

2. Birth of a Doctrine

FEW REMEMBER: The new era in the Middle East began at 6:45 A.M. on September 29, 2000, when a Palestinian policeman, Na'il Suileiman, got out of the Palestinian jeep that was taking part in a joint patrol with Israel in Qalqilyah, walked over to the Israeli jeep and shot his Israeli counterpart, Yossi Tabeja, a Border Policeman, at point-blank range.¹

The writer of this retrospective vignette, Ari Shavit of *Haaretz*, recalls the joint patrol as an icon of the Oslo period. Thus, its demise is a fitting symbol of the demise of everything associated with the 1993 deal, namely, mutual recognition, a rejection of violence, the peaceful resolution of the four “final status” issues—borders, settlements, Jerusalem, and refugees.

Others might have picked different moments. One might select October 12, 2000, when two Israeli soldiers were lynched by a Palestinian mob after erroneously entering Ramallah.² Or perhaps March 27, 2002 when a suicide bomber killed thirty Jews enjoying their Passover Seder at the Park Hotel in Netanya, triggering Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's decision to reoccupy Palestinian cities from which Israeli security forces had withdrawn pur-

1. Ari Shavit, “So Mature, This New Israeli Majority,” *Haaretz Special Magazine*, August 15, 2005.

2. Margot Dudkevitch and Arie O'Sullivan, “Israel Launches Reprisal Attacks on PA for 2 Soldiers Lynched in Ramallah,” *Jerusalem Post*, October 13, 2000.

suant to the Oslo II agreement (dubbed Operation Defensive Shield).³

In tracing the path of unilateral disengagement and Sharon's ultimate embrace of the doctrine, such searing and spectacular incidents can either illuminate underlying trends or blind the observer to these dynamics. The initial planning for the geographic separation of Israelis and Palestinians came during the administration of Prime Minister Ehud Barak (1999–2001) and was predicated on the assumption that talks with the Palestinians would succeed. In other words, separation would be part of a comprehensive agreement on borders. Barak accordingly launched a series of interdepartmental studies under the direction of Shaul Arieli, head of his "Peace Administration." Another strong presence was Transport Minister Ephraim Sneh. Both urged the prime minister to initiate the program with or without a deal with the Palestinians, advice Barak ignored. Instead, even after the failure at Camp David, he continued his talks with the PA as the Second Intifada began and his political standing crumbled. Their failure destroyed the political mandate of Barak's Labor government and brought Sharon's hard-line Likud-led coalition to power.⁴

Many political observers would cite the massive violence and virulent anti-Israeli sentiment on display during "Intifada 2" as the best indications that the real objective of the Palestinians was eradication of the Jewish state. This view was reinforced as accounts of the last gasp "Clinton Parameters" and final Taba burial ceremony of December 2000 and January 2001 came to light. Taba came about after President Bill Clinton, moving more quietly but no less dramatically than he had previously at Camp David (July 2000), sought to rescue the negotiation process from col-

3. Karin Laub, "Israeli Top Officials Meet Amid Calls for Retaliation After Suicide Attack Kills 20," *Associated Press*, March 28, 2002.

4. Leslie Susser, "Time to Build the Fence?" *Jerusalem Report*, August 27, 2001.

lapse by defining the “parameters” for resolving outstanding issues. Taba would then underline the fact that deep and fundamental differences on key issues had never been bridged since the start of the Oslo process. In the public relations battle to follow, largely over which side or individual bore primary responsibility for the failure of the talks and return to violence, the overall picture of systemic failure became blurred.

