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The Palestine Question in the Wake of the War in Iraq:

The re-emergence of the one state solution?

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The Palestine Question in the Wake of the War in Iraq: The re-emergence of the one state solution?

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Introduction

By mid-January 2003 the American Assistant Defence Minister, Paul Wolfowitz, stated that America would work intensively in order to create a Palestinian State as soon as the War in Iraq was over.¹ In Denmark and other European countries a number of politicians issued similar statements, and peace between the Palestinians and the Israelis became an argument to justify a war against Iraq.² Even people who were not convinced by the necessity of war began to argue that something positive would eventually emerge from the war – especially in the case of the Palestine Question. Their argument held that the Americans had to do something constructive in the Middle East. They needed to engage more seriously, and they had to demonstrate to the Arab world that although part of the “war against terror” might be taking place in the Arab world, it was not a war against the Arab world, or against Islam, for that matter. Thus, it was only logical to engage the US in the Middle East, and thereby do the utmost in order to force the Israeli occupation to cease. Despite the huge American problems in “post-war” Iraq the question of Palestine is still very high on the agenda not only in the Middle East, but globally.

What has actually happened in Palestine during the past year? What is new in the Road Map as opposed to the Oslo accords? And what happened to the grand plans of a Palestinian state with provisional borders by the end of 2003 and a permanent two-state solution by the end of 2005? How

¹ Stated in the Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz 22 January 2003. His statements were harshly criticized by pro-Israeli lobbyist. See for example the swift reaction of The Zionist Organisation of America (<http://www.zoa.org/pressrel/20030123a.htm>). At the summit on the Azores a few days before the US-led war on Iraq actually began, the war and the Palestine question were closely connected in an official context. It was understood that so called Road Map should be made public in the wake of the war as the Spanish Prime Minister Aznar stated during a common press conference after the summit at the Azores: “We’ve agreed on launching, on boosting the Middle East peace process, and on our vision that that peace process has to culminate with all necessary security guarantees and putting an end to terrorism. And this should end with the peaceful coexistence of two states, an independent Palestinian state and the Israeli state.” See <http://www.chron.com/cs/CDA/story.hts/side/1821063>.

² See for example the statements made by the Danish Prime Minister, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, on 18 March 2003: “The government emphasises in its support for the United States that Bush has declared his clear support to a Roadmap for a solution to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. Without such a solution peace and calm will never prevail in the Middle East”. <http://www.stm.dk/Index/dokumenter.asp?o=3&n=0&h=3&t=13&d=1434&s=1>.

did the opposing parties react to the Road Map? Does the plan have a future in the light of “the wall” that currently is being erected by the Sharon-Government? What are the consequences of “the wall” for a future settlement of the conflict?

The Road Map

The Road Map was a plan drawn up in Copenhagen during the Danish presidency of the EU during the second half of 2002, and thus the Danish Foreign Minister Per Stig Møller has a significant stake in the plan. It was later adopted by the Quartet, consisting of America, Russia, the UN and the EU, as their common policy vis-à-vis the conflict. However, the Road Map was never made public due to a common American and Israeli resistance to this step, as the Israeli Government did not accept the Road Map.

The Road Map itself is a not a very precise plan. The main idea of the plan states the need for creating an “independent, viable Palestinian state by the end of 2005,” side by side with Israel. The Road Map is divided into three phases.³ During the first phase the task on the Palestinian side is to curb the violence. In addition the Palestinian National Authority (PA) is required to continue the political reform and democratisation processes. On their side the Israelis are supposed to withdraw the occupation forces back to the positions they held prior to the outbreak of the *Intifada* on 28 September 2000. The Israeli government is also required to dismantle the “outpost” settlements established during the current *Intifada*, as well as to freeze the construction of new settlements and the expansion of existing settlements. The road map further states that during phase I:

“Israel takes measures to improve the humanitarian situation. Israel and the Palestinians implement in full all recommendations of the Bertini⁴ report to improve humanitarian conditions, lifting curfews and easing restrictions on movement of persons and goods, and allowing full, safe, and unfettered access of international and humanitarian personnel.”

Concerning the second Phase of the Road Map – which is supposed to start by June 2003 and last until December 2003 – the Road map states that:

³ For the full text of the Road Map, see <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2003/20062.htm>.

