

# Re-visiting the ‘Green Line’ 2022: The Legacy of a Non-existing Border on Israeli Maps

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*This paper seeks to place the Green Line boundary superimposed on the landscape of Palestine in 1949 as an Armistice Line within the context of a broader discussion, combining Israel’s alleged special needs for ‘security’ with that of its colonial activities manifested in land grab beyond its sovereign space, a national territory created in the wake of an-Nakba War of 1948. The Separation Wall (SW) erected by Israel to the east of the Green Line from 2002 overlaps with the Green Line by only some 15%. The remaining length of 85% of the SW penetrates deep inside the West Bank up to a distance of 22 km. Arguably Israel’s aim for constructing this Wall, along with the promulgation of the restrictive gate-system regulations for local Palestinians and their movement, is meant to dispossess Palestinian landowners and increase its continuous state territory further to the east. The then US President’s Deal of the Century (DoC) proposal in January 2020 clashes with international law and relevant UN resolutions pertaining to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. However, it was warmly welcomed by the right-wing government at the time.*

*Key words: Green Line, Separation Wall, Land grab from Palestinians, West Bank.*

## Introduction

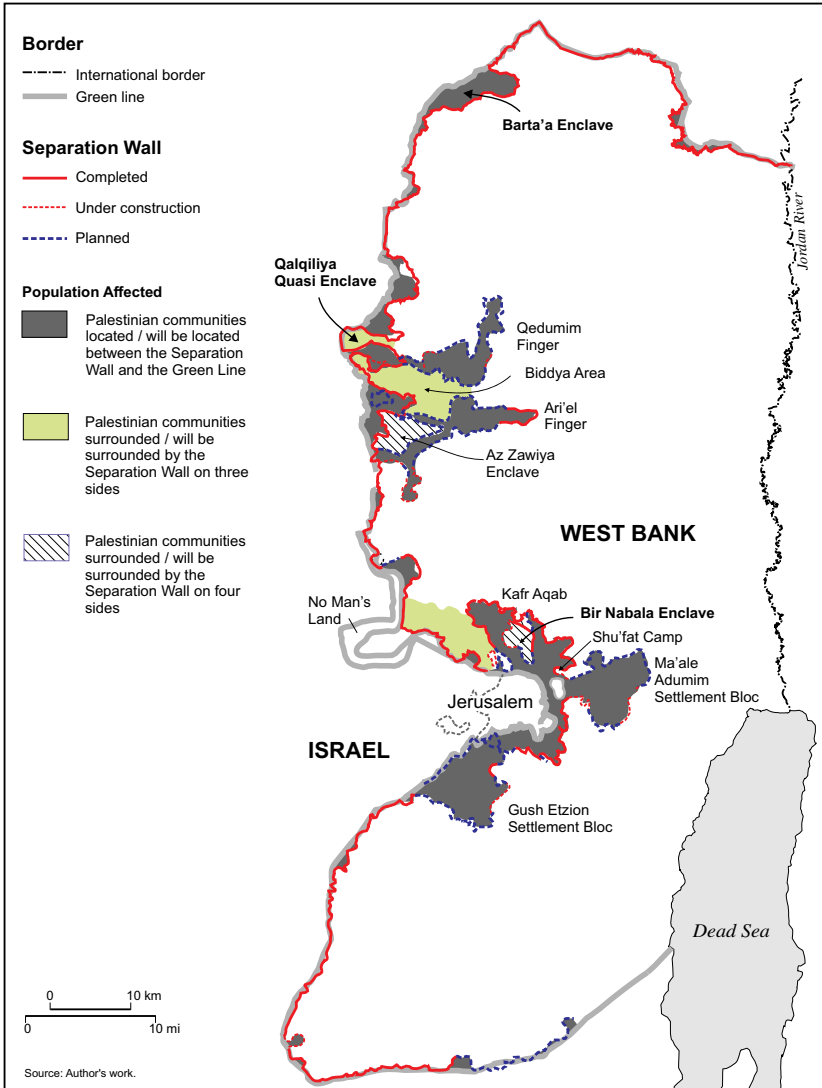
The territorial struggles are equally struggles of “ideas, representations, rhetoric, and images” (Said 1988, 1). Within the span of the past decade since 2010, dramatic spatial geopolitical changes have increasingly evolved and continue to evolve in the border areas between Israel and the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, conquered by Israel in the June 1967 War. Amongst these changes are the implications that following from US President Trump’s 2020 “Deal of the Century” (DoC), by which Israel’s eastern border was designated in effect as the Jordan River (White House 2020, 3; Falah 2021). This unilateral political decision by the White House at the time, which also entailed allocation of substantial areas of Palestinian land in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to be added to Israel’s sovereign space (Israel’s pre-June 1967 border), can be seen as a turning point in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, however it may be applied in the uncertain future or perhaps under another incumbent US president in the years to come. Since the state’s creation by force in 1948, the Israeli political class has refrained from establishing its eastern boundary line. The opportunity presented itself on 28 January 2020 when

