

Sharon's Endgame for the West Bank Barrier

Israel's construction of the West Bank barrier, which broke ground in the summer of 2002, has proven the country's single most-enduring controversy. Composed of chain-link fences, electronic sensors, tracking paths, barbed wire, and the occasional concrete wall, the barrier is now nearly half-complete. The international community has condemned the barrier for violating the Green Line, which has divided Israel from the West Bank and Gaza since 1948 and which the Palestinian Authority (PA) claims as the rightful border of a future Palestinian state. Most condemnation additionally targets the humanitarian suffering the barrier causes Palestinian populations, such as the restriction of movement between Palestinian towns made enclaves by the barrier, the Israel Defense Forces' (IDF) confiscation of land and property in the barrier's projected path, and the fact that large numbers of Palestinian farmers now have to cross the barrier circuitously to tend to their crops on the other side.¹

Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) claims that the barrier is a sad necessity, designed to prevent Palestinian suicide bombers from infiltrating Israeli population centers and Jewish settlements in the West Bank. Despite the barrier's frequent incursions into Palestinian territory, MFA officials insist that it does not represent a permanent border. They recently renamed the barrier from the "Security Fence" to the "Anti-terrorist Fence."²

Palestinian officials vehemently disagree, arguing that what they call the "Annexation Fence" or "Apartheid Wall" is nothing short of a brazen at-

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tempt by Israel's prime minister, Ariel Sharon, to confiscate land, depopulate Palestinian areas near the Green Line, facilitate the expansion of Israeli colonies, and unilaterally redraw borders, leaving the Palestinians with less territory than previous peace plans envisioned. Once completed, they argue, the barrier will annex nearly half of the West Bank's land and most of the area's precious aquifers to Israel. Given these high stakes, the PA neglected

many of its routine administrative tasks for months on end to prepare its legal case against the barrier at the February 2003 International Court of Justice (ICJ) hearing.

Most world leaders and analysts agree with the Palestinian perspective, believing that Sharon is using the Israeli public's desire for security to build a fence that will attach to Israel land intended for a future Palestinian state. According to the Arab League,

European Union leaders, and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, the confiscation of land required to build such a barrier and the fence's obstruction of free movement can only worsen the economic plight of the Palestinians, spur more violence, and scuttle the chances for peace.³ In July 2004, the ICJ issued an advisory opinion describing the fence as an illegal act and, subsequently, a UN General Assembly vote overwhelmingly called for Israel to take down the barrier.

Yet, contrary to international opinion, the barrier will not prove counterproductive to overall and final peace between the two sides. The fence is a tool of grand strategy that holds great potential for resolving the long-standing conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.

The barrier isolates outlying and ideologically extreme Jewish settlements in the West Bank. It excludes them from the fence's protection and symbolically places them outside of Israel's future boundaries. Although these settlements will temporarily receive IDF protection, the barrier enables their dismantlement.

Moreover, the fence will facilitate the creation of an interim Palestinian state. As Israel completes the fence and removes settlements from the West Bank, the IDF will be able to pull back from substantial portions of that territory, giving the PA political control over largely contiguous territory for the first time in its existence.

The barrier thus makes possible the current disengagement plan and avoids the mistakes that plagued past peace plans, which called for Israel to dismantle illegal settlements and for the Palestinians to suppress extremist groups simultaneously. These terms were unenforceable and hopelessly reciprocal, providing settlers and extremist groups alike ample incentive and opportunity either to mobilize political opposition or commit acts of vio-

lence to derail peace initiatives. The barrier and disengagement plan promise to dispense with such complications and unilaterally remove settlements, reduce terrorism, and enable a provisional Palestinian state. Thus, despite common claims that the fence threatens to retard any progress that has been made toward peace thus far, this controversial mechanism in fact stands the greatest chance of speeding Israel and the Palestinians toward simplified negotiations in the medium term over the singular issue of affixing final borders.

