

REPORT ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENT IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

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SHARON'S ENDURING AGENDA: CONSOLIDATE TERRITORIAL CONTROL, MANAGE THE CONFLICT

Ariel Sharon, prime minister of Israel, stands unchallenged as the architect of Israeli policy in the occupied territories. No foreign leader has challenged him effectively. No plan exists able to thwart his intentions. No Palestinian or Arab antagonist has demonstrated a capability of imposing a contrary vision or agenda, and in Israel no effective political challenger has yet appeared with a platform that questions his legacy.

Sharon has succeeded in turning the geopolitical map of the occupied territories to his advantage to a degree he could not have imagined when he assumed the premiership in February 2001. The basic instruments of the Oslo era—the Palestinian Authority and

those areas under its nominal control—survive only as shadows of their abbreviated existence. And Yasser Arafat, the only Palestinian leader capable of making and enforcing a peace agreement with Israel, has been declared *persona non grata* by Israel and the United States.

Sharon's plan for "disengagement" now unfolding in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza Strip, illuminates not only what is transpiring today but also what he intends to establish in the months and years ahead. Not since the early days of Israeli rule in the occupied territories has an Israeli leader been able to play such a dominant role in establishing the foundations that Sharon believes will consolidate permanent Israeli rule over these areas.

The map that Sharon is tirelessly fashioning out of stone and concrete in the occupied territories demonstrates far more clearly than any speech the breathtaking, if fanciful vision still driving Israeli policy. Building upon the pattern of settlements that Sharon has been constructing for almost three decades, Israel intends to preserve the territorial advantages of its 1967 victory by maintaining direct, permanent control over half of the West Bank and perhaps 20 percent of Gaza. Because of demographic concerns, Sharon prefers that the burden of ruling 3 million Palestinians be imposed upon a Palestinian state in those parts of the West Bank and Gaza that Israel does not desire for security or settlement purposes.

If anything is new at all in Sharon's call for disengagement it is the complete absence of concern for the character of the Palestinian state he intends to impose. Israel has conditioned much of its diplomacy during the Sharon era on an extensive list of internal political and security requirements to be fulfilled by the Palestinian Authority, requirements that were adopted at face value by the Quartet and feature prominently in the road map.

Managing, Not Solving, the Problem

Sharon is under no illusion that the implementation of his vision will in itself end the conflict that has been a central feature in the lives of both peoples for almost a century. This is a luxury he does not allow himself.

The stage upon which Sharon performs has never been hospitable to solutions aimed at ending the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. Rather it has been shaped by a dynamic cycle of Israeli rule and Palestinian resistance that has characterized the occupied territories since Israel's 1967 conquest. Sharon has failed to "sear [defeat] into Palestinian consciousness", the standard set by his chief of staff for Israeli policy toward the ongoing Palestinian rebellion. He has not removed Yasser Arafat as symbol or statesman, nor has he been able to protect Israelis from Palestinian terror. Continuing Palestinian resilience in the face of the

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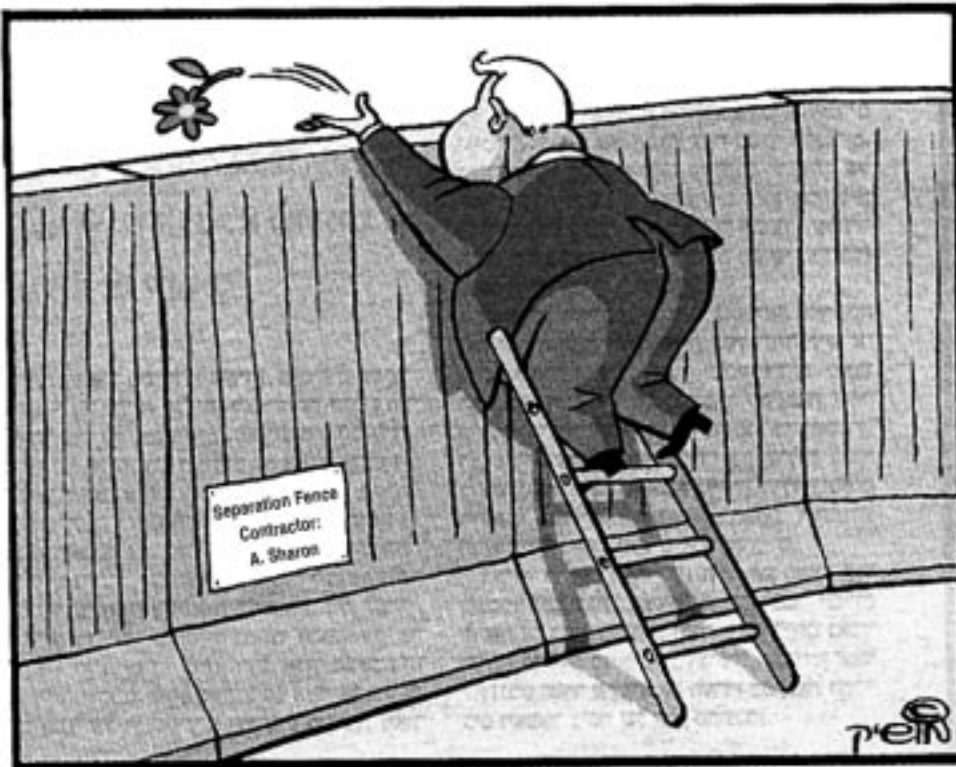
TO OUR READERS

