

CHAPTER TWO

POPULATION INTEGRATION—SITUATION REPORT

The Situation on the Ground

The State of Israel effectively controls the area between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River: the entry and exit of people and goods; responsibility and monopoly over security, maintaining freedom of security operations throughout the territory; the ability to impose its decisions and policies on approximately three million Palestinians without their consent. The Palestinian Authority depends on the Israeli economy and the movement regime for Palestinians enforced by Israel, thereby determining the fabric of life and Palestinian freedom of movement. However, Israel chooses not to assume full responsibility for the territory and the Palestinian population in Judea and Samaria.

While the Palestinian Authority operates, in accordance with a declared policy and an organized plan of action, to strengthen its hold on the land in Area C and to restrict Israel's activities, on the Israeli side, the policy is led by an official arm of the state. The Minister of Finance, Bezalel Smotrich, who is also a minister in the Ministry of Defense in charge of the civil administration in Judea and Samaria, regularly presents his long-term goals: eliminating the Green Line through the civil-infrastructure integration of Judea and Samaria into Israel, and equalizing the administrative and legal status of the settlements to those beyond the Green Line. This is coupled with public contemplation regarding the "necessity" of the Palestinian Authority (which he defines as no less a threat than Hamas). Smotrich's worldview is embodied in a document titled "The Decisive Plan," published in 2017, in which he proposed that Palestinians maintain self-administration without political or national expression or boundary determination, as well as residency status—similar to that of the Arabs in East Jerusalem—with a future option to naturalize if

they declare loyalty to the State of Israel and agree to serve in the IDF.¹¹ The current Economy Minister, Nir Barkat, is also working to promote a plan to settle two million Jews in Judea and Samaria by 2048, aimed at deepening and expanding Israeli control in the area and preventing continuity in Palestinian territories and the future establishment of a Palestinian state. Alongside the official arm, unofficial entities operate independently using non-state tools, dragging the State of Israel after settler movements' actions in Judea and Samaria without an organized government policy or long-term planning.

The settler organizations' struggle also manifests in strengthening Israeli control over areas referred to as state lands or survey lands. The Amana movement initiated the "million Jews in Judea and Samaria" Plan—aimed at reinforcing and expanding settlement in Judea and Samaria to alter the demographic balance in the region and establish facts on the ground that would prevent the evacuation of settlements even in a political settlement. As part of this plan, which has been encouraged and aided by the Ministry of Construction and Housing, the following steps were decided upon: building affordable housing for Israelis in communities outside the settlement blocs; promoting construction plans for optimal utilization of lands within existing communities; a campaign to encourage settlement in remote communities; scanning and identifying state lands and lands with potential to be declared as state lands in Area C, with an emphasis on the western slopes of the Samarian hills. All this is to create settlement continuity with Gush Dan and to exploit the housing shortage in Israel.