There is, however, more to the barrier and disengagement plan than the potential for resolving conflict between the two sides. Although it holds the key to a Palestinian state, the route of the fence also prejudices the future boundaries of Israel in a very specific way. In effect, Sharon's fence not only might provide the ticket to a final peace but also, as it liberally pierces into the West Bank, will ensure Israel has a maximalist bargaining position when final-status negotiations begin. Sharon's strategy may not be intended, as many insist, to retain major settlement blocs, but rather to secure the possibility that Israel can exchange such blocs for the greater Jerusalem area.

Those beyond the Fence

The idea to build a barrier preceded Sharon's rise to power as prime minister. Initially, the idea of separation via a physical barrier was not developed as a strategic response to infiltration by suicide bombers, but rather was conceived by debates in Israel over what was perceived to be a demographic crisis.⁴ Increasing numbers of elites argued that indefinite occupation of a rapidly growing Palestinian population would eventually make Israel a Jewish-minority state. Previously, Ehud Barak had come close to cobbling together a coalition of supporters that would have implemented the barrier. The collapse of the Camp David talks and the outbreak of the Al Aksa Intifada in September 2000, however, brought down his government. When Sharon's Likud Party took power in February 2001, public demands to implement the barrier proved impossible to resist.⁵

In discussing Sharon's adoption of the fence, much of the international community and many political analysts and Israeli leftist opposition elites argue that Sharon is at the helm of a coalition of expansionists who want the fence to incorporate maximum settlements into the contiguous territory of Israel, simultaneously encircling the Palestinian areas. To support their case, such accounts argue that Sharon's plans reportedly run counter to those of the MFA, which wants a simpler and less intrusive fence.⁶ Although the prevailing view of the fence is that it is a tool of Israeli territorial expansion,⁷ the barrier alternatively can be seen as a tool of exclusion that leaves

out many of Israel's most radical and isolated settlements and by definition pushes them outside the boundaries of a future Israeli state.

THE SETTLERS

More than any other act in Israeli political history, Sharon's chosen strategy of implementing the barrier definitively ends the settlement project and signals the resounding defeat of the idea of Greater Israel. Following the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, Israel occupied West Bank territory that Zionist Orthodox elites gradually began to settle. Although some secular elites expected that the land would have to be given up in exchange for a permanent peace, the

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settlement project aimed to settle broad tracts of the Biblical heartland and make them a permanent part of Israel. The settlement project has continued throughout the decades since the war with a host of government and private institutions funding the building of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. Sharon is therefore placing a fence today in the middle of what many of his right-wing political colleagues, settler elites, and prominent religious leaders consider Israel's indivisible territory.⁸

Sharon initially seems to have kept plans of the fence route secret to prevent settlers from mobilizing against it. Many settlements first learned about their exclusion from the fence project through leaked press reports,⁹ a fact that suggests that the route of the fence was not simply the result of collusion between Sharon and the settler lobby.

Sharon did, however, initially reach politically expedient deals with various settlers to promote his plan, but these arrangements proved temporary. For example, he secured the support of National Union chief Benny Elon, a right-wing radical from the West Bank, by assuring Elon that an eastern fence spur would be built to incorporate isolated settlements that Elon represented.¹⁰ In a cabinet meeting several months later when Elon protested the absence of such an extension, Sharon tellingly responded, "Whoever feels ill at ease can get up and leave."¹¹

Sharon's lingering reputation as the ideological father of the settlements can make his domestic political strategies seem inconsistent to policymakers and the world press. The prime minister had originally risen to the forefront of Israeli politics in the 1980s by actively designing, financing, and executing the expansion of the settlements. Yet, Sharon and his closest allies in Likud have come to believe, as the Left has for years, that the settlement project has proven unsustainable. In his speech at the Likud Party congress in Herzliya,

Sharon spoke openly of painful concessions and taking down settlements.¹² Since that time, the rift between the settlers and Sharon has grown tremendously, with settler elites making statements about broken trust, mobilizing against Sharon's policies, and threatening to topple his government.¹³ Sharon's steady moves toward disengagement can be expected to continue as the costs of maintaining isolated settlements are simply too high for the average Israeli to bear. The financial cost of maintaining the infrastructure and security of the settlements is now being felt more than ever, given Israel's extended recession. On a political level, a growing segment of the public blames the settlements and expansion policies for causing Israel's isolation in the international community and for triggering Palestinian suicide bombing campaigns.