Theodore Herzl, the founder of modern Zionism, said in support of a Jewish state, "If you will it, it is no fable." Herzl's exhortation helped inspire the popular movement that created Israel in 1948. But this triumph for the Jewish people after their sad history and the Holocaust was a tragedy for the Palestinians who bore no historic responsibility for Jewish suffering. The conflict between these two victims of history therefore has profound moral complexity. It commands respect and empathy for both peoples, and it demands a far more urgent effort to rescue peace and justice.

Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon, far from seeking peace and reconciliation with the Palestinians, is determined to defeat their quest for a genuine state by preserving most Jewish settlements and confining the Palestinians into half of the occupied territories behind concrete and steel barriers.

His distorted belief in Herzl's "where there is a will there is a way" is building what Israeli Knesset member Avram Burg calls "a scaffolding of corruption . . . on foundations of oppression and injustice." In 1980, the Israeli historian Jacob Talmon warned that Israel's attempt to subjugate the Palestinians was "a distorted imperialist formulation of nationalism that had brought many nations to grief." Calling this effort a "time bomb," he said "Let us not compel the Arabs to feel that they have been humiliated until they believe that hope is gone and they must die for Palestine." Sharon's blinkered vision, which Jeff Aronson aptly calls "fantastic and ill-fated," ignores Talmon's prophetic words.

Philip C. Wilcox, Jr.



Ma'ariv, November 24, 2003

FOUNDATION FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE

Merle Thorpe, Jr.
Founder
(1917–1994)

Philip C. Wilcox, Jr.
President

Geoffrey Aronson
Director, Research and Publications, Editor, *Report on Israeli Settlement in the Occupied Territories*

Mallika Good
Editorial Assistant

Arif Ahmed
Intern

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Israel Proposes Solution to Settlement Exports Dispute

Bowing to pressure from its export industries, Israel has proposed that it will specify the place of origin of exports to the EU in an effort to end a long-running dispute with the EU over the duty-free export of goods produced in settlements. The new policy is aimed at distinguishing settlement products from other exports produced in Israel that are covered under the free trade agreement with the EU. In recent months, European importers of all Israeli goods have been faced with the prospect of paying a 7 percent customs duty because of a lack of clarity regarding their origin. Israel's exports to the EU are valued at \$7.5 billion annually, including \$150 million originating in West Bank and Gaza Strip settlements.

Ma'ariv, December 5, 2003

The Settlers Also Have a Plan

Israel's settlers are devising a political alternative to government and opposition ideas that rests upon the following geostrategic principles: no Palestinian state west of the Jordan River, no division of sovereignty in Jerusalem, no Palestinian return to Israel.

One YESHA proposal for the occupied territories rejects concessions on "any part of land, settlement, or outpost." Palestinians will remain under Israel's complete security control, but Israel will not be responsible for their civic affairs. In place of a Palestinian state, which the settlers oppose, a plan promoted by former MK Hanan Porat proposes an internationally supported campaign of emigration. Those choosing to remain will be classified as "residents" with either Jordanian or Egyptian citizenship.