the DoC recognized Israel's desire (or at least former PM Netanyahu's desire) of annexation of the Jordan Valley area – located west of the River Jordan – opening wide the door to declaring the Jordan River in effect to be its eastern border. A note of explanation is in order. The DoC seemingly was serving in 2020 to help Israel to come closer to fulfillment of a long-cherished Zionist-nationalist territorial dream. Fulfillment means in the Israeli-Zionist imaginary to have the territory of the modern nation-state of Israel overlapping with the territory of historic Palestine of pre-1948 and with the ethos of the conquest of Canaan memorialized as a mythologem in the Biblical Book of Joshua. The 1948 Israeli-Palestinian War of an-Nakba led to the birth of an Israeli polity on 78% of the territory of historic Palestine (Falah 1996). It should be noted that actual Jewish land possession by settlers through land purchase over time on the eve of this 1948 war did not exceed 6.8 percent (Falah 1991). That is to say: the birth of Israel as a nation-state and its territorial concept in Palestine was not completed by the 1948 War and its armistice. Nor was it completed by the 1967 War that resulted in the occupation of the remaining 22% of the territory of historic Palestine. That 22% of territory comprises the West Bank and Gaza Strip – a territory that is considered by the International Community in its preponderant majority, including most UN member countries, as occupied territory that must be returned to the Palestinians at the earliest opportunity (see Figure 1). As Friel and Falk (2007, 5) note: “These [UN Council Resolutions 242 and 338] unanimously backed resolutions call upon Israel to withdraw unconditionally from the Palestinian territory occupied in 1967, giving Israel no legal or moral basis for claiming that it is entitled to keep part of the land or receive something of value from the Palestinians in exchange for its withdrawal.”

The DoC stipulation was at odds with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). It sought to legitimize Israel's illegal settlements in the West Bank (Gregory 2004, 76-106), giving them more living space at the expense of the Palestinians and stretching Israel's eastern border to the Jordan River. This act by the former US President was at the time welcomed by Israeli leaders and is envisioned as fulfillment of a core political dream in the Zionist geographic imaginary. The Abraham Accords have also proceeded to develop in the lingering geopolitical shadow cast by the DoC when first proposed and heralded in early 2020, whatever the developments since then in Israeli and US policy.

Concomitant with defining the limit of Israel's eastern border according to the DoC under Trump's presidency, a new set of questions have been broached in recent discussion as to the functioning aspects of the Green Line (itself a temporary Armistice Line of 1949) and its jurisdictional and legal status. In addition, will the Green Line become a relict boundary as time

FIGURE 1  
Map of the area



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passes? Over two decades ago, Newman (1997, 2) stated that “[t]he green line existed for only 18 years, from 1949 to 1967, and it has not existed for nearly 30 years. Yet the imprint of the green line on our mental image of the map of the region remains strong.” A satisfactory answer for the persistence of the image of the Green Line referred to by Newman – although the Green Line has been removed from Israeli books and maps since 1967 – may be found in Agnew’s (2008, 182) assertion that “[t]he perpetual instability of the

border is precisely what gives it such symbolic power in the mind's eye of the nationalists who favor/challenge it.”

I wish to suggest that the 1949 Armistice Line/Green Line will continue to function as a key focus in the mindset and consciousness of Israelis and Palestinians – no matter what Israel does or does not in future do. In fact it currently functions de facto as a boundary of the state proper despite its being based on ethnic cleavage. Israeli citizens cross it freely – although Palestinians residing in the West Bank or Gaza Strip cannot cross unless they obtain permission in advance. Lest we forget: this is a line that was drawn on maps to delineate an end to hostilities between adversaries in the 1948 war, a line of armistice (Abu-Sitta 2010,91). But eventually it came to be treated by Israel prior to 1967 as an eastern frontier of settlement as well as a border of the new Israeli state.

The purpose of this paper is to promote a better understanding regarding the colonizing nature of Israeli spatial expansion and its implications for the everyday life of the Palestinians residing in close proximity to the Green Line and beyond in the context of the geopolitical changes that have occurred over the last decade (see Figure 1).

The following section of the paper provides a brief conceptual framework and endeavors to shed light on the “security” discourse that framed the DoC text. That discourse sought to justify former President Trump’s acceptance at face value of all of Israel’s claims for keeping the status quo of Jewish settlement expansion in the West Bank and leaving the Gaza Strip as an open-air prison under prolonged siege by Israel. The paper then examines the Separation Wall (SW) that has been under continuous construction since 2002 as a high barrier for local Palestinians wishing to enter Israel or reach their own land west of the Wall. The paper ends with a conclusion that reflects on the (dis)functioning of the Green Line in the future.

### **The Geopolitical Discourse of “Security” in the Israeli Context**

Almost any informed reader knowledgeable about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and watches Israeli daily news or reads between the lines of messages and even the full lines of former PM Netanyahu’s tweets will be well aware of the notion of a country clearly haunted by some sort of military discourse. There are few voices in Israel that would challenge issues related to the ‘security issues’ of the country.

It is fruitful here to look in greater depth at ‘discourse as a tool and weapon,’ and how it evolves over time. For Agnew and Corbridge (1995, 47), “discourse is equivalent to a theory about how the world works, assumed implicitly in practice by a politician, writer, academic or ‘ordinary person.’” Hajer (1997, 44) defines discourse as “a specific ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorisations that are produced, reproduced and transformed in a particular set of practices and through which meaning

is given to physical and social realities.” Hajer (1997, 60) also notes that once these ideas collide and align themselves along within a common story-line, a form of “discursive hegemony” results. According to Elizabeth A. Eldredge (2007, 5) “[d]iscourses, the collective body of statements about given subjects, reflect, convey, and support the diffusion of ideologies, whether in the service of domination or in that of resistance”.

