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## The Geometry of Occupation

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### 1. Some Principles of Frontier Geography

If borders are nothing but abstract lines denoting the edges of jurisdictions, barriers make them concrete. With the complete mechanization of warfare in the twentieth century, and the relatively symmetrical power maintained across borders between similarly armed national and allied armies, defence was conceptualized no longer as a local practice, such as city walls and country forts, but as immense linear constructions amassed along the edges of the national space. Borders were initially fortified to control the movement of armies, but later used to regulate the movement of goods, labor, information, wealth, and diseases into the body of the state.

The trenches of the First World War were barriers on a continental scale, stretched along hundreds of kilometers. They proved that shovels and barbed wires could become strategic weapons capable of indefinitely paralyzing the movement of two opposing coalition armies. The post-WWI strategic doctrine that relied heavily on the principles of linear defence solidified into three major fortification systems – two were built along the volatile German-French border. The German *West Wall* was designed to hold off the French Army while the Wehrmacht was to occupy territories on the east. Parallel to it from the west was laid the French *Maginot Line*, designed to delay the Wehrmacht's westward *Blitzkrieg* while French reserves are drafted, and lastly the German *Atlantic Wall*, designed to defeat an Allied invasion of the continent along the Atlantic coast. With the increase in the ability of armies for rapid maneuver, concentration of forces, and air-ground integration, these lines were easily by-passed or pierced through. Their surprise collapse turned them into giant archaeological monuments to the absurdity of standing still in battle, and to the belief in eternal territorial control. The last of the fortified lines to have gone the path of a fantasy of eternal defence, and then to collapse, was the Israeli *Bar-Lev Line*, built on the eastern bank of the Suez Canal. The 1973 Arab Israeli War – the last symmetrical battle to be fought between state armies of relatively equal force – saw the collapse of this last fortified line of defence. With the later "peaceful" collapse of the Iron Curtain, and the end of the symmetrical military balance, another political space – the frontier – and another type of military engagement – the low intensity non-symmetrical conflict between regular armies and quasi-military guerrilla organizations in dense civilian environments has gradually staged its return.

The frontier is the antithetical political space to that defined by the fortified lines of borders. Against the geographical symmetry of static places, and the balance across sovereign lines, the frontier is a space of flow – it is a military and political pattern of elastic and shifting geography, a boundless border zone that could never be represented by drawing static lines.

In the following pages some geographical principles – parallels between varieties of historical frontiers – will be briefly outlined. Historical frontiers are different in many respects but the similar patterns they exhibit may help explain the consequences and dangers of the open frontiers of contemporary geopolitics.

Despite the common perception, the frontier did not originate with the expansion of the neo-Europes of America, Australia, or Africa. The margins of the ancient Roman and Chinese Empires, as well as those of the Aztecs and the Inca, were deep, shifting, and little-defined domains of cross-culture interaction and brutal battles with people defined since Roman times as "barbarians." Barbarians were not an amalgamation of primitive warriors, as common language wants us to believe, but often highly organized and cultured, settler, or semi-nomadic nations. Zones of imperial control expanded not only through the conquest, occupation, and annihilation of the "barbarians," but as well through their "acculturation" under a single language, culture, and religion, that is, through the flattening of differences and the melting of their "foreign" cultures into the social and economic pots of empires.<sup>1</sup> But the frontier is never only a single-track process of expansion. It retreats when the strength of the empire declines. In Rome of the fourth and fifth centuries, the by-then "barbarized" imperial army, almost completely manned by mercenaries, started to lose battles to more highly motivated, better organized, largely "Romanized" barbarians.<sup>2</sup> On both sides of

the battle lines were people not very different. In various periods throughout history and indeed still at present some of the (domesticated) colonized collaborate with the forces suppressing their own people.

In both its advance or retreat, frontier zones are at the edges of waves pushing towards (each period's) fantasies of richness and opportunities, or, in modern terms, being pulled by utopian visions of ideological fulfillment whose eccentricity often found no place at the center (think of the occult traditions of Templar knights developed during the Crusades, the Amish in America, and the contemporary mystical rituals, often involving the use of drugs, of some of the "youth of the hills" in today's West Bank outposts<sup>3</sup>).

The pattern of the frontier's geographical expansion is highly irregular. It shifts with changing climate, geology, and technological possibilities: pouring wide across pastoral steppe grasslands in an attempt to grab and fence out large fields; following the narrow and splintering arteries of geological strata; tracing ridges of metal and mineral concentrations above ground in workers camps, towns, and cities; or occupying geographical "islands" above isolated fields of energy resources. Often the pattern of inhabitation across the frontier draws a direct diagram not only of the balance of power between "empire" and "barbarians," but the economical and technological capacity and the social organization of the "empire" itself.

Territorial pockets of control are thus in constant expansion or contraction, temporary lines of engagements and confrontations, marked by local makeshift boundaries and field defences, are not limited to the edges of the imperial space but exist throughout its territorial body, describing the momentary balance of economical efficiency and military might. If sovereign borders are linear and fixed – the frontier is a deep, fragmented and elastic space in which clear distinctions between an "inside" and "outside" of a political system cannot be easily marked. The splintered geography folds inwards from the edge of the territory to empire's very interior. Like in a fractal arrangement, frontier conditions can be found to various degrees, wherever one looks at an empire. The "barbarians" are never organized behind fixed lines, but are already deeply inside. The border is everywhere, around every public and private property and infrastructure, splintered into a variety of local or regional fortification and security apparatuses, that are exemplified in today's road-blocks, check-points, fences, walls, CCTV systems, safety zones, mine fields, and killing zones.

The military geometry of the frontier relies, in all cases, on an elaborate interaction between points and lines. A series of relatively autonomous forts, scattered across the periphery, provides an intricate matrix of control over the whole terrain. Strongholds are often military colonies inhabited by civilianized veteran/soldiers (like Roman legionaries, or medieval knights) who are given land rights in return for fulfilling the task of frontier management and defence. These isolated settler/forts are equipped to suppress small disturbances, and located so as to be able to act as bridgeheads from which larger concentrated action into "barbarian" territory could be assembled. An interwoven and expanding network of communication and transportation lines is laid out to connect between the fortified points themselves and the empire's centers. The lines of communication and transportation are the wedges that open an alien terrain for further colonization, enabling larger populations to migrate and populate the settlement-points. The paths of the communication lines often double up as effective barriers that honeycomb local populations into isolated enclaves of limited habitat.

The use of rivers is indicative of the difference between frontier and border geographies. For states, rivers (the Oder/Neisse between Germany and Poland, the Amur/Heilong Jiang between Russia and China, the Jordan between Israel, the occupied West Bank and the Kingdom of Jordan<sup>4</sup>) are perfect borders marking the edge of territories, while in frontier conditions, rivers such as the Rhine and Danube for the Roman empire, the Chang Jiang for the Chinese empire, or the Mississippi river for the American frontier are but dynamic transportation, communication, and patrol networks running through the body of the terrain, lined from the banks by commercial/military strongholds.

The points and the lines are interdependent. The distribution of settlement-points across the frontier calls for a complex set of lines to connect them, while the safety of movement along the lines depends on the strong-points placed to protect them. As such the frontier resembles a dynamic battlefield played out in slow motion. It regularly shifts from offensive expansion – seeking the temporary occupation of new strategic points and securing the lines of supply to them – to defensive organization designed to protect the territorial gains from counter-offensives.

The forward frontier post (the legionary Roman fortresses, the Chinese steppe-forts, the crusaders' castles, the fortified peripheral settlements of the Conquistadors, or the suburban settlers' outposts on the West Bank) and the communication lines (the paved roads of the Roman empire, the mountain passes of the

crusaders, the railway and the telegraph of the American West, and the bypass highways of the West Bank) serving for occupation defence and economic production, are instruments merging military and civilian architecture.