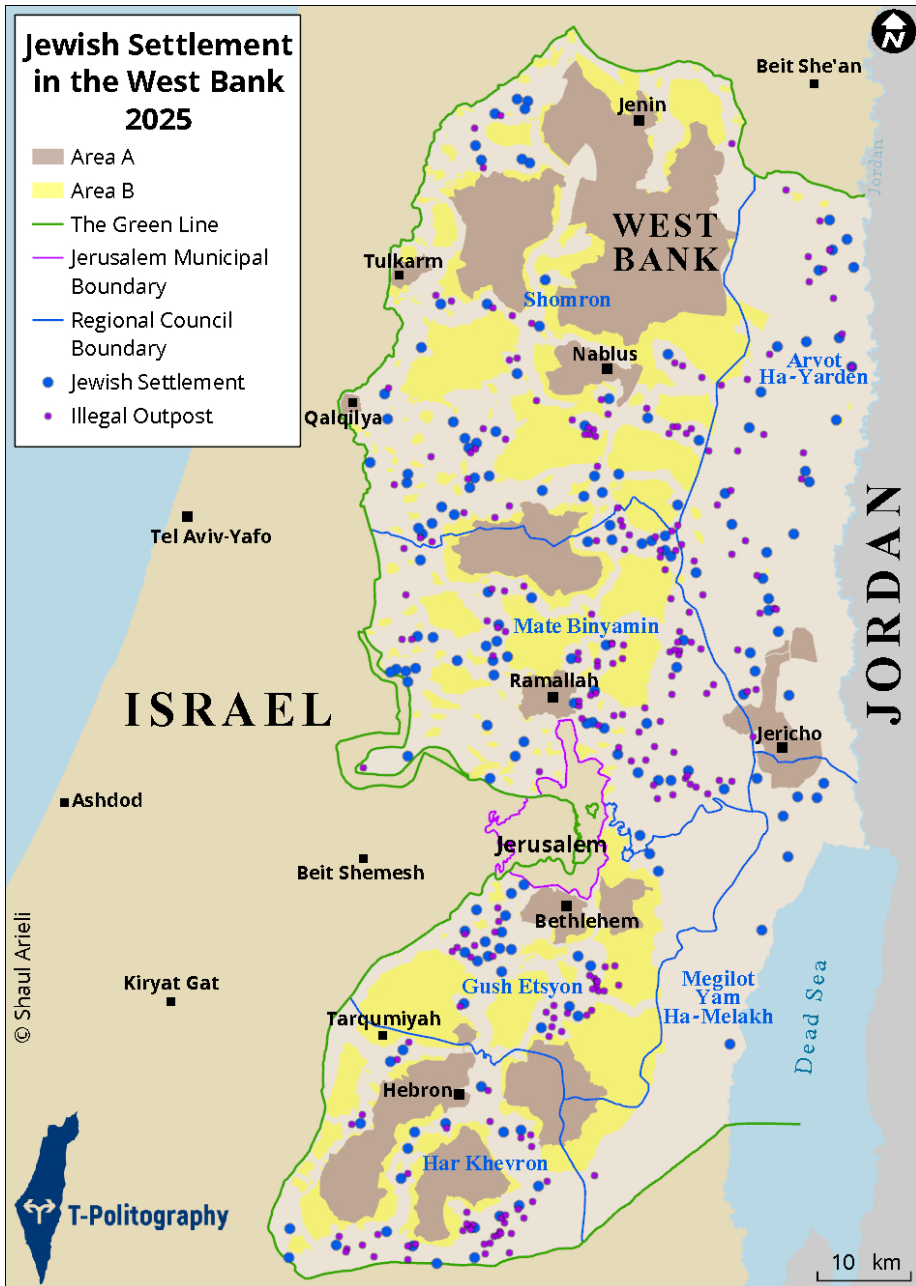
As part of this framework, illegal outposts and agricultural farms are being established (see Figure 4). Unlike outposts, which are settlements with a community, a secretariat, administration, and permanent and temporary structures, the agricultural farms are forward outposts in the area. In some, one to three families reside, along with several volunteer youth, and several

11 Smotrich, "Decisive Plan," 81–101.

temporary structures are established without community services. The agricultural farms are typically divided into two main types:

- a. Agricultural farms where field crops, vineyards, almonds, and grapevines are cultivated.
- b. Sheep farms, which include sheep pens, feed storage for livestock, irrigation facilities, dairies, and a residential cabin.

FIGURE 4.