Veteran settler leader Israel Harel proposes ensuring Israel's Jewish political majority by withdrawing Israeli citizenship from the state's Palestinian citizens.

"We should take the Arabs on both sides of the Green Line as one body and the Jews on both sides as one body, and give the Arabs Jordanian citizenship and the Jews Israeli citizenship."

Another version of the Porat plan proposes the division of Israel and the occupied territories into ten cantons, two of which—Gaza and the West Bank—will be Palestinian. Palestinian representatives to the Knesset will be limited to assure a Jewish political majority in the parliament.

Yediot Aharonot, November 25, 2003; *Jerusalem Report*, December 15, 2003; *Ma'ariv*, November 25, 2003

Loan Guarantees: Thanks But No Thanks

The United States has deducted \$289.5 million from the \$9 billion loan guarantee program. The deduction was charac-

terized as a penalty for Israeli settlement-related construction in the occupied territories. In September 2003, Washington made available \$1.1 billion. Only \$750 million of this guarantee authority was used when the first tranche of bonds were sold in late 2003, due to improving economic conditions in Israel. Israel may redeem unused U.S. guarantees for three years.

The Olive Harvest

This year's olive harvest was marked by increasing coordination between Palestinian landowners and the IDF in order to safeguard harvesters from Israeli settlers. This dependence by Palestinians upon the IDF to permit harvesting brings yet another aspect of Palestinian life under growing Israeli control.

Arutz 7 reports that, "Rabbi Elyakim Levanon of Elon Moreh said Arabs harvesting their olives in proximity to Jewish communities definitely should not be enabled, but the question is who must stop them. 'It's obvious that not every individual is permitted to make these decisions on his own. The general guidelines are that in a perimeter of 300 meters around each community, Arabs are simply not allowed to enter. If they do so, it becomes a matter of immediate self-defense, and in such a case, individuals are allowed to take action. They may even take action against the property—i.e., olive trees—of those who endanger them in this way.'"

Arutz Sheva News Service,
November 10, 2003

Golan Update

An increase in the settler population of 17,000 in the Golan Heights will be fueled by 1,500 approved units, half of which are already completed.

Construction is under way in 17 of 32 settlements. In Merom Golan, 115 units are under construction. In Matzok Oravim, a new settlement, 360 units; in Aneam, 115; Kidmat Zvi, 24; Yonatan, 60; Kfar Haruv, 115; Kibbutz Geshur, 115.

The largest Golan settlement, Katzrin, with a population of 7,000, is currently planning an expansion to 20,000, including an initial 430 units in the "build your own house" scheme. The main industries in the kibbutz are agriculture and industry, including deciduous groves and flowers for export on an area of 150 dunams, a 1,000 head herd of cattle, and two factories.

Yediot Aharonot, September 3, 2003

SETTLEMENT TIME LINE

September 2 Arutz 7 reports the firing of five antitank shells into the settlement of Kfar Darom in Gaza. One home north of the Katif bloc was damaged, but no one was injured. Two mortar shells are fired at a northern Gaza settlement, but no damage was reported.

September 4 The Israeli Housing Ministry issues tenders for the construction of 102 new housing units in the Olive Hill section of Efrat.

September 5 The Council of Rabbis in YESHA rules that it is permissible for Jews to enter the Temple Mount. The prevailing doctrinal view has long opposed such visits. (*Ha'aretz*)

The Jerusalem Municipality reports that it has demolished 53 illegal residential buildings in East Jerusalem and seven in West Jerusalem during 2003. (*Kol Ha'ir*)

September 7 The Remet construction company sells 15 apartments in three weeks in the settlement of Har Homa, in southern Jerusalem, as part of an Israeli government campaign offering buyers a special \$11,400 grant and another loan for the same amount at 4 percent interest. (*Globes Real Estate Supplement*)

Ma'ariv reports that the housing ministry and the Israel Lands Administration offer single-parent families financing up to 95 percent of the purchase price of an apartment in Ariel, including subsidized mortgages at 4-4.5 percent, as well as a special housing ministry grant of \$5,700 and a monthly subsidy by the developer of \$300 for the first year. The newspaper reports that "buyers will receive a very flexible schedule of payments, according to their economic circumstances." Three room apartments in the settlement start at \$94,000.

