

## **A Contextualized Approach for Understanding Israel's Construction of 'The Wall'**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper seeks to answer the question, "How is power structured and brought to bear on the Arab people through space and place in Palestine?" by answering the related question of "How can Israel construct a wall shown to be a less than satisfactory solution to its security concerns, which worsens the humanitarian situation in the occupied territories, and is on a route contrary to international law?" I argue that there is far more to Israel's construction of the separation wall than the state's avowed reason of "saving Israeli lives". Indeed, I provide evidence that other motives include the transfer of resources, the disabling of Palestinian statehood potential, and exogenous actors; each of which is made possible due to Israeli state indifference to both Palestinian human rights and world opinion. The Arab perspective of existing in a "periphery state" in international relations will be the driving force in my argument.*

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## A Contextualized Approach for Understanding Israel's Construction of 'The Wall'

*Good fences make good neighbors.*—Robert Frost, *Mending Wall*

*Good fences might make good neighbors—when those fences are erected on one's side of the land, NOT on the neighbor's side.* [Emphasis in the original.]—Jordanian Deputy Prime Minister and first Jordanian Ambassador to Israel, Marwan Muasher<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Research Question and Introduction

Why would Israel construct a wall shown to be a less than satisfactory solution to its security concerns, which worsens the humanitarian situation in the occupied territories, and runs contrary to international law?<sup>2</sup> The official Israeli position is that the “the security fence has only one purpose: to keep the terrorists out and thereby save the lives of Israel's citizens, Jews and Arabs alike.”<sup>3</sup> A report by Israel's State Comptroller, found that, “IDF [Israeli Defense Force] documents indicate that most of the suicide terrorists and the car bombs crossed the seam area into Israel through the checkpoints, where they underwent faulty and even shoddy checks.”<sup>4</sup> The B'Tselem report continues, “the lack of connection between the problem and the proposed solution may be what Prime Minister Ariel Sharon was alluding to when he said, ‘The idea [to build the barrier] is populist and intended to serve political objectives’.”<sup>5</sup>

Indeed, I will argue that are additional reasons for the wall's construction. These include: 1) purposeful: the intent is to transfer resources, land, water and labor from the Occupied Territories of Palestine to the State of Israel; 2) disabling of statehood potential: Israel's objective is to make a Palestinian state nonviable; 3) exogenous actors: the phenomenon of neoconservative Zionists<sup>6</sup> and Christian Zionists in the United States provides tangible motivational influences for the Israeli government to continue the wall's construction, while also

preventing the US from more forcefully persuading Israel to cease its construction; these factors are made possible by 4) Israeli indifference: Israel is indifferent to both international opinion of the wall, and the negative consequences of the wall on the Palestinian population. The Arab perspective of existing in a “periphery state” in international relations will be the driving force in my argument. Although the preponderance of this paper stems from information available in public forums, its originality and usefulness arises from the synthesis it provides and the contextualized argument that I make.

In order to provide a coherent and cogent argument on Israel’s policy of the wall, it is vital that a contextualization of the historical, political, and ethno-religious facets of the Palestinian—Israeli conflict be considered.<sup>7</sup> The economic dimension of the conflict should not be seen as *the driving factor*, but rather as one of several. As this paper will show, however, the wall’s construction does seem to be contributing to a serious deterioration of the last remnants of a viable economy in Palestine.

The state of Israel began construction of what is called—depending on one’s politics—the barrier wall, the security fence, or the apartheid wall, in 2002 and has completed over half of its 450 planned miles.<sup>8</sup> At the outset it should be noted that despite intense pressure from Israel, the US and EU Governments, this wall has been deemed illegal, and an unjustified response to security concerns by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague.<sup>9</sup> In a 14-1 decision the Justices concluded: “The construction of the wall being built by Israel, the occupying Power, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, and its associated régime, are contrary to international law.”<sup>10</sup> The sole nay vote was from the American judge (Muasher 2008: 26). In particular, the wall as “a necessary defense mechanism” was rejected since, “under Article 51 of the UN Charter, this self-defense was a right exercised against

another state and not in a territory under the control of an occupying power”(Muasher, 2008: 226).

Israel’s argument is that the wall reduces the most common form of attack on Israel, that of suicide bombers.<sup>11</sup> The Palestinians, however, see this as yet another case of group punishment as the physical route which the wall has taken further isolates, fragments and disenfranchises the Occupied Palestinians.<sup>12</sup> The problem is that both groups are correct.<sup>13</sup> Regardless of the normative issues involved in dealing with the conflict, this paper is concerned with less acknowledged (by Israel) reasons for the wall’s construction.

