

Analyzing the Implications of the West Bank Barrier in Israel

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Abstract:

The issue of national security and defense remains critical in all political discourse in Israel. It is a region rife with conflict both domestically and from abroad, which has already accumulated a dense history of national defense and security policy. Among recent developments in Israel has been the proposed West Bank barrier that is presently under construction, and is intended to secure Israeli citizens from the influx of terrorist activity coming from the West Bank. This is a tremendous undertaking that has the potential to drastically change the atmosphere of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as can already be seen by the mounting protests and controversy surrounding the issue. The successes and failures of this project will not only have an immediate impact on the state of terrorism and national security in Israel, but will also have a lasting effect on these subjects as a whole. In order to bring these possible effects to light and identify what lessons there are to be learned, the focus of this paper will be on the nature and gravity of the potential reactions stemming from this latest security measure in Israel.

In June of 2003 Israel began construction of a barrier that will extend 650 kilometres in length and for the most part follow the 1949 Jordanian-Israeli armistice line—the so-called Green Line. Amid persistent conflict and wavering peace talks, the Israeli government states that the barrier is necessary in order to prevent suicide bombers and other terrorists from crossing over from the West Bank into areas populated by Israeli citizens. The project itself is the subject of much controversy however, and has gathered opposition from Palestinian residents as well as from the international community. In October of 2003 the United Nations put forth a resolution that was vetoed by the United States, stating that the barrier's departure from the armistice line of 1949, deep into areas of the West Bank in some areas, is illegal.¹ Following the defeat of the resolution the International Court of Justice was then asked to make an advisory ruling on the legal consequences of the barrier, and on July 9, 2004, returned a verdict against its construction². Although some of the issues that form the basis for such controversy will be addressed in this paper, it will be in order to examine to what end they may impact Israel's security.

The analysis will unfold in three parts. The first part will examine other barrier projects that have already been undertaken by Israel, mainly, the barriers erected for similar purposes along the Israeli-Lebanese border, the Jordan Valley, and surrounding the Gaza Strip. How have each of these barriers affected Israel's security, and in what ways can comparisons be drawn between them and the barrier under construction in the West Bank? By looking at how such projects have worked in the past, it is hoped that conclusions can be drawn on how effective the West Bank barrier will be. The second part of the paper will examine the actual architecture of

the barrier in greater detail, as well as the accompanying security measures along the border and at crossings, in order to assess its overall level of security. Constructing an effective barrier around the West Bank present a far more daunting task than the Gaza Strip, not only because of its size, but because it must accommodate the tens of thousands of settlers that reside to the east of the barrier and need to cross it daily for work and various services.³ What systems are being implemented in order to suppress the security risks involved with the high level of traffic that is required to cross the barrier, and how effective will they be? The third part of the paper will look at how the barrier itself may provoke further acts of aggression from the Palestinian population, as well as from abroad. How will the barrier effect the lives of the Palestinian population in the area, will it increase tensions and provide further motivation for Palestinian attacks on Israeli targets, and what effects will it have on future peace talks between both parties? Although the barrier may prove to be effective in preventing aggressors from crossing over into Israeli populated areas, peace still remains an objective pursued by both sides of the conflict, and in the end has the potential to serve Israel's security needs more than any physical barrier they can erect. Following these three sections the paper will then review all the evidence put forth, and address the central question at hand: what are the short and long-term security implications surrounding the West Bank barrier?

Introduction

The issue of national security and defense remains critical in all political discourse in Israel. It is a region rife with conflict both domestically and from abroad, which has already accumulated a dense history of national defense and security policy. Among recent developments in Israel has been the proposed West Bank barrier that is presently under construction, and is intended to secure Israeli citizens from the influx of terrorist activity coming from the West Bank. This is a tremendous undertaking that has the potential to drastically change the atmosphere of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as can already be seen by the mounting protests and controversy surrounding the issue. The successes and failures of this project will not only have an immediate impact on the state of terrorism and national security in Israel, but will also have a lasting effect on these subjects as a whole. In order to bring these possible effects to light and identify what lessons there are to be learned, the focus of this paper will be on the nature and gravity of the potential reactions stemming from this latest security measure in Israel.

In June of 2003, Israel began construction of a barrier that will extend over 700 kilometres in length and for the most part follow the 1967 cease fire line—the so-called Green Line. Amid persistent conflict and wavering peace talks, the Israeli government states that the barrier is necessary in order to prevent suicide bombers and other terrorists from crossing over from the West Bank into areas populated by Israeli citizens. The project itself is the subject of much controversy however, and has gathered opposition from Palestinian residents as well as from the international community. In October of 2003 the United Nations put forth a resolution that was vetoed by the United States, stating that the barrier's departure from the Green Line, deep into areas of the West Bank in some areas, is illegal.⁴ Following the defeat of the resolution the International Court of Justice was then asked to make an advisory ruling on the legal consequences of the barrier, and on July 9, 2004, returned a verdict against its construction.⁵ Although some of the issues that form the basis for such controversy will be addressed in this paper, it will be in order to examine to what end they may impact Israel's security.

After reviewing the history of the barrier, the analysis will unfold in three parts. The first part of the paper will examine the architecture of the barrier in detail, as well as the accompanying security measures along the border and at crossings, in order to assess its overall level of security. Constructing an effective barrier around the West Bank presents a far more daunting task than the barrier surrounding the Gaza Strip, not only because of its size, but because it must accommodate the tens of thousands of settlers that reside to the east of the barrier and need to cross it daily for work and various services.⁶ What systems are being implemented in order to suppress the security risks involved with the high level of traffic that is required to cross the barrier, and how effective will they be? The second part will examine the security barrier erected in the Gaza Strip for similar purposes. How has this barrier affected Israel's security, and in what ways can comparisons be drawn between them and the barrier under construction in the West Bank? By looking at how such a project has worked in the past, it is hoped that conclusions can be drawn on how effective the West Bank barrier will be. The third part of the paper will look at how the barrier itself may provoke further acts of aggression from the Palestinian population, as well as from abroad. How will the barrier affect the

lives of the Palestinian population in the area, will it increase tensions and provide further motivation for Palestinian attacks on Israeli targets, and what effects will it have on future peace talks between both parties? Although the barrier may prove to be effective in preventing aggressors from crossing over into Israeli populated areas, peace still remains an objective pursued by both sides of the conflict, and in the end has the potential to serve Israel's security needs more than any physical barrier they can erect. Following these three sections the paper will then review all the evidence put forth, and address the central question at hand: what are the short and long-term security implications surrounding the West Bank barrier?