An important source detailing the difficulties was the “Moratinos Document,” compiled by European Union envoy Miguel Moratinos from notes he and members of his staff assembled after conferring with negotiators from both sides following closed door bargaining sessions.⁵ Even as members of each team praised the atmosphere inside the meeting rooms, they charted fundamental differences on many critical issues. Take, for example, the large Israeli settlement blocs built on land conquered in 1967. The Israelis sought to annex these areas. Yet as the Moratinos Document records, “The Palestinian side stated that blocs would cause significant harm to the Palestinian interests and rights, particularly to the Palestinians residing in areas Israel seeks to annex.” In particular, the dispute over the Ma’aleh Adumim bloc near Jerusalem exposed the fundamental difference between the parties on how Security Council Resolution 242—framing the debate on control of the 1967 territories—should be interpreted. The Israelis maintain it mandates the withdrawal from “territories” occupied subsequent to June 4, 1967 while the Palestinians—and the Arab states whose backing for any accord is critical—insist that Resolution 242 requires withdrawal from *the* territories, a return to 1967 with no exceptions. The differing interpretations produced different results as the Israelis sought to annex nearly twice as much land as the Palestinians were willing to offer.

5. Akiva Eldar, “Text: ‘Moratinos Document’—The Peace that Nearly was at Taba,” *Haaretz*, February 14, 2002. Text of Document dated January 2001 and available online at www.arts.mcgill.ca/MEPP/PRRN/papers/moratinos.html.

As regards Jerusalem, the parties had agreed in principle to maintain it as an “open city,” described by the Moratinos Document as “territory that citizens of both countries can enter without passing through any checkpoints.” However, “the Palestinians wanted it to encompass all of Jerusalem, while the Israelis wanted it limited to the Old City only.” Considering both parties desire Jerusalem as their respective capital, this constituted a very substantial difference.⁶

The two sides also failed to agree on how much of the Western Wall is sacred to Jews. This dispute speaks to a host of claims by the parties. That is, because the Western Wall is sacred to Jews but occupies the Harem al-Sharif (the Temple Mount) holy to Muslims, Palestinians cannot concede sovereignty over the Temple Mount less they lose the support of the broader Muslim world while Israeli concessions, vis-à-vis the Western Wall, jeopardize the Jewish nature of the state. Debating the extent to which the Western Wall is sacred to Jews thereby raised existential, religious, and territorial issues that would have to be resolved before any agreement could be reached.

On one land issue, however, there seemed no dispute. As the Moratinos Document offers: “Neither side presented any maps over the Gaza Strip. It was implied that the Gaza Strip will be under total Palestinian sovereignty, but details have still to be worked out.” Indeed, the principle details discussed involved the question of sovereignty over the land bridge linking Gaza to the West Bank in order that the new Palestinian state be contiguous; there was no debate over control of Gaza per se.

In the years following Taba, Israeli scholars, journalists, and government officials would scan the record for any hint that the two sides had agreed on a framework for resolving the core ques-

6. Ibid.

tion of refugees. What they would find instead was a fairly minor tinkering with the modalities of implementing a settlement but nothing to suggest that Yasser Arafat and his colleagues had budged from their insistence that ultimately those displaced by the 1948 fighting (and their descendents) be permitted to return to Israel. This position was expressed more by the failure of the two sides to embrace the “Clinton Parameters” than by a battle over the modalities of implementation. Under the parameters, the refugees could have been settled inside Israel, within the soon-to-be-created Palestinian state—including land transferred by Israel to that state as part of a “swap” for land annexed by Israel outside its pre-1967 borders—within the country where they were residing when the deal was clinched, or in some other country, with the final say in each case resting with the host government. This was a proposal for settling the issue once and for all, but instead the parties spent much of their time discussing the number of Palestinians who could return to Israel during the first three to five years following the accord. This was an utterly hollow approach, allowing both sides to claim noteworthy advances. Thus, left-wing Israeli negotiator Yossi Beilin and his colleagues could brag of the great progress made and constructive atmosphere achieved while the Palestinians could maintain that they had betrayed not so much as a word from General Assembly Resolution 194, which Palestinians say accords their refugees the right to return to their pre-1948 homes or villages so long as they agree to live in peace with their neighbors.⁷

A second imperative source on the refugee question comes from documents obtained by the French newspaper *Le Monde* in the late summer of 2001 containing the draft positions of each

7. Ibid. See also David Matz, “Trying to Understand the Taba Talks (Part I),” *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics, and Culture* 10, no. 3 (2003): 104.