September 8 *Ha'aretz* reports the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) tightening its hold around Gaza, preventing Palestinians from moving between towns and cities, and closing off most roads that had been recently reopened.

September 9 Arutz 7 reports traffic delays in and outside Jerusalem as IDF soldiers check each entering vehicle individually after Israel's attempted assassination of Hamas leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin.

Seven of the more than dozen original suspects of the "second Jewish underground"

remain in prison, two of whom have been indicted for possession of dynamite. (Arutz 7)

September 10 The Mishab company offers a grant of \$8,700 to any buyer of an apartment in the settlement of Giv'at Ze'ev on top of the grants and loans totaling \$22,800 that the Housing Ministry allots to "entitled" buyers. (*Globes*)

September 13 A 16-year-old Palestinian youth is caught attempting to cut his way through the fence of the Shani settlement. (Arutz 7)

September 14 Israeli army soldiers fire rubber bullets at some 150 Palestinians protesting outside the settlement of Kfar Darom in Gaza. (Arutz 7)

September 17 The Jerusalem District Court convicts three residents of the settlement of Bat Ayin for conspiring to bomb a Palestinian girls' school and sentences them to 12 to 15 years in prison. (Arutz 7)

September 18 Avner Shimoni, chairman of the Gaza Coast Regional Council, sends a letter to Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon asserting that of almost 19,000 attacks against Israelis in the preceding three years, more than half have been perpetrated in Gaza. IDF statistics show 10,096 attacks in Gaza, 7,917 in the West Bank and 758 in Israel. According to Shimoni, more than 3,000 Qassam rockets, mortar shells, and antitank missiles had hit within the council areas. (Arutz 7)

September 20 Approximately 10,000 Israelis march in Tel Aviv calling for evacuation of the settlements and for an end to the Sharon government. (*Peace Now*)

September 21 *Ha'aretz* reports settlers purchasing a five-dunum plot of land and a floor in a building near Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem. Irving Moscovich, an American-Jewish millionaire who had previously purchased Palestinian land in East Jerusalem and Abu Dis, is behind the Bethlehem purchase. The site has been used for Torah classes, and plans call for it to be the location of a new settlement.

September 25 Israel issues several settlement tenders, including four industrial plots at the Mishor Edumim industrial zone; 28 plots for self-construction of residential housing in the Mizpe Nevo neighborhood in Ma'ale Adumim; completion of development

of the Neve Menahem neighborhood in Karnei Shomron; and completion of development of a 167-unit complex in Ariel. (UNSCO)

September 26 *Ha'aretz* reports the killing of a seven-month-old infant and one settler in an attack on the settlement of Negohot, southwest of Hebron. Two other settlers are injured. The perpetrator is shot and killed by IDF soldiers.

September 28 *Ha'aretz* reports a higher percentage of people leaving the West Bank settlement of Immanuel in 2001 than any other location in Israel or the settlements. A total of 152 people per 1,000 left Immanuel, while 73 per 1,000 left the settlement of Ma'ale Efrat.

September 29 Arutz 7 reports a Jewish group moving into property adjacent to Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem. Forty people spend the Rosh Hashanah holiday there.

Tenders for the construction of 401 housing units in Har Homa and 6 units in Ma'ale Adumim are published in *Ha'aretz*.

October 1 The Israeli cabinet approves the route of the security fence 18-4 with one abstention. The fence will be constructed with gaps along the Ariel "finger," which soldiers will patrol. (*Jerusalem Report*)

October 2 U.S. secretary of state Colin Powell expresses "concerns" about Israel's settlement activity due to plans to build more than 700 new homes in West Bank settlements: 530 at Betar Illit; 50 at Ma'ale Adumim; 24 at Ariel; 100 at Efrat. (Army Radio)

October 3 *Ha'aretz* reports an IDF proposal for 400-meter security zones around settlements that remain east of the separation fence. Approximately 100 settlements have requested the security zones, and the IDF has approved 17.

October 8 The Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights reports that between July and September, 66 Palestinians were killed by the IDF, and 71 Palestinian homes in the West Bank and Gaza were demolished. (*Palestine Report*)

October 9 Eight Palestinians, including two children, are killed and 80 injured during an IDF operation in the Rafah refugee camp aimed at destroying tunnels used to smuggle weapons from Egypt. Approxi-

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mately, 1,500 people were left homeless. Peter Hansen, UNRWA commissioner-general, said, "It would appear between 100 and 120 shelters/houses were completely destroyed." Since the beginning of the al-Aqsa intifada, some 500 homes have been destroyed in this area in similar operations. (UNRWA)

October 10 *Ha'aretz* reports that a Palestinian from the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine was killed while attempting to infiltrate the settlement of Morag.