## **2. The Purpose Driven Argument**

*For a colonized people, the most essential value, because it is the most meaningful, is first and foremost the land: the land, which must provide bread and naturally, dignity.—Frantz Fanon<sup>14</sup>*

Admittedly, the following economic changes should not be wholly attributed to the wall; as mentioned above there are sundry, deep-rooted, variables involved which must be considered as well. The wall, however, may be seen as a tangible outcome of the conflict, and at least one cause of the economic deterioration occurring in the Occupied Territories. I include some information germane to Gaza as well, because it is my contention that to separate Gaza from the West Bank is an exercise in artificiality which serves to obviate the interconnectedness of the Palestinian political economy in the Occupied Territories.<sup>15</sup> A brief look at numbers from The World Bank shows the following: before the construction of the wall, unemployment in Gaza and the West Bank stood at 10%, it is now over 23%; the percentage of Palestinians living in deep poverty<sup>16</sup> before the wall was 21; it is now more than 35.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, since the wall’s construction, 95% of Gaza’s industrial operations have been shut down, and the agricultural

sector has also dwindled due to the wall's allowing Palestinians to "access neither the inputs for production nor the crossings to export what they produce".<sup>18</sup> And, "the number of Palestinians working in Israel or its settlements fell from 116,000 in 2000 to less than 64,000 in the first half of 2007".<sup>19</sup> I suggest that the wall's construction can be seen as, *inter alia*, an attempt by Israel to shift resources—natural (especially land and water), labor, and capital—from Palestine to Israel.

Marwan Muasher has held several senior positions within the government of Jordan, including deputy prime minister, foreign minister, ambassador to the United States and first Jordanian ambassador to Israel (Muasher, 2008). His comments on the wall are therefore instrumental as they, at the very least, show the perception of Israel's neighbor to the east. And, it is worth noting that one of the primary tenets of counterinsurgency theory and symbolic interactionism is that perception is reality (Petraeus et al, 2007)<sup>20</sup>. Dr. Muasher writes,

Israel described this elaborate system of barriers as a "security measure" that was necessary for public safety, not a political border between it and the Palestinians. But the facts on the ground suggested otherwise...it was clear that the wall would form a continuous barrier stretching more than four hundred miles through the West Bank, more than twice as long as the Green Line<sup>21</sup>...the barrier would follow a route running almost entirely through land occupied by Israel in 1967...At certain points, it would deviate from the Green Line to penetrate almost fourteen miles into West Bank territory—the width of which ranges from twelve to thirty-five miles...Overall, the area between the barrier and the Green Line would comprise almost 17 percent of the West Bank, including all of Jerusalem (Muasher, 2008: 219).

The deviation of the wall from the legal border lends great weight to the argument that the barrier is more than a security device. Indeed, such an obvious land grab is difficult to overlook when assessing Israel's policy vis-à-vis the wall.

Here is an Israeli settler's view:

There is a very sneaky combination here, says the head of the Jordan Valley Council, David Levy. "The army doesn't look at the political side, it insists on saying that this is a security barrier. But it is clear to everyone that this is a political line behind which there is a political outlook. Those who try and say that the fence doesn't represent a political line, don't know what they're talking about. Don't give me that nonsense. Everyone is playing this double game, and it's convenient for everybody. That is why I am in favor of the fence, obviously it will put us inside."<sup>22</sup>

This section has examined the Israeli intent to use the wall as a means to transfer resources from Palestine to Israel. The politically enabled transfer of resources (i.e., wealth) compliments the other objects of Israeli policy examined below.

### **3. Disabling of Palestinian Statehood Potential**

*I would have joined a terrorist organization.*—Ehud Barak, Israeli Prime Minister (1999-2001), when asked what he would have done had he been born a Palestinian<sup>23</sup>

In this section, I provide evidence to support the position that preventing the germination of a viable Palestinian state is still another function of the wall. This is of paramount concern because, if true, it would mean that all the talk of the "peace process" and "two-state solution"

should be seen as little more than a discourse of delay; the propagation of a red-herring narrative in order to create facts on the ground, and build the virtual Eretz Israel<sup>24</sup> by *faits accomplis*.

When assessing the wall's impact on disabling a viable Palestinian state, the words of Marwan Muasher are of still further assistance: "More alarmingly, the wall would effectively cantonize the West Bank, separating not only the West Bank from Israel but also cutting it into pieces and effectively killing the prospects for the emergence of a viable, independent Palestinian state with contiguous, defensible borders" (Muasher, 2008: 219).

In a telling interview with *Ha'aretz* reporter Ari Shavit, the idea of indefinitely postponing the peace process is made clear by Ariel Sharon's "trusted advisor" Dov Weisglass, when he states:

You know, the term 'political process' is a bundle of concepts and commitments. The political process is the establishment of a Palestinian state with all the security risks that entails. The political process is the evacuation of settlements, it's the return of refugees, it's the partition of Jerusalem. And all that has now been frozen.<sup>25</sup>

Mr. Weisglass, also used the metaphor of formaldehyde to describe Israel's policy in this case, saying that the policy "supplies the amount of formaldehyde that's necessary so that there will not be a political process with the Palestinians."<sup>26</sup> Weisglass' comments follow the historic pattern set at least as far back as Yitzhak Shamir, who upon leaving the office of Prime Minister in 1992 actually stated: "I would have carried out autonomy talks for ten years, and meanwhile we would have reached half a million people in Judea and Samaria."<sup>27</sup>

These statements from senior Israeli policymakers and their advisors belie the dominant discourse which states that the “the security fence has only one purpose: to keep the terrorists out and thereby save the lives of Israel's citizens, Jews and Arabs alike.”<sup>28</sup>