Agnew and Corbridge (1995,48-49) point out four points central to geopolitical discourse. First, “geopolitical discourse is not simply the identification of specific geographical influences upon a particular foreign policy situation. To identify and name a place is to trigger a series of narratives, subjects and understanding. For example, to designate an area as ‘Islamic’ or ‘Western’ is not only to name it, but also to brand it in terms of its politics and the type of foreign policy its ‘nature’ demands” (Agnew and Corbridge (1995, 48). Said’s (1978) concept of ‘Orientalism’ dealt in a critical way with the West’s reductionism of Arab culture, Islam to certain negative stereotypes. Such stereotypes are common among colonizing movements and ideologies, and Zionism has been infected with such toxic distortions since its genesis. Second, “geopolitical discourse involves practical reasoning... [that] relies on common-sense narratives and distinctions rather than formal models” (Agnew and Corbridge 1995, 48). For example, “defining areas based on binary oppositions such as “modern or backward, Western or non-Western, civilized or barbarian, and democratic or despotic...” (Agnew and Corbridge 1995, 48). Such binaries infest the popular mindset in many countries, a general xenophobia directed toward race, ethnic origin, and religion. Israel prides itself on being the only ‘real democracy’ in the Middle East. And in general promotes an ‘us’ vs. ‘them’ binary thinking that tends to generalize a range of negativities relating to Palestinians. Such xenophobic attitudes are perhaps endemic in a self-proclaimed ‘ethnocracy’ (Yiftachel 2006; Ghanem and Khatib 2017) such as Israel has become. Third, “the geographical knowledge displayed in geopolitical discourse is usually of a reductive nature. Information about places is filtered and suppressed in order to fit into a priori geopolitical categories. ... This is how places and their inhabitants can become ‘security commodities,’ readily subject to invasion, control or bombing” (Agnew and Corbridge (1995, 48-49). Israel from its foundation was constructed to view itself as under constant threat, a kind of “state of exception” as the everyday norm. The extreme version of this is Israel’s unique role as the sole Middle East nuclear country, justified due to its existence as supposedly threatened with eradication as a state. Many Israelis know very little about the 20 percent of Israel’s Arab population that is Palestinian, their communities, towns. Relatively few Israeli Jews have solid social contacts of friendship in such communities, few Israeli schoolchildren have any idea

of the life of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel, nor do their textbooks provide them with much accurate information (Peled-Elhanan 2012). That ignorance appears to be ‘common-sensical’ in the above sense of the second point.

Fourth, “not all political élites have equal influence over how global political-economy space is represented... Of course, hegemonic representations do not go unchallenged but even challenges often must conform to the ‘terms of debate’ laid down by the dominant discourse in order to be intelligible or readily understood” (Agnew and Corbridge (1995, 49). Non-Zionist and Zionism-critical discourse is perceived in Israel as beyond the ‘terms of debate’ about the nature of the state, its policies of occupation, its history of ethnic cleansing of the indigenous population (Pappé 2011). Direct critique of the Israeli Army is also deemed by most segments of the political class and broader population as beyond the ‘pale’ of permissible critique (Lentin 2017, 2). Significantly, in Israel and in many Western countries, incisive critique of Israel is labeled as anti-Semitic and therefore ‘racist.’ That is a commonplace in Great Britain within the Jewish community leadership at this point, attacking key figures in the Labour Party who support justice for the Palestinians as being anti-Semites, and attacking important filmmakers, for example Ken Loach (see Counterfire 2020).

Israel’s discourse over “security needs” is integrally connected with the Holocaust. The Holocaust gave Israel a shield for not being criticized for its colonial activities and the reaction of Palestinians toward the theft of their turf beneath their feet. In fact, Israel finds it very important to continue foregrounding this discourse in particular among the US population and Israel benefits from projecting itself as surrounded by potential enemies; the upshot is several billion in US financial aid annually and the readiness among many US politicians to have the US shield Israel with a veto at the UN Security Council.

While the post-state discourse of “security” was invented to justify physical existence of the state on what is territory acquired by force (Falah 1996), the pre-state discourse stressing “emptiness” (Leshem 2013). It was aimed at creating a justification for the establishment of a state. Tikva Honing-Pernass (2011, 20) has captured this well by saying “[t]he early slogan “a land without a people for a people without land” solicited a collective trust in just cause for the Jewish State.”

What is clear is that the kind of Zionist discourse prevalent before the creation of Israel in 1948 differed from that foregrounded by the Israeli political class after the 1948 war and increasingly after June 1967. In particular, the Israeli rhetoric expounded around the slogans of “Israeli security needs,” Israel’s need to defend “itself by itself” and “Israel’s knows better than others her needs,” etc. served to create a political discourse in order to justify Israel’s continuous expansion, encroaching

into Palestinian space and accumulating ever more Palestinian land whenever and wherever an opportunity presented itself, in the name of “security.” Taylor (1994) views the state as container, a territorialized vessel for wealth and social goods, applicable to the present case of Israel as “security-obsessed.” Meshed with that is discourse about the adversarial ‘Other’ who threatens the state, represented in a negative light in textbooks, the media and public discourse (Peled-Elhanan 2012; Mahamid 2017). “Indeed Israel is awash with dehumanizing racial classifications including of Palestinian citizens, Palestinian occupied and besieged subjects and diasporic Palestinians, many of whom have been living in refugee camps since the 1948 Nakba” (Lentin 2017, 2).