⁴The Bertini report was made by Ms. Catherine Bertini under the auspices of UN/OCHA as a Personal Humanitarian Envoy of the UN Secretary General. The report was published on 19 August 2002, and concluded, among other things: “...There is a serious humanitarian crisis in the West Bank and Gaza. The crisis is not a “traditional” humanitarian crisis, such as those caused by famines or droughts, but is inextricably linked to the ongoing conflict and particularly to the measures imposed by Israel.” For the full report, see: <http://www.caabu.org/press/documents/bertini-report.html>.

“Phase II starts after Palestinian elections and ends with possible creation of an independent Palestinian state with provisional borders in 2003. Its primary goals are continued comprehensive security performance and effective security cooperation, continued normalization of Palestinian life and institution-building, further building on and sustaining of the goals outlined in Phase I.”

During the third and last phase, which is supposed to last for the whole of both 2004 and 2005, the difficult questions that we know all too well from the Oslo process have to be discussed in an international conference, that is, the questions of Jerusalem, the refugees, and the settlements, as well as final borders.

The Road Map in many ways resembles the Oslo process, and this should come as no surprise, since the authors carefully read Oslo, as well as the Mitchell, Tenet, and Bertini reports, and put the lot together into one plan. Thus there is hardly anything new in the plan and in reality it appears to be a continuation of the Oslo process. As it has been evident throughout the past decade, Oslo laid the ground for an asymmetric peace. The power of balance was – and still is – in favour of Israel. As Glenn Robinson and others have argued, the Declaration of Principles (DoP) was a hegemonic peace deal. A hegemonic peace has been defined as,

“A peace between two significantly unequal powers that nevertheless retain the autonomy to accept or reject the terms of the settlement. It is not a peace among equals, nor is it a “peace” completely imposed on an utterly vanquished enemy.”⁵

As a continuation of the Oslo process the Road Map is another attempt to establish a hegemonic peace, and as such we can best understand the whole process as an internal Israeli discussion to address the questions, “How much land shall we leave the Palestinians? How many settlements are to be dismantled? And, how many Palestinian refugees may return home – if any?” It is only through Israeli acquiescence that the Palestinians will be able to acquire anything, and as we all know the Palestinians do not occupy Israel, nor do they have any illegal settlements in Israel, and they have no responsibility for the ethnic cleansing of a large part of the Israeli population. The only negotiating leverage that the Palestinians possessed – and still possess – lies in the small word “no”.

However, despite this rather critical approach to the Road Map, it is still possible to find some improvements in the wording of the Road Map as compared to the Oslo process. For example –

⁵ Glenn E. Robinson (2001): “The peace of the Powerful” in Carey (ed.): *The New Intifada. Resisting Israel’s Apartheid* (New York: Verso).

apart from the fact that it mentions specifically that the end goal is a Palestinian state - it is also stated in the Road Map that:

“The Quartet will meet regularly at senior levels to evaluate the parties' performance on implementation of the plan. In each phase, the parties are expected to *perform their obligations in parallel* [emphasis mine], unless otherwise indicated.”

Thus, a mechanism has been established in order to evaluate the implementation of the plan and furthermore it is made clear that things have to take place in parallel. The problem regarding the evaluation has been that the Americans in reality have a veto power according to the Road Map where it is stated that:

”Progress into Phase II will be based upon the *consensus judgment of the Quartet* [emphasis mine] of whether conditions are appropriate to proceed, taking into account performance of both parties”.

At the end of the day the plan resembles Oslo – even though its specified end result is a Palestinian state. But the Road Map offers no fundamental change from the previous decade. Hence, it was no big surprise that many Palestinians jokingly during the summer of 2003 stated “that the roads are for the Israeli and the map for the Palestinians to hold”.

The Israeli reaction to the Road Map

At the end of May Ariel Sharon took many by surprise when he suddenly accepted the Road Map that only a few months earlier he had scoffed at, saying: “Oh, the quartet is nothing. Don't take it seriously.”⁶ Ariel Sharon had numerous reservations vis-à-vis the Road Map. When he ended up accepting the Road Map it was largely attributed to the pressure exerted by President Bush. However, his acceptance is also closely related to the fact that the American president assured Sharon that after his formal acceptance of the Road Map the Americans would be more than willing to lend an ear to all the Israeli reservations. And there were quite a lot of reservations; fourteen reservations altogether. According to the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* these are some of the most serious reservations⁷:

- 1) Both at the commencement of, and during the process, and as a condition to its continuance, calm will have to be maintained by the Palestinian side. The Palestinians will have to dismantle

⁶ *Newsweek* 18 January 2003.