October 12 The IDF completes the first stage of its operation to uncover arms smuggling in Rafah. It redeploys troops from the refugee camp to the Egyptian border. (*Ha'aretz*)

October 13 Four mortars are shot at settlements in the Katif bloc of the Gaza Strip. One home in the settlement of Kfar Darom sustained a direct hit. No injuries were reported. (Arutz 7)

October 14 A Palestinian approaching the settlement of Negohot, near Hebron, is shot and killed by an Israeli soldier. (*Agence France-Presse*)

Instead of destroying them, the IDF has begun a program of sending vicious dogs held by local dog pounds to guard settlements. (*Yediot Aharonot*)

The United States vetoes a Syrian-sponsored Security Council resolution declaring the separation barrier Israel is building in the West Bank to be illegal. (*New York Times*)

October 16 For the first time since June, hundreds of Jewish worshippers visit the Tomb of Joseph in Nablus after receiving IDF clearance to do so. (Arutz 7)

October 21 More than 110 young couples sign up for the chance to receive \$22,800 toward building a new home in the Jordan Valley as part of the Israeli government's plan to increase the Jewish population there. The first 200 couples receive a benefits package that includes free, or nearly free, housing for the first four years, full university tuition for one spouse, as well as a \$2,700 grant if employed in area settlements. (Arutz 7)

Ateret Cohanim, an association that buys properties and settles Jews in Jerusalem's Old City, reports that about 60 families currently

live in the Old City outside the Jewish Quarter. (Arutz 7)

October 22 The Palestinian Agriculture Ministry reports that Israel has uprooted 953,071 trees and leveled 60,986 dunums of Palestinian land since September 2000. (*Palestine Report*)

Tenders issued by the ministry of housing for the construction of 153 housing units in Karnei Shomron and 180 units in Givat Ze'ev are published in *Ha'aretz*, increasing to 1,727 the number of units tendered in settlements during 2003.

October 23 The Akaba village, located in Area C, receives demolition orders for 12 of 18 houses, the mosque, and the kindergarten. (Gush Shalom)

October 24 Palestinians kill three Israeli soldiers after breaking into an army base at the settlement of Netzarim in the Gaza Strip. (Associated Press)

October 27 The Knesset Finance Committee approves a \$28.6 million allocation to the Housing Ministry, most of it for new settlement housing and infrastructure. (Arutz 7)

The Defense Ministry grants several outposts, including Pnei Kedem, Neve Erez, Mitzpe Kramim and Migron, the status of permanent township, allowing them to receive education and infrastructure budgets from the government. (Israel Radio)

The UN General Assembly adopts Resolution ES-10/13 condemning Israel's separation fence. The resolution states that Israel must "stop and reverse the construction of the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory" and describes the barrier as "in contradiction to relevant provisions of international law." The resolution passed 144-4, with 12 abstentions. Israel, the United States, Micronesia, and the Marshall Islands voted against it.

October 29 Palestinians fire at an Israeli car, injuring two passengers on the road leading to the northern Shomron settlements of Ganim and Kadim, south of Jenin. (Arutz 7)

October 30 In an annual report to the UN General Assembly, UNRWA commissioner-general Peter Hansen details the increase in the demolition of refugee shelters in the Gaza Strip, where more than 616 have been

destroyed, and in the West Bank, where close to 100 shelters have been destroyed and even more are in need of repair as a result of IDF actions.

Settlement Expansion

On November 27, 2003 the Israel Lands Administration published a tender for the lease of 13 plots for private residential construction in the settlement of Ariel. There were 1,284 new residential building starts in settlements throughout the occupied territories (excepting East Jerusalem) in the January-September 2003 period, an increase of 5 percent compared to the corresponding period in 2002. In contrast the national market in Israel contracted at an 8 percent rate. New residential building starts in the occupied territories accounted for 5.8 percent of all residential building starts in Israel and the settlements in this period. During the first nine months of 2003, 204 new residences were sold in the settlements, compared with 206 in the corresponding period last year.