In his 1893 lecture, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History,"<sup>5</sup> the historian Frederick J. Turner announced the closing of the American frontier – complete interior colonization and domestication of North America coast to coast – and claimed that American democracy would not develop the way it had so far without incorporating into the national character some of the rough and ragged characteristics of frontier individuality and the values of "personal freedom." The frontier was seen as a liberating experience from the stifling European culture and the urbanized east coast. "What the Mediterranean Sea was to the Greeks, breaking the bonds of custom, offering new experiences, calling out new institutions and activities, that, and more, the ever retreating frontier has been to the United States," he claimed.<sup>6</sup> The qualities of liberty and autonomy, as well as those of intolerance to law, order, and all things urbane, were typical of attitudes that developed in isolated frontier forts and settlements. On these characteristics, in a later echo Negri and Hardt claimed that "the open space of the frontier became the conceptual terrain of republican democracy."<sup>7</sup>

There were other frontier myths and characteristics. From the refugees of the seventeenth century religious wars who left Europe to build their utopias in the new world, through to nineteenth-century survivors of plagues, pogroms, and famines, to the twentieth-century survivors of totalitarianism (to the twenty-first-century victims of terror?) – the people of the modern frontiers nourish myths of regeneration and triumph to contrast with histories and narratives of victimization and persecution.<sup>8</sup> Recurring frontier myths tell of the fragile "immigrant" hardened into a "native," transgressing the limit between civilization and the wilderness, combating barbaric forces, gaining his right to settlement in the destruction of local "evil" forces, and finally becoming something of the "natives" just destroyed. Examples for this phenomenon are common and varied: the American pioneer admiration of the very nobility and unspoiled "savageness" of the native American nations he had helped destroy, his wearing of furs and pretences for scouting and camouflage; the common images of the Englishman wearing local costumes turning into a "native" hero; the Israeli outpost settler discontent with and rejection of the suburban culture of his parents and retreating into pastoral cana'aisation that is simultaneously both Arab-inspired and fiercely anti-Arab in sentiment... etc.

The brutality necessary for the pacification and domestication of the frontier cannot be accommodated within the legal frame of the modern state. Frontier wars are not won before the enemy is either annihilated or domesticated to become an imperfect mimicked clone of his colonizer.<sup>9</sup> No truces are permanent and no stable lines can ever be agreed upon across the fragmented geographies, until unconditional victory has been reached.

When criticized for its brutality, an expansionist power may claim it lacked effective mechanisms to enforce its own laws on the periphery of its territory, or claim that brutal and illegal actions carried out by its agents are grave exceptions that do not reflect on the rule; but often enough, it profits, in psychological effect, territorial control and otherwise, from the brutal and illegal actions carried out through "local initiatives" of armed settlers or rough soldiers, without having to own responsibility for their actions. It excuses what effectively is the rule as an exception, and the exception as the rule. It is common enough for governments to create the atmosphere that allows certain crimes to take place. It was therefore sufficient, according to the Israeli Historian Benny Morris,<sup>10</sup> that David Ben Gurion makes his wish for expulsion of the Palestinians felt by IDF officers in 1947-1948, for actions to be carried out full swing. The frontier thus only seems to degenerate into complete lawlessness, but this form of chaos is often promoted and protected from the center. The surrender of authority has its price, however: the political initiative in states that have open frontiers shifts from the center to the periphery. The inhabitants of the frontier can thus exercise strong political leverage over mainland politics.

The perpetuation of violence is a necessary condition for pacifying the frontier. Provocation produces counter-violence and the very justification for the further suspension of law. The imposed martial law largely neglects individual rights and reflects nothing much beyond the present strategic need of an occupier. A legal paradox is thus created: in reaction to "disturbances," states may suspend both international and national laws, act in breach of international convention, without international mandate (holding their "enemies" in artificially created enclaves that enable the military to act outside of the state's own legal framework) – in general, operating in a complete lawless domain, while flagrantly criminalizing all acts of resistance to its own actions.<sup>11</sup> This paradox may paraphrase some of the ideas of Giorgio Agamben.<sup>12</sup> In his European imagination, and following Hanna Arendt, Agamben saw the spaces of legal exception exemplified in the concentration camps of totalitarianism. But frontiers offer a variety of zones of legal exceptions where

crime and murder may be possible. The Native American reservations were sites of genocidal wars in the late nineteenth century; the South African Bantustans were to exclude a whole race from citizenship; the Gaza Strip is a walled-off space where selective death can be administered without legal jurisprudence by military units that compress the legal system (incrimination, arrest, trial, appeal, execution) into split seconds.<sup>13</sup>

Excessive violence is the rule, brutality exceeds the limits acceptable at the center, crimes are often unrecorded, soldiers and settlers kill without legal jurisprudence. As the civilian and military domains get blurred, frontier violence is never confined to organized armies or to guerrilla fighters. The struggle redefines every act of living, settling, extracting, harvesting, or trading as violence itself. The settler of a frontier zone is a militarized and often armed civilian; military action is often carried out in the midst of and against civilian population, resistance to it is carried out or assisted by entire populations.

The fragmented legal geography of the frontier is positioned outside the very condition of modernity and progress that brought it about. The frontier creates thus a shifting legal geography of exception, or using Agamben's words, "zones of indistinction"<sup>14</sup> whose edges are elastic, shifting, and incoherent. According to Agamben the definition of the temporary is integral to the concept of the "state of emergency,"<sup>15</sup> as this state is defined and justified as an exception limited by time. The temporary state of emergency and/or the temporary application of martial law, thus allow the frontier to maintain a level of lawless brutality that would, and could not be tolerated were the situation considered permanent.<sup>16</sup> The situation will remain temporary as long as it is essential for victory to be achieved, and the frontier to be completely domesticated – thus and only then the "closed" frontier could be imbued with the normal laws of the state. Frontier violence is thus termed as "pacification" (nineteenth and twentieth century) or "peace keeping" (twentieth and twentieth-first century) – a temporary instability in preparation for the "eternal stability" to come. In fact the geography of the frontier is often so fragmented that legal distinctions can no longer effectively be territorially based, law can not be contained by territorial envelopes, because these envelopes undergo constant transformation. Legal distinction is therefore effectively made between persons on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, or nationality, using categories of citizens, part-citizens, subjects, enemies, or aliens. Not only does the legal exception of the frontier refer to violence, but often it refers to ownership of resources. These resources are often land, but may include minerals, metals, or energy resources. Land-registry projects, such as the ones enacted by virtually all colonial empires that operated in Africa, America, or Australia in the nineteenth century, do not recognize the full right of "natives" over lands in their possession in the same way as they recognize the ownership of the colonizers. The native and nomadic tribes are seen as parts of the natural landscape of trees and rocks, and their habitat, defined as *terra nullius*, could be handed to the imperial state or the crown. If rights are granted, such as in reservations, they are often do not extend vertically to include the natural resources below the surface. This principle allows Israel not only to seize almost half of all land reserves in the West Bank, but to control the water of the mountain aquifer under it, and the air over it.

Negri and Hardt implied that the current aggressive quest for Western expansion is but a further extension of the historical principle of the frontier.<sup>17</sup> As if the Pacific coasts were no effective limit, the centrifugal forces of capitalism are yet to unleash another open-ended process of dynamic expansion into frontiers rich with natural resources and anger. The territorial architecture of the "war on terror" with its militarized flows has placed the imaginary space of the frontier in the forefront of global consciousness, and gradually extended its legal, social, and military geography across a new geopolitical construction site. Indeed the militarization of the global economical and legal infrastructure laid out during the 1990s turned economic enclaves into outposts and trade channels into temporary alliances and militarized trajectories. The world has become a deep zone across whose depth the Western Empire seeks its "barbarians" in an ongoing and brutal frontier war. The frontier ceased to be limited to a particular domain of the globe but gradually crawled to encapsulate its whole. The principle being that as long as there is an open frontier, the whole of the networked space would display frontier-like characteristics. Thus the new global geography of fragments, micro-conflicts, newly erected barriers and fortifications, exists everywhere in a constant state of territorial ambivalence, prone to the inconsistent behavior and self-destructive impulses that define a new global "borderline disorder."<sup>18</sup>

Christian Salmon recently described the geography of borders and barriers in the Israeli occupied territories in this way:

The border shifts like a swarm of locusts in the wake of another suicide attack, like the onset of a sudden storm. It might arrive at your doorstep like a delivery in the night, as quickly as the tanks can roll in; or it

may slip in slowly, like a shadow. The border keeps creeping along, surrounding villages and watering places. It is a mobile phenomenon... easily transportable to keep pace with the ever-expanding settlements. The border is furtive as well: like the rocket launchers, it crushes and disintegrates space, transforming it into a frontier, into bits of territory. This frontier paralyses the ebb and flow of transit instead of regulating it. It no longer serves to protect, instead transforming all points into danger zones, all persons into living targets or suicide bombers. It has ceased to be a peaceful boundary designed to separate two autonomous lands, to assign a rightful place to each, to endow a given space with its distinctive shape, form and color. The border here is meant to repress, displace and disorganize.<sup>19</sup>

## **2. Ariel Sharon and the Geometry of Occupation: Strategic Points, Flexible Lines, Tense Surfaces, Political Volumes**

*(For Paul Hirst in memory)*

The wording of the current Middle East peace initiative, the "roadmap" managed – perhaps unwittingly but clearly all the same – to equate the transformation of the built environment with acts of organised violence. The action required from the Palestinians "on a way to a final and comprehensive settlement of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict by 2005" is "to undertake an unconditional cessation of violence", and dismantle the infrastructure of terror; while Israel must "(freeze) all settlement activity" and "immediately (dismantle) settlement outposts..."