Background Information:⁷

The government of Israel has played around for years with the idea of erecting a physical barrier to stave off attacks from suicide bombers and other threats emerging from the West Bank. It is believed by a great deal of the Israeli population that having such a system in place is vital to their security, an extension of the philosophy expressed by former Prime Minister Ehud Barak in February 2001 as, "us here, them over there."⁸ One of the earliest forms of such a barrier was first conceived of in 1995 by Israel's then Minister of Internal Security, Moshe Shahal. His security recommendations against attacks coming from the West Bank were to put in place "a buffer zone along the Green Line, which would include obstacles and roadblocks."⁹ The plan did not call for an actual fence, however, and lacked many of the other security measures that the present construction is adorned with. After some revision by the National Security Council, it was "determined that such a separation zone would not fulfill its goal as an effective buffer against terror,"¹⁰ and it was subsequently scrapped.

The idea of constructing a physical barrier was once again revived during the Al-Aqsa intifada as it was building momentum by the end of 2000. The surrounding events mounted a great deal of outrage amongst the Israeli population, lambasting the supposed inaction of the government in the midst of incessant attacks on Israeli sites. Ehud Barak's response was a plan of "unilateral separation", in which he was even prepared to evacuate a number of settlements.¹¹ Any such thoughts of abandoning Israeli settlements were abandoned however, when Barak lost the election to the current Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon.¹² Although not initially keen on erecting a barrier, primarily for fears that it would be viewed as a border and thus send the message that Israel was relinquishing all territory east of it, public pressure was building for the government to act, as can be seen by the 78 per cent approval rating that the barrier was receiving.¹³

In June of 2001, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon was sufficiently motivated to initiate the planning process for a separation barrier, in spite of the proven difficulties surrounding the matter.¹⁴ Though a project of this scope could be considered a logistical nightmare in and of itself, as well as an incredible expenditure, the reality that formed the locus of complications which consistently annulled discussions of separation, is the "more than 200,000 Israeli settlers living in the West Bank on the other side of the Green Line."¹⁵ Any government seen as abandoning such a great number of its citizens on the short side of a security barrier would be castigated at the ballot box, and so the plans that would emerge made every effort to include as many Israeli settlements as possible. As

will be seen, this solution to the problem of Israeli settlements beyond the Green Line also forms the principle resentment towards the barrier, and is surrounded by numerous security implications.

In February 2002, after much debate over the issue during the months that followed the initial decision to produce a plan of action, Avi Dichter, the head of the Shin Bet—Israel's security force—began to urge the prime minister to push forwards with the proposals that had emerged. His call for action was also strengthened by a study composed by the Israeli army which predicted that security barrier presently under consideration would witness an 80-90 per cent success rate in preventing attacks from suicide bombers. The plan called for the barrier to run roughly the length of the 1967 cease fire line, though as will be seen, in some regions the barrier pushes deep into areas of the West Bank in order to include Israeli settlements therein. On April 15, 2002, the Israeli made the decision to begin construction of the barrier¹⁶, and by June various companies were already hard at work laying down some of the preliminary infrastructure. Construction moved along slowly, but the idea move was gaining a great deal of Israeli popular support, and by August 14, 2002, the Israeli cabinet had approved the first 115km of the security barrier.¹⁷

Upon reviewing the government's proposal, defence establishment experts concluded that construction of the barrier should take somewhere between 18 and 24 months, once the NIS 4.5 billion (approximately US \$1 billion) budget is approved.¹⁸ The plans call for the central section to include all of the settlements of western Samaria¹⁹, the area around Modi'in, Etzion, and the southern Hebron hills,²⁰ a decision that has garnered outrage from the international community, and is in open defiance of the United States, which in turn "could draw penalties from the Bush administration." The administration threatens to deduct \$100 million – the cost of the central part of the fence that will stretch almost 14 miles into Palestinian areas to the east of the Green Line – from the three-year, \$9 billion loan guarantees it extended to Israel last March 2002.²¹

Opposition to the barrier continued to build amongst Palestinians and members of the international community as it grew clear that Israel was adamant in keeping the route which they had set. Observers in the Middle East especially were quick to chime in against its construction, denouncing the supposed annexation of Palestinian land. Kadura Musa, Fatah's secretary general in Jenin, expressed his concerns about the project in Cairo's Al-Ahram Weekly, claiming that "[the] first phase of the fence would require the confiscation of 7,500 acres of Palestinian land. The land theft would only offer Palestinians more incentive to find ways around the fence."²² Along a similar vein, the Palestinian Authority's chief cartographer, Khalil Tufakji, reported that Israel's security barrier would leave 11 Palestinian villages cutoff on the other side, and voiced concern over the issue by noting that "it is unclear what status their citizens would have."²³

Not all of the criticisms against the wall came from abroad however. Some felt that the plan was nothing more than a stall, and displayed the government's negotiation failures more so than their concern for the well-being of Israelis. Some of the strongest criticism against the wall at home came from Ha'aretz, one of Israel's three major dailies. "The fence will not eliminate terror attacks. Like a speed bump, it will only slow them down...It is the defence minister's duty to remove the unauthorized [Israeli] settlements without delay and implement a different policy...The principle that should guide planners is that the fence should provide an 'insurance' of sorts, not a de-facto annexation."²⁴ Tel