### **Why Does Israel Need an 8-Meter-High Wall around the West Bank?**

If Israel wanted a Wall [...], it could construct it on its territory and raise it to 80 meters rather than 8 meters if it wished (cited in Müller 2004, 9).

These are the exact words in a statement by Dr. Nasser Al-Kidwa, Ambassador and Head of Palestine Delegation to the oral proceedings of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on 23 February 2004. The ICJ concluded its deliberation with the following ruling decision:

Israel [must] stop and reverse the construction of the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, which is in departure of the Armistice Line of 1949 and is in contradiction to relevant provisions of international law (para. 1) (International Court of Justice 2004, 147).

In my opinion, this is a “Wall of exception” (SW, herein) that begs a broader geopolitical perspective to place it in convincing and grounded perspective. The Wall was planned and constructed to the east of the Green Line for 85% of its course in order to achieve both overt and covert aims in favor of Israel (see Figure 1). Henk van Houtun’s (2005) observation as to how the study of borders has shifted in emphasis is applicable to our case study. “I would argue that the philosophy and practices of b/ordering and othering, of fixing of territorial (id)entities, of purification of access as well as of scale transgressions, need not be restricted to the entity of states alone, but are valuable for theorizing and studying in their own right” (Van Houtun 2005, 674). Paasi’s (1988) early recognition that border lines are not simply lines in maps but rather institutions that govern by their internal rules is consistent with Van Houtun’s observation. Similarly, Newman (2003, 14) postulates that “[b]order institutions govern the extent of inclusion and exclusion, the degree of permeability, the laws governing trans-boundary movement—exit from one side of the border and entry into the other side.”

Significantly, the above testimony by a representative of the Palestinian Authority (Dr. Nasser Al-Kidwa) in ICJ stating that Israel should have followed the Green Line's demarcation is grounded on the stipulation of the Oslo Accord that Israel must comply with relevant UN resolutions – and that the Green Line should be respected by Israel for the envisioned border between Israel and the new State of Palestine.

In his report, Andreas Müller (2004, 7) argues that even if the SW were to rigorously follow the Green Line it would not be just and fair for the Palestinians: it would only cement and solidify the Occupation. First and foremost, it would deprive Palestinian workers of access to work in Israel, on which many West Bank Palestinians depend, a situation highlighted in dismayed ways for many such workers in March 2020 by the situation of the virus-induced lockdown. He concludes: “Therefore, the ... Wall project must be an unequivocal rejection of a physical barrier and a call for the end of occupation and full equality and justice for all those living between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River” (Müller 2004,7).

As alluded to above, “this is a Wall of exception” in essence, given the scope of its physical destruction inside the landscape of Palestine and the territorial injustice that has been inflicted on local Palestinians inhabitants by its erection. Unlike any other walls of separation which the name would imply, it does not simply separate; nor does it treat all on both sides equally. Its structural formula is one of apartheid cast in concrete. Jews can cross back-and-forth without even needing to think or feel its physical existence as a barrier. For the Palestinians, the SW is prison-like: it locks them in and out. They are not permitted to cross it without prior Israeli official permission.

Ostensibly, it appears as if it designed to separate between territorial units of two different nations. This is only true in certain sections of the SW where the Wall's route meanders, engineered toward ethnically homogenizing spaces and places, and in the process separating Palestinian localities from their immediate environs, guided by an aim to box them in within a welter of enclaves or semi-enclaves.

Israelis and their allies employ euphemistic discourse, preferring moderate terminology such as “barrier,” “fencing” “security barrier” or just plain “wall” for obvious reasons, geared to conceal its racial-ethnic discrimination against Palestinians. Israel's stance insisting this wall came about for security reasons has been widely accepted in the West, the US in particular. This also assists Israel in continuing to defy international objections, ICJ ruling, and UN resolutions. Israel's Supreme Court issues decisions based on the state's long litany of “security considerations,” and in addition the government's claim that the Wall is meant to be a ‘temporary’ measure. ‘States of exception’ and their structures are often conve-



niently termed 'temporary' no matter how permanent their architecture. This footnote of 'temporality' has been well-received in Western political circles and in Israel itself. On small-scale maps, the Wall appears as if overlapping with the Green Line. In reality only 15 percent of it is directly contiguous with the Green Line, and 85 percent of its route snakes into West Bank territory. Once completed, the SW, according to a July 2004 UN report, will cover approximately 157 800 acres – or about 11.5 percent – of West Bank land (excluding East Jerusalem). The scope of this paper limits in-depth and lengthy discussion of details pertaining to the negative impact of the SW on the Palestinians in the West Bank and on those living in proximity to the Green Line. Its destructive impact on Palestinian lives is a matter of empirical record (Müller 2004; Zeitoun 2008; Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem (ARIJ) 2015; Saddiki 2017; B'Tselem 2017). I suffice here to note a summary from a report based upon official Israeli Government projections:

The Wall's construction will leave some 640,000 dunums (158,000 acres) or 11.5 % of the West Bank (excluding East Jerusalem) in closed areas between the main barrier and the Green Line – 490,000 dunums (120,000 acres) – or in enclaves completely surrounded by the Wall– 150,000 dunums (38,000 acres). Including East Jerusalem, approximately 770,000 dunums (190,000 acres) or 13.1 % of the entire West Bank will lie between the Wall and the Green Line. These figures, based upon official Israeli Government projections, suffice to give an idea of the huge and far-reaching effects which emanate from the construction of the West Bank Wall, not even taking into account the already envisaged, although currently postponed, project of a Jordan Valley Wall which would further aggravate the situation (cited in Müller 2004, 21-22).