*Israel is to stop planning; constructing and populating then dismantle settlements built by independent groups in breach of its own laws. The Palestinian authority is to prevent shooting, shelling and suicide attacks carried out by armed organisations, dismantle their infrastructures and arrest their masterminds. Although the document does not make it clear if it sees the activities of each side as comparable (or merely trapped in a cyclical sequence of causes and effects), never before was the work of architects and planners so clearly corroborated with those of terrorists.*

Indeed the human and political rights of Palestinians are violated not only by the frequent blows of the Israeli military, but by a much slower and steadier process in which the totality of the environment in which they live is configured around them as an ever-tightening knot. In this process, the transformation of the territories occupied by Israel since 1967 became a parallel conflict, carried out with pencil lines on the drafting tables of military and civilian planners and architects. The West Bank as we know it today has come to be, not as a result of a collection of accumulated haphazard decisions of incremental politics, but as the spatial outcome of a strategic planning.

The design and construction of the "security barrier" through and around the West Bank is to complete the last stage in the Israeli project of territorial control.

It may appear that with the construction of such a border-like apparatus, Israel has finally surrendered to military contingencies and political pressures, thus transforming its entrenched territorial policies (how else could Ariel Sharon, the person who epitomises Israel's settlement project, be the one finally to set a border through the "heart of the land of Israel"?).

But beneath the apparent change lies the same stubborn and implacable ideological regularity – the use of apparently temporary security-architecture to create permanent facts on the ground, the rejection of borderlines as the limits of state territory, the preference for ever-flexible internal frontiers. This is, in short, the spatial legacy of Ariel Sharon.

Ariel Sharon thus guides the progress of the "roadmap" and the barrier's path as two complementary processes: the former is the process of bringing forth a Palestinian state in temporary borders, the latter is in the process by which these borders will solidify unilaterally in both space and time.

With the construction of the barrier, the border between Israel and the Palestinians can no longer be understood as a single absolute and continuous line, but rather as a sequence of convoluted boundaries, security apparatuses, and internal checkpoints.

As a result, a permanently temporary Palestinian state is in the process of being inaugurated. It will be fragmented in three dimensions and across the elements: scattered on a series of separated territorial islands, surrounded by and perforated with Israeli territory, without borders to the outside world, strung together by a series of tunnels and bridges spanning over or digging under Israeli territory, without control of its subterranean water resources below and on its airspace above. All this is an implementation of the plan drawn up by Ariel Sharon as early as 1982.

This essay extends and connects with the general thesis set out in my 2002 project, "The Politics of Verticality". It examines the process by which, after the expansion of Israel's borders following the 1967 war, these borders have been dissolved and transformed: from being fixed fortified lines, laid out at the edges of the occupied territories, to fragmented and scattered inner frontiers across both horizontal and vertical dimensions.

So much of this process can be traced to Ariel Sharon. As chief of southern command of the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) before the Yom Kippur war in 1973, where he rejected the effectiveness of linear fortification along the edges of the Suez Canal and conceived a defence system based on a matrix of elevated strong-points spread throughout the depth of the Sinai desert; as a minister with various portfolios in a number of Likud-led governments where his 'location strategy' for the West Bank was implemented by the seeding of the depth of the territory with civilian mountain-top settlements and outposts; as a politician who rode to power as prime minister following the collapse of the Oslo peace process, who now draws the meandering and splintered path of the barriers – Ariel Sharon, more than anyone else, is the man who has shaped the spatial and physical environment in which the Israeli-Palestinian conflict takes place.

This essay tries to trace the way in which Ariel Sharon imagines territory and practices space; it is in fact an attempt to look at his long lasting physical oeuvre, the one in which both Israelis and Palestinians must struggle to live – as one architect looks at the work of another.

## **Agoraphobia**

Israel's pre-1967 borders were seen by the military as indefensible. The then foreign minister Abba Eban described them as an existential danger to the state – no less than the "Auschwitz lines". Israeli military strategy, conscious of the strategic inferiorities of Israel's borders, was based on an oxymoron coined in 1959 by Yigal Allon, a Labour politician and a retired military commander: "pre-emptive attack". This principle conceived an extensive use of Israel's superior air power as a volumetric compensation for its planar inferiority.

The 1967 war implemented Yigal Allon's strategy to the letter. With complete control of the skies, the IDF was free to progress across surface, stopping and redeploying along clear natural barriers. The geopolitical balance of the Middle East was radically transformed. Israel tripled the territory under its control. The new lines, stretched now along the Jordan River and the Suez Canal, seen as the "natural border" of a biblical promised land, fitted well with a newly developed fantasmagorical attitude of the Israeli state. An unparalleled period of economic prosperity begun, due at least in part to cheap labour drawn from the newly-occupied Palestinian population of more than a million people. But gradually the 'occupied territories' grew too large within the national imagination. This creeping agoraphobia meant that the unfamiliar territories had to be studied, mapped and domesticated from within and that their edges had to be fortified against the prospect of counter-aggression from the "outside".

## **Points versus lines**

In the project of fortification that ensued, one energised by growing hostilities along the new ceasefire lines, two geometric models of defence were explored: the principle of linear fortification and a 'matrix of strong points' spread throughout the depth of a territory. Each of these alternative principles was derived from military vocabulary and had been employed in the fortification of the Sinai, where, during the 'war of attrition' of 1970-71, the edge was under constant attack. But, as with many things Israeli, these military models turned into the planning concepts that later guided the nature and distribution of civilian settlement throughout the West Bank.

Under the Labour administration of Golda Meir, two Labourites – Haim Bar-Lev and Yigal Allon were put in charge of fortifying the edges of the occupied territories on two different fronts. Bar-Lev, then IDF chief of staff, devised a series of linear fortifications along the ceasefire line with Egypt on the Suez Canal; Allon, then the minister of agriculture, devised and implemented what later became known as the Allon Plan.

This plan aimed to create and fortify a new borderline with Jordan. It marked out the locations of a series of agricultural outposts, to be settled by the Nahal Corps – the settling corps of the IDF along the western bank of the Jordan rift valley – thereafter termed the 'iron valley'.

The Bar-Lev Line was the military counterpart of the Allon Plan. Both were the products of a similar doctrine, one that sought to establish a line of defence along the outer edges of the territory. It so happened that in both cases the edge was marked by a water line.

The Bar-Lev Line was an immense technical undertaking that demanded the shuffling of huge quantities of sand from across the desert to the bank of the Canal. There, it was piled up to form a formidable artificial landscape composed of hardened sand ramparts above ground, and a parallel system of deep bunkers and communication trenches below it. Thirty-five fortified positions (*Ma'ozim*) were spread out along the length of the Canal at 10 kilometre intervals, overlooking the Egyptian positions across the water line ON AFRICAN SOIL from a mere 300 metres.

Ariel Sharon – a popular and energetic general, a mythical military figure since the 1950s when his audacious deep cross-border retaliation operations earned him much fame with Israeli youth – served between 1969 and July 1973 as the chief of southern command of the Israeli Defence Forces.

It was during this time that Sharon; always an overtly political general, broke with traditional military ranks as well as with his Labour-Zionist upbringing, and affiliated himself with the political right. Sharon was also the only general who dared challenge the logic of defence spelled out by the Bar-Lev Line.

He argued again and again in series of heated meetings with the General Staff that the army "cannot win a defensive battle on an outer line..." and proposed that the IDF should "fight a defensive battle the way it should be fought – not on forward line but in depth..." (SHARON 2001) Sharon held that the *Ma'ozim* forced the IDF into static defence, offering sitting targets to Egyptian artillery, and should thus be abandoned.

Instead he proposed, and partially implemented, a dynamic system of point-based defence in depth composed of a series of strong points (*Ta'ozim*) spread out on elevated grounds within the terrain on a series of mountain summits that dominated the canal plain. Between the *Ta'ozim* and the canal he proposed to run mobile patrols, constantly and unpredictably on the move.

Before long the entire zone was enveloped in a frenzy of construction, mountain outposts were constructed and fortified to become command and long-range surveillance points, and a network of high-volume military roads was paved to connect them. At the time it seemed that every available building contractor in the country was making a good profit at the canal-side.

But then, at the first opportunity, Sharon was dismissed by Bar-Lev, and his plan remained uncompleted.