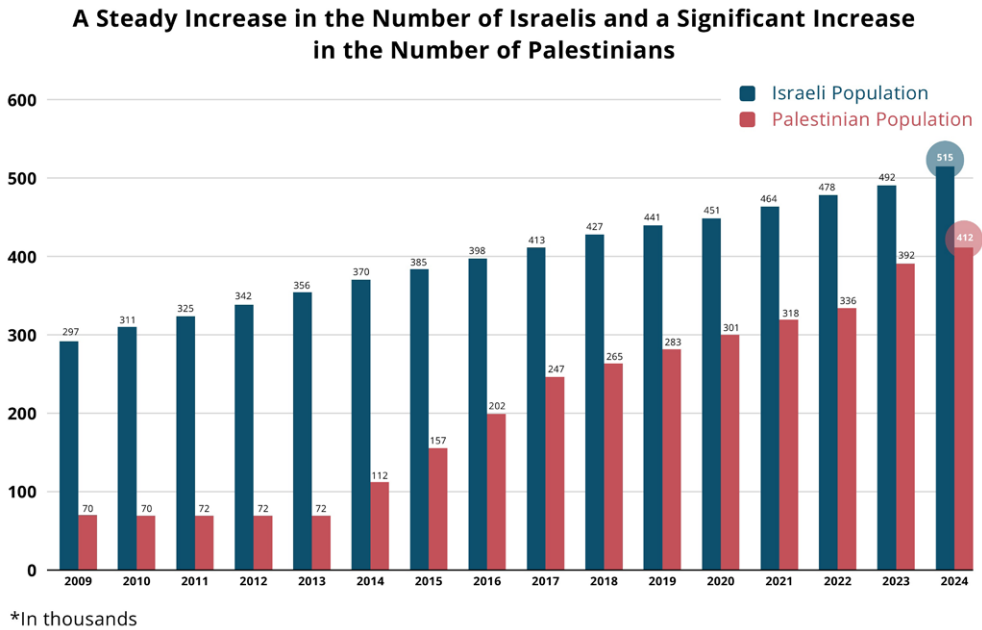


Alongside the settlement movements striving to establish and enhance control in Area C, the Israeli government is also an active participant in this process. Israeli actions to strengthen control in Area C include closing areas and designating them as military training zones where entry is permitted only for agricultural purposes on weekends or during harvest season, subject to prior coordination; issuing construction prohibition orders along main routes and near the security fence; allocating lands for Israeli agriculture (even in locations that are far from settlements); and granting grazing licenses to Israeli shepherds.

Officials in the Israeli government view the second term of US President Donald Trump as an opportunity to apply Israeli law and sovereignty in Judea and Samaria. A strategic plan was formulated and presented in segments rather than as a complete package, including extending the jurisdiction of regional councils to encompass the areas between settlements as a preliminary step toward applying sovereignty over the settlements and open areas; taking control of open areas with the aim of managing them under the State of Israel—not only in construction but also in the management of natural resources and archaeology; significantly promoting and developing the agricultural farm enterprise, including the establishment of hundreds of additional farms to preserve state lands and create a legal construction for their possession.

According to data from the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, as of the end of 2024, 515,437 Israelis reside in Judea and Samaria—in 134 settlements, 221 outposts, and a number of agricultural farms (see Figure 5). Close to 50% of the total natural increase is concentrated in the ultra-Orthodox cities of Modi'in Illit and Beitar Illit, where approximately one-third of the settler population resides. About 60% of the workforce in the settlements is employed in Israel. Overall, Israelis constitute 18% of the total population of the West Bank, and about 75% of them live in the triangle surrounding Jerusalem (Modi'in Illit—Beitar Illit—Ma'ale Adumim).

FIGURE 5.



Note. From the Central Bureau of Statistics, correct as of December 31, 2024.

Acceleration of the Process by the Current Government, Particularly Since October 7

With the establishment of the current Netanyahu government in early 2023, and particularly due to war in Gaza, the consolidation of settlements in Judea and Samaria was expedited. Since October 7, 2023, 37 new outposts have been established, most of which are shepherd outposts manned by young individuals and *no'ar ha-givot* [hilltop youth] who seize land and expel Palestinians from the area. The government allocated 75 million NIS for the year 2024 to fund illegal outposts, 39 million NIS of which were designated for illegal farms.¹²

12 Peace Now, “The Israeli Government Funded 68 Illegal Farms with 15 Million NIS,” (July 23, 2024) [in Hebrew] <https://tinyurl.com/mvu59mk2>

An examination of the budgets of Jewish authorities in Judea and Samaria reveals that the settler population, which constitutes four to 5% of Israel's population, receives more than 7% of the government's contributions to the budgets of all authorities in Israel. This is an average of one billion shekels per year for the establishment of outposts, infrastructure, and roads leading to them, as well as the provision of municipal services.