Consider the following scope of land grab involved due to the placement of 13.1% of the West Bank area of 5 800 km<sup>2</sup> between the Green Line and the SW. This percentage amounts to 759.8 km<sup>2</sup>, which is far larger than the Gaza Strip's area of 365 km<sup>2</sup>. Put differently, this is a chunk of territory equal to 2.89% of historic Palestine (26 323 km<sup>2</sup>). In adding this area to Israel's 78% of sovereign territory obtained at the time of its establishment in the wake of the 1948 War, we reach a continuous area of 80.89% of historic Palestine under Israeli sovereignty and control, stretching from the SW to the Mediterranean Sea. As of now, Israel has not formally annexed this area into its sovereign territory. The stipulations of the DoC give it a clear green light to place this area, along with much larger areas in the heart of West Bank and Jordan Valley, under Israel's sovereign territory. In fact, the DoC Plan, if fully materialized, will provide Israel with 88-90% sovereign living space carved out of historic Palestine.

What will be the fate of the SW that Israel claims is 'temporary' in nature? Page 14 of the DoC gives a partial answer. "The security barrier will be

realigned to match the new border. New, modern and efficient border crossings will be constructed” (White House 2020, 14). This stipulation is an official stamp of approval by the White House which serves to convert the alleged claim that the SW is a temporary measure into one that will become permanent. There is no guarantee that the three words “will be realigned” will reduce the 13.1% of the West Bank area between the SW and the Green Line in favor of the Palestinians. Rather, the opposite option will be more likely given the greed for territory of the Israel’s-led right-wing government. Moreover, significant is that the newly ‘realigned’ SW with modern gates, equipped with state-of-the-art, cutting-edge surveillance capacity, will likely not put an end to Israel’s long-standing aim of acquiring whatever land remains in Palestinian possession. A report in the daily *Haaretz* published in March 2018 is entitled “15 Years of Separation: The Palestinians Cut Off from Jerusalem by the Wall” (Ahitov 2018). The subtitle of this report summarizes its content focus: “Palestinians see it as Israel’s attempt to expel them from Jerusalem; Israelis see it as protection from terrorism ...”

Significantly, this report quotes an Israeli scholar whose statement resonates with a partial truth regarding the basic intentions of the SW:

Ir Amim’s executive director, Yudith Oppenheimer, also in the car, adds that the wall in Jerusalem “doesn’t just separate Israelis from Palestinians, it separates East Jerusalem from the West Bank. Its construction stemmed from security reasons, but the route that was chosen was exploited in order to fulfill Israeli political, demographic and territorial ambitions (Ahitov 2018).

I would question the veracity of the claim that the SW “stemmed from security reasons” – a kind of plausible discourse. I think greater weight should be given to what Ms. Oppenheimer terms “territorial ambitions,” an ideologically-driven objective, lending support to the Palestinian counter-argument. And in the case of Jerusalem, the reasons are both “demographic” and “territorial ambitions.” For Palestinians who are the impacted party (the victims), the SW is a bold-faced theft of Palestinian land that isolates Palestinian communities, boxing them into “Bantustans, ghettos, and military zones” (Palestinian Grassroots Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign, 2009).

Let me add: had Palestinians in the West Bank been so infected by a desire to blow themselves up and inflict sustained violence on Jewish Israelis, they would be doing that specifically to those Jewish settlers nearby who are living east of the SW in their numerous ‘colonies.’ Consider the following: according to a UN OCHA Report, dated 8 July 2004, 62% of Israeli settlers in the West Bank live in 56 Israeli settlements (containing approximately 140,200 persons) located in the area between the SW and the Green Line (United Nations, 2004). That is to say: 38% of Jews are elsewhere in the West Bank and theoretically could be targeted

for acts of violence by Palestinians at any time. In addition, another report of same UN agency (OCHA), dated September 2017, indicates that only 65% (460 km) of the planned SW had been completed, while another 53 km (about 7.5%) was under construction, and construction has yet to be started on some 200 km (B'Tselem, 2017). That in effect alludes to another 'space' purportedly 'tactically useful' for Palestinians in the West Bank, who doubtless know very well the hidden corners in the topography of the uncompleted SW: namely to pierce the Green Line, 'infiltrate' and reach any town in Israel if they so choose to engage in violent attacks on Jewish Israelis. As Müller (2004, 7) claims "... the security rationale of the Wall has been widely challenged, even within Israel's own security and military establishment who claim that the winding and lengthy route of the current Wall is practically indefensible." It appears only logical that the intention is covert, aimed at achieving undeclared 'national' ends, no matter how much the final financial cost. Various authors have been puzzled about the exorbitant cost of the SW, speculating regarding different sums invested in this huge project. It ranges from 2.1 to 3.2 billion US\$ (Saddiki, 2017).

Other concrete questions should also be asked. Why have those who designed and engineered this Wall as a physical object chosen a length that is double the length of the nearby Green Line (315 km or 220 miles)? Why in certain sections of the Wall have designers stipulated the need for an area ca. 30 to 150 meters in width? (Parry 2003). If it is not for expropriating additional Palestinian land added to that of the state, then what else is such a land grab for? "The Wall project...leaves a 'footprint' of 28,000 dunums (7,000 acres) of land (or 0.5 % of the whole West Bank surface) confiscated for the Wall's construction. In the Jerusalem area alone, the Israeli Government has seized over 2,700 dunums (670 acres) of Palestinian land for construction; nearly all of it either privately owned by Palestinians or belonging to churches or Palestinian villages" (Müller 2004, 19-20).