Aviv's Hatzofeh spoke out against the plan in a similar fashion, decrying that "a separation fence is insufficient to prevent attacks on Israeli soil. If it becomes difficult for terrorists to infiltrate Israel, [they] will still be [able] to fire mortars over the fence."²⁵ As stinging as such statements can be however, most Israeli observers hope that it will manage to save lives. A more supportive voice was heard from the Jerusalem Post, who even defended the route of the barrier by saying that "it would be a mistake to build a fence along the Green Line [because] it [would] be assumed by both sides that anything east of the fence will ultimately fall from Israeli control. The fence, therefore, must be built to generously incorporate blocks of Israeli communities."²⁶

To date the barrier is growing figuratively more and more divisive, with those supporting the "security fence" and those opposing the "wall" growing more distant in their views on its necessity and the effects it will have. In response to the series of concerns expressed, numerous government officials have publicly addressed the issue in an attempt to demonstrate the foresight with which the plan was hatched, and their understanding of the situation. Foreign Minister Shimon Peres was quoted in Ha'aretz as saying, "I think the only way to real security is achieving peace through political agreement,"²⁷ poignantly illustrating Israel's official position. This point was carried even further by Gerald Steinberg of the Jerusalem Centre for Public Affairs when he asserted that "[unilateral] separation provides a short-term alternative that will at least allow for conflict management, creating a modicum of stability and a foundation for resumption of formal negotiations toward an end to the conflict." This effectively summarizes the strongest argument in favour of the barrier. It is believed that the barrier will successfully create an atmosphere of reduced violent and therefore facilitate peace talks.

Presently, Phase 1 of the barrier has been completed, and estimates claim that the barrier will be complete near the end of 2005²⁸ with a total expense of approximately US \$1 billion.²⁹ As of January 2004, with 317 km out of the total 728 km approved by the government constructed, some 7,800 Palestinians had found themselves on the "wrong" side of the barrier, and as construction progresses the number is expected to reach the hundreds of thousands.³⁰ This reality is often pointed out as the inherent flaw or contradiction in the barrier, since its purpose is to provide security by securing the Palestinian population in place to the east of the barrier. Observers have been quick to point out, however, that the "fence is saving lives every day." In a report in July 2004, Ma'ariv published a report showing that since the beginning of construction, "an approximate 90 per cent decrease in the number of successful terror attacks was registered," and also suggested that the "fence has contributed to an increase in Israel's GDP and resulted in a 0.3 per cent decline in unemployment."³¹

In mid October 2003, the United General Assembly made its position on the security barrier official. The first resolution put forth, which would have deemed the barrier illegal, was vetoed by the United States on October 14 2003, and led to the weaker—non-binding—resolution passed on 21 October 2003, by a vote of 144 in favour, to 4 against and 12 abstentions, demanding that Israel stop and reverse construction of the fence.³² The resolution was more or less shrugged off by the Israeli government however, compelling the General Assembly to pass yet another resolution, on December 8 2003, requesting that the International Court of Justice (ICJ) put forth an advisory opinion on the legal consequences of the separation fence.³³ The ruling would

again be non-binding, but it was felt that this symbolic gesture would at least carry a significant amount of weight in popular opinion. Over the following two months outrage began to swell in Israel, with the Jerusalem Post chalking the decision up to yet another instance of the UN neglecting its security needs: “Does the international community wish to continue the systematic destruction of its institutions on the altar of the Arab-Israeli conflict?”³⁴

The ICJ opened hearings on the matter on February 23 2004, and heard arguments on the matter from, among other organizations, the League of Arab States, and the Islamic Conference.³⁵ After some four months of deliberation, the ICJ rendered their advisory ruling in line with the General Assembly on July 9 2004, deeming that the barrier is against international law, that it should be removed, and that adequate compensation should be paid to Palestinians whose lands have been confiscated.³⁶ The ruling was of course generally ill received by the Israeli population, and even Ha’aretz, the national news publication speaking out against the barrier the strongest, claimed that “[the ruling] fails to address the essence of the problem, and with it the very reason for building the fence—Palestinian terror.”³⁷ The international community’s concerns were not completely lost however, and although it would not go so far as to agree with the ICJ ruling, an editorial published in Yediot Ahronet on July 12 2004, showed a moment of pause to review how the barrier was being perceived. “For the Palestinians, who consider the fence from its eastern side, it says: ‘Thus far and no further. All of your national dreams and yearnings, from a state to [the right of] return, you – the Palestinians – will have to realize and implement them in the areas up to the fence; what lies beyond the fence is separated and blocked off forever. For you, it is a foreign country.’”³⁸

Following the ICJ decision, the UN General Assembly passed its latest resolution against the barrier. On July 20 2004, by 150 countries in favour, 6 against, and 10 abstentions, the UN once again deemed that the fence should be completely dismantled and that the ICJ ruling obeyed completely.³⁹ Like the resolutions before it and the ICJ ruling, this too was a non-binding assertion, leaving the Israeli government yet again ignoring its validity, only stirring up further resentment toward the international body. The Israeli government has not been completely inflexible in its adherence to the original route, however, and was in fact compelled by its own Supreme Court, on June 30 2004, to reroute a 25 mile section of the barrier, ruling that it “would impose too many hardships on Palestinians in several West Bank villages northwest of Jerusalem.”⁴⁰ Following the ruling, Netzah Mashiah, the Defense Ministry official in charge of the barrier project, stated on Israeli radio that “[when] the new maps are published they will show movement toward the green line, although not right on the green line.”⁴¹

Most recently on August 19 2004, in response to a petition submitted by residents of the West Bank village of Shukba, Israel’s Supreme Court “ordered the government to produce a statement in the next 30 days assessing the ramifications of a nonbinding ruling of the International Court of Justice in The Hague that declared the Israeli security barrier around the West Bank to be illegal.”⁴² Despite the Supreme Court ruling that that the barrier was legal regardless of its route (so long as disproportionate hardships do not result), it is also clear that the issue of the ICJ ruling must be properly addressed. According to the Supreme Court, the petition has conveniently afforded them this opportunity, one which they intend to take full advantage of.