The settler organizations, in collaboration with the Israeli government, are working to create a reality in which Israel exerts control over the entire Area C, while displacing approximately 350,000 Palestinians residing in this area, through various settlement efforts (see Figure 6).

- c. **Creating continuity of Jewish settlements along the Alon Road**, from the Jerusalem-Jericho Road to Mehola in the northern Jordan Valley. The construction of at least 30 illegal outposts, three of which were built during the war. The strategic rationale: Control over the eastern slopes of Samaria, in the Jordan Valley, and in key junctions connecting the Jordan Valley to the mountain ridge.
- d. **Creating continuity of Jewish settlements along Road 60**, which connects the main Palestinian cities from Jenin in the north to Hebron in the south. The construction of at least 30 outposts, five of which have been built since the beginning of the war. The strategic rationale: Controlling the mountain ridge and the ability to sever Palestinian territorial and transportation continuity in Judea and Samaria.
- e. **Creating continuity of settlements from Ariel to the Jordan Valley**. Promoting the paving of bypass routes to these outposts and settlements. Five outposts were built east of Elon Moreh, and six outposts were built east of Itamar. To establish continuity between Ariel and Eli and Shiloh, 21 illegal outposts were constructed, two of which were during the war. The strategic rationale: Connecting the isolated settlements in the mountain

ridge to the Jordan Valley—those that were slated to be evacuated according to any past negotiations.

- f. **Creating continuity of settlements between Jerusalem and the Jordan Valley through Ma'ale Adumim.** Construction of the Mevaseret Adumim neighborhood, which will add approximately 4,000 residential units to Ma'ale Adumim. Between Jerusalem and the Almog Junction, 14 illegal outposts were built.
- g. **Attempt to create four new blocs:** 16 outposts were established between the settlements of Ma'on and Susya, one of them during the war; in the Tekoa and Nokdim area, 16 outposts were established, three of them during the war, five were “legalized”; in the northern Jordan Valley, eight outposts were established, three of them were legalized; in western Samaria, 12 outposts were established, five of them were legalized.

FIGURE 6.



In December 2024, Knesset Member Avihai Boaron from the Likud presented the strategic vision for settlement in Judea and Samaria, stating that,

We are in a window of opportunity that we can either utilize wisely or foolishly. If we utilize it foolishly, we will have 700,000 residents and more houses in four years; if we utilize this window of opportunity wisely, we will create the conditions for making Judea, Samaria, and the Jordan Valley an inseparable part of the State of Israel—not only by making it difficult to remove residents from there but also by changing the operating program.¹³

Moreover, right-wing elements in Israel view President Donald Trump’s second term as an opportunity to apply Israeli sovereignty—in other words, the annexation of Area C, which constitutes 60% of the West Bank. Their intention is to expand the jurisdiction of the regional councils to include the areas between the settlements; to take control of open areas, including those in Area B currently under Palestinian Authority control, to manage them under Israeli governance—not only in construction but also in the management of natural resources and archaeology; to establish industrial, commercial, and transportation zones; to significantly promote and develop the agricultural farm enterprise, including establishing hundreds of additional farms aimed at preserving “state lands” and creating a legal basis for their retention; to establish Arab municipal authorities in place of the Palestinian Authority, effectively advancing its dismantling and creating separate Palestinian cantons under Israeli control. “The two-state solution should be permanently removed from the agenda, according to a clear directive from the political echelon,” said Knesset Member Boaron.¹⁴

13 Hanan Greenwood, “Revealed: Settlers Plan Major Trump-Era Transformation for West Bank,” *Israel Hayom*, December 1, 2024, <https://www.israelhayom.com/2024/12/01/revealed-major-transformation-in-judea-and-samaria-planned-by-settler-leaders/>

14 Ibid.

Israel is a target of harsh criticism for granting construction permits almost exclusively to Israelis, rejecting more than 98% of Palestinian applications for construction permits in Area C, and demolishing allegedly “illegal” Palestinian construction on a large scale, while permitting illegal construction in settlements, outposts, and agricultural farms belonging to Israelis.