In conclusion, framing these questions within Taylor's (1994) view of the state as a "container of wealth," would aid neutral observers in better contextualizing the long-standing operative ideology (cloaked in an invented 'security' discourse) which had been the dream of the Israeli Zionist project. Territorially, that dream is manifested here materially in 'facts on the ground,' physically extending the length and breadth of the SW in order to expropriate Palestinian land. No matter what the financial cost, amounting to billions of US dollars, if the end result is to "secure" 13.1 % of the West Bank territory as a kind of "reserve asset" to be expropriated and added to its sovereign space. In fact, "security" takes on a new semantic feature here, the "securing" qua asset of additional sovereign territorial space. The DoC likely presented itself and was perceived by

Israeli PM Netanyahu at that juncture as a truly golden opportunity. Indeed, it would be conceivable to conceptualize Israel's territorial gain from erecting the Separation Wall within Taylor's (1994) views of the state as a "container of wealth and power". In this vein, even more conceivable is to rethink Agnew and Corbridge's (1995, 48-49) statement noted above in defining geopolitical discourse by their concept of "... how places and their inhabitants can become 'security commodities,' readily subject to invasion, control or bombing." This is precisely how successive Israeli governments and their agencies have targeted 13.1% territory of the West Bank located between the SW and the Green Line – and placed its Palestinian inhabitants within a vortex of extended uncertainty in respect to maintaining possession of their properties and homes.

### **The Spatial Bureaucracies of the Separation Wall**

If some Palestinians were at all able to escape governmental regulations under regimes of occupation and cantonization, the omnipresent wall and all the regulations surrounding its maintenance as a functioning technology of government colonize every possible nexus of body and space. Not leaving anything to chance, the wall carves space according to a calculated policy of annexation and dispossession. Whatever the wall does not achieve in its spatial-material form, it does through the unwieldy regulatory practices of permits, registrations, rules, norms, and codes (Alatout 2009, 960).

The above quote conveys a true and concrete description of the nature of the SW and its intended multi-functioning control. Geographers (from both sides of the Atlantic) have conducted field research in Palestinian localities in West Bank and provide a valuable ethnographic account of the impact of border crossing, and specifically of the harsh impact of the SW on Palestinians and their localities (Lina Jamoul 2004; Joana Long 2006; Nadia L. Abu Zahra 2007; Samer Alatout 2009; Christopher Harker 2010; Gary Fields 2016).

This section examines Israeli authorities' bureaucracies specifically designed and implemented over Palestinians who are residing along the eastern side of the 1949 Armistice Line/ Green Line with a view to expropriating as much land as possible from them, depriving them of the full benefit from their outdoor resources, disrupting their mobility to work, take care of and cultivate their land, tend to their domestic animals, to go to schools, health centers and hospitals, and engage in various everyday activities in normal social life. Arguably, the SW has upended their life due to a complex reticulation of restrictive military stipulations. In tandem with the erection of the SW, a gate system of control was established. Israeli authorities developed a sophisticated surveillance regime and imposed numerous new regulations. These regulations are subject to

change; they are enforced and implemented by state military personnel in uniform and guided by Zionist ideology, troops armed and ready to shoot whoever fails to obey the regulations at the gate.

According to B'Tselem (2017):

Israel did install 84 gates in the completed sections of the barrier to theoretically enable the owner's access to their lands. In practice, however, the gates obstruct access to the land and are largely there for the sake of appearances, making a show of enabling life to go on undisturbed as before. According to OCHA figures for 2016, only nine of these gates were opened daily; ten were opened only a few days a week and during the olive harvest season; and 65 gates were only opened for the olive harvest.

It should be noted that the SW has split the Palestinian localities situated along the east of the Green Line into two different groups which must cope with the imposed regulations at the gate in slightly different ways, but the negative consequences are the same. Significantly, one group's localities lie between the SW and the Green Line; a second group lives in localities beyond the SW; however, their lands, water resources and other economic facilities remain inside the area between the SW and the Green Line. The former area has been designated by the Israeli government as a "seam zone" and declared a "closed zone." According to the Israeli military Declaration of Closing an Area No. S/20/03 issued on 2 October 2003, "no person will enter the seam area and no one will remain there." This order, however, does not apply to Israelis citizens, Jews and non-Jews (Saddiki 2017; B'Tselem 2017). Palestinian residents who are in this area prior to erecting the SW have overnight become strangers in their own homes by dint of this military order. They are allowed to remain in their homes and on their lands only if they possess a written permit authorizing permanent residence. Their stay in their homes is contingent on obtaining a permit from the relevant Israeli authority. Nearly all Palestinians over the age of 16 must obtain "permanent residency permits" in order to continue living in the homes that their families have lived in for generations. Using data from B'Tselem, Alayout (2009, 958) gives the number of 17 communities encompassing 27520 persons living in the "seam zone" in September 2008. B'Tselem's own figures from November 2017 are ca. 2.5 times less: "There are some 11,000 Palestinians living in 32 communities that are now trapped between the Separation Barrier and the Green Line" (B'Tselem 2017).

B'Tselem figures of November 2017 do not include Palestinians living in areas annexed to the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem. Alayout (2009, 958) cites figures for communities for East Jerusalem: 21 communities encompassing 222 500 individual Palestinians.