#### **4. Exogenous Actors**

*Do not try to appease the Arabs at our expense. We cannot accept this.*—Ariel Sharon, Prime Minister of Israel to US President George W. Bush<sup>29</sup>

*Ariel Sharon is a man of peace.*—Ari Fleischer, White House Press Secretary<sup>30</sup>

This section deals with the influence (or lack thereof) generated by exogenous actors vis-à-vis Israel's policy of the wall. I will argue that, as the sole superpower, the United States' “special relationship” with Israel is a major contributor to Israel's refusal—despite the ill affects described above—to halt construction of the illegal wall. The interrelated topic of the domestic politics of the settler movement will also be discussed. The United States and the settler movement are interrelated because, as will be shown, the domestic politics of the United States often demands obeisance to the Knesset, which often supports the Israeli settlers.

In their book, *The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy*, Professors John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt of the University of Chicago and Harvard, respectively, argue that Zionist segments of the American population act, like other lobby groups, to further their policy goals (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007). Furthermore, the authors (both supporters of Israel<sup>31</sup>) contend that the propagation of such policies is in the interests of neither the United States nor Israel. Though this may seem to be a mild and intuitive contention, the outrage generated over their

thesis served to prove some of the authors' positions (e.g., the subject of the Israeli lobby is taboo).<sup>32</sup>

The phenomenon described by Drs. Mearsheimer and Walt is easily perceived in the political choices generated by even the most senior decision makers in the United States. For example, the President of the United States, Barack Obama, has selected Rahm Emmanuel to function as chief of staff to the President. Of note is the fact that Emmanuel has actually served in a foreign military—the Israeli Defense Force—which raises questions as to what his chances would be, under normal circumstances, for being granted the high-level security clearances needed to exercise the duties of such senior government positions as chief of the President's staff.<sup>33</sup> Obama has also chosen Hillary Clinton to be Secretary of State. Clinton has promised that “the United States stands with Israel, now and forever”<sup>34</sup>, and *New York Times* columnist Roger Cohen has mentioned “the pro-Israel constituency that Clinton has dealt with as a Democratic senator for the state of New York. Nobody's been more solidly pro-Israel than she.”<sup>35</sup>

The key point here is to understand that the Israeli lobby within the United States is shown by Mearsheimer and Walt to affect US policy vis-à-vis the Palestinian situation. The following narrative illustrates the cycle of political support for the wall quite clearly.

In order to attempt the assuagement of the image of the United States in the Arab world, and decrease Arab support for groups like al Qaeda, the Bush administration initiated a discourse calling for Israel to ease its occupation of Palestinian lands (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007: 204). Bush's approach was met with a robust counter discourse from the Israeli government (and, as will be explained, vehemently pro-Israel individuals and groups in the US), which compared Bush's approach to that of Chamberlain, and then invaded Palestinian territories around

Hebron.<sup>36</sup> After Israel conducted another military invasion into the West Bank, Bush “personally met with Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and demanded a quick withdrawal” (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007: 204). Israel denied the plea and the *Guardian* reported that Sharon had “provoked the most bruising confrontation with Washington since George Bush came to power, flatly rejecting a demand to end an occupation of Palestinian lands that threatens the survival of Yasser Arafat.”<sup>37</sup> In order to assure continued political support from the US, Sharon called on his “longtime supporter” and influential *New York Times* columnist, William Safire.<sup>38</sup> Safire quoted Sharon as saying “You in America are in a war against terror. We in Israel are in a war against terror. It’s the same war.”<sup>39</sup> This would become the dominant discourse used to guarantee American electoral support, and hence political support, for Israel’s occupation. In so doing, an official US policy desire of easing the Israeli occupation in order to bolster US national security was overturned. Indeed, in November of that year, 89 senators sent Bush a letter which, Elaine Sciolino of the *New York Times* described as having “stemmed from a meeting two weeks earlier between leaders of the American Jewish community and key senators...and that was intended to prevent Secretary of State Colin L. Powell from including direct or indirect criticism of Israel and from offering inducements to the Palestinians...”<sup>40</sup> In an explicit example of raising the dominant discourse described above, the letter stated

The American people would never excuse us for not going after the terrorists with all our strength and might. Yet that is what some have demanded of the Israeli government after every terrorist incident they suffer. No matter what the provocation, they urge restraint.<sup>41</sup>

The reader is also informed that “particularly active in providing advice on the letter was the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the principal lobbying group for Israel.”<sup>42</sup>

Within a month, the Bush administration's relationship with Sharon's government had improved considerably. The two leaders had a "friendly meeting at the White House, where Bush placed the onus of reducing the violence on the surrounded and cut-off Palestinian Authority leader, Yasser Arafat. Furthermore White House spokesman, Ari Fleischer, unequivocally stated "Israel has a right to defend herself"<sup>43</sup>; of course the contrary had never been encouraged by any US official" (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007: 207).