⁷ *Ha'aretz* English edition, 27 May 2003. The points below are among a total of 14 Israeli reservations to the plan which are mentioned in the *Ha'aretz* article.

the existing security organizations and implement security reforms during the course of which new organizations will be formed and act to combat terror, violence and incitement... In the first phase of the plan and as a condition for progress to the second phase, the Palestinians will complete the dismantling of what Israel considers terrorist organizations such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad, the Popular Front & Al-Aqsa Brigades and their infrastructure.

- 2) The need of the emergence of a new and different leadership in the Palestinian Authority within the framework of governmental reform. This constitutes a condition for progress to the second phase of the plan. In this framework, elections will be conducted for the Palestinian Legislative Council following coordination with Israel.
- 3) The Monitoring mechanism has to be under American management.
- 4) Declared references must be made by the PA to Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state and to the waiver of any right of return for Palestinian refugees to the State of Israel.
- 5) There will be no involvement from the Israeli side with issues pertaining to the final settlement. Among issues not to be discussed: settlements in Gaza and the West Bank as well the status of the Palestinian Authority and its institutions in Jerusalem.

Although Sharon accepted the Road Map, all evidence pointed to the fact that this was merely a strategic decision to please the American administration rather than a political change of heart. Thus, nobody expected to see Sharon as a peace dove, even though he has been talking about making “painful concessions” and the necessity of establishing a Palestinian state ever since his acceptance of the Road Map. However, it is noteworthy that these days even the Israeli right wing has accepted that the solution to the conflict preconditions the establishment of a Palestinian state. Nevertheless, it is still beyond imagination that Sharon would ever offer the Palestinians anything even in the vicinity of what was offered at Camp David during the summer 2000 by the then Israeli PM Ehud Barak.⁸ This been the case is primarily based on the assumption that the political aim of Sharon rather is what Israel professor of Sociology, Baruch Kimmerling has named *politicide*.

⁸ Much has been written on the negotiations in Camp David during summer 2000. For a critical judgement of the Camp David negotiations see Tanya Reinhardt (2002): *Israel/Palestine: How to end the 1948 war* (New York: Seven Stories Press).

Kimmerling defines *politicide* as “a process that has, as its ultimate goal, the dissolution of the Palestinian people’s existence as a legitimate social, political and economic entity”⁹

Palestinian reform and *hudna* as a consequence of the War in Iraq

As a consequence of both external pressure and the Road Map – which in fact was known to both sides prior to the date that it was made a public document – the Palestinians began to reform the Authority during the latter months of 2002 and the early months of 2003. Interestingly there was a rare concurrence of interests between the majority of the Palestinians – who had grown tired of the corrupt and inefficient Palestinian leadership – and Israel, the US and the EU, who suddenly argued for the necessity of Palestinian political reform as a precondition for progress in the peace process. In effect, things were turned upside down; while Oslo presupposed a non-democratic, authoritarian and human rights violating Palestinian regime¹⁰, it was exactly this type of regime that was described as the main problem hampering progress towards peace – and not the occupation nor the policies of Sharon.

After the Palestinians during the last days of April 2003 had designated Abu Mazen, also known as Mahmoud Abbas, as the new Palestinian Prime Minister the Road Map was publicized. Thus, in Palestine a regime changed by diplomatic means, in contrast to the more dramatic regime change the world witnessed a few weeks earlier in Iraq. By this development the Palestinian President Yassir Arafat was made “irrelevant,” which is exactly what Sharon had wanted and argued for ever since the outbreak of the second *Intifada* during late September 2000. Part of the reform process led to the designation of a new Minister of Finance, the former IMF employee Fayyad Salam. An equally important reform process began with the security forces when Muhammad Dahlan was appointed the new Minister of Interior.

The new government promptly made contact with the Palestinian opposition, represented by Hamas, Jihad Islami, and Kata’ib al-Aqsa. With Egyptian mediation on 1 July they managed to present a unilateral Palestinian truce, or *hudna*.¹¹ That Hamas chose to sign a *hudna* at this point in history was closely related to, and in fact a consequence of, the US-led war on Iraq. There had long been an internal power struggle within Hamas between a moderate and a more hard-line faction.