Section 1 – Architecture of the Barrier

According to the Israeli government, the barrier—which is referred to as “the security fence” in this sphere of discourse—is a defensive measure.⁴³ They stress that it is in no way intended to be a border of any sort, and reinforce this statement with the assurance that any future borders will be the product of negotiations, and that the barrier can be dismantled and rearranged as the political situation changes. The core belief underlying the various justifications for the construction of the barrier is that death is an irreversible consequence, whereas any inconvenience or hardships that may arise from the construction of the barrier can.⁴⁴ While this may certainly be the case, there as of yet have been no indications as to what sort of timeline the Israeli government foresees for the duration of the barrier, nor have they outlined any specific conditions under which a dismantling process may begin. It is entirely conceivable then that these so-called inconveniences, felt over an extended period of time, may in fact produce negative and irreversible effects as well. In turn, this can have a resounding effect on peace negotiations and thus the barrier’s lifespan.

Approximately 97 per cent of the barrier will be formed by an intricate system of chain-link fence. For the most part the barrier does not operate under a principle of impenetrability, but aims rather to prevent and deter infiltration by erecting a security system that can detect any unauthorized breaches of the barrier, while providing the security zone with enough depth and treacherous obstacles to make the time required to traverse it long enough for patrolling IDF forces to respond to the threat. Where the barrier cuts through densely populated regions with adjacent Israeli and Palestinian settlements, or where highways pass near Palestinian settlements, the fence becomes a concrete wall measuring up to eight metres in height, intended to impede gunfire volleys against Israeli citizens. These concrete divides, though only making up some three per cent of the barrier, generate a far more ominous atmosphere and are responsible for earning it the reference of “the wall” by those whom oppose it. Though the term may seem slanted given the proportions of the barrier, it must also be taken into consideration that the concrete sections of the barrier are the most visible, as they pass through the heavily populated regions. This debate over the terminology used to describe the wall may initially seem trivial when discussing the issue of security, but as will be seen in subsequent section, the way in which the barrier is perceived can in fact have a significant impact on how both the Palestinian population, and the international community react to its presence.

The main component of the barrier is the chain-linked fence, standing three metres in height, and equipped with an intrusion detection system. Approaching the barrier from the east, the first component of the barrier is a fence of coiled barb wire that serves as the initial level of impedance and deterrence. The barbed wire fence sits along the top edge of a ditch that runs the length of the barrier, varying in width between six and eight feet. The purpose of the ditch is to provide a suitable obstacle to prevent motor vehicles from punching through the barrier and thus making pursuit of infiltrators a far more daunting task. In some places, depending on the topography, other means may be used to achieve this end.⁴⁵ This trench is followed by a dirt access road and then the electric chain-link fence. On the western side of the fence is a paved road used for IDF

patrol vehicles, sandwiched between two paths of fine sand. These paths of fine sand, also referred to as trace roads, are meant to identify the footprints of anyone that has crossed the fence. After the second trace road is another length of barbed wire fence, and a series of surveillance cameras and observation stations that keep an eye on the barrier at all times. The components of the barrier will average 60 metres in width. In some areas the terrain forces the barrier to narrow and the detection fence in some of these areas lacks some of the accompanying elements, on the other hand, “in certain cases, the barrier will reach a width of 100 metres due to topographic conditions.”⁴⁶ Where the barrier passes there is also a great effort to maintain as much of the seam zone⁴⁷ as possible to be used as a buffer between it and Palestinian settlements. What results are sections of terrain with fair to good observational vantage points by IDF patrols, and in the regions where such a buffer is not possible, the density of patrols can be increased to compensate.

The current figures emerging since the beginning of construction describe an approximate 90 per cent decrease in the number of successful terror attacks,⁴⁸ attesting to the soundness of the security measures. Indeed, if we were to try and conceive of a pedestrian attempting to traverse the barrier from the eastern side—excluding an approach via one of the gates—success would require that they first evade detection en route to the barrier, a significant challenge in and of itself when considering the surveillance equipment at the IDF’s disposal. Along the barrier there is a supervised gate approximately every 3 kilometres,⁴⁹ so the longest distance between an IDF patrol vehicle and a potential infiltrator will be an average of 1.5 kilometres. Traveling at a modest 100km/hr on the paved patrol road, this gives a response time of approximately 1 minute as the absolute worst case scenario. From the time that the individual first disturbs the fence (after hypothetically passing the first barbed wire fence and the security ditch undetected), it may be conceivable, depending on their physical prowess, for them to make it across the last obstacle of the barrier within a minute. In most regions, however, there is a great deal of terrain along the seam zone that must be crossed before reaching populated areas. In those regions where this is not the case, the matter can again be rectified by increasing the density of patrols.

With the actual structure of the barrier itself proven to be successful versus infiltration, the next component of this security measure that needs to be addressed is the number of Israelis found on the eastern side of the barrier, and the number of Palestinians found on the western side. Based on the clear assumption that Israeli populated areas are the targets being defended by the barrier, and Palestinian populated areas the regions from which these threats are emerging, a measurement of the barrier’s security can also be made by observing how successful it is in maintaining these desired divisions. Examining a map of the latest approved route,⁵⁰ and overwhelming number of Palestinian villages can be found to the west of the barrier, as well as Israeli settlements to the east. In a strategic assessment report written by Shaul Arieli, these numbers correspond to roughly 399,000 Palestinians and 354,000 Israelis, left on the “wrong” side of the barrier. This thus places a far greater burden on security forces that are required to maintain a presence in Israeli settlements on the eastern side. Alone these figures tell us a little about what we can expect in terms of the level of security, but the best way to proceed in the evaluation is to examine the results of alternative plans since, with all other things being equal, a route with a less skewed population distribution would in turn be more secure.