In making sure that US policy would not run counter to Israel's occupation of Palestine, Secretary of State Colin Powell appears to have been especially singled out by Israel's most fervent supporters. Robert Kagan and William Kristol, well known neoconservatives, published an article in the *Weekly Standard* arguing that Secretary Powell had "virtually obliterated the distinction between terrorists and those fighting terrorists."<sup>44</sup> Soon thereafter, David Brooks, at the time with the *Weekly Standard* (now, like William Kristol, at the *New York Times*), stated that Powell "hurt US prestige...shredded US policy in the Middle East...hurt our moral clarity...caved into Yasser Arafat...it's a victory for Arafat, a victory for terror, and a muddling of the U.S. commitment, which started Sept. 11 until today."<sup>45</sup> The unmistakable point for policy actors in the United States: Anything less than unequivocal support for all Israeli actions will be confronted with a well-coordinated and widespread assault from the established punditry.

There is also a strong political force from the Christian Zionist segment of the American electorate. For example Romesh Ratnesar wrote in *Time* of

Jerry Falwell and former presidential candidate Gary Bauer sending Bush a letter demanding that the Administration "end pressure" on Sharon to withdraw from the West Bank. After Falwell adjured his followers to do the same, the White House was flooded with calls and e-mails. The next day, sources say, senior

presidential aides phoned Falwell to reassure him that Bush stood behind Sharon.<sup>46</sup>

In May of 2002, the United States Senate and House both passed resolutions declaring support for Israel, each stating that the US “stands in solidarity with Israel” and making clear that both the US and Israel are “now in a common struggle against terrorism.”<sup>47</sup> Not surprisingly, the policy outcome from all of this is massive US taxpayer assistance to Israel for its military occupation. As United Press International reported, “the Israeli lobby in the nation's capital scored a major legislative victory...congress approved \$200 million in additional counter terrorism assistance to the Jewish state.”<sup>48</sup>

In a Rose Garden press conference with Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas, President George W. Bush stated “I think the wall is a problem, and I discussed this with Ariel Sharon. It is very difficult to develop confidence between the Palestinians and the Israel – Israel – [sic] with a wall snaking through the West Bank. And I will continue to discuss this issue very clearly with the Prime Minister.”<sup>49</sup> In a telling comment, however, a “senior Israeli official” was quoted in the *New York Times* as saying “we are not under any pressure...The United States is a very vibrant democracy, and this is a very politically oriented administration. Reality is made sometimes by political constraints.”<sup>50</sup> And so the wall goes on, quite unheeded, apart from an action described as “almost totally symbolic” when the US

reduced loan guarantees to Israel to meet Congressional restrictions on providing financial support to Israel's continued expansion of settlements in the West Bank and Gaza...It came on the same day that Israel sold \$1.6 billion of bonds on Wall Street, all backed by a guarantee of repayment by the United States government

under legislation passed last spring that provides Israel with up to \$3 billion in loan guarantees annually for three years.<sup>51</sup>

*New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman provides the following description for what I've been calling the "exogenous factors" contributing to Israel's policy of constructing the wall:

Mr. Sharon has the Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat under house arrest in his office in Ramallah, and he's had George Bush under house arrest in the Oval Office. Mr. Sharon has Mr. Arafat surrounded by tanks, and Mr. Bush surrounded by Jewish and Christian pro-Israel lobbyists, by a vice president, Dick Cheney, who's ready to do whatever Mr. Sharon dictates, and by political handlers telling the president not to put any pressure on Israel in an election year -- all conspiring to make sure the president does nothing.<sup>52</sup>

Even a cursory examination of the leading officials in the Bush administration shows a strong presence of Zionist policymakers. For example, Professors Mearsheimer and Walt assess Elliott Abrams, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Near East and North African Affairs (2002-present), to be "the main obstacle to putting any kind of meaningful pressure on Israel." (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007: 223). Writing for *Asia Times*, reporter Jim Lobe notes,

Abrams' personal influence over Bush could not possibly match [Secretary of State] Rice's, but his bureaucratic skills and political connections - notably to the so-called "Israel lobby" of pro-Likud Jewish organizations and the Christian Right - give him considerable clout. According to various sources, Abrams has been working systematically to undermine any prospect for serious negotiations...<sup>53</sup>

It is outside the scope of this paper to give full attention to the influence of personnel such as Elliot Abrams in the current administration; I provide detail in his case to serve as an illustrative example of the “exogenous factors” contributing to the ongoing construction of the wall in Israel/Palestine. As I also noted, there is no sign of substantive change in the general make-up of senior level advisors in the current US President’s hiring decisions thus far.

## 5. Indifference to Unintended Effects

*For the intellectual the task, I believe, is explicitly to universalize the crisis, to give greater human scope to what a particular race or nation suffered, to associate that experience with the suffering of others.—Edward W. Said<sup>54</sup>*

This section examines the Israeli government’s indifference to the effects of the wall. The contexts of both Palestinian human rights (the wall explicitly violates articles 1, 2, 13, and 17 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights)<sup>55</sup>, and international opinion will be discussed; as well as how Israel manages its citizens’ perception of the policy.

