



Best Line of Defense: The Case for Israeli Extension of Sovereignty in the Jordan Valley

At a time of American retrenchment from a chaotic and violent Middle East, U.S. national security interests would be advanced by Israel extending sovereignty to the Jordan Valley now.

JINSA's Gemunder Center is issuing a new paper laying out the long-term security benefits, even necessity, of enshrining Israeli sovereignty now in the Jordan Valley. We believe it important to consider the status of the Jordan Valley on its own terms and dispassionately.

Israel's permanent control over the Jordan Valley has been brought to the fore by Israel's recent intent, with American support, to extend sovereignty to parts of the West Bank under the Trump peace plan. This action could take place in stages or at once beginning on July 1st.

The rationale for applying Israeli law there is purely strategic:

- As Islamic extremism and the long reach of Iran have menaced much of the Middle East, and as the United States has sought to reduce its presence there, Israel has stepped up its efforts to hold back the region's growing disorder and especially Iran's aggression.
- The Valley's depth creates a formidable barrier and provides a far more defensible boundary than the so-called Green Line, or pre-1967 line, especially in the current geostrategic context of an increasingly violent and unpredictable Middle East.
- Israeli sovereignty in the Valley also helps protect Jordan and the Palestinian Authority from the real possibility that Hamas could overthrow the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank – as it did in Gaza in 2007.

Despite opposition voiced by Jordan, the Palestinian Authority and some Gulf Arab states, the convergence of their interests with Israel against Iran and Sunni Islamic extremism, and thus their warming ties, are too vital to countenance a full break over Israeli policy in the Valley:

- Jordan, which faces major internal and external challenges, looks to Israel for security cooperation, a stable border, and vital subsidies of natural gas and water.
- The Palestinians need security and economic cooperation with Israel for their own survival, including preventing subversion by Hamas.
- Gulf Arab states need a strong and secure Israel to roll back the shared Iranian threat.

Critics would argue that Israel can accomplish all these goals now, but some are working to end Israeli control over the Jordan Valley:

- Previous U.S. peace plans envisioned Israel relinquishing control of the Valley to inadequate security forces, and future administrations might offer similar positions.
- The Trump Administration's support for Israeli sovereignty in the Jordan Valley could be a rare chance for Israel to bolster its own security and that of its partners, too.

Given the benefits to regional stability, any costs are likely short-term. Therefore, the United States should support Israel's extension of sovereignty to the Jordan Valley.