⁹ Baruch Kimmerling (2003): *Politicide. Ariel Sharon’s war against the Palestinians* (New York: Verso).

¹⁰ For this argument see e.g. Human Rights Watch (1997): *Human Rights under the Palestinian Authority*.

¹¹ For a brief discussion of Hamas’ view to the *hudna* concept, see Michael Irving Jensen (2002), *Hamas i Gazastriben* (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag), pp. 58-64.

However it now appears evident that the moderate faction was just about to gain control during the late 1990s as a consequence of PA pressure on their institutions within civil society, as well as the Authority's crackdown on members of Kata'ib Fizz ad Din Assam. Thus, at that time it seemed inevitable that Hamas would move back to a focus solely on activities within civil society. This tendency was strengthened by the fact that the leadership in exile, which had historically represented and supported the hardliners, was forced to leave Jordan and had to relocate to Qatar and Syria. However, the whole equation changed with the outbreak of the Intifada in September 2000, where resistance once again became the main source of legitimacy for the various political groupings. And it is beyond doubt that Hamas was strengthened. Internationally they were on the other hand branded as terrorists and economic transactions were withheld. Due to this they signed a *hudna* in July of 2003. In doing so the internal leadership were being heavily influenced by the leadership in exile, who now were present in the Syrian capital. This is when the war on Iraq entered the picture.

Hudna and the Syrian influence

Prior to the war on Iraq Washington portrayed Syria as a rogue state in the periphery of the "axis of evil." The main reason why Washington labelled Syria a rogue state was due to the perception that it supported terrorism, that is, the Palestinian and Lebanese resistance movements. As George W. Bush stated during a press conference with Ariel Sharon, also known in Bush's words as, "the man of peace,"

"We would like to make it clear for Hezbollah and the nations supporting Hezbollah ... that we do not expect that there will be any attacks [on Israel] ... We consider this terrorist activity, and we will fight terror everywhere, where terror exists"¹²

There is no doubt that the Syrians feared an attack on Iraq, though not because either the Syrian people or their leadership would miss Saddam Hussein. Syria had a very antagonistic relationship to Iraq throughout most of the last three decades, although it had improved slightly during the last few years to the benefit of the Syrian economy.¹³ The Syrians feared an attack on Iraq because they knew such a move would embolden the US to confront Syria.

¹² <http://www.cnn.com>, 16 October 2002.

¹³ See Eberhard Kienle (1990): *Ba'th v. Ba'th. The conflict between Syria and Iraq 1968-1989* (London: I.B. Tauris).

The US made accusations of Syria even prior to the war on Iraq. Donald Rumsfeld, for instance, accused Syria of smuggling military equipment into Iraq, as well as letting “Islamic terrorists” enter Iraq from Syria. The accusations continued and intensified after the war. The US claimed that certain persons from the highest echelons of the Iraqi Baath Party fled into Syria and took refuge. Not surprisingly the Syrians denied these allegations. The Syrians were further accused of producing weapons of mass destruction. The Pentagon warned Damascus by stating: “The Syrians need to know... that they will be held accountable.”¹⁴ Another prominent American conservative, the former head of the CIA James Woolsey, called the Syrian government a fascist government that needed to be changed. And no one stated the US policy more clearly than Paul Wolfowitz:

“I think a lot of countries, including Syria, will eventually get the message from this [Iraq war] that it's much better to come to terms peacefully with the international community, to not acquire these weapons of mass destruction, to not use terrorism as an instrument of national policy.”¹⁵

At the same time the Israelis tried to make things worse for Syria by hinting that “it is possible Iraq transferred missiles and weapons of mass destruction into Syria.”¹⁶ The US administration did not buy into that argument, and after the official end of the war Colin Powell went to Damascus in an attempt to tone down the crisis. However his message to the Syrian government was clear: “close the offices of the terror organisations like Hamas, Jihad Islami and Hezbollah. If that does not happen you will face the consequences.” Thus, few were surprised to find that many of these organisations’ offices were closed down shortly after Powell’s visit. Some of the Palestinian leaders of Hamas and Jihad Islami, for example, have lately been outside Damascus, mainly in Beirut. Although the Islamist leaders claim that they left Damascus on their own initiative in order to “protect” the Syrians it appears more likely that the Syrian government yielded to American pressure, despite the fact that the Syrian policy to date had been that these movements would disappear “automatically,” so to say, the moment the cause of resistance disappeared, that is, when Israeli occupation ceased. Thus, one can argue that Syrian pressure on the Hamas leadership in exile influenced Hamas’ signing of a *hudna* on 1 July.¹⁷

¹⁴ Deputy Defence Minister Paul Wolfowitz to the *Washington Post*, 8 April 2003.