side.⁸ Though formally only “draft positions,” these remained the de facto negotiating positions through at least January 2001 as reflected in subsequent drafts and negotiations up through Taba. Though the December 2000 Clinton Parameters provided a coherent plan for settling the refugee issue, the two sides did not significantly alter their positions. Specifically, the Palestinian proposal argued at Taba still provides that “all refugees who wish to return to *their homes* in Israel and live at peace with their neighbors have the right to do so.”⁹

The Israeli position, meanwhile, reminded the parties that after accepting all UN resolutions dividing Mandate Palestine into Jewish and Palestinian states, “the emergent state of Israel became embroiled in the war and bloodshed of 1948–49, that led to victims and suffering on both sides, including the displacement and dispossession of the Palestinian civilian population.” The Israelis, in other words, would embrace an historical narrative in which they shared *responsibility* for the refugee problem but not one in which they assumed *blame*. Further, they noted that Palestinian aspirations can be satisfied by the establishment of their own sovereign state together with a right of self-determination that includes the ability of a designated capped number to return to Israel. Due to demographic trends, Israel can go no further than that if it seeks to remain a Jewish state. By contrast, the Palestinian insistence on the right of return for refugees is, in effect, a proposal for a two-state solution, but with both of the states Palestinian, one now and one after demography does its work.¹⁰

8. Le Monde Diplomatique’s Refugee Papers (2) Israel’s “Private response to Palestinian refugee paper of January 22, 2001,” Taba, January 23, 2001, Draft 2; (1) Palestinian Refugees Paper, Taba, 22 January 2001 at www.arts.mcgill.ca/mepp/new_prrn/research/research_documents.htm.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

Other participant accounts of the talks have fleshed out the positions described above, none with greater comprehensiveness or authenticity than that of Dennis Ross, Mr. Clinton's Middle East specialist and the man who played the same role for Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush. Ross portrays Yasser Arafat as a man unable or unwilling to close a deal requiring serious compromise. In the period between the Camp David talks of July 2000 and the Taba negotiations mentioned above, for example, Arafat agreed on the need for a demilitarized Palestinian state but never on what the specific limits would be. He embraced territorial compromise but turned down Clinton's plan for delivering 94–96 percent of the West Bank to the Palestinians together with a 3 percent land swap and a nonsovereignty right-of-way linking Gaza and the West Bank. When it came to Jerusalem, he rejected Israeli sovereignty over its own Western Wall. And, in the true moment of truth, he rejected any and all of Clinton's plans for solving the refugee problem.¹¹

Coupled with the increasingly violent course of the Second Intifada, the failures at Camp David and Taba are widely assessed as having “discredited” the Israeli peace movement. This is true only in a narrow sense. Ehud Barak, architect of dramatic openings to Syria and the Palestinians, lost his bid for reelection in a rout. Ariel Sharon, the arch hawk, mastermind of Israel's disastrous intervention in Lebanon in the early 1980s, former political pariah, and zealous proponent of settling the 1967 Territories (earning him the sobriquet of the “Bulldozer”) was now prime minister. Labor's Knesset mandates fell below two dozen for the first time in Israel's history.

Still, several underlying realities of Israel's situation had not changed; these would soon have more of an impact on Israeli

11. See Dennis Ross, *The Missing Peace* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Co., 2004), pp. 712–58, for specifics on the back-and-forth dialogue.

policy than the “discrediting” of the peace movement. The first was demography. As early as 2001, centrist Likud figures like Dan Meridor and Michael Eitan noted ethnic trends that would eventually make Jews a minority in the land they governed, spurring them to urge serious consideration of proposals to withdraw from areas that were clearly Palestinian. Zionism may have meant settling all the land west of the Jordan, encompassing Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. But it also meant establishing a state populated mainly, if not exclusively, by Jews. As of the 2000 census, Jews numbered only 51 percent of the population in this region. Palestinian Arabs, non-Jewish Russians, Druze and foreign workers accounted for the rest. Their higher birthrates meant that within a few years, Jews would be a minority in their own country plus the land they occupied, and would either have to invoke increasingly repressive measures to maintain political control, or surrender that control in the name of democracy. During an interview at his wood-paneled Tel Aviv skyscraper office, former prime minister Barak defined the issue succinctly:

