

BICOM

BRITAIN ISRAEL COMMUNICATIONS
& RESEARCH CENTRE

EXPERT VIEW

January 2013



Why Settlements have not Killed the Two-State Solution

Col. (res.) Shaul Arieli

KEY POINTS

- Regardless of where one stands on the wisdom or otherwise of past or future settlement construction in various parts of the West Bank, creating a border between Israel and the West Bank remains entirely possible.
- To create a border which connects the major Israeli settlement blocks in the West Bank and the East Jerusalem neighbourhoods to Israel requires annexing around 6% of the West Bank, which can be compensated with 1:1 land swaps.
- The continuing viability of partition from an Israeli perspective is enhanced by the fact that:
 - Most Israeli settlers are concentrated in blocks (see map);
 - The Israeli settlement presence beyond the blocks is limited;
 - Most working settlers are employed inside Israel;
 - Israeli settlements use largely distinct infrastructure from West Bank Palestinians;
 - Many settlers would be motivated to seek their future within the Green Line if government subsidies were removed from the settlements;
 - The number of new homes currently planned for construction within Israel is 20 times the number of households that might need to be relocated.
- The picture outlined here of the demographic and settlement reality in the West Bank shows that the real difficulty in implementing the idea of partition is not physical but political.

INTRODUCTION

Ever since the 1937 Peel Commission, the only viable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been based on the idea of separating the territory into distinct Jewish and Arab states. As the Peel report stated, it is 'a struggle between two national movements with valid claims, that cannot be settled together ... other than by partition.'

Over time, this idea developed into the form of 'two states for two peoples,' with negotiations between Israel and the PLO over the past two decades establishing the pre-1967 lines as the basis for a territorial agreement with land swaps on a ratio of 1:1. Turning this idea into a reality requires first and foremost political support from both sides, but physical feasibility is also necessary. This means that the cost of implementing what is agreed should be practically manageable, particularly in social and economic terms.

An increasing number of people, from various political perspectives, are asserting that it is becoming geographically unviable to create a separation between Israel and the West Bank, if it has not become so already. The reason given is that Israeli settlement construction has reached a point that it is no longer possible to create a border between Jewish and Palestinian population centres.

Among the proponents of this case are opponents of the two-state solution, whether from the Israeli right, or from the international anti-Zionist left, who want to force the idea of creating a separate Palestinian state alongside Israel off the agenda. Those on the Israeli right who are opposed to a two-state solution want to claim that the Israeli settlement enterprise in the West Bank has made the idea of two countries meaningless, to support their case that Israeli sovereignty should be imposed on some or all of the West Bank. The anti-Zionist left argues with increasing confidence that the two-state solution is dead and only the so-called 'one state solution' remains feasible.

At times, a comparable claim is made by those who believe and hope for a two-state solution to the conflict, and who express concerns that there is a window of opportunity for implementing this which

will soon close. British Foreign Secretary William Hague said recently, 'If progress on negotiations is not made next year, then the two-state solution could become impossible to achieve.'

It is true that the construction of settlements over the years has complicated the issue of drawing a border and undermines confidence in Israel's intentions. At the same time, it is important for all those who believe that advancing a two-state solution is in the interests of both Israelis and Palestinians, to challenge the claim that the possibility for creating a border has almost closed.

Regardless of where one stands on the wisdom or otherwise of past or future settlement construction in various parts of the West Bank, this paper argues that drawing a border remains entirely possible.

SETTLERS CONCENTRATED IN BLOCKS

Civilian Israeli presence over the Green Line is mainly concentrated in neighbourhoods of East Jerusalem and a small number of settlement blocks in the West Bank. In East Jerusalem there are 12 Jewish neighbourhoods with some 200,000 Israelis, representing 40% of the 530,000 Israelis living over the Green Line. It is beyond the scope of the paper to address Jerusalem in detail, or the sensitive issue of the proposed E-1 development between Jerusalem and Maale Adumim. Suffice to say that as it stands, it remains entirely feasible to divide Jerusalem along the lines of the Clinton Parameters, under which Jewish neighbourhoods would stay part of Israel and Arab neighbourhoods would come under Palestinian sovereignty.

In the West Bank, the settlement enterprise has created a scattered network of 124 settlements and dozens of unauthorised outposts. However, the Israeli West Bank settlements, with 330,000 residents, have not achieved Jewish dominance across the territory. The Jewish population of the West Bank is just 12%, and the built-up area of the settlements covers just 1% of the West Bank (1.9% including East Jerusalem neighbourhoods).