Along these lines, Nehamia Strasler noted in Ha'aretz that "[if] the fence had been built according to the plan presented by former interior minister Haim Ramon two years ago, it would have been built along the Green Line, on the shortest possible route, and would thus be efficient in maintaining security. After all, every zigzag makes security more difficult and infiltration easier."⁵¹ Arieli describes the situation even more bleakly in his paper, stating that the barrier's present route will simply divert violence and terrorism away from Israel and toward settlements remaining in the West Bank, causing the security forces to "bear an extra heavy burden—guarding 700 kilometres of the fence; guarding the Jewish settlements, dozens of outposts, and 700 kilometres of roads east of the fence; and preventing terrorist operations."⁵² He follows up his attack by introducing an alternative plan, which includes "the removal of settlers and IDF bases from the Gaza Strip and northern Samaria the construction of the fence along a different route," as well as "measures aimed at creating conditions for reaching and implementing an agreement with international support."⁵³ The result of the first two aspects of this plan would be a shift in the division, with approximately 330,000 Israelis remaining on the eastern side of the border, but only about 31,000 Palestinians left on the western side.

In addition to these preliminary figures favouring the alternative plan drastically, it must also be noted that the changes would have other positive security benefits as well. The proposed alternative is approximately 206 kilometres shorter than the presently approved barrier, reducing the length of the region that must be patrolled, as well as reducing the number of gates, and thus the number of access points for potential infiltrators. A barrier not violating the Green Line would also ease tensions; in fact, the Palestinian Authority claims that they have no problems in principle with the barrier. Their only cause for concern is the route that it takes. Taking this under consideration, if the barrier is intended to serve as a short-term security plan with foresight towards long-term peace negotiations—as has been stated by government officials, it can be argued that a reasonable course of action when constructing the barrier would be to do so in a manner consisting of the least possible amount of conflict, so as to facilitate communication between both parties. Furthermore, in light of a proposed alternative which succeeds in demographically dividing the region to the tune of the security barrier's philosophy more accurately, it can be argued that the wall presently being constructed does not meet these specifications.

In the midst of such criticism however, it is important to note that the barrier may still be successful in preventing attacks. Although it is difficult to argue against the increased logistical efficiency of a shorter barrier, there is some weakness to the claim that Palestinians left on the western side of the barrier may threaten Israeli security. The basis of the argument is that Palestinians residing to the west of the barrier "will have a much higher standard of living, due to its access to labour and commerce in Israel."⁵⁴ As will be examined later, this increased standard of living can do much to quell motivations for violence. It is possible then that the alternative plan would only see a comparable rate of success. On the other side of this argument is the notion that, by leaving these Palestinian settlements on the western side of the barrier, the government may be opening the door for illegal immigration to these regions and thus potentially harming the State of Israel's demographic balance.⁵⁵

As can be expected, the central issue of the barrier is, and remains, the route it takes. The Israeli government feels compelled to include as many Israeli settlements with

their barrier, while opponents denounce these intentions in favour of a barrier striving to keep as many Palestinian settlements out on the other side. It is almost unavoidable then that the barrier is seen to focus on politics, more so than on actual security matters. In a paper by Shlomo Brom, written for the Jaffe Centre for Strategic Studies, this very issue is explored in detail. He argues that although some deviance from the Green Line can be justified through topographical constraints, and the desire to give the barrier depth, the barrier is glaringly off the mark “in its leaving Israel without any effective means of preventing the entry of Palestinians from these now-enclosed areas into its own populated centres.”⁵⁶ In reviewing the politics of the barrier, Brom outlines three major results affecting its security. He first mentions the problems associated with the barrier’s increased length, as described above, along the rationale that adding more territory to be patrolled can only decrease security unless it is of some strategic importance. He then argues that the barrier will adversely affect hundreds of thousands of Palestinians residing along the seam zone, allowing it to “become the focus of Palestinian opposition and a convenient device for anti-Israeli Palestinian propaganda.”⁵⁷ This can be summarized as how the barrier is perceived internally, for the most part by the Palestinian population, and he concludes by then considering how this effect the external perceptions of the barrier as well, for both have the capacity to effect Israel’s security. A good example of such a threat would be the economic situation involved in the United States retracting from some of its loan to Israel, as it has threatened to do in proportion to the barrier’s deviance from their advice. This could in turn weaken the economic foundation of this security strategy, thereby rendering it less effective.

Section 2: Lessons from Gaza

In order to support their claims that the barrier project in the West Bank will improve security, the Israeli government points to the successes the Gaza Strip barrier has seen since it’s construction in 1994, under the leadership of former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. The accurateness of this analogy can be brought under question however, citing two major differences between the two. Firstly, the border around the Gaza Strip is far more discrete in its division of Palestinian and Israeli populations than in the West Bank, making it easier to erect a less conflictual barrier. Since this has proven to be the centrepiece of complications and opposition towards the West Bank barrier, this distinction between the two cases is crucial. Secondly, the Gaza Strip barrier measures only approximately 52 kilometres in length, constituting something in the neighbourhood of a 15 fold division in the required patrol routes, and affords the surveillance technology employed around the Gaza Strip the opportunity to refine its scope along the barrier. These two factors alone may be strong enough to negate Israel’s claims that West Bank barrier should observe a comparable success rate, though the analogy may not be completely valueless.