Between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean there live eleven million people, four and a half million Palestinians and six and a half million Israelis. If there is only one political entity ruling over there named Israel, it will become inevitably either non-Jewish or non-democratic. Inevitably! Neither option is good. So there is a compelling advantage to separate, to disengage.¹²

The issue can, however, be overstated. With this analysis, a key question became: what percentage of the included population could you occupy and oppress and still maintain both your Jewish and democratic credentials. Forty-nine percent? Thirty percent? Twenty percent . . . the current non-Jewish Israeli citizen popu-

12. Ehud Barak, transcript of interview with author, Tel Aviv, August 17, 2005.

lation inside the Green Line demarking the pre-1967 borders? There was no silver bullet without going all the way back to those 1967 borders. But clearly the “Greater Israel” approach could only aggravate the demographic issue.

A second factor was security. During the 2001–2002 period, the Palestinians increasingly resorted to suicide attacks inside Israel. Busses, restaurants, cafes, market places, and a discothèque all became targets, killing hundreds, maiming thousands, and choking tourism. Such attacks turned the most mundane of life’s activities into perilous adventures for a people increasingly fearful of losing their national sanity but also wary of encouraging the terrorists should they depart from their ordinary pursuits. Yet to a visitor during the 2002 period of most savage attack, Israel maintained an air of defiant normalcy, with roads clogged, busses packed and markets, cafes, and restaurants well attended.

Even this collective courage proved insufficient. Things threatened to get worse as the Palestinians attempted to stage a mega-incident on the scale of 9/11. One foiled plot involved using a car bomb in the parking lot to collapse one of the Azrieli Towers, the tallest skyscrapers in downtown Tel Aviv.¹³ In another incident, the putative suicide driver of a truck filled with explosive material tried to ignite a natural gas tank farm at Pi Glilot, just south of Herzliya.¹⁴ Only one small blaze resulted and the fire was quickly extinguished. Yet although no incidents akin to September 11 succeeded, the attempts were sufficient in and of themselves, increasing the siege mentality of the Israeli populace and raising the specter of inevitable and prolonged violence.¹⁵

13. Jerusalem Post Staff, “IDF Thwarts Bid to Bomb Azrieli Towers,” *Jerusalem Post*, April 29, 2002.

14. David Rudge, “Pi Glilot Attack Raises Questions,” *Jerusalem Post*, May 24, 2002.

15. David Rudge, “Ben-Eliezer Warns of Bombing Wave. Catastrophe Averted at Pi Glilot,” *Jerusalem Post*, May 24, 2002.

By far the most significant political change was less the discrediting of peace advocates than the discrediting of the Palestinians as negotiating partners. Despite lip service to a so-called “two state solution” to the long-running dispute, Israelis were increasingly convinced that the real objective of Yasser Arafat and his colleagues was the destruction of the Jewish state through terrorism, demographics, or some combination of the two. That alone could explain the continuing insistence on the right of return, the systematic support to terrorism, the honors paid the Palestinian “martyrs,” the direct involvement of groups like the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade—an offshoot of Arafat’s own Fatah movement—in the violence, and Arafat’s attempt to up the ante by importing fifty tons of advanced weapons from Iran aboard the intercepted cargo ship *Karyn A*.

Professor Dan Schueftan of Haifa University, a combative scholar with a searing wit, was among the first of the Israeli intellectuals to argue that the demographic challenge posed by the Palestinians is no less severe than the security threat, that there is no foreseeable negotiating option and that the situation presents Israel with the need to disengage unilaterally from the Gaza Strip and those parts of the West Bank that are either too remote to defend efficiently or too close to existing Palestinian communities. During an interview in his Ramat Aviv duplex apartment, he argued that negotiations with the Palestinians were an exercise in futility:

Even those Palestinians who are saying we are willing to accept for the moment a state on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are still saying, but we need Israel to recognize the profound injustice that Israel caused us in 1948, and therefore the 1948 issue is not closed, and you have at least to admit your guilt—which will be an everlasting guilt—and you must start a process that would allow Palestinians in large numbers to come into

Israel, change the demographic balance, and in the final analysis this will not be a Jewish state.