The settlement residents and their supporters claim that the commandment of settling the land is equal in value to all other commandments, and that Jewish demographics will ultimately prevail. This claim is emphasized in Minister Bezalel Smotrich’s plan, which intends to double the number of settlers in Judea and Samaria, or the hope, which is entirely unfounded, that the Palestinians will despair and revoke their national demands.¹⁵ This is joined by the idea proposed by President Trump and enthusiastically embraced by the Israeli government, to encourage “voluntary emigration” of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip, which is perceived by some segments of the Israeli right as also relevant to altering the demographic situation in Judea and Samaria. The notion that economic prosperity and an improvement in the quality of life for the Palestinian population would moderate their national aspirations does not align with past events, particularly the outbreak of the First and Second Intifadas, nor with universal historical logic and experience.

Practically, even if not declaratively, the current Israeli government is accelerating the annexation of Area C. Over the years, Israel has established facts on the ground, which may be irreversible, through the construction of settlements and encouragement of Jewish settlement. In the past, Israel argued that Judea and Samaria are “disputed territories,” and until an agreement is reached with the Palestinians regarding their future, it possesses them temporarily, in accordance with the belligerent perception and international law. International law prohibits an occupying power from transferring populations

15 Palestinian Prime Minister, Mohammad Shtayyeh remarked in a video that circulated on Twitter on January 20, 2020: “I urge all citizens to act in Area C as if every centimeter of it is ours; there is nothing preventing us from sowing seeds in Area C.”

from its sovereign territory to an area under its control and vice versa, except for security purposes. In light of this, Israel ensured that all decisions regarding the territories, from the expansion of a neighborhood in Judea to the paving of a road in Samaria, were made by security officials based on security considerations. However, all this changed with the government established in 2023. The appointment of Smotrich as a minister in the Ministry of Defense has removed the mask from Israel's intentions. The authorities he was granted essentially constitute a declaration that Israel's conduct in the territories is subject to civil-political considerations. Thus, Israel knowingly violates international law regarding its obligations toward the territory under its control and the local population. The pace of changes implemented by the current government reflects a policy aimed at realizing Minister Smotrich's declared hope that the year 2025 will be the year of sovereignty, meaning that Judea and Samaria will become part of Israel.

By refraining from formalizing sovereignty, Israel is perceived as democratic for its citizens while simultaneously eschewing responsibility for the Palestinian population. This arrangement also allows many of Israel's supporters worldwide to continue believing that the situation is temporary—that Israel remains a democracy, and that one day the Palestinians will exercise their right to self-determination.

The data on the ground is changing rapidly: By the end of 2024, there were 221 outposts in Judea and Samaria (see Figure 7). Of them, 154 are located on state lands, 67 on privately owned lands; 122 outposts are agricultural farms; 214 outposts are in Area C; 6 outposts are in Area B or nature reserves; 19 outposts were established in 2023 before the war (17 of which are farms); and 64 outposts were established during the war (39 of which are farms).¹⁶