"All legal tenders within existing communities are not included in the road map [call for a settlement freeze] according to our interpretation and our understanding," noted a senior Israeli official.

Publication of the final route of the separation barrier has reportedly increased housing sales in the settlements of Ma'ale Adumim, Adam, Modi'in Ilit and Beitar Ilit which are located to the west of the barrier.

Ma'ariv, December 1, 2003;
IDF Radio News, *Globes*,
December 4, 2003;
Ha'aretz, October 24, 2003;
Ha'aretz, December 21, 2003

most draconian Israeli policies in the history of its rule has forced Israelis to confront the high costs of occupation and compelled Sharon to revise his policies, if not his objectives, in the hope of removing the sense of permanent crisis characterizing Israeli rule in the occupied territories.

In June 1977, Israeli foreign minister Moshe Dayan explained that the presumption that Israel's conflict with the Palestinians could be "solved" was fundamentally flawed.

"The question," explained Dayan, "was not, 'What is the solution?' but 'How do we live without a solution?'"

Sharon is a loyal heir to this view. He too believes that the antagonistic passions and interests driving Israelis and Palestinians cannot be permanently resolved short of a Palestinian surrender. Like Dayan, Sharon's actions and policies do not betray an aspiration to solve the problem, that is, to end the conflict. Rather, they are inspired by a belief in an existential, all but inexhaustible contest with the Palestinians and the Arabs generally that can at best be managed to Israel's advantage.

Sharon's proposals, explains *Ha'aretz's* Aluf Benn, are "not a peace plan but an update of the goals of the war against the Palestinians—and a guarantee that it will continue after the withdrawal."

Israel's policies in the occupied territories have been guided by an unwavering strategic purpose, first articulated by Foreign Minister Yigal Allon, who in 1969 noted, "We are creating a Land of Israel that is whole in the strategic context and that maintains a Jewish state demographically." The policies devised to support this objective, however, have always been characterized by improvisation and adaptability. "Deciding not to decide" was the slogan adopted to describe this policy in the early years of Israeli rule. Sharon's latest ideas are yet another manifestation of this policy, which promises endemic conflict and a continuing cycle of bloodshed. They signal much less a well-conceived "plan" than the tactical response of a fighter in the ring, jabbing and feinting in the hope of keeping his opponent on the ropes.

Time Is on Our Side

One of the most remarkable effects of the belated Palestinian revolt against occupation beginning in 1988 and erupting again in late 2000 has been its erosion of Israeli confidence in the future, symbolized most vividly by the growing intensity of the split in elite Israeli views about the proper response to the continuing insurrection.

Sharon does not share this pessimism. "History teaches us," he explained at a little-reported December 9, 2003 speech before the Israel Business Council, "that since the beginning of Zionism, and even since the creation of the state, that time is on our side. . . . From the earliest days of the *yishuv* [modern Jewish community in Palestine], when there were 56,000 Jews at the time of the Balfour Declaration, and less than 660,000 when the state was declared, we established a state in

all of its glory. We also absorbed millions of immigrants and now number 5.5 million Jews. . . . Even if the mission appears to be impossible, I am sure that even today time continues to work in our favor."

Sharon long ago resolved to his own satisfaction the "demographic threat" posed by permanent Israeli rule in the occupied territories and the source of much consternation among Israeli Jews today

"I am definitely for a democratic Jewish country," Sharon explained in a September 10, 1976, radio broadcast. "The question is, can we see a democratic Jewish state in the Land of Israel today? . . . If we take the Alon Plan, which certainly blessed Kiryat Arba and the settlements in Gush Etzion, Tekoa, and Ma'ale Adumim, we are speaking about a Jewish democratic state which has 1.2 million Arabs. If I take the plan of Gush Emmunim, then the difference is very small. They are talking about a Jewish state that has 1.6 million Arabs. That is to say, if we sincerely want a Jewish democratic state we have to return to the patriotic borders of 1947. If we want a Jewish democratic state we have to return to the partition policy of 1947. . . . Therefore, in my opinion, one should be most careful when talking about what is called a Jewish democratic state."