Some 80 per cent of the settlers (excluding East Jerusalem) live in settlement blocs, where they represent 95 per cent of the total population. The

blocks include the three largest Jewish towns – Modi'in Illit, Beitar Illit and Ma'ale Adumim – each of which has 40,000 residents or more. Also within the blocs there are another 15 smaller communities with up to 10,000 residents each, such as Efrat and Alfei Menashe, and two that are larger than this – Ariel (18,000) and Givat Ze'ev (13,000). The majority of the population in the blocs are either ultra-Orthodox or secular Israelis. The main reason for living in the West Bank among both these populations is economic, since housing in West Bank settlements is cheaper. To create a border which connects these major settlement blocks and the East Jerusalem neighbourhoods to Israel requires annexing around 6% of the West Bank, which can be compensated with 1:1 land swaps.

LIMITED SETTLER PRESENCE BEYOND THE BLOCKS

For the 20 per cent of the settlers who live outside the blocks the picture is completely reversed.

Most of the settlements outside the settlement blocs have fewer than 2000 residents each. In many of them, the number is no more than a few dozen families. The large majority belong to the national religious sector of Israeli society who built their settlements as part of the 'Gush Emunim' ('Block of the faithful') ideological movement. These communities established themselves beyond the areas Israeli governments mainly wanted to settle (the Jordan Valley, the 'Jerusalem envelope', and along the Green Line), with the conscious intention of breaking up Palestinian contiguity and preventing the establishment of a viable Palestinian state. Many of these settlements are located along the central mountain ridge ('*Gav HaHar*') on Route 60, which is the main traffic axis from north to south for Palestinians.

But despite the efforts of these groups, in the area of the West Bank beyond the separation barrier and the main settlement blocks there is clear Palestinian dominance in terms of population. Israeli settlers represent just 2.6% of the total population of the West Bank outside the blocks. The built-up area of the settlements outside the blocks is less than 0.4% of the area of the West Bank and is 17 times smaller than the built-up area of the Palestinian villages and

towns. For example, in the northern part of the West Bank, in the area between Nablus and Jenin, which is four times greater than the Gaza Strip, there is no Israeli presence at all aside from seven tiny settlements.

SETTLERS LARGELY EMPLOYED IN ISRAEL

Israeli settlements are largely urban and residential, rather than agricultural. Some 93% of Israeli construction in the West Bank is for residential purposes, and 105 of the 124 settlements are urban, without industrial or agricultural areas. One third of the settler population is ultra-Orthodox, living in the two largest Jewish towns in the West Bank – Modi'in Illit (54,000) and Beitar Illit (40,000). Both towns are located close to the Green Line, and many of their residents do not participate in the Israeli labour market.

In the 14 Israeli industrial areas in the West Bank, most of them are small in scale and the majority of employees are Palestinians. The flourishing agriculture in the Jordan Valley, which generates NIS 0.5 billion a year (£80m), covers only 40 square kilometres, or just 0.6% of the West Bank. The land is worked by around 700 households, and almost 95% of its employees are Palestinians.

This means that most of the working Israeli settlers living in the West Bank are actually employed in Israel, and therefore would not have to change their place of employment if they were required to evacuate when a permanent agreement is signed.

DISTINCT INFRASTRUCTURE

The Israeli settlement enterprise is not integrated with Arab population centres in the West Bank. Like the IDF's military posts, the settlements are located on hilltops, and not on the slopes like the Arab villages. They are supported by a separate network of roads originally established for the emergency movement of IDF forces from West to East, which over time have become fast roads for the benefit of Israelis. The settlements have separate water and electricity infrastructures, and are protected in part by the separation barrier, which creates a situation

whereby the settlements to the west of it are already connected to Israel.

Israelis who do not live in the West Bank use only 293 km (10%) of the West Bank's roads outside the blocs (for example, Route 90 which runs up the Jordan Valley and Route 443 which connects Jerusalem to Tel Aviv). Israelis who live in the West Bank travel on an additional 19% of the roads, most of them access roads to their homes. The remaining 71% of West Bank roads are used only by Palestinians. On the other hand, within the settlement blocs, 83% of the roads are in use by Israelis.

Maintaining the security of the settlements in the West Bank also requires several layers of protection:

- The first – for the settlement: A peripheral fence, patrol route, watchtowers, observation devices, security squad, call center, distress buttons, electric gate, emergency road etc.
- The second – for Israelis on the roads: reinforced buses and escort vehicles for suppliers and service providers.
- The third – for separating traffic: A network of obstacles, barriers, gates and checkpoints.
- And the fourth, and most costly, the separation barrier: Though not completed, the final planned route, designed to include the maximum number of settlements, is 815 km, at a cost of NIS 15 million per kilometre.

This is therefore an existing situation in which Israelis in the West Bank use distinct infrastructure, meaning there is a de facto separation of the fabric of Israeli and Palestinian life in the West Bank.