“We live in a bad neighborhood, and when you live in a bad neighborhood, being nice doesn’t cut it,” Schueftan continued. “In order for Israel to survive, it has to cut itself off completely from Palestinians. And the danger of a Palestinian terrorist is not as big as the danger of a Palestinian migrant into Israel who changes the demographic composition of the state of Israel.”¹⁶

The notion of adding some sort of physical barrier on the West Bank to offer protection from terrorist infiltration and delineate the border of the Israeli state was soon added to the dual-idea of unilateral Israeli withdrawal and Israeli-Palestinian separation. Credit for integrating the two ideas is disputed, but western diplomats paid to know such things insist the parentage belongs to Eival Giladi, at the time head of strategic planning for the IDF. They say Giladi had floated the idea in several private conversations and authored a secret memo on the subject late in 2001 or early the following year. During the course of a March 3, 2006, News Hour interview with the BBC, Giladi recalled the pitch he had made directly to Sharon: “I came to Prime Minister Sharon and asked him very simply, you know we enjoy military superiority, we are so stronger politically. Why do we have to let the extremists of the other side shape the future of everyone here? Why can’t we take action which must be balanced?”

Amos Malka, head of the IDF’s Intelligence Branch, was quick to sign on; so was Avi Dichter, head of Shin Bet. An Israeli military planner present at several relevant meetings insists that Dichter soon became the most zealous advocate of the fence. “It became like a mantra with Dichter,” he recalled. “He raised it every time we talked about stopping the suicide bombers.” Even

16. Dan Schueftan, transcript of interview with author, Tel Aviv, August 1, 2005.

with Sharon having reoccupied parts of the West Bank ceded by Oslo for Palestinian administration, the strategists saw a deteriorating situation with nothing in sight save continuing terrorist penetrations. During an early morning interview at Tel Aviv's Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, Dichter claimed that without a fence, suicide attacks could not be stopped:

There is nothing between the terror centers and the living centers in Israel. To cross from Nablus to Tel Aviv is easier than to cross from New Jersey to New York—at least there you have a river. So we convinced people to build the fence—that we needed the physical buffer zone. We also convinced them that fighting from the outside with no fence would lead us nowhere.¹⁷

Barak, a defeated politician but still a defense intellectual to be reckoned with, likewise embraced the idea of a fence. So did the Likud MKs Eitan and Meridor. Independently, they briefed Sharon on the idea but did not specifically address the questions of precisely where the fence would go or what would be done to the settlements in the West Bank lying beyond it. Sharon, who could at times convey all the conviction of a sphinx, gave no indication of either interest or noninterest. Nor was there any political pressure for him to act. His Laborite defense minister, Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, was against the proposal, fearing it would bring about a repetition of the pullout from Lebanon which was proclaimed by Hezbollah as proof that Israel could succumb to sustained military pressure, a lesson the Palestinians took to heart. No, argued Ben-Eliezer, unilateral Israeli separation “would be seen as a reward for terror and invite more terror.”¹⁸

Neither was the United States enthralled with the move. In

17. Avi Dichter, author's notes of interview, Tel Aviv, August 1, 2005.

18. Susser, “Fence.”

his farewell address, departing U.S. ambassador Martin Indyk told a Tel Aviv University audience: “Because it will not be recognized, because it will remain controversial, because you will retain some territories beyond the June 4, 1967 lines, the last line of your withdrawal will become the first line of Palestinian attack. If you think mortars are a problem now, imagine what it could become then.”¹⁹