Sharon has always been confident that the management of the lives and politics of Palestinians in the occupied territories could be married to a strategy of expanding Israeli settlement and strategic military control throughout these areas. In 1976, Sharon believed that Palestinians in territories that Israel coveted could find their political identity in Amman. He was one of the first Israeli leaders, together with Shimon Peres, to reluctantly conclude that an ersatz state called Palestine cobbled out of bits of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem could preserve Israeli hegemony in these areas and square the circle created by the impending establishment of Jewish-Arab demographic parity between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.

Unlike the religious partisans of Greater Israel, however, Sharon has always been a champion of the kind of pragmatism that David Ben Gurion demonstrated in his diplomatic and military efforts to consolidate Jewish power in Palestine.

In Sharon's speech to the Herzliya Conference in December, there was no talk of Greater Israel, no claim to rule the West Bank based on God's promise to the Jewish people, no grandiose promise to end the conflict. There was only the imperative of security, that illusive concept at the heart of Israel's long and bitter engagement in the occupied territories, established by Israel's founding generation and championed by Sharon.

Sharon himself has been thinking about the strategy of compromise followed by Ben Gurion in Israel's early years. In a recent speech marking Ben Gurion's death, Sharon, in remarks read by Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, noted, "Ben Gurion's greatness was not only in his visionary rhetoric but to limit it to what was possible under the circumstances of the day. Ben Gurion said, 'Let's assume that with military

means we could conquer all of western Eretz Israel [the West Bank]. Then what? We'll be one state. But that state will want to be democratic. There will be general elections. And we'll be a minority. . . . When it was a question of all the land without a Jewish state or a Jewish state without all the land we chose a Jewish state without all the land.”

Like Israel's founders, Sharon is enthusiastic about the future of Israel and Zionism. Like them he has not been blinded by an ideological commitment to Greater Israel. And like them, he has always been prepared to make what he views as a tactical retreat when the balance of forces dictates—to wait for another day when the equation becomes more favorable.

It was not necessary to listen to Sharon's Herzliya speech in order to understand his intentions, which are taking shape every day in the hills and fields of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and along the deep-rutted roads of East Jerusalem. His unilaterally imposed disengagement plan is hardly new in substance or in strategy. Almost every plan in the occupied territories for the last forty years—the creation and expansion of settlements foremost among them—has been a unilateral Israeli action designed to enable Israel to remain in the territories. It could be argued that even the territorial divisions sanctified in the Oslo agreements were imposed by Israel upon Palestinians, who pressed unsuccessfully for a total Israeli withdrawal. Indeed the Oslo territorial division of the West Bank into Areas A, B, and C approximates the separation barriers now under construction.

Sharon's commitment to refrain from creating new settlements is belied by continuing state support for the consolidation of up to 100 “outposts” established since 1996. His promise to evacuate these “unauthorized” new settlements establishes a distinction recognizable only in Israel (and perhaps in the White House) that formalizes the “legality” of scores of settlements established during the last eight years, notwithstanding the fact that *all* civilian Israeli settlement in these areas violates international law. The promise not to confiscate more Palestinian land for settlement expansion

is betrayed by scores of military-ordered confiscations for the separation barrier, whose trajectory is determined by settlements, by numerous instances of outright land theft by expanding settlements, and the fencing off of lands according to military orders issued years if not decades ago.

Sharon's statement at Herzliya that no special economic incentives encourage settlers to move to settlements cannot survive a casual reading of Israel's daily newspapers, which are

full of advertisements touting such offers. Sharon's commitment to restrict settlement expansion to present “lines of construction” offers a new linguistic formulation for an old expansionist story. Together these elements portray a continuing program of government-supported settlement expansion throughout the occupied territories.

Like his predecessors, Sharon is prepared to recognize the limits of Israeli power and if necessary to make “painful concessions” in order to consolidate Israel's considerable territorial gains. Sharon it will be remembered, spoke of “room for considerable retreat in Sinai for real peace” years before Israel's withdrawal from Sinai and its peace agreement with Egypt. At the Camp David talks in September 1978, Prime Minister Menachem Begin agreed to Israel's withdrawal from Sinai and all of its settlements only after receiving Sharon's approval.

Today, Sharon's pragmatism is expressed in a willingness to acknowledge that a policy intended to secure Israel's hold on the occupied territories will require the evacuation of some settlements, sacrificed in the face of Palestinian resistance in order to establish the minimal territorial conditions for the creation of a weak Palestinian state that he believes Palestinians will have no choice but to accept.