The principle of linear defence is to prohibit (or inhibit) the enemy from gaining any foothold beyond it. General Erwin Rommel, commander of the *Wehrmacht* defences along the Atlantic in 1944, asserted the core of this principle when he argued that the only chance to stop an Allied invasion force was to beat them at the water's edge. But as the Germans knew well after their experience with the supposedly impregnable Todt Line, when the line is breached even at one location it is – much like a leaking glass of water – rendered immediately useless.

By contrast, defence based on a 'network of points in depth' relies on a matrix of interlocking strong points connected by physical and electro-magnetic links: roads and electronic communications. Each point can connect and communicate with any other, and each point overlooks and whenever necessary covers the other with firepower, thus creating an interlocking fortified surface.

When the defensive matrix is attacked it can become flexible and adapt to the fall of any number of points by forming new connections across the matrix.

The geography of nodes in a matrix cannot be conventionally measured in distance. "Distance" between nodes is not a measurable absolute but a relative figure that is defined by the speed and reliability of the connection – that is, how fast and how secure can one travel between given points.

The network defence is a spatial trap that allows the defenders a high level of mobility while acting to paralyse any possibility for enemy movement. Jeff Halper explains how effective this strategy was in Vietnam where "small forces of Viet Cong were able to pin down some half-million American soldiers possessing overwhelming firepower" (HALPER 2002).

### **The Yom Kippur war**

In 1973 the Bar-Lev line looked so steadfast that Moshe Dayan, then Minister of Defence, claimed that it "would take the American and Soviet engineer corps together to break through [it]". But on 6 October 1973, it took the Egyptian military only a few hours to break through and overrun the "in-destructible" line.

In the end, the line that had stood up to two years of Egyptian artillery-fire throughout the war of attrition, succumbed to water. British-made high-pressure water cannons used the water of the Suez Canal to dissolve the hardened sand and melt the formidable artificial landscape into pools of mud.

The Egyptian military then set in motion ordnance systems surprising in size and scope. Some 100,000 heavily armoured troops were ferried onto the eastern, previously Israeli-controlled bank, made their way through the ravaged landscape a few kilometres into the Sinai. Then, without encountering much resistance, but scared of entering the fortified depth of Israeli defences constructed only a few months earlier by Ariel Sharon, stopped progressing and dug themselves in, guns facing east.

Two days later, 8 October 1973, brought the most bitter defeat in IDF history, when waves of bewildered Israeli soldiers in an armoured counter-offensive broke against a dug-in Egyptian army equipped with previously unknown personal anti-tank missiles. That day, Moshe Dayan proclaimed that the "Third Temple was falling". A shift of national consciousness occurred and a process began that forced Labour four years later, for the first time in the history of the state, out of government.

The war had broken out a few weeks before general elections set for 31 October 1973. Sharon, a candidate of the right, and Bar-Lev, by then a Labour party cabinet minister, both retired generals, were drafted as reserve commanders. Each stepped one step down the command ladder; Sharon receiving the armoured 143 Division (later known as the Likud Division) and Bar-Lev the overall command of the southern front. Old rivalries inevitably resurfaced as the glory-hungry generals used the war as an electoral asset.

Ariel Sharon realised that whoever first counter-crossed the canal to the Egyptian side would be crowned as the war's hero. On his relentless drive towards the line, Sharon allowed himself a large measure of autonomy, disregarding the orders of Bar-Lev, at times shutting off communications altogether, and at others pretending not to hear explicit orders screamed over the radio.

After suffering many losses, he succeeded in breaking a gap in Egyptian lines and established a bridgehead across the canal to African soil over which the Israeli army flowed onto the rear of the Egyptians, cutting off their supply lines and encircling the entire 3rd Egyptian army.

The Israeli counter-crossing of the canal created a bizarre stalemate. The two armies had switched sides across the water line and the continents. Such was the power of linear defence that it was crossed twice, in both directions, during a war lasting less than three weeks.

The Yom Kippur war ended in unprecedented public outrage. The heads of the general staff and of the Labour party rolled. But Ariel Sharon, the general who devised the defence strategy that deterred the Egyptians from progressing deeper into the Sinai, and successfully led the Israeli counter-crossing of the Suez Canal, was publicly perceived as the man who had saved the nation.

Even thirty years later, the story is kept alive. This summer, a few months ahead of the anniversary of the Yom Kippur war, the IDF was pressured to release its official historical account. It was completed a decade ago, but was shelved, largely because Sharon feared that its publication would undermine his popular image as the war's hero.



The Suez Canal is the place where Israel's territorial ambitions and fears consolidated into physical form. The Israeli public could no longer believe in the idea that its borders are non-permeable from the outside. The debate around the construction and fall of the canal's fortification and the trauma of the canal campaign became deeply etched in the national consciousness; and they were endlessly replayed and re-fought – in slow-motion mode, this time on the hills of the West Bank.

## Strategic Points

The Likud came to power two elections later, in May 1977. Ariel Sharon was appointed minister of agriculture, and took over the ministerial committee in charge of settlement. This was an influential and powerful portfolio in an administration of politicians that had become accustomed to a permanent role in the political opposition and were utterly inexperienced in governance.

Sharon seized his opportunity to devise a new location strategy for settlements in order to turn the West Bank into a defensible frontier and consolidate Israeli control of the occupied territories. Having successfully demonstrated the shortcomings of the Bar-Lev Line, he now moved against the second of the Labour defensive lines, the Allon Plan.

Seeking to implement the lessons of the Sinai campaign, Sharon claimed that: "...a thin line of settlements along the Jordan would not provide a viable defence unless the high terrain behind it was also fortified...." Consequently, he proposed to establish "other settlements on the high terrain... [and] several east-west roads along strategic axes, together with the settlements necessary to guard them." (SHARON 2001)

Labour had traditionally conducted its state-building policies almost entirely through the construction of settlements. Before the creation of the state it used the "Tower and Stockade" cooperative settlements to mark and defend Israel's future borders. After its creation, prime minister David Ben Gurion laid out the so-called "organic wall" composed of a string of development towns inhabited by immigrant communities, mainly Jews from the Arab states, along the state's new borders.

But after the 1967 war, Labour was indecisive about what policy to take with regard to the new territories and was unable to reinvigorate its past pioneering energies; thus it pursued its settlement policies with far less enthusiasm and vigour.

Instead it was Sharon, the Labourite turned Likudnik, and Gush Emunim, the national religious and messianic organisation, who managed to revitalise the pioneering ethos of Zionism. They saw in the depth of the West Bank a sacred territory and a defensible frontier, a border without a line, across whose depth a matrix of settlement could be constructed.

The "artificially-created" Green Line, Israel's internationally recognised 1949 border, was deeply repressed, and the borders became fluid and elastic again, pulled out to incorporate every new settlement.

Linear fortification was no longer trusted after the war and instead the entire depth of the terrain was fortified. Thus the open frontier replaced the rigidity of the line and blurred the distinctions between a political "inside" and "outside"; or, in the words of the Israeli sociologist Adriana Kemp, it blurred the difference between "the political space of the state and the cultural space of the nation" a difference "hidden by the hyphenated concept of "nation-state"." (KEMP 2000)

## Sharon's plan

In a famous syllogism, Lenin once described strategy as "the choice of points where force is to be applied". Points have neither dimension nor size; they are mere coordinates on the X/Y-axis of the plane and on the Z-axis of latitude. In Israel, the settlement 'location strategy' is based upon a close reading of the terrain and a decision made with the precision of acupuncture regarding where effort should be concentrated.

The fact that the word settlement means in Hebrew a 'point on the ground', and sometimes simply 'a point' (*Nekuda*) is indicative of a planning culture that considers the positioning of a settlement less in terms of its essence, than in terms of its strategic location.

Because settlements are autonomous and separate points on a matrix, a reliable communication had to be established between them.

In 1982, few months before his invasion of Lebanon, Sharon, then minister of defence, published his *Masterplan for Jewish Settlements in the West Bank Through the Year 2010* – later known as the Sharon Plan. In it he outlined the location of more than a hundred settlement points, placed on strategic summits, and marked the paths for a new network of high-volume, interconnected traffic arteries reaching also into the Israeli heartland.

Ariel Sharon saw in the formation of continuous Jewish habitation a way towards the annexation of the areas vital for Israel's security. These areas he marked onto the map attached to his plan in the shape of the letter H. The "H-Plan" contained two parallel north-south strips of land: one along the Green Line containing the West Bank from the west, and another along the Jordan valley, accepting the presence of the Allon Plan to contain the territory from the east.

These two strips separated the Palestinian population centres, organised along the central spine of the West Bank's mountain ridge from both Israel proper and from the (much relieved) kingdom of Jordan. Between these north-south strips Sharon marked a few east-west traffic arteries – the main one connecting through Jerusalem, thus closing a (very) approximate H. The rest, some 40% of the West Bank, separate enclaves around Palestinian cities and towns, were to revert to some yet undefined form of Palestinian self-management.