ECONOMIC MOTIVATION

In order to encourage settlers to move east of the Green Line, the Israeli Government guarantees their well-being. The per-capita budget transferred to local authorities in the West Bank is more than double that of the general Israeli population. Settlements in the West Bank are also among those areas considered by the Israeli government to be 'priority areas', meaning that their residents are entitled to mortgage subsidies when buying an apartment. The government also subsidises the development of construction projects and land

purchase and provides additional benefits in spheres such as education and health.

This array of subsidies is one of the central reasons for 70% of Israelis who live over the Green Line. A change in this costly government policy, even without an agreement, would motivate many to seek their future within the Green Line.

In the framework of an agreement, based on the Palestinian and Israeli proposals presented in the negotiations at Taba in January 2001 and during the Annapolis process in 2008, the number of households that would have to be absorbed back into Israel would be between 20,000 (Israeli proposal) and 30,000 (Palestinian proposal). With the right preparation, there will be no difficulty absorbing them within Israel's borders. Israel has in any case a fast growing population and the planned inventory of new housing units in Israel today is more than 20 times the anticipated number who would have to relocate from the West Bank.

CONCLUSION

The picture outlined here of the demographic and settlement reality in the West Bank shows that the real difficulty in implementing the idea of partition is not physical but political. Given that fact, public opinion and decision-makers in Israel and around the world should refocus public debate around dividing the territory between Israelis and Palestinians based

on the pre-1967 lines, which remain the only viable solution.

What was written in the 1947 UN Partition Commission report remains true today: 'Only through partition can these two conflicting national aspirations attain tangible expression and enable the two peoples to take their places as independent nations in the international community and the United Nations.'

Col. (res.) Shaul Arieli is one of Israel's leading experts on borders and the separation barrier. During his IDF career he has served as commander of the Northern Division in Gaza, deputy military secretary to the Minister of Defence and the Prime Minister, and head of the administration for negotiations with the Palestinians under Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres, Benjamin Netanyahu and Ehud Barak. He is a senior researcher at the Economic Cooperation Foundation, one of the initiators of the Geneva Initiative, and an executive member of the Council for Peace and Security.

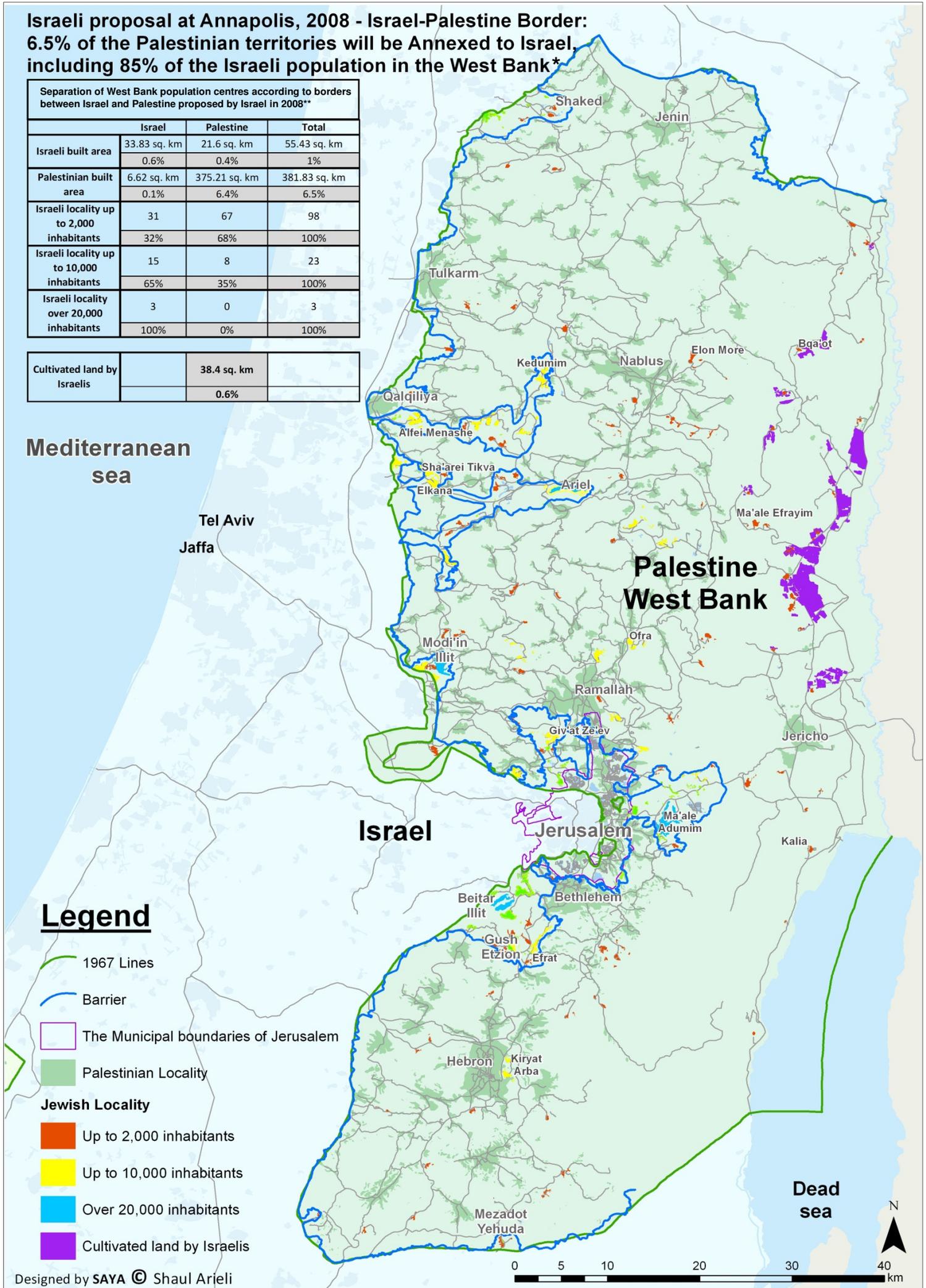
© BICOM 2012 All rights reserved. The opinions expressed in this report are those of the author and not necessarily those of BICOM.