THE PALESTINIANS

The emergence of a provisional Palestinian state is a realistic expectation. It is a consistent objective of peace proposals by the United States (including the Washington-backed road map), as well as the EU, the Arab League, and a host of international humanitarian organizations. Senior Israeli security officials hope that, by removing the constraints of military occupation, the barrier will prod Palestinian leaders to focus on routine elements of state building such as general law and order as well as the provision of public goods.

The fence and related disengagement strategy will do more for peace and a Palestinian state than any previous plan, not least because the removal of settlements beyond the fence will mean that the IDF will be able to withdraw from substantial portions of West Bank territory. IDF checkpoints and army camps scattered throughout the West Bank prevent the PA from controlling territory other than large urban areas. Such checkpoints and closures retard communication between Palestinian officials who live and work in different municipalities, rendering proper administrative reform and state building impossible. IDF withdrawal from substantial portions of the West Bank territory would allow the PA to expand its control to cover the countryside and rural road network, link Palestinian urban areas, and push ahead with institution building. The expansion of Palestinian organizations charged with security, taxation, and social services over additional territory would help facilitate the emergence of a functional Palestinian state.

Beyond encouraging the formation of a Palestinian state, the fence will have the second and no less important benefit of removing a consistent obstacle to the implementation of peace treaties between Israel and the Palestinians. Evidenced by the shortcomings of Camp David and the more recent road map, peace treaties required the Palestinians and Israel to eliminate terrorism and dismantle illegal settlements, respectively. This reliance on reciprocity gave settler organizations the opportunity to delay government attempts to

dismantle illegal settlements. The Palestinian side would then cite this as cause to renege on its own obligations in the peace treaty. Meanwhile, terrorist organizations found it easy to operate and attack Israeli population centers, creating a vicious cycle that effectively derailed the move toward peace.¹⁴ The promise of the fence and of the disengagement plan lies in the fact that that they will serve to reduce terrorism and remove settlements prior to the beginning of any negotiated peace process. In short, they reduce the potential for Palestinian and Israeli groups opposed to peace to spoil a final agreement.

Surprisingly, the authors and signatories of the December 2003 Geneva Initiative—the most recent attempt to revive treaty diplomacy in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—have failed to learn from the tragic failure of previous peace plans. Article 5 of the initiative writes into the peace process the expectation that the PA will suppress Palestinian terrorist groups in exchange for a gradual Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Although this plan would give settlers tremendous incentive to resist withdrawal and stall the peace process, Sharon's strategy dispenses with such stumbling blocks altogether.

The Geography of the Fence

Opponents of the fence will insist that, even if the fence enables the dismantlement of settlements, it will leave the Palestinians with much less territory than they are willing to accept in a final agreement. For example, a high-level Palestinian official negotiator argues that Sharon will stop short of full withdrawal and create a partial Palestinian state on a portion of the West Bank completely encircled by an Israeli fence.¹⁵ Maps disseminated by the PA's Negotiations Affairs Department depict a wall with multiple enclaves that twist and turn through the West Bank. The PA predicts that the completed barrier will encircle and divide the remaining Palestinian land into three disconnected cantons.¹⁶ Thus, despite Sharon's unprecedented moves to dismantle the settlements, Palestinians insist that the goal of achieving a Greater Israel is still very much alive. According to the PA, the barrier simply revises plans for a Greater Israel and makes it more streamlined; it will allow Israel to relieve itself of the burden of ruling densely populated, poor, and nominally independent Palestinian "bantustans" while still holding territory from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordanian border.