¹⁵ *Washington Post* 8 April 2003.

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ The relationship between the War in Iraq and the Hudna in Palestine was confirmed through informal discussions with a former high ranking member of Hamas in Ramallah, Palestine in August 2003 as well as through discussions with various employees at European embassies in Damascus during October 2003.

It appears that the US administration hopes that severe pressure on the regime will “change” the Syrian attitude and thus Syria will open up and show more creativity toward finding a solution to its conflict with Israel concerning the Golan Heights.

The breakdown of the hudna

The *hudna* only lasted for a short period of time. On 8 August Israeli soldiers killed two alleged Hamas militants in Nablus. It appeared that Hamas would withhold retaliation. However, on 12 August a suicide bomber sent by Hamas killed one Israeli in the town of Rosh-Ha'ayin, and on the same day another suicide bomber killed one settler near the settlement of Ariel, which is situated near Nablus. Both suicide bombers came from Nablus. Hamas announced that the *hudna* would continue, stipulating however that they intended to reply in kind if, and when, the Israelis resorted to extra-judicial killings. But Hamas also stressed that this kind of retaliation was not considered as a break of the *hudna*. For a short while this created a headache for the Palestinian Authority, for while it was difficult to reconcile this position with the official PA policy, all Palestinians fully understood this kind of logic. On the 14th of August the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) killed Muhammad Seeder, the head of Izz ad-din al-Qassam in Khalil. Just five days later another Khalili blew himself to pieces, taking 23 Israelis with him, and wounding more than 100 others. The Israeli reaction was swift. They killed one of the top five Hamas leaders in another extra-judicial killing. The man killed was Ismael Abu-Shanab, one of the most moderate political leaders of the movement. Actually Abu Shanab was one of the most active behind the scenes when the *hudna* was agreed upon, and he has continually argued for the possibility of a long-term *hudna* – of up to 20 to 30 years – with Israel.¹⁸ After the killing of Abu Shanab the IDF also unsuccessfully attempted to kill other Hamas political leaders such as Mahmoud Zahhar, Ismael Haniyya, and the spiritual head of the movement, Sheikh Ahmad Yasin. Hamas abrogated the *hudna*.

A new and very tense situation became a reality. Abu Mazen was experiencing an increased pressure in order to crack down on the Palestinian Islamists. In stead of doing so he resigned on 6 September. In his letter of resignation he stated a number of reasons for his resignation. Among them was that:

¹⁸ See Michael Irving Jensen (2002): *Hamas i Gazastriben* (Copenhagen: Akademisk forlag).

“The fundamental problem is Israel's unwillingness to implement its Road Map commitments and to undertake any constructive measures”.¹⁹

The main cause for Abu Mazen's resignation was the fact that Israel did not fulfil its obligations as stipulated in the Road Map despite the Road Map was made an international recognized document as the Security Council adopted the Road Map during autumn 2003. Despite of this today the Israelis don't even have to fulfil their part as the American president George W. Bush made it clear that the new Palestinian Prime Minister needed to crush terror and the “infrastructure of terror.” Meanwhile Hamas declared open war, and so did Israel. The Israelis will now hit the “terrorists” everywhere (including Syria) as the PA – in their view – is doing absolutely nothing. All dialogue as specified in the Road Map has stopped, although most of the autumn of 2003 Hamas, the PA and Egypt spent discussing a new Hudna which so far never materialised. Powell put the ball even further into the Palestinian court when he made it clear that he believed that the PA must crack down on terrorism *before* the Israelis could respond to international pressure to curb further construction of settlements on occupied Palestinian land.²⁰ Thus, the idea that the two sides were supposed to perform their “obligations in parallel”, as stated in the Road Map, no longer exists.