The settlements, relying on their own weapons, ammunition and military contingency plans, were to form a network of 'civilian fortifications' integrated into the IDF's overall system of defence, serving strategic imperatives by overlooking main traffic arteries and road junctions in their region.

The role of settlements as observation and control-points promoted a particular layout for their urbanity. The (sub)urban layout of a mountain settlement is concentric; its roads are stretched in rings following the topographical lines closing a complete circuit around the summit.

The outward-facing arrangement of homes orients the view of its inhabitants towards the surrounding landscape in which "national interests" – main roads, junctions and Palestinian urban areas, compose a part of a picturesque panorama. The essence of this geometric order is to produce 'panoptic fortresses' – optical devices on an urban scale, laid out to generate observation, spatially and temporally, all round. (WEIZMAN 2002 and SEGAL, WEIZMAN 2003)

The high ground, on which settlements were located, thus offers the strategic assets of self-protection and a wider view. But beyond being employed militarily, the urban layout of vision also serves an aesthetic agenda: it allows for contemplation over a pastoral landscape evocative of history, one in which biblical scenarios could be easily imagined and participated in, at least visually. All this feeds the national mythic imagination, giving settlers the sense of foundational authority based on long historical continuity.

In the early 1980s another of the construction frenzies that are indicative of Ariel Sharon's closeness to executive power had begun. The "Biblical" heartland of the West Bank became overlaid by the two symbiotic and synergetic instruments of security: the settlement observation point and the serpentine road network, the latter being the prime device for serving the former, the former overlooking and protecting the latter.

Sharon realised the double potential of emerging messianic-religious impulses: to settle a mythological landscape and to facilitate the desire of the middle classes to push outside of congested city centres to populate his matrix of points with civilian communities. Unlike Labour's agricultural settlements of the Kibbutz and the Moshav, the new 'community settlements' were in effect dormitory suburbs of closely-knit social groups composed mainly of national-religious-professional middle classes.

Architectural organisation and aesthetics were conscripted in order to create uniform communities as well as to establish the state's control of its territories. Uniformity of architectural taste was imposed through the repetition of a small variety of single and double, family house-and-garden structures. Beyond responding to

middle-class suburban aesthetics, the adorning of settlement homes with red roofs, served a further military agenda – identifying these sites from afar as Israeli.

The fact that the inhabitants had to seek work outside the settlements made them rely on the roads to connect them with the employment centres in the metropolitan areas around Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, within Israel proper. This was similar to the way that the American suburbs developed as an offspring of pacified Second World War construction technology, and especially around the system of interstate highways, developed to serve the integrated industry of the American war economy.

Israeli suburbia made perfect use of the system laid out for mobile defence in depth. The massive system of fifty highways together with a modern matrix of infrastructure became effective instruments of development – merging the needs of a sprawling suburbia with national security and political ambitions to push ever more Israelis into the West Bank.

Sharon and the engineers, already experts in military defence works, and now building for civilian communities, had to become urban planners. Sharon "... got tremendous satisfaction seeing how everything was moving forward, how drawings on a map were every day becoming more of a reality on the ground." (SHARON 2001)

His planning decisions, however, were not made according to professional criteria of economical sustainability, ecology or efficiency of services, but were guided by a strategic agenda focused on spatial manipulations. Planning under Sharon shed any pretence to facilitate the social and economic improvement of an abstract 'public' and manifested itself fully as the executive arm of the strategic and geopolitical agenda of the Israeli state.

Architecture and planning were thus used as the continuation of war by other means. Just like the tank, the gun and the bulldozer, building matter and infrastructure were used to achieve tactical and strategic aims. It was an urban warfare in which urbanity provided not the theatre of war but its very weapons and ammunition. It was a war in which a civilian population was drafted, knowingly or not, to supervise vital national interests as plain-clothes security personnel.

### **Architecture as the continuation of war by other means The enemy 'within'**

But the geopolitical reality of the 1980s and 1990s – after the terms of the 1978 peace agreement with Egypt were fulfilled, after the drying out of military assistance to the Arab states with the collapse of the Soviet bloc, and after the first *intifadah* began in 1987 – presented new dangers to the strategy. The challenges that the state faced arose less from a conventional attack by Arab armour from the "outside" and more from a disgruntled and restless Palestinian population located already "inside".

The centres and headquarters of popular resistance were deep within Palestinian towns and cities, especially the winding and impenetrable fabric of the refugee camps. These over-dense and under-serviced urban environments became in the eyes of the state the "habitat of terror". The rapid urbanisation of the West Bank during the relatively prosperous 1980s was seen by the Israeli security establishment as the "*jihad* of building". (GRAHAM 2002)

Palestinian urban growth, fuelled by a rapidly increased population, "illegally" sprawled beyond the 'blue lines' that the IDF's civil administration traced around them as planning boundaries. Cities swallowed towns, and towns villages, into an ever-thickening fabric of large continuously-built blocks along the main Palestinian traffic arteries, and especially along Route 60 historically the most important Palestinian route, the one stringing all major Palestinian cities along the north-south mountain ridge. Urbanity became a Palestinian 'weapon' of retaliation threatening to undermine Israeli territorial control.

The way to contain these urban threats, from Ariel Sharon's planner's perspective, was by using more of the weapon of counter-urbanity – or more precisely, sub-urbanity. From the 1980s onwards, Sharon was using settlements as an antidote to uncontrolled Palestinian population growth, placing them as wedges that disturb the consolidation of large metropolitan centres – those most likely to form the cultural demographic and political basis of a viable territorial entity.

Beyond their status as forward positions in the defence of the state from invasion, the settlements were used to allow the state to exercise the task of civilian control. A continuous fabric of homes, industrial zones, and roads were knitted together to act as wedges separating the different Palestinian population centres.

Sometimes the objective of making the settlement act as a wedge was achieved by its very layout; in the case of the settlement-city of Ariel (the largest settlement in Samaria, coincidentally named after Ariel Sharon), it stretched itself long and thin in order to partially envelop the Palestinian city of Salfit and cut it away from the villages composing its regional economy.

The small red-roofed single family home replaced the tank as the smallest fighting unit. District regional and municipal plans replaced the strategic sand table. Homes like armoured divisions, were used in formation across a dynamic theatre of operations to occupy strategic hills, to encircle an enemy, or cut communication lines.

The location strategy employed for the West Bank was based on yet another basic military principle, one that states that the party to move faster across a battlefield is the one to win the battle. It acted to differentiate between the speeds by which Israelis and Palestinians could move across the terrain.

Traffic arteries are de facto separated across national lines: the six-lane bypass roads on which military vehicles and civilian vans can rush between settlements contrast with the narrow, informal dust-roads connecting Palestinian towns and villages. This slowing down of the Palestinian population is what the courageous Israeli journalist Amira Hass has called "the theft of time".

The architectural research group *Multiplicity* demonstrated that it takes an Israeli driver ninety minutes to cross the West Bank from north to south, while the same journey takes a Palestinian driver eight hours – and this only on condition that the roads are open to Palestinian traffic (BOERI *et al.* 2003).

The fixing of the Palestinian population as relatively stationary, and separated into isolated, immobile islands, makes them easily manageable and controllable.

Jeff Halper called the contemporary consequence of this strategic texture in the West Bank "the matrix of control" (HALPER 2002) within this matrix the inhabitation of nodal points acts as on/off valves regulating movement according to identity, replacing the necessity for the direct presence of Israeli forces within Palestinian cities.

## **The Battle for the Hilltops**

Ariel Sharon, fearing the reversal of his spatial practices, was reluctant to implement his 1982 plan gradually. He believed it was important "...to secure a presence first and only then build the settlements up".

He therefore acted to lay out the entire skeleton of the project, seeding the area with small outposts, some hardly more than footholds, composed of tents or mobile homes – knowing that each of these outposts, once establishing itself as a fact on the ground, would grow to become a fully-grown settlement. (LEIN, WEIZMAN 2002)

Defining in advance his policy regarding the West Bank barrier, Sharon advised settlers not to build fences around settlements but rather around the Palestinians: "if you put up a fence, you put a limit to your expansion".

At the beginning of 1983, after the Kahan inquiry into the 1982 massacre at Sabra and Shatila refugee camps had found Sharon indirectly responsible, he was out of government and his influence on the settlement project was thereafter exercised through an active role in the political opposition.

In this light, the current scenes of removal and repositioning of the "illegal outposts" – small ad hoc settlement seeds put up by independent groups in breach of Israeli law – in the context of the "roadmap" can be understood in the context of Sharon's skeleton strategy.