Yossi Sarid, head of the opposition Meretz Party in the Israeli Knesset, seemingly confirms this: "I know Sharon very well and ... I knew he was going to build a very bad fence. I know his political vision with respect to territory: to annex and enable a Palestinian state on about 50 [percent] of the area. The fence is instrumental for this."¹⁷ Although the route of the fence does not fol-

low the Green Line, interpretations of the fence as a simple landgrab overlook the fact that Sharon is using the fence as part and parcel of a strategy to speed Israel and the Palestinians toward simplified negotiations.

The barrier is a tool of Israeli grand strategy. By building a deep fence rather than a barrier along the Green Line, Israel is signaling its opening bid for West Bank territory. This strategy has its roots in Barak's government,¹⁸ and Sharon, like Barak, intends for the invasive fence to serve as a bargaining chip with the Palestinians in future negotiations. As the barrier nears completion in late 2005, Israeli officials expect that Palestinians will feel overwhelming urgency to enter final-status negotiations to recover disputed land.¹⁹

Israel can be expected to save the largest territorial concessions for a later time to increase its leverage when bilateral negotiations begin. Right or wrong, many officials in the current Israeli government and the IDF believe that the Palestinians are either unwilling or incapable of functioning as equal peace partners. As such, the route of the barrier, in addition to separating Jewish and Palestinian population centers, is designed to take more land than Israel intends to keep to guarantee that the Palestinians return to the negotiating table to ask for the return of fenced-in land. The fence route and the overall disengagement plan reveal three particular areas in which Israel is likely to make major territorial concessions to the Palestinians.

First, many of the fence's incursions do not make much sense given Israel's expressed aim of protecting population centers from suicide bombers. For example, just north of the Palestinian city of Qalkilya, proximate to the Green Line and walled in from all sides by the barrier, the fence makes a 17-kilometer detour around largely empty land. Satellite photos reveal the area to be Zufin, a miniscule settlement of just more than a dozen houses. Areas such as Zufin hold little strategic value for Israel and are not prime areas for settlement expansion. Palestinian negotiators would do well to conclude that places such as Zufin and the land around them are likely to be concessions in negotiations, especially as the transfer of such areas to the Palestinians would facilitate the contiguity of West Bank land.

Second, despite public statements to the contrary, Israel is likely to concede the Jordan River Valley in any final-status negotiations. Since the inception of the fence project, Israeli officials have publicly maintained that the Jordan River Valley is too strategically valuable to give up, and consequently, they declared that it will be protected behind a planned eastern spur of the fence. Although some early maps revealed plans to build an east-

Previous peace strategies gave leverage to settler organizations and terrorists.

ern fence separating Palestinians from the Jordan River Valley, where Israel retains military forces, border control, and settlements, Sharon recently hinted that the eastern fence will not have to be built “for now.”²⁰ The truth is that a serious plan for an eastern fence never existed. The military did not plan to build an eastern fence, and Israeli officials privately admitted as early as January 2004 that an eastern spur would not be constructed.²¹ The eastern fence is merely a bluff intended to exaggerate Israel’s resolve to hold on to the Jordan River Valley. Especially given the fall of Saddam Hussein’s regime in Iraq and the U.S. military presence there, any residual Israeli concerns about confronting hostile armies on an eastern front are anachronistic.²² If Barak was willing to withdraw from most of the valley at Camp David in 2000, Israel has no reason to maintain an occupying presence there in the future. The Jordan River Valley, although sparsely populated and generally arid, makes up 30 percent of the West Bank and provides a vital trade link to neighboring Jordan. The PA would be eager to bring it under its control.²³

Third, many settlement blocks are likely to fall outside the fence and be eventual concessions to the Palestinians. Even though Sharon asked the Bush administration in April 2004 to allow Israel to retain large settlements, he has not consistently advocated their annexation. Consider Ariel and Kedumim, large Jewish settlements located deep inside Samaria in the West Bank. The anthem of Ariel includes the phrase, “So long as Ariel stands, so does Tel Aviv.” Yet, Sharon and the IDF do not appear convinced. Ariel and Kedumim are strategic burdens draining army resources and the IDF has no plans to provide a fence to two settlements whose annexation would add nearly 100 kilometers of snaking lines to a future border.