This annulment of the parallel obligation principle may be due to the severe criticism faced by the Road Map within influential US circles. Those members of the current American government who happened to be the hawks in the question of the Iraq war also happen to be the staunchest opponents of a free and independent Palestine (within the pre-1967 borders.) Douglas Feith, for example, who is the number three in the Department of Defence, David Wurmser of the Department of State, and Richard Perle of the White House together authored a “policy-paper” for the Israeli right wing party, Likud, back in 1996, in which they argued for a clean break from the peace process. They argued that the principle of “land for peace” was an inherent danger to Israel, and in fact represented a step toward the annihilation of the state. Other prominent pro-Israelis in the US government today who have a significant influence on US Middle East policy include Paul Wolfowitz, John Hannah (of Vice President Dick Cheney's office), John Bolton, and Elliot Abrams. What is characteristic of these influential players is that they are not only pro-Israeli, but that they support the Israeli right wing, who are staunch opponents to a solution to the conflict based on international law. Although most US administrations during the past three decades have been pro-

¹⁹ Letter of resignation by Mahmoud Abbas.

²⁰ *Ha'aretz* English edition 23 September 2003.

Israeli to one degree or another, the current US administration supports Israeli radicals that are working against the will of the international community.²¹ As Sharon stated to Bush during a press conference in Washington: “We have never had a better relation with any American president than is the case with you.”²² This close relationship did not vanish after the war in Iraq. Thus, we still see strong US support for the occupying force, Israel.

Nonetheless if the Americans want to win hearts and minds in the Middle East, or at least some confidence among some of the Arabs, the Administration needs to engage more in the conflict. The administration is beginning to recognise this, and recognise that mere public relations efforts alone will not solve the problem. But they have to yet to acknowledge that they actually need to secure a solution that is based on international law. In other words it does not really matter who the Palestinian Prime Minister is; what matters is that the occupation is brought to an end. However, as I have discussed, nothing will lead the parties in this direction, with or without the Road Map, as long as Israel, the US, and the EU have established the most pressing and important issue for the incoming Palestinian PM as the elimination of Palestinian terror and the so-called “infrastructure of terror.” No Palestinian leader can deliver as he would lose all the legitimacy which is needed to act in the first place. Thus, not many options are left for the Palestinian leadership. The Road Map is as dead as the Oslo process was back in the late 1990s. The question then is where does that leave the Palestinian question here in the beginning of 2004?

The Wall: The end of the two-state solution?

In late summer 2002 the Sharon government decided to erect a so-called “security barrier” – known among some Palestinians as “the Apartheid wall” – between Israel and the Occupied Territories.²³ The first part of the wall was to run from north-west of Jenin down to the area around Qalqilya. Only after the first 150 kilometres were completed did the wall really make the headlines in the Western media. During late summer 2003 we suddenly witnessed stories in each and every newspaper and magazine around the world about the consequences of the wall, first and foremost for the Palestinian farmers whose lands were effectively expropriated when they were placed behind the wall. The wall was not erected on the old 1967-border known as the green line, but

²¹ For a severe critique of the current US foreign policy in the Middle East and the people behind it, see Kathleen Christison and Bill Christison (2002): “A Rose by another Other Name. The Bush Administration's Dual Loyalties”, *Counterpunch*, 13 December 2002, <http://www.counterpunch.org/christison1213.htm>.