The role of the Israeli media in promulgating support for the wall has been examined by journalist Peter Lagerquist, and reported by the former director of the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University and former senior adviser to Prime Minister Barak, Yossi Alpher, who admits to politically “engineering” the Israeli public’s support (Lagerquist, 2004).<sup>56</sup> And, University of Exeter Professor Ilan Pappé writes of “the media’s cooptation [which has] curbed significant criticism and alternative thinking” throughout Israel’s history (Pappe, 2002: 46). Indeed, due to the opposition of the Israeli settlers, the wall—initially designed to follow the Green Line—“veered eastward, and the appeal of it broadened” (Lagerquist, 2004: 7).<sup>57</sup> Soon

after the eastward expansion, YESHA (a large settler organization) “ceased opposing the fence.”<sup>58</sup> Lagerquist highlights the fact, “that 91 to 99 percent of all settlers were to remain on the ‘Israeli’ side under the approved plans illustrates how hollow was the rhetoric of ‘painful’ concessions” (Lagerquist, 2004: 10).

The Palestinians literally walled off from society are dependent on the temperament of Israeli Defense Force personnel manning the gates. There are “some 47 gates placed at irregular intervals along the wall’s path...[the] access is limited; the gates open at irregular times for very short periods, passage has been subject to the caprices of Israeli soldiers and even when farmers obtain permission to pass they have been prevented from taking their agricultural equipment with them” (Lagerquist, 2004: 10). This is a clear violation of Article 13 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights, which reads: “(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state. And (2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.”<sup>59</sup>

Muasher notes, “The barrier would affect the livelihoods of more than two hundred thousand Palestinians, either by placing them into enclaves surrounded by the wall or by separating them from substantial farmland areas west of the barrier” (Muasher, 2008: 219). And the following findings, produced by The Norwegian Refugee Council, in conjunction with the Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, offer the following quantitative information which highlights the human impact of the wall. Their research

clearly shows that the Wall and its regime generate forced displacement in East Jerusalem: 17.3 percent of all the Palestinians in Jerusalem [230,000 Palestinians hold East Jerusalem residency permits]<sup>60</sup> who have changed their previous place of residence (32.9 percent) did so as a direct result of the construction of the Wall.

The number of those currently considering changing their place of residence is increasing (63.8 percent compared to 52.2 percent in the past). Violation of the right to an adequate standard of living, particularly as a result of restriction of movement and access to services and basic goods, was found to be the major factor inducing forced displacement by the Wall and its regime in East Jerusalem. No less than 34.5 percent of all households, and 88.3 percent of households on the eastern side of the Wall, are cut off from health services in the centre of Jerusalem. Palestinian family life is disrupted and households are often separated by the Wall. 21.4 percent of all the Palestinian households in East Jerusalem have been split and are separated from their relatives. A striking finding of the Survey is the impact of the Wall on the choice of spouses: 69.4 percent of the households state that the Wall has been an obstacle for the choice of a spouse since the beginning of its construction in 2002. The findings suggest that Palestinian women and children are particularly affected by violation of the freedom of movement. Some 67.8 percent of children (81.9 percent among those residing on the eastern side of the Wall) and 78.5 percent of women (84.3 percent East of the Wall) have reduced their movement due to the Wall and its associated regime.<sup>61</sup>

Since the only act these Palestinians perpetrated was being born in the “wrong” area, with the “wrong” ethnicity, Israel’s contravening of the following articles of the UN Declaration of Human Rights is manifest:

Article 1: All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2: Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

Article 17: (1) Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others. (2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.<sup>62</sup>

Muasher's authoritativeness and perceptiveness is again helpful, as he notes that "Israel's announcement that it would begin construction on a separation wall signaled to every Palestinian that it had completely abandoned any attempt to reach a two-state solution, delivering a new blow to Abbas's [Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian National Authority] credibility" (Muasher, 2008: 197). This is an extraordinarily important point as it shows the incompatible nature of the argument presented by Israel. To wit, Israel contends that until the Palestinian resistance movement is brought to heel by the Palestinian Authority (PA), effective peace talks cannot begin, while at the same time, Israel takes actions that can only weaken the PA's control of the increasingly frustrated Palestinian population (Muasher, 2008: 283-290).

This section has showed the indifference on the part of the Israeli government to the human rights situation of the occupied Palestinians, as well as the systematic manipulation of the Israeli general public by the media with respect to the construction of the wall.

## 6. Conclusion

The Israeli—Palestinian Conflict is one of the most difficult dilemmas in the field of modern geopolitical studies. A major reason for this difficulty is that the case involves an occupier who is also the most historically victimized group known in recorded history.<sup>63</sup> The Jewish people's undeniable record of suffering makes any criticism of policies implemented by Israel a perilous undertaking, as the scholar opens herself up to an assortment of attacks of an unusual ferocity, even for academia.<sup>64</sup> Fortunately, the present research project does not attempt to solve that conflict writ large. Though hazardous, such an examination of at least one part (i.e., the construction of the separation wall) of this long and sad conflict is exceptionally important.