The way in which the Gaza Strip barrier and the surrounding security operations have evolved since its inception should still provide an idea as to what can be expected along the sister barrier. In December 2000, the IDF decided to erect a 60 square kilometre security buffer around the Gaza Strip, complimented with new and more effective rules of engagement.⁵⁸ This buffer zone had a two fold advantage, allowing the IDF to both

protect the border itself more effectively, as well as protecting construction workers commissioned during the first half of 2001 to reconstruct and fortify sections of the barrier.⁵⁹ Since the modifications have been completed on the barrier, not one suicide bomber has been successful in infiltrating the border; the charges are usually detonated along the barrier, making the buffer zone that much more beneficial.⁶⁰ In addition to these structural and topographical features, the buffer zone is also set up with observation posts, equipped with “high-technology capabilities such as night vision.”⁶¹ The posts afford IDF forces a view into Gaza with a depth of 4km to 5km, and are supplemented even further by “unmanned aerial vehicles with intelligence-gathering technology.” As described in an article by Doron Almog and David Makovsky: “Such devices, used in combination with motion detectors, [are] designed to help troops intercept individuals attempting to enter the buffer zone well before they [reach] the border. Indeed, because of this system of intelligence gathering both in and outside the zone, the IDF was able to capture several terrorists as they approached the fence.”⁶² In short, the IDF has already amassed a significant amount of experience in conducting this type of security policy, and have proven themselves to be quite effective. Since the West Bank barrier is to be constructed and monitored along similar principles,⁶³ it is not altogether unreasonable to expect similar results in preventing infiltration from the West Bank.

In further support of the analogy, Almog and Makovsky make two additional observations. The first is that, despite some three years of violence in the Gaza Strip, the barrier has managed to not become a hindrance on economic prosperity. Furthermore, “[one] of the outcomes of stable coexistence is improved economic conditions, which in turn diminish the level of conflict between the two societies.” Whether this will be the case or not in the West Bank, is far more difficult to see, since the route is already cutting Palestinians off from their land in regions of the seam zone, levying part of the cost of this security measure on those that rely on the land for agriculture. The second point that they make, is that the problem of terrorism emerging from the West Bank is presently far more severe than what is seen in the Gaza Strip. They make the argument that “[this] discrepancy is directly attributable to the absence of a fence or comprehensive defensive system around the West Bank that is capable of protecting Israelis and saving lives.”⁶⁴ As former commander of IDF forces in the Gaza Strip during the barrier’s inception, Maj. Gen. Almog argues that a similar security system could be established along the West Bank with “minor cosmetic adjustments,” primarily due to differences in terrain, and concludes that a “comprehensive security model that includes overlapping levels of intelligence, a security fence, and operational flexibility could be easily implemented in the West Bank, and would dramatically improve Israel’s ability to fight terrorism.”⁶⁵

Section 3: The Barrier and the Palestinian People

Due to the nature of the West Bank, construction of an effective security barrier is clearly complicated. Both Israeli and Palestinian settlements reside close to each other, with some Israeli settlements in the West Bank still remaining on the eastern side, thereby necessitating a more porous system capable of handling increased traffic across the barrier—as opposed to the barrier in place in Gaza. In tackling such issues, it has more often than not been at the expense of the Palestinian population that they are

resolved. For instance, in many areas along the seam zone, the operational solution arrived at by the government was to build a secondary security barrier to provide depth, east of the Palestinian settlement. The resulting situation finds a Palestinian city such as Qalqilya being completely disjointed, blocking it off from all sides.⁶⁶ In other instances, the desire to give the barrier depth has also resulted in separating agricultural lands from Palestinians that rely on them for their wellbeing, and sometimes even basic services like schools and health care facilities, finding themselves on the other side of the barrier. What effect will such things have on the Palestinian population? As altruistic as the government's intentions may be in defending Israeli populated regions, even in a morally detached state of rationalism, the barrier's impact on Palestinians should still have a natural impact Israel's security policy.

The key issue affecting the day to day life of Palestinians due to the barrier is isolation: "The barrier is cutting off communities from their income streams, either within the West Bank or in Israel."⁶⁷ According to a report in the Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics & Culture reviewing the economic impacts of the barrier, those communities finding themselves trapped between the security barrier and the Green Line are likely to "suffer long-term damage to agricultural development and restrictions on the use of water resources and livestock grazing, coupled with increasing transaction costs."⁶⁸ Along with these long-term effects, the article also puts forth four immediate effects generating hardship among the Palestinian population, especially in the regions of Jenin, Tulkarm, and Qalqilya. These effects are: (1) the destruction of agricultural land and assets; (2) the inability to access agricultural lands and assets, including water resources; (3) added limitations on mobility of people and goods and, as a result, higher transaction costs; (4) uncertainty about the future leading to a dampening of investment in economic activities, including agriculture.⁶⁹ An immediate argument that can be made in light of these realities is that the lower standards of living associated with these economic conditions will lead to more illegal immigration of Palestinians into regions west of the barrier, attempting to find adequate means to support themselves. After all, Jenin, Tulkarm, and Qalqilya are home to a population of approximately half a million, constituting roughly one quarter of the total population in the West Bank. They represent some 21.1 per cent of the total built-up Palestinian regions, and account for 37 per cent of all agricultural lands in the West Bank.⁷⁰ These three regions are thus vital to the overall wellbeing of Palestinians in the West Bank, and any sufferance felt therein will be reflected in the Palestinian population in the West Bank as a whole.

Who then is the threat to Israeli security, and what are the conceivable reactions to the barrier by such individuals? The fence may indeed make it more difficult for attacks against Israel to occur, but if the means by which this is achieved elevates the level of tension, it may create a situation where the frequency of attacks is lowered, but the severity of the attacks increases. Only time will be able to determine the actual outcome, but in the meantime it is possible to review how the barrier will affect the motivations for terrorism, and reason along the lines that, all else being equal, a security barrier less likely to provoke violence is more effective.