The plans for the fence therefore reveal intentions to make strategic territorial concessions. Those who argue on behalf of the landgrab hypothesis might note that the fence is a physical structure and, once constructed, it cannot be torn down easily and moved. Here it is important to distinguish between two issues regarding moving the fence. The first is a logistical one. Precedent suggests that the fence is movable. Israel has already made changes both to the projected route and to the actual fence. In early 2004 it tore down and rebuilt a section of the barrier in Bakal al-Sharkiya to ease hardship on Palestinian populations. In June 2004, Israel’s High Court ruled that a section of the fence’s route near Jerusalem must be altered to prevent bringing hardship to Palestinian populations; the Sharon government is currently complying with the decision.²⁴ Although the relocation of the fence does not vindicate the prime minister’s office and the IDF from the humanitarian problems their policies are causing, it does suggest that there is reason to believe that the barrier is indeed a moveable structure.

A second issue concerns time. The longer the fence stays up, the more opportunity Israel has fully to incorporate the areas inside the fence. Areas inside

the fence might be linked more firmly into the infrastructure of the state of Israel while their ties to the West Bank remain effectively severed. Such a process is reversible as long as the division is a short-to-medium length of time and as long as Israel's intent to concede these areas is genuine.

But for what will these concessions be exchanged? Israel's primary goals in final negotiations will be to retain the densely populated settlements that have been built since 1967 either on or proximate to the Green Line and to entice the Palestinians to give up sovereignty claims to Jerusalem and its surrounding area. Both Israel and the PA claim Jerusalem as their rightful capital, claims which are rendered largely indivisible by the fact that the city's Muslim and Jewish holy sites either overlap or are in close proximity to one another.

The fence route reveals three particular areas ripe for major territorial concessions.

Israel's intent to annex the greater Jerusalem area wholesale—a claim that dates back to the takeover of the city by Israel following the 1967 war—will be implemented via the current barrier plans. Although the MFA has publicized maps that are mysteriously vague on the route of the Jerusalem “security envelope”—a term used to refer to the continuation of the barrier in the Jerusalem area—security plans incorporate not only the entire city but also Ma’aleh Adumim, a compact, densely populated Jewish suburb of Jerusalem, to the east. Indeed, in April 2004 Sharon visited Ma’aleh Adumim and promised its residents that he would include it in the “security envelope” and within the future boundaries of Israel. The suburb's municipal boundaries are the size of Tel Aviv in terms of acreage,²⁵ and the area overlooks surrounding territory from a commanding height. It can function as a security shield that provides strategic depth and keep a future international boundary at a distance from Jerusalem.

The Israeli government intends to absorb the entire Jerusalem area firmly into the state of Israel, disassociating many Palestinian suburbs from Jerusalem. Israel will build separate infrastructures, in the form of tunnels and bypass roads, for these Palestinian areas left outside the “security envelope,” effectively converting them into suburbs of nearby Ramallah and Bethlehem. Moreover, the area of Ma’aleh Adumim is slated for expansion and will likely function as a cheap relocation site for displaced settlers. A high-level security official explained that dismantled settlements will be relocated east of the Green Line but west of the fence.²⁶ Although no specific relocation sites have been mentioned yet, existing plans to develop and expand Ma’aleh Adumim's neighborhoods and infrastructure suggest that this will be a prime area of relocation.

Although the core motivation for the fence is to separate Israel from the Palestinians and reach an agreement, the irony is that Israel's emerging strategy to trade territories such as the ones listed above for Jerusalem likely means that such a strategy will fail to evolve the way Israel envisions. The Palestinians will not likely accept final borders that do not include East Jerusalem and Muslim holy sites in the old city such as the Dome of the Rock.²⁷ As Saeb Erakat, a senior Palestinian negotiator, recently confided to an EU diplomat, his greatest fear is that the Palestinian leadership will face great public wrath if Israel, safe and secure behind a completed fence, cannot be compelled to share Jerusalem.

Israel's emerging strategy to trade territories for Jerusalem will likely fail.