To answer the research question, this paper has provided an examination of motives such as 1) Israel's purposeful intent to transfer resources, land, water and labor from the Occupied Territories of Palestine to the State of Israel; 2) Israel's desire to disable (by indefinite delay and/or the creation of facts on the ground) the potential for a viable Palestinian state; 3) the power of exogenous actors (e.g., the phenomenon of neoconservatives in the US policy arena, and Christian Zionists); all of which is made possible by 4) Israeli indifference to the (un)intended effects of the wall vis-à-vis international opinion, and the negative consequences of the wall on the Palestinian population. The discussion of these factors provides at least part of the necessary contextualization for showing that Israel's construction of the wall is due to much more than the simple, innocuous reason stated by the Israeli government. This paper has amalgamated several competing theories to provide a contextualized approach for answering the question, "Why would Israel construct a wall shown to be a less than satisfactory solution to its security concerns, which worsens the humanitarian situation in the occupied territories, and is on a route contrary to international law?"<sup>65</sup>

With the decrease (albeit acutely lopsided in Israel's favor) in conflict generated causalities that has coincided with the wall, one might be inclined to feel satisfaction; after all, the wall seems to have fulfilled its stated purpose: "to keep the terrorists out and thereby save the lives of Israel's citizens, Jews and Arabs alike."<sup>66</sup> It is my contention that this is a dangerous simplification of the conflict. The wall is analogous to an imaginary policy that might be implemented in the US if the desire was to reduce crime; we could simply imprison all young, urban males—or even more analogously, wall off high crimes areas (e.g., Washington DC). Never mind the racist group punishment; never mind the sundry human rights violations; and never mind that in doing so we would have only created an artificial depression in the symptoms of the greater problems involved. In this example, the absurdity of such an idea is palpable.

This paper has not only argued for a contextualized, eclectic approach to assessing the wall. It has also shown that the Question of Palestine is often approached differently; a policy that, in another context, would be roundly dismissed as patently ridiculous is allowed (even encouraged) to continue, all the while exacerbating the already perilous human rights conditions of the occupied Palestinian people. Edward W. Said was correct when he wrote, "Palestine is a thankless cause. Palestine is the cruelest, most difficult cause to uphold, not because it is unjust, but because it is just and yet dangerous to speak about...honestly and concretely."<sup>67</sup>

End Note

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<sup>1</sup> Marwan Muasher. *The Arab Center: The Promise of Moderation*, New Haven & London, Yale University Press. 2008. 217.

<sup>2</sup> International Court of Justice. “Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.” 2004. Especially, “Settlements are illegal as they violate article 49 (6) of the Fourth Geneva Convention” paragraph 120-1, and “the wall cannot be justified as an exercise in self-defence” paragraph 138-9. See also, United Nations, Human Rights Council, “Human Rights Situation In Palestine And Other Occupied Arab Territories.” January 21, 2008. 21-22.

<sup>3</sup> See the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs at <http://securityfence.mfa.gov.il/mfm/web/main/document.asp?SubjectID=45219&MissionID=45187&LanguageID=0&StatusID=0&DocumentID=-1>.

<sup>4</sup> State Comptroller. *Audit Report on the Seam Area*. 35. Cited in, Yehezkel Lein, ed. Yael Stein, data coordination by Najib Abu Rokaya, trans. by Zvi Shulman, *Behind The Barrier: Human Rights Violations As a Result of Israel's Separation Barrier*, Jerusalem, B'Tselem. 2003. 26.

<sup>5</sup> Yehezkel Lein, ed. Yael Stein, data coordination by Najib Abu Rokaya, trans. by Zvi Shulman, *Behind The Barrier: Human Rights Violations As a Result of Israel's Separation Barrier*, Jerusalem, B'Tselem. 2003. 29-30. Cited from Amit Ben-Aroya, “Sharon to Seam Area Police: The Separation Fence is a Populist Idea,” *Ha'aretz*. April 12, 2002.

<sup>6</sup> “Zionist” will be used in this paper to connote a form of colonialism that propagates a “refusal to admit, and the consequent denial of, the existence of Palestinian Arabs who are there not simply as an inconvenient nuisance, but at a population with an indissoluble bond with the land.” Edward W. Said. *The Question of Palestine*, New York, Random House. 1992. 8.

<sup>7</sup> Such an explicit and exhaustive contextualization is outside the scope of this paper; its guiding influence, however, will be adhered to throughout the present writing.

<sup>8</sup> B'Tselem. "The Israeli Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, Separation Barrier Statistics," [http://www.btselem.org/english/Separation\\_Barrier/Statistics.asp](http://www.btselem.org/english/Separation_Barrier/Statistics.asp).

<sup>9</sup> United Nations, Human Rights Council. "Human Rights Situation In Palestine And Other Occupied Arab Territories." January 21, 2008. 21-22.

<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G08/402/29/PDF/G0840229.pdf?OpenElement>. See also, inter alia, Saree Makdisi, "Said, Palestine, and the Humanism of Liberation," *Critical Inquiry*, 31, (Winter 2005): 433-461.

<sup>10</sup> International Court of Justice Ruling. July 9, 2004.

<http://stopthewall.org/internationallaw/639.shtml>.

<sup>11</sup> The wall does seem to have reduced suicide bombings, but with the decrease in suicide bombings, there has been an increase in rocket attacks. Overall, the number of Israelis killed by Palestinians has dropped precipitously since the wall's construction. B'Tselem, "Statistics of Fatalities,

[http://www.btselem.org/English/Statistics/Casualties\\_Data.asp?Category=6&region=ISRAEL](http://www.btselem.org/English/Statistics/Casualties_Data.asp?Category=6&region=ISRAEL).