Soon after it took power in 1992, the Yitzhak Rabin government stopped issuing permits for the construction of new settlements. In response Ariel Sharon, leading the ferocious opposition to the 1993 Oslo accords, announced the "battle for the hilltops"; he urged young ideological and religious settlers to "move, run and

grab as many hilltops as possible" and replace the suburban culture of the settlements with a renewed sense of frontier in order to stop any further territorial concessions.

In the decade since then, these settlers have established over 100 "temporary" outposts on the remaining strategic hilltops beyond the boundaries of settlements, with a total population not exceeding 1000 (Peace Now 2003). Their aim is to secure the areas in a way that allow them to challenge any proposal for territorial compromise, or at least change the trajectory of any proposed border – if one has to be set – to Israel's permanent advantage.

The settlers inhabiting the outposts, the so-called "youth of the hills", are rarely beyond their teens. Their way of life, represented both by the layout of outposts (a series of mobile homes or adaptable ship containers organised in a circle) and by their preferred method of transport (horseback) seems at times influenced by the iconographies of the 19th century American frontier reproduced in countless Hollywood Westerns. Indeed, in contrast to the suburban economy of the settlements, the outposts seek biblical self-sustainability based on shepherding, manual labour and agriculture.

This apparent naivety hides the fact that, with their potential for immediacy, mobility and flexibility, these outposts are the perfect instruments of colonisation. The prefabricated homes allow for quick, overnight deployment on the back of trucks or (in case where a road is not available) even by helicopter.

The prefabricated rigidity of the single element allows for an immediate urbanism, based on patterns of quick repetition and distribution. The seed of mobile homes may then be free to transform and develop into a 'mature' settlement as conditions allow.

In the context of the "roadmap", Israel is committed (in principle) to "immediately (dismantling) settlement outposts erected since March 2001". The government's acts of "dismantling" today are as revealing about the precision of the settlements' location strategy as any past decisions regarding the establishment of new settlements.

Most outposts spring up again immediately after being removed. Evacuation on the back of trucks means very often relocation, sometimes even to a more strategic location. Sharon himself has already announced that the government intends to permanently remove only those outposts which are not in locations that he regards as strategically important.

The timing of Ariel Sharon's return to power, this time as Prime Minister, is not surprising. It occurred after the collapse of Labour's peace project in Camp David on July 2000, and the beginning of the second *intifadah* – which itself followed Sharon's provocative visit to the vicinity of the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem. When a series of suicide terrorist attacks on Israeli cities reignited the politics and geography of fear, security and territorial planning fused together, and with the construction of the barrier the final and decisive round of territorial conflict in the Israeli/Palestinian history seems to have arrived.

## **The Barrier**

Points and lines are synergetic systems – the distribution of settlement points across the surface of the West Bank called for complex set of lines both to connect (roads) and to protect (barriers). The latter are concretised by a series of long and interlocking mechanisms: barbed wire, ditches, dykes and checkpoints.

What the government refers to as the "seam-line obstacle", the Israeli public as the "separation fence", the foreign media as "the wall" and the Palestinians the "the apartheid wall" is a complex barrier composed of a sequence of fortifications measuring between 35 and 100 metres in width that is in the process of being constructed through the West Bank. It is designed to separate the Jewish settlements and their supportive infrastructure from the Palestinian population.

The main component of the barrier is a touch-sensitive, "smart", three metres high electronic fence, placed on 150 centimetre-deep concrete foundation (to prevent digging under it), topped with barbed wire (to prevent climbing over it), day and night video cameras and even small radars.

Stretched along the east side of the fence (facing the bulk of the West Bank) are a patrol road, a three-metre deep trench, and two barbed-wire fences. West of it (towards Israel proper) are a trace road – where

footprints of intruders are registered, a patrol road suitable for armoured vehicles and some more barbed-wire fences.

At some places, when the barrier nears a Palestinian town, the tactically required see-through (and shoot-through) fence solidifies into an eight-metre high bullet-proof wall; watchtowers with firing posts are placed at intervals of a few hundred metres along it.

Other positions utilise enhanced natural barriers, like fifty-metre high artificial cliffs cut into the mountain rock. Seven control gates for Israelis and nine for Palestinians are planned in order to allow people in and out of the enclosed area, and some twenty-six "agricultural gates" will serve Palestinian farmers whose lands are on the other side.

This monumental system of fortification has an estimated per-kilometre cost of about \$1.5 million.

The barrier is constructed from north to south in several separate phases. The first stage, about 123 kilometres along the northern third of the West Bank, became operational on July 2003. South of it, the central area of the seam-line is currently mapped from the air; ten planning offices are labouring over alternative paths. But while uncertainties regarding the path of the barrier still exist due to a variety of political pressures, large tracts of land have already been seized for "temporary military needs".

In November 2000, in the wake of the collapse of Labour's political project at Camp David, and a little more than a month after the second *intifadah* began, the then prime minister Ehud Barak decided that if the political borders between Israel and a Palestinian state could not be agreed upon, he would set them out unilaterally.

Ehud Barak approved a plan to establish a linear barrier, roughly corresponding with the Green Line, composed of a series of ditches and dykes and aiming to prevent the passage of motor vehicles into Israel. Labour, propagating the idea of unilateral separation along a fortified line, has since lost two elections.

Ariel Sharon, whose strategic doctrine still saw the West Bank as a defensible and national frontier, wanted by contrast to avoid being the one to set a borderline through the heart of the Land of Israel. He insisted – up until the day he appeared to have changed his mind – that "the idea [to build the barrier] is populist."

However, on 14 April 2002, two days before the battle for Jenin was concluded and with all other major Palestinian cities firmly in his hands, Sharon "surrendered" to the demands of the Labour ministers in his government, as well as to growing public pressures. Amid fear of suicide attacks carried out by infiltrators from the West Bank, and awareness that not a single attack had been carried out from fenced-off Gaza, Sharon demanded a "security fence", and announced the coalition government's decision to establish the barrier.

In a context where the IDF occupied the entire West Bank, and with the Palestinian Authority all but destroyed, the decision to set up the barrier was not seen by the government as necessarily separating "them" from "us"; it rather marked across its two sides different degrees of occupation, corresponding to the gradient of Israeli military tolerance.

What started as the brainchild of the left was continuously revised and "improved" by the Sharon government. The line Sharon has drawn was very different to Labour's. It is to be a feat of great geometrical complexity and technical sophistication – the last of Sharon's territorial gestures, the one to finally solidify, in space and time, his territorial strategy.

## **Flexible Lines**

If, as architects know well, the direction and path of a line is the sum total of the force field of pressures that is applied to it, the barrier can offer the clearest diagram of the principle of political and social pressure moulded into form. The paths taken by the barrier line reflects a momentary balance of all the vectors of influences on it.

As the path of the barrier “snakes” southwards, it goes through a process in which political pressures on either side of the proposed structure start reinforcing each other, and in a principle of “positive feedback” the barrier makes ever more radical twists and turns, pushing ever deeper east of the Green Line.

As the barrier neared their region, settlement councils started applying political leverage for the path to “loop around” and absorb them into the western (Israeli) “inside”. Appearing to be wary of settlers’ pressure, but actually using it as an excuse to perform what was planned in advance, the government sought to include as large a number of settlement points as possible, and leave as few Palestinians as possible within the Israeli side of the barrier.

The settlers initially resisted the idea of the barrier that will cut parts of the West Bank from Israel proper, but once they realised they could not stop its construction, opted to try to influence its route.

A particularly strong outcry came from the settlement of Alfei-Menashe, a relatively wealthy suburban community. According to the first phase northern path, authorised in June 2002, this settlement found itself left “outside”. The local panic about being “abandoned”, mediated through political pressures and ultimatums from right-wing ministers, managed to force a revision of the path and the stretching out of a long loop to incorporate the settlement back “inside”.

As a result, the Palestinian towns of Qalqiliya and Habla, a few hundred metres apart as the crow flies, found themselves surrounded on all sides by the barrier’s extension, and the connection between them now swelled into a corridor twenty kilometres long.

The path of the barrier was complicated by another series of external influences. Following pressure by government ministers from religious parties, the path of the Jerusalem envelopment (the Jerusalem metropolitan part of the barrier) was stretched a few hundred metres southwards to include an old archaeological site believed to be the Biblical-era tomb of Rachel. Ten other archaeological sites, including one complete Egyptian city, were discovered during the digging works along another part of the barrier and in some cases the path was changed to bring them back “inside”.

The desire to match the path of the barrier with sub-surface interests meant the incorporation of the water extraction points of the mountain aquifer, while the desire to serve Israel’s aerial interests meant the appropriation of areas located closely beneath the landing paths of international flights.