The main threat of violence that the barrier is intended to prevent is that of suicide bombers. In order to gain a better understanding of what motivations drive these individuals a paper on the subject, by Shaul Kimhi and Shmuel Even, proceeds by forming a typology of Palestinian suicide bombers, of which they distinguish four

prototypes based on primary motivation factors. The first prototype described is that of the religious fanatic, individuals that believe that their actions involve some holy cause, usually characterized by “a religious background and membership in an Islamic organization.”⁷¹ The second prototype is that of the nationalist fanatic, those motivated primarily by nationalistic and political ends. Common justifications for violence in these individuals are centred on the struggle against the Israeli occupation, and for the establishment of a Palestinian state. The third classification is that of the avengers, driven towards violence by a desire for revenge. “These are cases of personal revenge for a family member or friend who has been killed, general revenge against Israel for its actions against the Palestinians, or revenge for the trauma caused by personal injury or the injury of a person close to them.”⁷² The fourth and final prototype is that of the exploited, made up primarily young individuals that can be easily persuaded or manipulated into sacrificing themselves for a heinous act of violence; individuals whose “personal circumstances...make it nearly impossible to refuse the proposal.”⁷³ How then, is the security barrier likely to influence individuals potentially landing in one of these four categories, or more to the point, is it likely to result in an increase in their numbers?

The first two prototypes, religious fanatic and nationalist fanatic, are based primarily on ideology. The motivation to act out violently towards the state of Israel in these spheres would thus arise where the state clashes with these ideologies. It is possible that the barrier may remain relatively neutral in terms of religious ideology, thus having no net effect in this area, but the barrier will certainly conflict with those Palestinians with strong nationalistic ideologies. Simply by looking at how the barrier is perceived in the media, it is clear that one of the primary concerns surrounding its existence is the implications it has for Israel’s borders. As a significant element of nationality, it is thus reasonable to argue that as the barrier—and the notion of a fixed border—persists in the West Bank, a rise in nationalist fanatics may be observed. In the case of the avenger and the exploited, these prototypes are more susceptible to the hardships inflicted by the barrier. As the standard of living in the regions heavily affected by the barrier begins to decline, it is possible to argue that such individuals would be more inclined to seek revenge for their economic plight, and that those more malleable characters become even more vulnerable to exploitation as their level of desperation increases. For example, in many cases of suicide bombings, those carrying out the attacks are often assured that their families will be taken care of financially. Such recruitment incentives clearly grow in strength as economic depravity does as well.

In general then, it is not unreasonable to conclude that, given the nature of the barrier and the manner in which it isolates Palestinians from their land and from other Palestinian villages, a rise in the level of motivation to conduct attacks against Israel may be observed. The corollary to this conclusion is that the barrier, under its present plans of construction, carries with it implications that can in turn decrease the overall level of security in Israel, contradicting its very purpose. The barrier may be able to contain this increase of threats, but it again contradicts statements by officials citing peace as a long-term objective.

Conclusion

Israel's security barrier has very few appropriate comparisons throughout history and in modern times, resulting from circumstances that are no less unique. As such, when evaluating the effectiveness of a particular security strategy, there is an utter lack of exterior evidence that can appropriately be used to draw analogies. For the most part, all that can be done is to examine the policies and strategies attempted in the past, and attempting to draw conclusions as to whether or not the present proposal will work better or worse. Experimentation has played an enormous role in the development of modern democracies and international organizations, a process that is benefitted by mass participation. With very few regions facing situations similar to that in Israel-Palestine, this process of experimentation is likely to be far more drawn out.

The West Bank barrier is essentially a large scale experiment, and its successes and failures are as of yet still to be determined. The key words needed in addressing these outcomes are short-term, and long-term. In many ways the short-term results have proven to be quite favourable in terms of security. A significant decline in successful attacks has been registered, and if the analogies between the West Bank barrier and the Gaza Strip barrier prove to be accurate, it may in fact prove to be even more beneficial in the long-term. The barrier is having other effects, however, primarily on the standard of living of Palestinians, and in turn on how Israel is being perceived by the rest of the world. This set of negative implications running parallel with those positive ones may very well lead to a fatal collision if Israel maintains an general air of inflexibility, and thereby allowing tensions to rise towards a critical point.

What will then prove to be the dominant argument? Throughout this analysis the two competing theses have proven to be polar opposites of each other. On the one hand, it can be argued that the barrier will be successful in generating a more peaceful atmosphere, an outcome that can in turn help drive peace negotiations, even if this initial boost is achieved through coercion. It is possible to find potential flaws in such a strategy however, for it presupposes that both sides of the barrier will benefit from the barrier, whereas those Palestinians suffering economic hardships due to its presence may be difficult to find the silver lining. On the other side of the coin is the more bleak prediction that the barrier will in fact fail due to its antagonistic path. It does not however, exclude the possibility of a security barrier all together. In fact, there is an intersecting path on which both arguments overlap, thus forming the potential for the two camps to come to a compromise of ideas. This path is of course traced by the Green Line, and it divides these two spheres as readily as it does Israel from the West Bank. The closer both sides are to the line on this issue of a barrier the easier it will be to implement, and the more likely it will be to succeed.

NOTES

¹ United Nations Press Release, "In Day-Long Security Council Meeting, Palestine Observer Says Israeli Security Wall Involves De Facto Annexation of Occupied Land," 14 Oct 2003, <<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2003/sc7895.doc.htm>> (22 Sept 2004).

² United Nations Press Release, "International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion Finds Israel's Construction of Wall Contrary to International Law," 9 July 2004, <<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2004/icj616.doc.htm>> (22 Sept 2004).