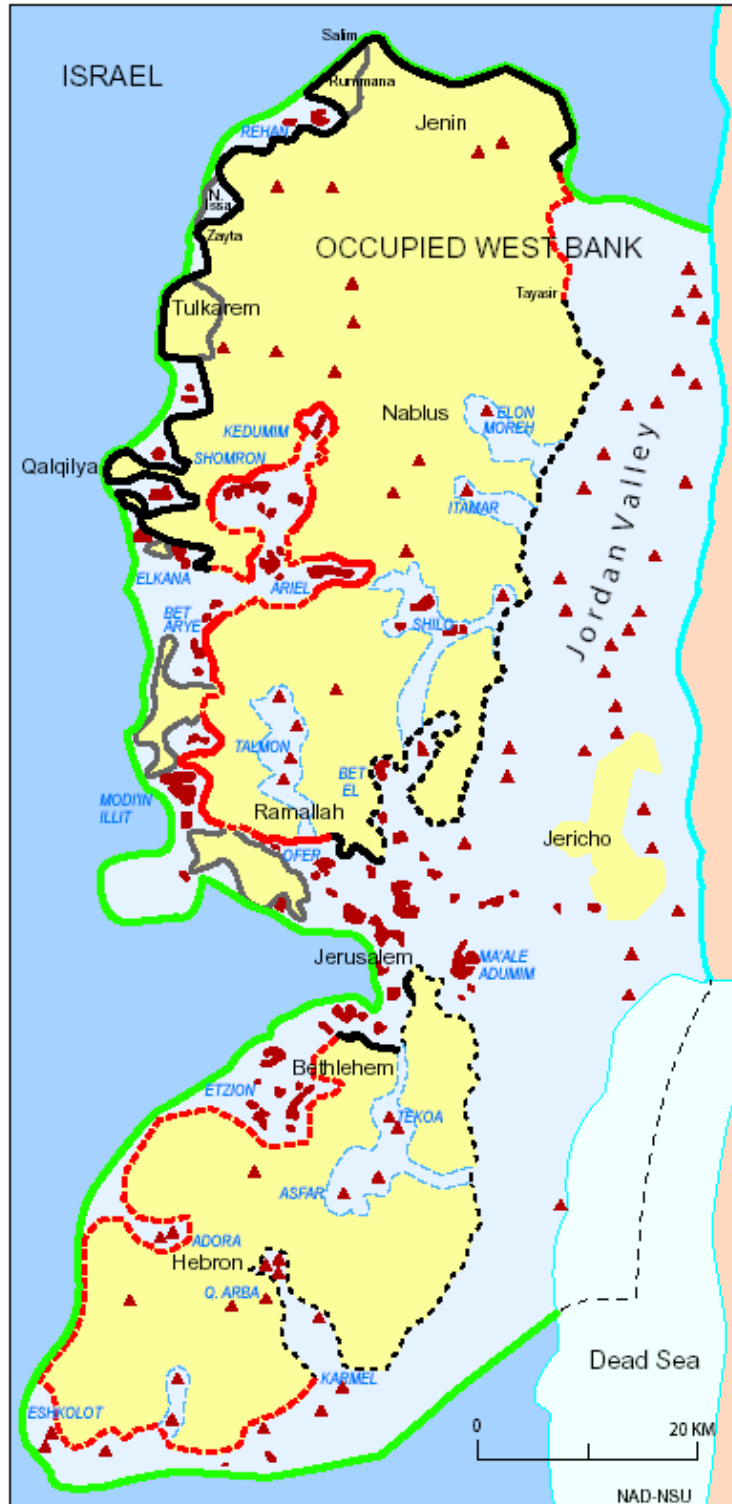
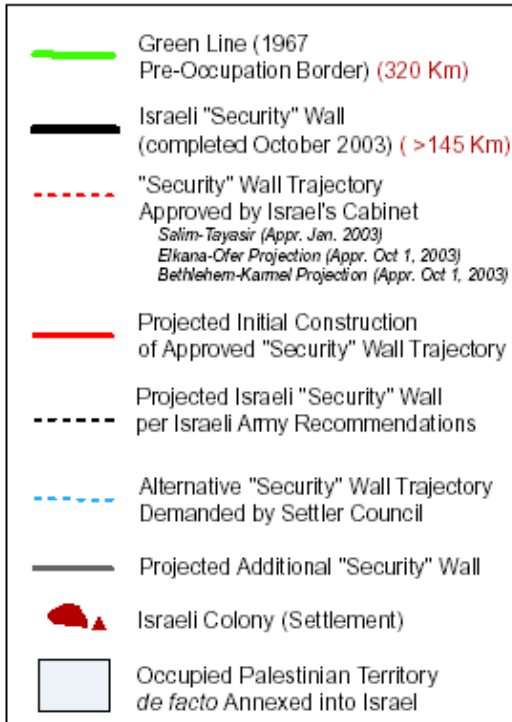
²² <http://www.cnn.com>, 16 October 2002.

²³ For a good introduction to the Palestinian narrative of the wall and its consequences for the Palestinians, see PENGON (2003): *Stop the wall in Palestine* (Ramallah: PENGON).

significantly eastward, with tens of thousands of dunams of land expropriated during the first phase alone, including some of the most fertile Palestinian land in the northern West Bank. Qalqilya is now effectively an open air prison, surrounded by the wall on three sides and accessible only via an Israeli checkpoint.

