation.

"Terror supporters": A right-wing demagogic and dangerous argument directed primarily at the leadership of Arab-Palestinian citizens, who constitute twenty percent of Israel's population. It is aimed at delegitimizing and perpetuating the right's coalition majority by destroying any prospect of the left establishing an alternative bloc of 61 Knesset members and forming a government based on the Arab vote.

"Sovereignty in Areas A and B": Shedding all Israeli responsibility for most of the Palestinian population in the Occupied Territories through the creation of isolated and destitute Bantustans.