Nonetheless, there is reason to be optimistic. A provisional Palestinian state can and should be encouraged to emerge after the completion of the barrier. By 2005 the fence's completion and the ongoing evacuation of settlements will allow the IDF to leave much of the West Bank and to transfer authority to Palestinian officials. Following that, simplified negotiations can begin over the location of the barrier and final borders. Because the

negotiations will be biased in Israel's favor given its continuing occupation of the aforementioned concession areas, it is possible that the Palestinians could refuse to negotiate and delay the declaration of a provisional state. Such a delaying strategy, however, is unlikely to take place. As Israel retreats behind the fence and prods the PA to act as a government and provide a full array of state services, the PA de facto becomes a provisional state. Moreover, the international recognition of the PA as a state with provisional borders will allow Palestinian officials to assume full membership in international organizations and enter negotiations with Israel in equal legal standing. Statehood can thus place the PA in a much better negotiating position than if it remains a debilitated nonstate entity.

If the security situation in the territory of a provisional Palestinian state is satisfactory, this will exert a confidence-building effect in Israeli-Palestinian relations. It will allow the Palestinians to make the case, with the support of the broader international community, for Israel to agree to a more equitable division of Jerusalem. Nevertheless, such an equal division is unlikely to result. Israel, as outlined above, will bargain hard to keep a majority of the greater Jerusalem area. Israeli officials are much more likely to give up the Jordan Valley and large settlement blocs such as Ariel before they agree to have an international border run down the middle of the densely occupied city. At best, Palestinians can hope that Israel will make adjustments to the "security envelope" and transfer some outlying East Jerusalem neighborhoods to the PA and that Israel will agree to the creation of islands of Pales-

tinian sovereignty around the old city's holy sites. For example, mosques such as Al Aksa and the Dome of the Rock, located in the center of the city, might become sovereign Palestinian territory but with access in and out of these areas regulated by Israel.

Coping with Uncertainty

The July 2004 vote in the UN General Assembly, which condemned the barrier 150 to 6, has intensified pressure on Israel to halt its construction and to return to treaty diplomacy. Yet, without a barrier, it is nearly impossible for settlement dismantlement to proceed. To counter such pressure and encourage rapid dismantlement of the settlements, Washington must use its traditional leverage over Israel and play an active role in the process. More specifically, Washington should consistently pursue the following policy objectives:

- *Push for rapid settlement dismantlement, not changes to the fence route.*

David Makovsky, a senior fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, argues that the fence creates a necessary and stabilizing partition between the Palestinians and Israelis but worries that the current Israeli government will scuttle the long-term chances for peace by yielding to settler pressure and building an annexation fence. He argues that the United States should encourage more equitable adjustments to the fence route.²⁸ Yet, this is only likely to delay construction of the fence and the dismantlement of settlements. Moreover, an incomplete fence gives settlers incentive to lobby for exact changes in the route. On the other hand, a completed fence decreases the prospect that excluded settlers will stay in place and thus enables their relocation.

Hasty dismantlement of settlements is not ideal, but at the same time, it is important to avoid exaggerating concerns that a rapid Israeli withdrawal will plunge the PA into chaos, strengthen Hamas politically, and seemingly reward terrorism. Recent events show that it is the political clout of the settlers that should not be underestimated. The settlers have been increasingly adept at mounting protest and civil disobedience to defeat Sharon's plan to complete the fence and to dismantle settlements, starting first in the Gaza Strip.

The potential benefit of interim statehood for the Palestinians should outweigh exaggerated concerns of political instability. To this end, Sharon should dismantle all isolated settlements in Gaza within the next six months and not within the 12-month schedule he recently laid out. The United States should likewise encourage Sharon to initiate a timetable for the West Bank settlements that requires their removal within six months of the fence's completion in their vicinity.