³ Brom, Shlomo, "The Security Fence: Solution or Stumbling Block?" Strategic Assessment, Vol. 6, No. 4, Feb 2004, <<http://www.tau.ac.il/jcss/sa/v6n4p2Bro.html>> (21 Sept 2004)

⁴ United Nations Press Release, "In Day-Long Security Council Meeting, Palestine Observer Says Israeli Security Wall Involves De Facto Annexation of Occupied Land," 14 Oct 2003.

⁵ United Nations Press Release, "International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion Finds Israel's Construction of Wall Contrary to International Law," 9 July 2004.

⁶ Brom, Shlomo, "The Security Fence: Solution or Stumbling Block?" Strategic Assessment, Vol. 6, No. 4, Feb 2004.

⁷ This section draws heavily from Tekla Szymanski's historical account of the wall in "Israel's Security Fence: Back to the Wall?"

⁸ Rees, Matt. "Israel's Last-Ditch Peace Plan." Time (Nov 6, 2000): 90-93

⁹ Szymanski, Tekla. "Israel's Security Fence: Back to the Wall?"

¹⁰ Szymanski

¹¹ Szymanski

¹² The idea of unilateral withdrawal has been revived with Sharon's plans to move settlements out of the Gaza Strip.

¹³ Makovsky, David. "Fence Gives Israel Chance for Peace." The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Newsday (13 July 2004).

¹⁴ Barzilai, Amnon. "The Fence Timeline." Haaretz.com. July 2004.

¹⁵ Szymanski

¹⁶ Amnon

¹⁷ Amnon

¹⁸ Szymanski

¹⁹ Samaria is the historical name for the northern region (north of Jerusalem) of the West Bank, which roughly makes up the entire West Bank within the Judea Samaria territory bloc.

²⁰ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "Saving Lives – Israel's Security Fence."

²¹ Myre, Greg. "Israel Approves an Expanded Security Barrier." New York Times (Oct 2, 2003): A.7

²² Szymanski

²³ Szymanski

²⁴ Szymanski

²⁵ Szymanski

²⁶ Jerusalem Post, "Build the Right Fence." (June 17, 2002).

²⁷ Szymanski

²⁸ Myre A.7

²⁹ Myre A.7

³⁰ Arieli, Shaul. "Disengagement, the "Seam" Zone, and Alternative Conflict Management" JCSS Strategic Assessment, Volume 7, No. 2. (Aug 2004).

³¹ Ma'ariv "Anti-Terrorist Fence." (8 July 2004).

³² United Nations Press Release, "General Assembly, in Resumed Emergency Session, Demands Israel Stop Construction." 21 Oct 2003.

³³ United Nations Press Release. "General Assembly Adopts Text Requesting International Court of Justice to Issue Advisory Opinion on West Bank Separation Wall." 8 Dec 2004.

³⁴ Jerusalem Post. "Soviet Justice." (Jan 6, 2004).

³⁵ Szymanski

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- ³⁶ United Nations Press Release, 9 July 2004
- ³⁷ Szymanski
- ³⁸ Szymanski
- ³⁹ United Nations Press Release. "General Assembly Emergency Session Overwhelmingly Demands Israel's Compliance With International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion." 20 July 2004.
- ⁴⁰ Myre, Greg. "Israel Adjusts Route of West Bank Barrier to Obey its Court." *New York Times* (July 30, 2004): A.4
- ⁴¹ Myre A.4
- ⁴² Erlanger, Steven. "Israeli Court Orders Assessment of West Bank Barrier." *New York Times*. (Aug 20, 2004): A.3
- ⁴³ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "Saving Lives – Israel's Security Fence." Nov 2004.
- ⁴⁴ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- ⁴⁵ Lein, Yehezkel. "Behind the Barrier: Human Rights Violation as a Result of Israel's Separation Barrier." B'Tselem Publications. April 2003
- ⁴⁶ Yehezkel
- ⁴⁷ The seam zone refers to the two strips of land on either side of the Green Line.
- ⁴⁸ As mentioned previously in the background section.
- ⁴⁹ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- ⁵⁰ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- ⁵¹ Arieli
- ⁵² Arieli
- ⁵³ Arieli
- ⁵⁴ Arieli
- ⁵⁵ Arieli
- ⁵⁶ Brom, Shlomo. "The Security Fence: Solution or Stumbling Block?" *JCSS Strategic Assessment*, Volume 6, No. 4. Feb 2004.
- ⁵⁷ Brom
- ⁵⁸ Almog, Doron, Makovsky, David. "Special Policy Forum Report: Israel's Fence." *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, Peace Watch #433 (24 Oct 2003).
- ⁵⁹ Almog, Makovsky
- ⁶⁰ Almog, Makovsky
- ⁶¹ Almog, Makovsky
- ⁶² Almog, Makovsky
- ⁶³ The buffer zone in the West Bank is far less consistent, mostly due to the topography of the region. As Major General Doron Almost describes in *The West Bank Fence: A Vital Component in Israel's Strategy of Defence*, this is a key feature that will be exploited by potential terrorists if not rectified.
- ⁶⁴ Almog, Doron. *The West Bank Fence: A Vital Component in Israel's Strategy of Defence*. (Washington: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2004).
- ⁶⁵ Almog
- ⁶⁶ Brom
- ⁶⁷ *Palestine – Israel Journal of Politics, Economics & Culture*, Volume 10, Issue 4 "Economic Impact of Israel's Separation Barrier on Northern West Bank Communities." (2003): 99-104.
- ⁶⁸ *Palestine – Israel Journal of Politics, Economics & Culture*, 99
- ⁶⁹ *Palestine – Israel Journal of Politics, Economics & Culture*, 99
- ⁷⁰ *Palestine – Israel Journal of Politics, Economics & Culture*, 99
- ⁷¹ Kimhi, Shaul, Even, Shmuel. "Who are the Palestinian Suicide Terrorists?" *JCSS Strategic Assessment*, Volume 6, No. 2. Sept 2003.
- ⁷² Kimhi, Even
- ⁷³ Kimhi, Even

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