Like the separation barrier, the Palestinian state at the heart of Sharon's plan for disengagement is an idea that Sharon has embraced, if only in order to transform it into an instrument necessary for the implementation of his own fantastic, ill-fated vision. The coming months promise to be decisive, challenging not only Palestinians but the international community, as the defining features of Sharon's map take concrete form. ♦

Autonomy Forever?

“In the last three years, Israel has been systematically working to either dismantle the Palestinian Authority or cause fundamental changes in its character and makeup. To do this, the Israeli authorities have slowly narrowed the physical and political space within which the Authority is able to move. . . . The Israeli military has cut deeply into Palestinian security space with its repeated and extensive operations in areas that were once under Palestinian security control. Finally, Israel continues to narrow the geographic space of the Palestinian Authority by re-occupying towns, restricting the movement of all Palestinians (as well as officials of the Palestinian Authority), expanding its settlements and confiscating land. What remains is barely room to move.

“If Israel is to continue narrowing the breathing room of the Palestinian Authority (half of the Palestinian people say they don't even feel the Authority's presence) then Israel will eventually achieve its goal of ridding itself of the Authority. That is the Israeli government's first strategic objective on the road to strategic objective number two: removing the practical possibility of an independent and viable Palestinian state through intensive and illegal settlement expansion in the occupied territories. Israel instead wants a kind of Palestinian services administration to continue under an arbitrary Israeli security regime, i.e., autonomy forever.”

Former Palestinian Authority labor minister
Ghassan Khatib, BitterLemons.org,
November 10, 2003

GAZA SETTLEMENTS POPULATION, JANUARY 2004

<i>Settlement</i>	<i>2002^a</i>	<i>Increase Since 1990^b / %</i>	<i>Settlement</i>	<i>2002^a</i>	<i>Increase Since 1990^b / %</i>
1 Neve Dekalim	2,501	1,431 / 133.7	11 Gan-Or (1992)	321	102 / 46.6
2 Nisanit (1994)	943	620 / 191.9	12 Bedolach (1993)	217	72 / 49.7
3 Bnei Atzmon (Atzmona)	567	122 / 62.9	13 Morag	170	55 / 47.8
4 Netzer Hazani	410	56 / 15.8	14 Rafiah-Yam (1993)	149	25 / 20.2
5 Netzarim (1993)	382	252 / 193.9	15 Peat Sadeh (1996)	95	-16 / -14.4
6 Ganei Tal	377	27 / 7.71	16 Dugit (1996)	76	11 / 6.9
7 Alei Sinai (1992)	360	145 / 76.4	17 Kerem Atzmona (outpost)	NA	NA
8 Katif (1993)	346	184 / 113.6	18 Kfar-Yam (1993)	NA	NA
9 Kfar Darom	338	190 / 128.4	19 Shiraat Ha Yam (outpost)	NA	NA
10 Gadid	324	8 / 18.3	20 Tel Katifa	NA	NA
			TOTAL	7,576	3,284 / 68.8

a. The latest year statistics available is 2002.

b. Unless otherwise noted.

Sources: www.geocities.com/m_yericho/yishuvim.htm; Knesset Center for Research and Information; "Figures of the Occupation in Judea, Samaria and Gaza," Ministry of Interior letter to Labor

MK Yuli Tamir, May 28, 2003; *List of Localities: Their Population and Codes*, Jerusalem. Technical Publications, Israel, Central Bureau of Statistics.

Prepared by Lily Pirouzian.

I must be frank. The demographic picture is very stark. Within the next decade or so, Jews will be a minority in the area of Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

As Israeli settlements expand, and the population increases, it becomes ever more difficult to see how two people can be separated to two states. . . . The fact is, the settlements continue to grow today, encouraged by specific ongoing government policy.

Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs David Satterfield,
at the State Department conference "The United States, the Middle East,
and the 1967 Arab-Israeli War," January 12-13, 2004,
as reported by *Ha'aretz*, January 12, 2004

Foundation for Middle East Peace
1761 N Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
Telephone: 202-835-3650
Fax: 202-835-3651
E-mail: info@fmep.org
Internet: <http://www.fmep.org>

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