**Israeli proposal at Annapolis, 2008 - Israel-Palestine Border:
6.5% of the Palestinian territories will be Annexed to Israel,
including 85% of the Israeli population in the West Bank***

Separation of West Bank population centres according to borders between Israel and Palestine proposed by Israel in 2008**

	Israel	Palestine	Total
Israeli built area	33.83 sq. km	21.6 sq. km	55.43 sq. km
	0.6%	0.4%	1%
Palestinian built area	6.62 sq. km	375.21 sq. km	381.83 sq. km
	0.1%	6.4%	6.5%
Israeli locality up to 2,000 inhabitants	31	67	98
	32%	68%	100%
Israeli locality up to 10,000 inhabitants	15	8	23
	65%	35%	100%
Israeli locality over 20,000 inhabitants	3	0	3
	100%	0%	100%

Cultivated land by Israelis		38.4 sq. km	
		0.6%	



Mediterranean sea

Tel Aviv
Jaffa

Palestine
West Bank

Israel

Jerusalem

Dead sea

Legend

- 1967 Lines
- Barrier
- The Municipal boundaries of Jerusalem
- Palestinian Locality
- Jewish Locality**
- Up to 2,000 inhabitants
- Up to 10,000 inhabitants
- Over 20,000 inhabitants
- Cultivated land by Israelis

Designed by SAYA © Shaul Arieli

0 5 10 20 30 40 km

*This map does not show the areas offered by Israel to the Palestinians in exchange
** Data does not include Jerusalem

ABOUT BICOM

BICOM, the Britain Israel Communications & Research Centre, is an independent British organisation dedicated to creating a more supportive environment for Israel in Britain.

We do this by trying to create a more complete understanding of Israel and its situation. We believe in the right of the State of Israel to live in peace and security, just as we believe in the rights of the Palestinians to statehood.

We support a close relationship between Britain and Israel, based on shared values and interests. BICOM pursues its objectives through a range of activities:

- Providing daily, expert news summary and analysis of events in Israel and the region through our online publications.
- Taking British journalists and opinion formers to Israel and the Palestinian territories to learn about the issues first-hand.
- Bringing analysts, journalists and politicians from the region to Britain, to share their insights with their British counterparts.
- Promoting a balanced discourse about Israel in the British media by creating opportunities for a wide range of voices to be heard.
- Organising events and seminars in the UK aimed at deepening the discussion about Israel in Britain.
- Engaging in dialogue with British opinion formers and the media on issues of importance to Israel and the Britain-Israel relationship.

MORE RECENT BICOM EXPERT VIEW PAPERS ON THE PEACE PROCESS

- Ambassador Alan Baker: The Palestinians Must Negotiate – July 2012
- Professor Asher Susser: Israel Should Withdraw Unilaterally – July 2012
- Dr. Gershon Baskin: A Deal is Possible, Both Leaders Must Decide – July 2012
- Brig. Gen. (ret) Michael Herzog: Making Peace After the Arab Spring – August 2011

Tel +44 (0)20 7636 5500
Email info@bicom.org.uk
Web www.bicom.org.uk

Cover Photo: View of the Jewish settlement of Maale Adumim. (Mahmoud illean /Demotix/Press Association Images)