As Robert Pape notes in his influential article, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 97, No. 3, (August 2003): 343-361, "...the best course to improve Israel's security may well be a combined strategy: abandoning territory on the West Bank along with an actual wall that physically separates the populations." 357. Israel has not acted on the former recommendation.

<sup>12</sup> See, inter alia, Saree Makdisi, "Said, Palestine, and the Humanism of Liberation," *Critical Inquiry*, 31, (Winter 2005): 433-461.

<sup>13</sup> According to the Israeli Human Rights Center, B'Tselem, there has been an approximate decrease of Palestinian generated Israeli mortalities of 80% since a majority of the wall has been constructed (2004). <http://www.btselem.org/English/Statistics/Casualties.asp>.

<sup>14</sup> Frantz Fanon. *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York, Grove Press. 2004, 9.

<sup>15</sup> The embargo placed on the democratically elected Hamas party in Gaza by Israel and the US has no doubt further contributed to Gaza's worsening economic situation.

<sup>16</sup> The Deep Poverty line reflects a budget for food, clothing and housing only. For a family of six the deep poverty line in 2006 was NIS 1,837. The Poverty line adds other necessities including health care, education, transportation, personal care and housekeeping supplies; raising the line to NIS 2,300 for a family of 6. In 2006 the poverty rate based on actual consumption was 24% in WB and 51% in Gaza, <http://domino.un.org/pdfs/WBParisConfPaper07.pdf>, 7.

<sup>17</sup> The World Bank. "Investing in Palestinian Economic Reform and Development," December 17, 2007. 7. The poverty measurement is as follows:  
<http://domino.un.org/pdfs/WBParisConfPaper07.pdf>.

<sup>18</sup> The World Bank. "Investing in Palestinian Economic Reform and Development, December 17, 2007. 8. <http://domino.un.org/pdfs/WBParisConfPaper07.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> For symbolic interactionism and perceptions see, for example, Erving Goffman, *Strategic Interaction*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press. 1969.

<sup>21</sup> The Green Line is the 1967 armistice line between the West Bank and Israel.

<sup>22</sup> Meron Rappaport. "On Israel's separation fence (part 1)" *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 31, (May 2003).  
<http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article1546.shtml>.

<sup>23</sup> Bill Maxwell. "U.S. Should Reconsider Aid to Israel," *St. Petersburg Times*. December 16, 2001. And Ron Pundak, "From Oslo to Taba: What Went Wrong?," *Survival*, 43 no. 3 (Autumn 2001): 37.

<sup>24</sup> Eretz Israel is "a term used by the Israeli right meaning Greater Israel, comprising all of historic Palestine". Marwan Muasher. *The Arab Center: The Promise of Moderation*, New Haven & London, Yale University Press. 2008. 291.

<sup>25</sup> Ari Shavit. "The Big Freeze," *Ha'aretz*, October 11, 2005.  
<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=485929>.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Ma'ariv, June 26, 1992. Cited in Marwan Muasher, *The Arab Center: The Promise of Moderation*, New Haven & London, Yale University Press. 2008. 25.

<sup>28</sup> See the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs at  
<http://securityfence.mfa.gov.il/mfm/web/main/document.asp?SubjectID=45219&MissionID=45187&LanguageID=0&StatusID=0&DocumentID=-1>.

<sup>29</sup> James Bennett. "Sharon Invokes Munich in Warning U.S. on 'Appeasement'," *New York Times*, (October 5, 2001).

<sup>30</sup> Bill Sammon. "White House Softens Tone With Israel", *Washington Times* (April 12, 2002).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*; see especially page 12.

<sup>32</sup> See, for instance, Leslie Gelb's apoplectic *New York Times* book review, where he compares the authors with Fidel Castro, and suggests that, with the publishing of this book, they have become anti-Semites. Leslie Gelb, "Dual Loyalties," *New York Times*, (September 23, 2007).

<sup>33</sup> Roger Simon. "The Man Who Would Be George," *New Republic*, vol. 216 issue 5 (1997):17-22, and Orly Azoulay, "Obama's Israeli adviser: Next White House chief of staff?," *YNet*,

November 2, 2008, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3616306,00.html>. This author has personally known multiple individuals who have been denied security clearances on the grounds of having spent too much time in a foreign country, or whose family members were politically active in that country.

<sup>34</sup> Roger Cohen, “Try Tough Love, Hillary” *New York Times*, (December 1, 2008).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> James Bennett. “Sharon Invokes Munich in Warning U.S. on 'Appeasement',” *New York Times*, (October 5, 2001) and Alan Sipress and Lee Hockstader, “Sharon Speech Riles U.S.,” *Washington Post*, (October 6, 2001).

<sup>37</sup> Suzanne Goldneburg. “Sharon Defies US Demand to Retreat,” *Guardian*, (October 24, 2001).

<sup>38</sup> William Safire. “Israel or Arafat,” *New York Times*, (December 3, 2001).

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Elaine Sciolino. “Senators Urge Bush Not to Hamper Israel,” *New York Times*, (November 17, 2001).