During the past months there has been quite a lot of discussion in the West as to whether Sharon should be allowed to continue building the wall, expropriating more fertile agricultural land from the Palestinians and further subdividing the West Bank. In September the Israelis began the second phase of construction. The excuse was, of course, the “terror campaign” launched by Hamas, that is, the security argument, which has proven such an effective justification in the light of the global “war on terror.” In the shadow of the current crises and the latest suicide bombings the Knesset and the Sharon government have approved funding for phase two of the wall, which, like phase one, will veer east of the green line to include several settlements such as Ariel and Kedumim in the heart of the West Bank (See map on the next page).

ISRAEL'S "SECURITY" WALL: ANOTHER LAND GRAB OCTOBER 2003



ELKANA-OFER "SECURITY" WALL FACTS AS OF OCTOBER 2003

Number of Palestinians Between Projected Approved "Security" Wall and the Green Line: 74,000

Number of Israeli Colonies Between Projected Approved "Security" Wall and the Green Line: 28

Percentage of West Bank Land Area Between Projected Approved "Security" Wall and the Green Line: 7.6%

Total Percentage of West Bank Land *de facto* Annexed into Israel (from Salim to Ofer): 9.2%

UPON COMPLETION

Total Area *de facto* Annexed into Israel: 45-55% of the Occupied West Bank

Percentage of Colonies Outside the Wall: 91%

Percentage of Settlers Outside the Wall: 95-98%

The final plan will leave 91 percent of the settlements on the Israeli side of the wall. The result will be that some 95 to 98 percent of all settlers would then be placed inside “Israel,” that is, on the Israeli side of the wall. It will swallow some 45 to 55 percent of the entire West Bank, only a fraction of which remains in Palestinian hands.

The erection of the fence will place most Palestinians behind barbed wire and fences. The end result will be that the idea of a two state solution is fading, and instead the conflict seems – in the short term – to move towards a truly racist regime. This process will no doubt eventually lead to the redefinition of the Palestinian struggle for freedom. A number of prominent Palestinians have already stated in public that the Palestinians no longer should work for a two-state solution, as this no longer makes any sense.²⁴ Instead they argue that the fight should now focus on equal rights in a democratic state. This argument promises to gain momentum in the long term – and already it is winning support among Palestinian intellectuals. It could possibly also win international support as the Palestinians then would represent values like human rights and democracy, while the Israeli state would represent an *altmodisch*, nationalistic vision based on an ethnic and religious sense of belonging.

It is a paradox that Ariel Sharon, who during his whole life has fought for a “greater Israel,” will turn out to be the man who is finally responsible for the end of the Zionist project. That something new is under way appears beyond doubt. Even pro-Zionist forces have begun to utter critique, among them Thomas Friedman, who recently wrote in a New York Times called “One wall, One Man, One Vote,” that the wall would end up being “the Mother of all unintended consequences,” that is, that it signalled the end of the Jewish state and the beginning of a bi-national state. The former speaker of the Knesset, Labour MK Avraham Burg, is also fearful of the consequences of the wall. In an article first published in the Israeli daily Yediot Aharonot and later re-printed in the International Herald Tribune, Burg writes:

²⁴ Recently (24 January 2004) Palestinian President Yassir Arafat warned that the time is running out for the two-state solution because of the impact of Israel's "security barrier" and settlement expansion on the viability of a future Palestinian state. And chief negotiator Sa'eb Erakat stated: “The two state solution is being buried by an apartheid system of Palestinian bantustans and walled city prisons”. See *The Guardian*, 24 January 2004.

“Do you want democracy? No problem. Either abandon the greater Land of Israel, to the last settlement and outpost, or give full citizenship and voting rights to everyone, including Arabs. The result, of course, will be that those who did not want a Palestinian state alongside us will have one in our midst, via the ballot box”.²⁵

Even some American diplomats are publicly speaking along similar lines. William Burns, the Assistant secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, said in a speech during one of the last days of September 2003 that:

“as Israeli settlements expand and their populations increase, it becomes increasingly difficult to see how the two peoples will be separated into two states”.²⁶

Nonetheless, there is a long road ahead before we have a chance to see the establishment of a democratic, bi-national state, and this despite the fact that polls already show that by now 25 percent of the Palestinians would accept it, and that is before a single political movement has begun to argue for this solution. The Israelis on the other hand are not as keen, but there is still time for the Israelis to change and reverse this process. However, time may be running out faster than they realise.

²⁵ Article by Avraham Burg, *International Herald Tribune* 6 September 2003.

²⁶ Quoted from the *Telegraph* 1 October 2003.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2003/10/01/wmid01.xml>.