The second group which is directly impacted by the SW are those who

were cut off from their land and who are located outside the SW to the east (i.e., outside the seam zone). Alatout (2009, 958) defines them as “Communities east of the barrier that are completely or partially surrounded.” According to him, they comprise 54 communities with 247 800 persons. These particular communities are probably the most strongly impacted by experiencing the loss of their land since the creation of the Green Line in 1949. First, they lost a substantial portion of their lands at the time of Israel’s creation due to the establishing of the Green Line itself that cut right through their land (loss of land to Israel along the Green Line has been accurately documented and mapped by Abu Sitta (2010). Traditionally and historically, Palestinian villagers built their homes in agglomerated hamlets centuries ago in the rocky and moderate hills at points in the topography where the coastal plains meet the foot of the mountains. They did this in order to preserve each available inch of arable land suitable for cultivation and food production. The second chapter in the loss of their land came after the June 1967 War, due to expropriation of land in order to construct Israeli colonies between their localities along the eastern side of the Green Line. With the erecting of the SW in 2002 and the following years, a third round in the chronicle of land grab targeted their villages: this was to expropriate land for the actual building of the SW (which varies in its actual width). The fourth round that entails potential further land loss for this group is ongoing; it has been operative since 2002. The introduction of the gate system and its regimen of regulations is instrumental in that extended process of loss. I term this round in expropriation “loss of land by default.” Since the policy forces farmers to be physically absent from their lands for a substantial portion of the year, coupled with a policy of denying access to the land by the owner for development, protection or any other purpose, it will lead inexorably to a devastating situation for these families in terms of the economy and their attachment to their land. To access their land, farmers must obtain a special permit from the Israeli authorities, a requirement which also applies to family members and agricultural workers. Decisions for such access are arbitrary, non-transparent and can be denied without giving any reason whatsoever by the Israeli authorities. The fact that the owner has title to his/her land in the seam zone does not guarantee obtaining permission for access. Alatout (2009) describes this procedure noting: “...granting Palestinians permits to travel, across the wall in particular, depends on individual and community biographies.” In other words, a covert criterion of obtaining a permit selection is based on the discriminatory binary in the Israeli security lexicon of “good Palestinian vs. bad Palestinian.” Significantly, the Israeli authorities, as the occupying power over the West Bank and Gaza Strip since 1967, have in their databank files personal data on each Palestinian individual

resident in these territories. Israel issues them an ID card (green in color to be distinguished from standard Israeli citizen IDs which are blue).

The UN Office for Coordination of Human Affairs (OCHA) in Occupied Palestinian Territory posted on a report on 28 February 2020 entitled “Record yield reported from 2019 olive harvest.” (United Nations 2020). This report contains vital data on the stipulations of the permit system governing Palestinians residing outside the SW but who own land inside the “seam zone.” These stipulations establish certain times throughout the year when Palestinians are permitted to cross through the gate to their land and how long they are allowed to stay there. The stipulations also set down the opening time of the gates and lists the specific gates they are allowed to cross at. The number of days accorded farmers depends on the type of crops they are cultivating. Significantly, this report shows that as time passes fewer permits are being issued to Palestinians. The report states: “Recent years have witnessed a significant decline in the

allocation of Barrier permits... the approval rate for permits for landowners fell from 76 per cent of applications in 2014 to 28 per cent in 2018 (up to 25 November). Permits issued to agricultural workers declined from 70 per cent to 50 per cent of applications in the same period” (UN, OCHA 2020)

The report has a sub-section that describes how in September 2019 the Israeli authorities introduced a new set of regulations to limit access by Palestinians to their land. Amongst these regulations are the following: “... the new regulations state that the purpose is to enable agricultural cultivation according to agricultural need, based on the size of the plot and the type of crops, while preserving a connection to the land.” This implies that from now on, Palestinian landowners, their family members and agricultural workers, will be able to visit their land solely for purposes of cultivation. Furthermore, “[a]pplicants must have a minimum land area of 330 square meters per person; this is calculated by dividing the size of each plot by the total number of heirs of the registered owner, regardless of who actually owns or cultivates the land.” In addition, “the new regulations set a limit to the number of days that farmers can access their land a year, based on the size of the plot and the nature of the crop. The limit for farmers with olive groves is set at 40 days a year; 50 days for figs; and 220 days for tomatoes and strawberries.”

What are the implications here? Israel has chosen to change an agrarian system for Palestinian farmers that has persisted for generations. Villagers are being forced to grow crops that require minimum attention and fewer days per year in their care and cultivation. The permit system has an evident darker side anchored in Israeli security aims and policy: it forces into a competition one against the other, in effect vying for

obtaining permits. The prolonged absence of farmers from their lands opens the door to undesirable consequences where others, especially Jewish settlers, may vandalize their property. In the long run, Palestinian steadfastness will be eroded by such a policy and its impact, and some may choose to abandon their land or even sell it in desperation to Jewish settlers. This is probably the underlying political intention pursued by the Israeli authorities in designing such a scheme within the policy regimen of such gate-system permits.

### Conclusion

In the Colonial Present, Derek Gregory (2004, 102) captured the core issue of disagreement between Palestine's President Yasser Arafat and Israel's PM Ehud Barak in a meeting convened by US President Bill Clinton at Camp David in Maryland in July 2000. In Gregory's words:

Israel insisted that the issues to be resolved had their origins in 1967, in its 'Six Day War' that resulted in the occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, whereas the Palestinians argued that the roots lay in 1948, in al-Nakba and the dispossession and dispersal of the Palestinian people (Gregory 2004, 102).