It seems that the only consideration absent from the vectors of push and pull are those relating to the human rights and daily life of the Palestinian residents of the area. Along the whole length of the built and proposed paths, Palestinian villagers will be cut away from their farmland and water sources.

The human rights organisation B’Tselem estimates that the barrier would negatively affect the livelihood of at least 210,000 Palestinians, and irreversibly damage the economic prospects of a Palestinian state (LEIN 2003).

The central phase of the barrier path, now under planning and revision, is more strategically and politically sensitive than the built-up northern part. In this phase the barrier is supposed to mediate through the densely populated regions close to the metropolitan region of Tel Aviv. There the largest numbers of settlers are located, built densities are high, and settlement real estate is relatively expensive.

Israeli pro-capita gross domestic product (GDP) is twenty times larger than that of Palestinians; the economic disparity between the two groups is higher than between any two other neighbouring populations worldwide. In the central region, where upper-middle class suburbs crowd against impoverished villages, the economic contrast is even more extreme.

It is not yet clear what path the barrier will take through this region – none of the speculative maps published by the many organisations monitoring the construction of the barrier are similar; neither the Israeli army nor the government has made its plans public, and each revises them as pressure mounts and ebbs.

In July 2003, the government announced its intention to include a particularly intrusive fold, stretching deep into the very heart of the West Bank, to incorporate the settlement-city of Ariel (population 17,000).

Unlike the construction of the northern part, the construction of the central part did not catch the Palestinian organisations off-guard. Together with Israeli-Palestinian members of parliament and peace organisations, they managed, sometimes risking their lives in perilous demonstrations along the path, to put the barrier and its path at the top of the international agenda, considerably delaying its construction.

European leaders demanded cancellation of the project, Tony Blair proposed delaying it and American officials proposed physical re-routings of the map. The American administration was particularly “worried”<sup>i</sup> by the loop designed to encapsulate the settlement of Ariel, and even threatened reducing loan guarantees as a penalty if construction goes ahead.

Sharon responded that the barrier will go ahead as planned. The government has authorised a budget of almost \$200 million, but the eventual route is still unclear. Although construction has begun in the Ariel region, it may be in order to encircle this large settlement city so that it can be left behind like a fortress island.

### **Temporary Permanence**

The government maintains that the principle that guides the path involves “temporary and urgent security considerations”, not political ones, and that the barrier is not and will not become a permanent border.

The claim for the “temporariness” of the barrier describes it as an instrument of contingency in a temporary state of emergency. But it is precisely the transient nature of Israeli unilateral actions across the frontier of the West Bank that renders them most effective in terms of the occupation.

In their book *Bad Days*, Israeli philosophers Adi Ophir and Ariella Azoulay noted that the occupation perpetuates itself through ever-new seemingly “temporary” facts, and that it is the “temporality” of conflict that allows the occupation to continue permanently.

Barriers are indeed different than borders in that they do not separate an “inside” and an “outside” of a sovereignty-based political and legal system, but merely act as contingency apparatuses to prohibit movement across a territory. Throughout Israeli history, though, the state always preferred to use temporary security arrangements as a way to create permanent political facts on the ground. If Sharon gets his way, the barrier will be transformed from a temporary security measure to a permanent political and material fact.

Currently the barrier is still “flexible” – capable of incorporating more political pressures into its very path. The barrier construction in the central zone may still be altered or delayed, depending on local or foreign political pressures, until an initial territorial phase of the political negotiations between Israel, the Palestinians and the US on the temporary borders of the Palestinian state will reach some conclusions. If they do.

### **Islands**

“The more forces there are in the vicinity of a line, the more complex is its path”. The modernist painter Wassily Kandinsky set thus the basis for the formal organisations of lines across a canvas in his book *Points and Line to Plane*. “When the force field around a line contains intense contradictions the line can no longer maintain its graphic coherence and shreds into fragments and discontinuous vectors”.

Ariel Sharon recently made public his intention to extend the barrier from being only in front (west) of Palestinian-populated areas of the West Bank to being also behind (east) of them and run through the Jordan valley, thus fully encircling and completely surrounding the Palestinian areas.

Under this outline, more than half of the total territory of the West Bank will remain under Israeli control – namely, the two strategic north/south strips of the Jordan valley in the east and the meandering strip next to the Green Line in the west. They would be connected via Jerusalem and other east-west arteries.

The resulting layout will repeat almost exactly the ‘H’ pattern envisaged in Sharon’s 1982 plan, as if nothing in the intervening years – neither the Oslo process nor the “roadmap” – have altered his long-term vision.



Instead of a promise for separation embodied within this border-like device, the barrier will complete a project of containment. Not only will the Palestinians be surrounded on the surface of the land, Sharon will keep effective sovereignty on the mountain aquifer below their feet and on the airspace above their heads. This will wrap the Palestinians figuratively and physically from all directions.

The Palestinian state will effectively become a series of unstable pockets, completely surrounded lest they expand, within a Zionist body-politic that will cover all the territory between the Mediterranean sea and the Jordan river.

The archipelago of isolated territories around the Palestinian cities that remain, initially under IDF control, will gradually turn into what will become the "Palestinian state within its temporary borders" – the one the "roadmap" has as its objective. The Green Line, which the Palestinian government would like to see as its border with Israel, is 350 kilometres long, but the total length of barriers projected to be constructed between Israel and the Palestinians stretch to more than 1,200 kilometres.

In this geographic arrangement, the Palestinians are simultaneously inside and outside: landlocked inside a complete territorial envelopment, without any border save the very long and fragmented one to Israel, but – recalling the apartheid-era South African Bantustans – outside the Israeli state system.

### **Enclaves / Exclaves**

Within both Israeli and Palestinian parts of the West Bank, there will be islands or enclaves belonging to the other zone. A line separating Israelis and Palestinians has become geometrically impossible, unless large settlements are removed – something that the Israeli government is incapable of doing. Thus, a few hundred thousands of Palestinians will be left within the Israeli side, while almost the same number of Israelis, in remote settlements and military installations, will remain in pockets of "special security zones" within the Palestinian areas.

To protect these settlements and reassure their inhabitants, a sequence of fortifications identical to those composing the primary barrier is being laid out in enclosed circuits around them. The barrier has ceased to be the single and continuous line; like splintered worms taking on renewed life, it curls around isolated settlements and along the roads connecting them.

It is a condition of double enclosure. Settlements are fenced in for self-protection while Palestinian towns are enclosed from outside to prohibit security threats from leaking out. With this arrangement, the traditional perception of political space as a contiguous territorial surface, clearly delimited by continuous borders, is no longer relevant.

If the relation between the length of a border and the surface of the territory is an indication of the amount of "security" present, then the folds of the barrier line and its separate shreds place "security" measures deep throughout the terrain. Similar to the way in which the fjords, islands and lakes along the Norwegian coast create a whole zone across which water meets rock, the barrier's folds and twists create an ever-present high-friction zone where civilian populations are jammed against "security" apparatuses.

With this fragmented geography in mind, Sharon finally merged the two extremes that defined Israel's relation to its edge. Trying to articulate defence in depth with a line, he simultaneously created the line of a "border" and the deep conflict space of the "frontier".

The paradox in the fact that it is finally Ariel Sharon that set the borders of the state can thus be resolved. The barrier is not a defeat of his geo-strategy, based on the historical rejection of the setting of a permanent border. For in its convoluted path, the one inscribed in the logic of his strategic thinking, the barrier is the direct and logical consequence of his free frontier mentality, which seeks to blur the borders of the state, rather than fix them.

The territorial concessions embedded in the plan are based on nothing but an acknowledgment of the Palestinian demographic advantage. Sharon is aware that considering current population growth, there will be a Palestinian majority in the combined territories of Israel/Palestine by 2020. He has thus acted to cut out the Palestinian demographic centres from the legal and effective responsibility of the Israeli state.

The consolidation of lines so convoluted and discontinuous into such expensive material presence will however not end the occupation but rather offer the means to indirectly consolidate it. Israel will go on being a borderless society, left in a perpetual state of fermentation and uncertainty in its identity, with the inconsistent behaviour and self-destructive impulses that define, in the words of Israeli architect Zvi Efrat, its own "borderline disorder".

## Hollow land

When the barrier is completed and the temporary-permanent security measures outline the border of a permanent "Palestinian state in temporary borders" scattered on landlocked sovereign islands, yet another territorial paradox will have to be resolved.

The fragmentation of jurisdiction across the surface will not be compatible with Sharon's public pledges that (with the implementation of the "roadmap") he will carve out a "contiguous area of territory in the West Bank that would allow the Palestinians to travel from Jenin [the northernmost city in the West Bank] to Hebron [the southernmost] without passing any Israeli roadblocks."