- *Provide incentives to create an interim Palestinian state.*

Although Palestinians are unlikely to be easily enticed into declaring a state with Jerusalem's status unresolved, the United States can provide two incentives to encourage this crucial step. First, it should avoid giving Sharon blank checks or specific guarantees regarding Israel's claims over particular settlement blocks. At Sharon's meeting with President George W. Bush in March 2004 in Washington, Bush set a precedent for this. He did not guarantee Sharon specific territories. Rather, he stated that final

negotiations would have to confront demographic realities.²⁹ This statement casts into doubt Israel's claim over East Jerusalem as much as it depresses Palestinian hopes of a return to Green Line borders.

Second, Washington should immediately place substantial credits and grants in escrow for the PA, contingent on a declaration of provisional statehood. Added to current EU grants, this would infuse the PA with the capital necessary to build infrastructure and

pay salaries to security officials and government employees. The transfer of these grants to the PA should be timed with the withdrawal of the IDF to ensure that Palestinian government functions can expand to fill the vacuum without any fiscal constraints.

- *Insulate the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from U.S. electoral politics.*

The pressures of an election year could lead the Bush administration to attempt to improve public approval of its foreign affairs track record by prodding the Palestinians and Israelis into premature peace summits. Although the United States should encourage diplomatic contact between the Palestinians and Israelis as a means of managing withdrawal and authority transference, it should avoid attempts to revive the flawed road map.

The barrier does not deserve the international notoriety that it has received. Symbolically, it places many extreme and isolated settlements outside the future boundaries of Israel and enables their dismantlement. It will allow the IDF to withdraw from much of the West Bank, effectively transferring unprecedented authority to the Palestinians. The fence does not represent an ideal solution to the conflict nor an entirely fair one insofar as it biases both the timing and the terms of a final peace. Outweighing this drawback, the barrier promises to reduce terror and dismantle settlements,

Washington should support the fence and encourage rapid settlement dismantlement.

the two greatest obstacles to peace which no former treaty addressed effectively. Detractors will note, in addition to the humanitarian suffering caused, that the barrier does nothing to solve the status of Jerusalem, which looms large in the horizon. Yet, the ability to negotiate over final borders credibly is a luxury that the Palestinians and Israelis never had, given the ability of spoilers to derail peace talks and prevent their implementation. The barrier promises to change all that and will speed the Palestinians and Israel toward a final and simplified peace.

The United States should avoid attempts to revive the flawed road map.

Notes

1. See Health, Development, Information, and Policy Institute (HDIP), *Health and Segregation: The Impact of the Israeli Separation Wall on Access to Health Care Services* (Ramallah: HDIP, 2004).
2. Both sides are deploying names that they believe will gain international sympathy. This article uses the words “fence” and “barrier” interchangeably without any adjectives. The author has confirmed via onsite visits that the majority of the barrier does not resemble a solid wall. As such, the term “wall” is not used.
3. See UN General Assembly, “Report of the Secretary-General Prepared Pursuant to General Assembly Resolution ES-10/13,” A/ES-10/248, November 24, 2003, <http://ods-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N03/630/77/PDF/N0363077.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed July 5, 2004).
4. This point was made by several individuals and is based on personal interviews. Uzi Arad, interview with author, Jerusalem, January 27, 2004 (former senior Mossad official and political adviser to Benjamin Netanyahu); Israel Michaeli, interview with author, Herzliya, January 23, 2004 (former acting head of Israel’s National Security Council) (hereinafter Michaeli interview).
5. This logic underlies all of Sharon’s statements about the necessity of dismantlement. See Aluf Benn, “PM: Contacts on Unity Government Underway,” *Ha’aretz*, April 5, 2004; Aluf Benn, “The Herzliya Initiative,” *Jerusalem Post*, December 19, 2003 (Sharon’s Herzliya speech). See also David Makovsky, “How to Build a Fence,” *Foreign Affairs* 83, no. 2 (March/April 2004): 50–64.
6. Makovsky, “How to Build a Fence.”
7. Eyal Weizman, “Strategic Points, Flexible Lines, Tense Surfaces, Political Volumes: Ariel Sharon and the Geometry of Occupation,” *Philosophical Forum* 35, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 221–244.
8. For plans of the route, see <http://securityfence.mfa.gov.il> (accessed July 2, 2004).
9. As reported to author by individuals with families who live in the settlements. This process of keeping settlers uninformed of their status also applies to the dismantlement plan. See Eli Ashkenazi, “Kadim Residents Are Living in a State of Limbo,” *Ha’aretz*, April 19, 2004.
10. Yoav Sorek, interview with author, Jerusalem, January 21, 2004 (political adviser to Benjamin Elon). In a conversation with the author, Elon confirmed that Sharon