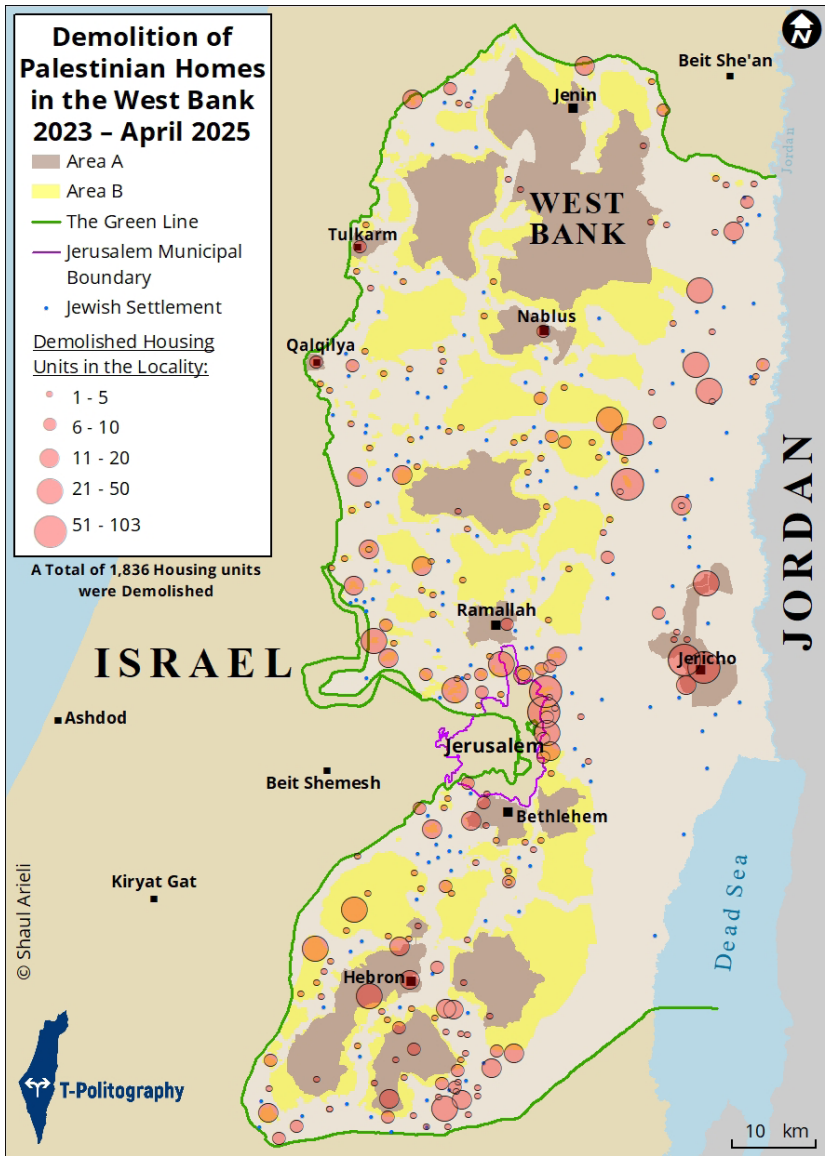
16 Shaul Arieli, Facebook Post, January 19, 2025.

FIGURE 7.



Figure 8 illustrates the extent of Palestinian home demolitions and settler violence incidents in Judea and Samaria between 2023 and April 2025.

FIGURE 8.



The Security Challenge

The current security situation in Judea and Samaria, and its spillover into Israeli territory, is not encouraging. Still, it can be argued that the Israeli security response—which is based on a concept of full freedom of security action throughout the area west of the Jordan River—provides a reasonable level of security, even during the war in Gaza, and has prevented Hamas and the other actors of the Iranian-led Axis of Resistance from setting the area ablaze and triggering a combined wave of terrorism alongside a broad popular uprising (see Figure 9).