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> David Sanger. “Mideast Flare-Up: The Policy; U.S. Walks A Tightrope On Terrorism In Israel,” *New York Times*, (December 4, 2001).

<sup>44</sup> William Kristol and Robert Kagan. ““Senior White House Aides’: Speak Up!,” *Weekly Standard*, (April 11, 2002).

<sup>45</sup> Transcript of “Shields and Brooks”. *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*, (April 12, 2002).

[www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/political\\_wrap/jan-june02/sb\\_4-12.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/political_wrap/jan-june02/sb_4-12.html).

<sup>46</sup> Romesh Ratnesar. “The Right’s New Crusade,” *Time*, (May 6, 2002).

<sup>47</sup> Allison Mitchell. "Mideast Turmoil: Congress; House And Senate Support Israel In Strong Resolutions," *New York Times*, (May 3, 2002).

<sup>48</sup> Eli Lake. "Israeli Lobby Wins \$200 Million Fight," *United Press International*, (May 11, 2002).

<sup>49</sup> Transcript of remarks by President Bush and Prime Minister Abbas. "President Bush Welcomes Prime Minister Abbas to White House," White House, Office of the Press Secretary, (July 25, 2003). <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/07/20030725-6.html>.

<sup>50</sup> James Bennet. "Israel Reportedly Willing to Delay Portions of Barrier," *New York Times*, (August 8, 2003).

<sup>51</sup> Richard W. Steveson. "U.S. Cutting Loan Guarantees to Oppose Israeli Settlements," *New York Times*, (September 17, 2003).

<sup>52</sup> Thomas Friedman. "A Rude Awakening," *New York Times*, (February 5, 2004).

<sup>53</sup> Jim Lobe. "Rice Faces Formidable White House Foe," *Asia Times*, (February 23, 2007). [http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle\\_East/IB23Ak04.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/IB23Ak04.html).

<sup>54</sup> Edward W. Said. *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures*, New York, Pantheon Books. 1994. 44.

<sup>55</sup> United Nations. "Declaration of Human Rights," (December 10, 1948). <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>.

<sup>56</sup> See also, Yossi Alpher, "Chronicle of a Good Idea Gone Sour," <http://www.bitterlemons.org/previous/bl110803ed30.html#is1> and Ilan Pappé, "Donning the Uniform: The Military and Media in Israel," *Middle East Report*, 223, (Summer 2002): 46-51.

<sup>57</sup> See also, B'Tselem, *Behind the Barrier*, 4 and Yisrael Harel, "Fence of Paradoxes" at <http://www.bitterlemons.org/previous/bl110803ed30.html#is2>.

<sup>58</sup> Yisrael Harel, “Fence of Padoxes” at

<http://www.bitterlemons.org/previous/b1110803ed30.html#is2>.

<sup>59</sup> United Nations. “Declaration of Human Rights,” (December 10, 1948).

<http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>.

<sup>60</sup> UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. “Preliminary Analysis of the Humanitarian Implications of the April 2006 Barrier Projections,” (July 31, 2006).

<http://domino.un.org/unispal.nsf/eed216406b50bf6485256ce10072f637/94d194e691d54be2852571ea004d47c1!OpenDocument>.

<sup>61</sup> The Norwegian Refugee Council in conjunction with the Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights. “Displaced by the Wall: Forced Displacement as a Result of the West Bank Wall and Its Associated Regime,” (September 2006). 8.

<sup>62</sup> United Nations, “Declaration of Human Rights,” (December 10, 1948).

<http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>.

<sup>63</sup> From enslavement by the ancient Egyptians, to the holocaust, no other ethno-religious group is known to have suffered such targeted, wide-spread, and efficient subjugation and genocide as the Jewish people.

<sup>64</sup> For example one need only to recall the unprecedented and successful attack on Dr. Norman Finkelstein by an exogenous group to deny him tenure, or the uproar surrounding Professors Mearsheimer and Walt stemming from their rather timid contention that there is such a thing as an Israeli lobby in the United States.

<sup>65</sup> International Court of Justice. “Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.” 2004. Especially, “Settlements are illegal as they violate article 49 (6) of the Fourth Geneva Convention” paragraph 120-1, and “the wall cannot be justified as

an exercise in self-defence” paragraph 138-9. See also, United Nations, Human Rights Council, “Human Rights Situation In Palestine And Other Occupied Arab Territories,” (January 21, 2008): 21-2.

<sup>66</sup> See the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs at

<http://securityfence.mfa.gov.il/mfm/web/main/document.asp?SubjectID=45219&MissionID=45187&LanguageID=0&StatusID=0&DocumentID=-1>. There has been an approximate decrease of conflict generated casualties of 80% for Israelis and 40% for Palestinians in the recent four year time block (September 1, 2004—September 1, 2008) when the wall has been basically “operational” as compared with the previous four years, when the wall was unconstructed.

<sup>67</sup> Edward Said. “Cherish the Man's Courage,” foreword to Eqbal Ahmad, *Confronting Empire: Interviews with David Barsamian*, Cambridge, MA, South End Press. 2000. Xxviii.

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