- had promised him an eastern fence.
11. Gideon Alon and Aluf Benn, "PM Clashes With Right-Wing Ministers During Cabinet Meeting," *Ha'aretz*, April 4, 2004.
 12. Benn, "The Herzliya Initiative."
 13. Matthew Gutman, "Sharon, Settlers Go Head to Head," *Jerusalem Post*, January 5, 2005; Jeffrey Goldberg, "Among the Settlers: Will They Destroy Israel?" *New Yorker*, May 31, 2004, p. 58; Mazal Mualem and Uzi Benziman, "Katz: Disengagement Will End in Total Evacuation of Samaria," *Ha'aretz*, April 20, 2004.
 14. Most scholarship focuses on Palestinian extremist groups for derailing peace treaties while overlooking the consistent ability of settlers to block implementation. For example, see Andrew Kydd and Barbara F. Walter, "Sabotaging the Peace: The Politics of Extremist Violence," *International Organization* 56, no. 2 (Spring 2002): 263–296.
 15. High-level official at the Palestinian Negotiations Affairs Department, interview with author, Ramallah, January 22, 2004. Mustafa Barghouti, a Palestinian official, also repeated this point to the author during an onsite visit to the village of Budrus, located on a planned fence route. Barghouti later published a statement to that effect in *Al-Quds*, March 16, 2003.
 16. See PLO Negotiations Affairs Department, "Israel's Wall: Another Land Grab, May 2004," <http://www.nad-plo.org/images/maps/pdf/lgapril.pdf> (accessed July 5, 2004).
 17. Yossi Sarid, interview with author, Tel Aviv, January 25, 2004 (head of Meretz Party); Yuli Tamir, interview with author, Jerusalem, February 2, 2004 (Labor Party member of Knesset).
 18. Ze'ev Schiff, interview with author, Ramat Aviv Gimmel, January 26, 2004 (*Ha'aretz* strategic and military affairs columnist) (hereinafter Schiff interview).
 19. Senior IDF officials expressed this strategic objective. When asked whether or not the fence might have such an objective, a Palestinian official in the PLO Negotiation Affairs Department angrily responded, "Such claims are disgusting and worse than simply making an honest case for outright annexation."
 20. Benn, "PM: Contacts on Unity Government Underway."
 21. Author's interview with senior Israeli security official, confirmed in the Schiff interview.
 22. Shlomo Brom, interview with author, Tel Aviv University, January 26, 2004 (professor at the Jaffe Institute for Strategic Studies).
 23. For more on the Jordan River Valley in previous negotiations, see Jeremy Pressman, "Visions in Collision: What Happened at Camp David and Taba?" *International Security* 28, no. 2 (Fall 2003): 16.
 24. Joseph Berger, "High Court Tells Israelis to Shift Part of Barrier," *New York Times*, July 1, 2004, p. 1.
 25. Israel Kimhi, interview with author, Jerusalem, January 27, 2004 (fellow at the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies).
 26. Interview with author.
 27. Ron Hassner, "To Halve and to Hold: Conflicts Over Sacred Space and the Problem of Indivisibility," *Security Studies* 12, no. 4 (Summer 2004): 2–33.
 28. Makovsky, "How to Build a Fence," p. 63.
 29. "In light of new realities on the ground, including already existing major Israeli population centers, it is unrealistic to expect that the outcome of final status negotiations will be a full and complete return to the armistice lines of 1949." *Financial Times*, "Bush Backs Sharon Over West Bank Settlements," April 15, 2004.