



Model United Nations

Committee: Specpol

Topic: Annexation of the West Bank

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Introduction:

Hey everyone! My name is George and I will be your chair this year. I look forward to a fantastic day of discourse and debate and I hope all of you do too. I have done Model UN since my freshman year and its grown into my favorite club. It's a fantastic way to get better at debating and working with others, which are both skills you need in life way past in high school. This year, our committee has a very interesting topic that has been all over the news recently. Justin and I look forward to seeing your unique perspectives and ideas brought to the floor. If you have any questions about this committee, please do not hesitate to contact us.

History and Background:

The West Bank, which refers to an area on the western bank of the Jordan River yet to the east of Jerusalem, has been a territory of contention ever since the 1948 Israeli War for Independence. It was occupied by Jordan in the aftermath of the war yet returned to Israel after the 1967 Six Day War, when it became occupied by the nation. Since 1967, large settlements of Israelis have grown in the West Bank, which they call Judea and Samaria after its name from the Torah, which have brought into question whether the status of occupied is nothing more than a formality.¹ Additionally, when the Israeli government began constructing walls during the Second Intifada, it built many around the settlements, cutting into occupied territory which is recognized as a breach of international law.²

¹ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "West Bank." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 24 Jan. 2020, www.britannica.com/place/West-Bank.

² Liebermann, Oren. "What You Need to Know about the Israeli Settlements." *CNN*, Cable News Network, 3 Feb. 2017, www.cnn.com/2017/02/01/middleeast/settlements-explainer/index.html.

The Situation Today

The United States, Israel's most important ally, legitimized the settlements in its own eyes in November 2019. Furthermore, in March of 2019, America also recognized the Golan Heights as a part of Israel, which is a territory whose occupation also began after the 1967 war. These events suggest Israel may have international support if they go through with the annexation. Most recently, sitting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu promised during his reelection campaign to annex the West Bank should his party, the Likud, win a majority.³ Although they did, Mr. Netanyahu did not set up a government in the required time and lost his chance, and has since been indicted on bribery charges leaving the future of this promise in doubt.

Statement of Issue

The annexation of the West Bank would be unique in the modern era. Although many annexations, such as that of the Crimean Peninsula, have occurred, none of them have been of territories under "occupied" status and none have as vast a history of contention. It is illegal under international law to annex territories that are won through war, however Israel argues that, because the West Bank was never a part of a Palestinian state, it does not count as being won through war. Furthermore, as noted above, Israel has already taken steps to annex territories under similar circumstances. However, many large and influential nations, such as the United States and India, have important relationships with Israel and therefore may be inclined to take the nation's side. On the other side, states like Saudi Arabia and Indonesia haven't recognized Israel's legitimacy in the first place.⁴ This is all to emphasize that, if Israel were to

³ Holmes, Oliver. "Netanyahu Vows to Annex Large Parts of Occupied West Bank." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 11 Sept. 2019, www.theguardian.com/world/2019/sep/10/netanyahu-vows-annex-large-parts-occupied-west-bank-trump.

⁴ "Israel International Relations." *International Recognition of Israel*, www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/international-recognition-of-israel.

take this enormous step, there would certainly be a monumental divide within the UN and a fight would break out. There would also be immediate problems on the ground in Israel. The annexation of the West Bank would virtually dash all hopes of a two state solution which would likely lead many palestinian citizens to pick up arms in protest, as they have in similar situations in 1987 and 2000. The Israeli response to this potential uprising would also become a point of international attention. In short, if Israel chooses to take the route of annexing the West Bank, chaos will be unleashed.

Topics Working Papers Should Address:

- Should the UN get involved in a relatively domestic matter with such a complicated history?
- Does the West Bank count as a territory taken in war?
- Even if the annexation is illegal, should the UN act?
- If it does act, what should the nature of this punishment be?

Thanks so much, and we'll see you all soon!

George Wilson, Chair

Justin Peikin, Director

Work Cited

- Holmes, Oliver. "Netanyahu Vows to Annex Large Parts of Occupied West Bank." The Guardian, Guardian News and Media, 11 Sept. 2019, www.theguardian.com/world/2019/sep/10/netanyahu-vows-annex-large-parts-occupied-west-bank-trump
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