When the bewildered reporters objected, based on the fact that the proposed path of the barrier will enclose these cities and set them apart in separate territorial envelopment, and asked how contiguity and fragmentation could be resolved, Sharon responded, probably with one of his famous winks, that this will be accomplished by "a combination of tunnels and bridges".

This type of continuity, Sharon realised in 1996 when (as minister of national infrastructure under Benjamin Netanyahu) he inaugurated the first apparatus of vertical separation – the 'tunnel road' – can be achieved not on the surface but in volume.

The tunnel road connects Jerusalem with the southern settlements of Gush Etzion and further, with the Jewish neighbourhoods of Hebron. To accomplish this it performs a double contortion: spanning as a bridge over a Palestinian cultivated valley, and diving into a tunnel under a Palestinian suburb of Bethlehem.

The Israeli writer Meron Benvenisti describes it as the crashing of three dimensions into six: three Israeli and three Palestinian. Both the valley that the road spans, and the city it dives under are, according to the Oslo agreement, areas under limited Palestinian sovereignty; thus the physical separation of traffic arrangements is mirrored by a political one – the city above is under Palestinian limited sovereignty while the road below it is under full Israeli sovereignty.

By introducing the vertical dimension, in similar schemes of over and under-passes, linkage could be achieved between the different territorial islands and the last territorial paradox of the frontier be resolved. Israeli/Palestinian roads and infrastructure will connect settlements/Palestinian towns while they span over or under Palestinian/Israeli lands.

Consequently, and hand-in-hand with the planned completion of the barrier, plans are under way to transform Route 60 – the main north-south traffic artery connecting all major Palestinian cities – into an elevated construction placed on stilts allowing for Israeli east-west routes (those making the H plan) to pass undisturbed underneath it. At the point where these roads cross, sovereignty will be divided along the up/down axis of the vertical dimension.

In the West Bank, bridges are no longer merely devices engineered to overcome natural boundaries or connect impossible points. Rather, they become the boundary itself. Indeed, a new way of imagining territory was developed for the West Bank. The region was no longer seen as a two-dimensional surface of a single territory, but as a large "hollow" three-dimensional surface, within which the West Bank could be physically partitioned into two separate but overlapping national geographies. Within this volume, separate security corridors, infrastructure, over-ground bridges and underground tunnels are woven into an Escher-like space.

With the technologies and infrastructure required for the physical segregation of Israelis from Palestinians along complex volumetric borders, it furthermore seems as if this most complex geopolitical problem of the Middle East has gone through a scale-shift and taken on architectural dimensions. The West Bank appears to

have been reassembled in the shape of a complex building with its closed-off enclaves as walled spaces and its bypasses as exclusive security corridors.

Yet because borders and the technologies necessary to maintain them have become so incredibly expensive and complex, the politics of separation will soon be completely and utterly exhausted as a viable alternative. The obsessive drive for an excessive territorial-based “security” has produced its own hermetic logical chain. It started with the making of a line of settlement along the Jordan valley, then continued with the seeding of strategic settlement-points across the depth of the territory, then with an attempt to collect all points within separate and convoluted barrier lines. This resulted in the breaking-up of the surface into separate islands and enclaves, which brought about the necessity to overcome this fragmentation with volumetric transport lines – a classically Talmudic *redactum ad absurdum*.

The “politics of verticality” that described the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian areas as the three-dimensional wrap has not collapsed with the construction of a two-dimensional barrier. The barrier is but the surface component in an occupation that will continue underneath the surface – in the effective Israeli control of the water aquifers under Palestinian areas and in Israeli sovereignty over the airways and electromagnetic fields that will allow constant Israeli air force control above the territory.

The volumetric technologies of separation might well be geometrically creative and “interesting” in planning terms; but in essence they are the very familiar and traditional, absolute and hermetic borders, here disguised within the Trojan horse of spatial radicalism.

Exhausted by its effort to eradicate a unified Palestinian polity by military means, Ariel Sharon's territorial policies are without doubt aimed at its elimination by territorial means. There clearly exists a direct relationship between the coherence and continuity of space and the ability to govern and control it. The proposed territorial form of the Palestinian political space – dispersed within a fragmented area, with the connections between its separate territorial islands subject to Israel's will – will prohibit the chance for a united Palestinian political order to emerge.

The attempt to imagine a spatial-technical design solution to the conflict – one based on barriers, tunnels and bridges – has thus reached its most extreme and dystopian manifestation. It is too complex to offer security, (unless the entire resources of the state are constantly drafted to maintain and service its length), too aggressive to offer the appearance of a just solution, and too expensive to be economically viable on the long run.

It is, in short, the architectural product of fear, serving nothing but the Israeli public's psychological need for a real object, rather than a belief in an abstract process, to provide protection. But inevitably in the consequential loop of the self-fulfilling prophecy, the barrier will keep on justifying itself in producing the very threats from which it professes to defend.

Against the endless search for the form and mechanisms of “perfect” separation comes the realisation that a viable solution does not lie within the realm of design. If a resolution of *the* territorial struggle of the century is seriously proposed in this bizarre manner, perhaps the only counter-proposal is not for more planning “creativity” of the Ariel Sharon type, but for a non-territorial approach based on principles other than partition.

If we dare look at the ‘Holy Land’ as a densely-inhabited environment of quite modest proportions (it barely exceeds the London metropolitan area), one that needs to address some very urgent problems of infrastructure, environment, transport and housing as well as those of citizenship and rights, we realise that the partition path is the wrong one to take.

The essential condition for the practice of equitable straightforward planning and development is not a further play of identity-politics in complex geometry – but the formation of a single democratic, non-discriminatory and non-ethnic state based on mutuality, equality and fundamental political and human rights across the complete borders of Israel and Palestine.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> DONNAN, HASTINGS, and WILSON, THOMAS.M., *Borders: Frontiers of Identity, Nation and State*, Berg, Oxford 1999, p. 48.
- <sup>2</sup> HIRST, PAUL, *Governing Space: Architecture, Politics and War* (manuscript to be posthumously published).
- <sup>3</sup> ETKES, DROR, «Settlement Watch, Peace Now», 14/3/2004, <http://www.peacenow.org.il/English>.
- <sup>4</sup> Zionism in its pre-state period as well as currently could provide a text case of frontier geography. Although the Zionist project has its roots in the modern political concept of the nation-state, Israeli governments have nevertheless avoided recognizing its borders as final, currently keeping open frontier zones in Gaza and the West Bank.
- <sup>5</sup> TUMER, FREDERICK J., «The Significance of the Frontier in American History», a paper read at the meeting of the American Historical Association in Chicago, July 12, 1893. It first appeared in the *Proceedings of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, December 14, 1893; accessible on the web at [www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1893turner.html](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1893turner.html), on 24.2.03.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>7</sup> NEGRI, ANTONIO and HARDT, MICHAEL, *Empire, op. cit.*, p. 168.
- <sup>8</sup> ZERTAL, IDITH, *Death and the Nation: History Memory Politics, op. cit.*, p. 262.
- <sup>9</sup> DONNAN, HASTINGS, and THOMAS M. WILSON, *Borders: Frontiers of Identity, Nation and State, op. cit.*, p. 137. On the importance of mimicry in colonial culture see: BHABHA, HOMI, «Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalend-ce of Colonial Discourse», in *October* 28, Spring 1984.
- <sup>10</sup> MORRIS, BENNY, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1987.
- <sup>11</sup> For application of Agamben's ideas to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, cf. GREGORY, DEREK, «Defiled Cities», in *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 24 (3), 2003, pp. 312-314.
- <sup>12</sup> AGAMBEN, GIORGIO, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and the Bare Life*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 1998.
- <sup>13</sup> LAOR, YITZHAK, «Land of Israel vs. State of Israel», *Haaretz*, 7.5.04.
- <sup>14</sup> AGAMBEN, *op. cit.*
- <sup>15</sup> According to Agamben, a European, the temporary state of exception is embodied in the concentration camp itself originally implemented in the frontier Boer Wars of South Africa.
- <sup>16</sup> AZOULAY, ARIELLA and OPHIR, ADI, *Bad Days*, Resling Press, Tel Aviv 2002 (Hebrew), p. 56.
- <sup>17</sup> *Empire, op. cit.*
- <sup>18</sup> EFRAT, ZVI, *Borderline Disorder*, Ministry of Science, Culture and Sport and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jerusalem 2002.
- <sup>19</sup> SALMON, CHRISTIAN, «The Bulldozer War», *Le Monde Diplomatique*, May 2002, quoted in GREGORY, DEREK, «Defiled Cities», *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 24 (3), 2003.

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