Neither of the two opposing positions above was ever mutually accepted by the two sides or their respective leaders, yet in any case the Green Line to mark the 'armistice' created in the landscape of Palestine in 1949 eventually disappeared from Israeli maps (after 1967). But it is still the only reference point for any possible peaceful resolution between Israelis and Palestinians. It will never be a relict boundary unless the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is resolved peacefully on the basis of one binational-democratic political entity from the River to the Sea. Hence, the Right of Return of more than six million Palestinians currently residing outside Palestine must be respected and duly implemented, not cast aside as it was in the DoC. The DoC itself will doubtless be proven a non-starter given the continuation of Israeli policies of hegemony and territorial exclusiveness tendencies. The Palestinian Right of Return is firmly enshrined UN Security Council Resolution 194(III) of 11 December 1948 as grounded in international law. No Palestinian leader will be able to tamper with this right, sacred in the eyes of every Palestinian in the diaspora who identifies as a Palestinian. As Boling (2001, 1) put it correctly: "individual and collective rights are not mutually exclusive under international law but rather supplementary and complementary; the exercise of one right can never cancel out the exercise of another and should never be viewed as doing so."

This paper has sought to place the Green Line within a broader analysis and combine Israel's security discourse with its hands-on territorial



actions on the ground. Israel's colonial expansion beyond its sovereign territory, especially east of the Green Line has been at odds with international law, relevant UN Resolutions as well as the ICJ ruling concerning the Separation Wall. It also negates its own rhetoric of willing to conclude a peace with Palestinians on the formula of a two-state solution. The erecting of the SW from 2002 on – after almost a decade of negotiations with the Palestinians within the framework of the 1993/1994 Oslo Accord – should not be understood as a result of the failure of the peace talks between Arafat and Barak in July 2000, nor was it prompted by the outbreak of Intifadat Al-Aqsa in September 2000 (Falah 2001). In fact, it was envisioned much earlier, discussed by the Israeli government in 1996 (Müller 2004, 13). Given the scope of land grab that the SW has brought with its construction and expansion – giving Israel control of 13.1% of the total land in the West Bank and 0.5% of West Bank total land required simply to construct the Wall itself – is enough solid evidence to conclude that Israel's fundamental aim is to increase its assets of Palestinian lands by expropriation and control. Added to that core land grab is an additional potential land acquisition scheme envisioned by the gate-system regulations and its regimen, imposed on Palestinians who have been cut off from their land by the Separation Wall. The longer-term aim is to strip those individuals of their land, as described above.

In conclusion, it needs to be recognized that since its creation as a state, Israeli successive governments have never abandoned a fundamental core of Zionist ideological policy that aspires to “place all the lands in the homeland in the hands of the state and Zionist movement” (Granott 1956,140). This is the end goal of successive Israeli governments and they have never deviated from such basic aspirations.

How are these territorial aspirations linked operationally to the Green Line and the SW? Both of these markers on the land – one cartographic, the other in imposing concrete – are defined in this paper as Israeli settlement frontiers, viewed by the Israeli political class as an ‘iron wall’ (Jabotinsky1923) to protect and maintain whatever settlements have been created to date in Palestinian lands, and geared to secure more land and build more settlements in Zionist futurity, concrete “facts on the ground.” At same time, these lines function physically as barriers to exclude the legal owners of the land from fully benefiting from it. Why does Israel pursue this policy? Because the land is already in its hands, plain and simple. There is no imminent pressure to prevent it from doing so. The US administration acts as its resolute lawyer at the UN and in the international arena. Any resistance by the ever vulnerable Palestinian victims is classified as ‘terrorism.’

The justificational basis for such Israeli national policy currently is grounded in the ideological dreams of the Zionist founders in the past,

reproduced and revitalized in the present-day generation of the Israeli political class. Theodor Herzl envisioned a Jewish state in Palestine as “an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism” (cited in Gregory 2004, 79). In 1923 Ze’ev Jabotinsky, the ideological progenitor of today’s Likud Party, published two essays entitled “The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World” and “The Ethics of the Iron Wall” (cited in Saddiki 2007), focused on an image and mythologeme of a “wall of iron” securing the state and society to be established. He noted in “The Ethics of the Iron Wall: “And this state of affairs will continue because it cannot be otherwise, until one day the iron wall will compel the Arabs to come to an arrangement with Zionism once and for all” (Jabotinsky 1923). Finally, in 2020, in a bid for that “arrangement with Zionism once and for all” envisioned by Jabotinsky, the Zionist-American son-in-law of the US President, in drafting the DoC, suggested at that time under President Trump to reinvigorate the Zionist mythologemic ‘past’ – and simultaneously to brush aside and consciously forget the Palestinian past – leaving Israel with everything it has accumulated from Palestinian lands and wealth, within the armature of a consciously engineered disconnect from the long chronicle of dispossession and expropriation of Palestinians over many decades. Some 53 years after the 1967 War and its conquest of territory, the DoC was designed to offer the Palestinians remnants of what is now left of the land so resolutely expropriated since that war’s end. The aim was to piece together a super-fragmented “State of Palestine,” jettisoning the Green Line and creating a topographic land-based archipelago, a veritable labyrinth of islets, a fractionated mesh marked by a maze of tortuous boundaries.

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