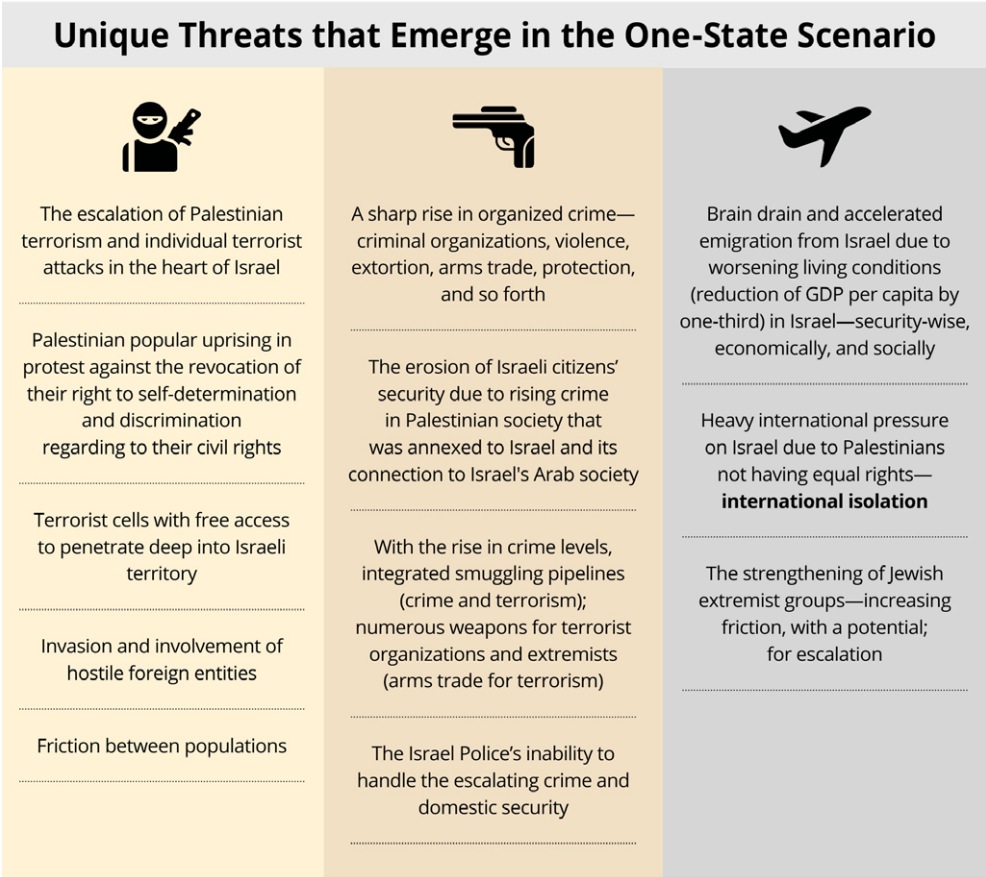
FIGURE 9.

	2023	2024
Terrorist attacks	3436	6828
Significant terrorist attacks	414	241
Israeli casualties	43	46
Israelis wounded	224	337

Note. From Israel Security Agency data

In a simulation-based analysis, the expected security situation in a one-state reality—marked by the denial of Palestinian national aspirations and the restriction of their civil rights—was found to be more complex than the current situation (see Figure 10).

FIGURE 10.



A one-state situation will not provide Israel with security advantages compared to the current situation or a separation framework. The security establishment will be required to make a series of decisions and develop capabilities to control a hostile and frustrated population, including establishing delineation lines for areas inhabited by Palestinians to monitor their movements and prevent easy access for carrying out acts of terrorism and minor and major crimes in the heart of Israeli territory. A security barrier between the areas may also be erected; a shortage of security personnel is expected, along with limitations

in their suitability for policing and monitoring tasks, and damage to security cooperation with Arab countries, particularly Egypt and Jordan, which will undermine security along the borders. Significant investment will also be required in security infrastructure along the borders—force deployment, detection systems, and a security barrier. Updated lines of responsibility will need to be drawn between the military, the police, and the ISA, distinguishing between security and law enforcement.

Security in Jerusalem currently exemplifies the significant investment in force and resources required in mixed cities and Israeli communities adjacent to Palestinian communities, as well as to prevent the spillover of violence into Israeli society. A significant challenge will be neutralizing situations that could lead to civil war and unrest among residents. This will require not only security measures but also civil actions.

Enhanced security preparedness will be required for the reality of a one-state scenario:

- **Continuous security presence in the Palestinian communities**—Reinforcement of IDF and Israel Police forces will be required throughout Judea and Samaria to thwart threats, neutralize the growth of terrorist infrastructures, enforce law and order, and address popular uprisings, while enhancing the sense of security for Israeli citizens.
- **Comprehensive and multidisciplinary intelligence efforts**—to thwart terrorism; reduce the risks caused by Palestinians' freedom of movement; prevent terrorist infrastructures; identify and neutralize national outbreaks; counter political subversion; reduce crime; and prevent religious and nationalist incitement.
- **Supervision and prevention of weapons smuggling**—IDF forces will need to be reinforced along the Jordanian border and in the seam zone to prevent smuggling and infiltrations into and within Israel.

- **Strengthening the Police**—Due to its central role in law enforcement, crime prevention, and internal security, and the potential strain that may arise in such a scenario, it will be necessary to significantly reinforce the police and its forces.