Indyk left Israel in July 2001. Over the next several months, Labor and others on the left became increasingly infatuated with the idea of a unilateral separation coupled with a wall or fence that followed the 1967 boundaries, perhaps encompassing the settlement blocs as well. Some agreed with Meridor that the Israeli move could induce the Palestinians to return to the negotiating table, but most did not regard this as a paramount objective or its potential failure as a defect of the strategy. Nor did Indyk’s fear of a hostile Palestinian state committed to regaining territory outside the 1967 borders Israel might try to hold bother too many on the left. After all, Israel had been surrounded by hostile neighbors from its creation through the peace with Egypt and had managed to survive. Up to and including the Six Days’ War, it had held the moral high ground, fighting only in self-defense, governing only those Arabs who resided inside its own boundaries, imposing a colonial-style regime on no one. Many on the left had opposed settlements from the start. They warned that settling on the land of others would undermine the Israeli character and lead to a form of exploitation that would cost Israel support throughout the democratic West. Over subsequent decades, they watched “creeping annexation,” with disgust as settlers murdered Palestinian mayors and committed countless acts of violence and intimidation against the Palestinian residents while the state looked

19. Ibid.

the other way and the number of settlers grew from fifty thousand to a hundred thousand to the current two hundred and forty thousand. Perhaps most distressing was that Labor began the settlement policy and, during its brief periods of power after the mid-1970s, did little to rein it in, even after Oslo. Now they argued, it was time to disengage. The absence of a Palestinian negotiating partner should not determine the character of Israel. With the help of a physical barrier to counter the new threat of the suicide bomber, Israel could both defend and define itself.

Sharon read the signals. Those who have watched him over the years comment that Sharon was far more of a consensus builder than many critics realize, but also very much more a tactician than a strategist. His Lebanon debacle of the early 1980s had convinced him that big moves require both Labor support and acquiescence by the United States. Unilateral disengagement was a concept he was not nearly ready to embrace in 2001–2002. Not only was it a coalition killer in terms of alienating his right-wing coalition partners, but much of his own party would likely bolt at the idea.

If disengagement was a nonstarter at the time, the construction of a wall separating the two populaces was a middle-of-the-road approach that would placate Labor. There were, however, drawbacks to this avenue as well. Sharon himself had expressed doubts about the project, concerned that it might be interpreted as an Israeli statement of sovereignty over the fenced area, more a border than a buffer, a move he was similarly not ready to make at this time. Also, military and intelligence views on the subject were by no means unanimous. Dichter, Malka, and Giladi aside, others like IDF chief-of-staff Moshe Ya'Alon saw the fence as a prelude to unilateral disengagement, which he warned would be interpreted as an Israeli military defeat. Other IDF officials argued that close to 55 percent of the suicide bombers entered Israel through ruse and disguise at legal checkpoints. A wall—we

should use the term *separation barrier* rather than wall, as only 5 percent of the barrier is wall—could not impede such infiltration, while making an elaborate search of all vehicles traveling to and from West Bank destinations each day would choke ordinary commerce beyond endurance.

Still, Sharon finally agreed to the fence in the summer of 2002, purporting to sever it from the concept of unilateral disengagement. This was an illusion. Irrespective of adjustments in the route designed to bring additional settlements within its protection, a majority of settlements and at least fifty-eight thousand of the two hundred and forty thousand Israelis living on the West Bank would fall outside its perimeters. Yes, Israeli troops could range where they wanted. Checkpoints and searches would offer some protection. But the fence would come to define the 8 percent of the West Bank Israel was committed to protecting, and also the land it would be willing to give up, just as the fence built in Gaza in the mid-1990s had separated land many could not wait to get rid of from Israel's beloved Negev.

Sharon, a man defined by actions and rarely by words, remained cryptic, describing the fence as “only another counterterrorism measure.” He denied unilateral separation was even under consideration. During the political campaign that fall and winter, Labor candidate Amram Mitzna proposed a substantial unilateral withdrawal from Gaza if negotiations proved impossible. Sharon famously replied, “The fate of Netzarim is the fate of Tel Aviv.”²⁰ He and Likud overwhelmingly won the January 2003 election, taking forty-one seats in the one-hundred-and-twenty-member Knesset to only nineteen for Labor, and formed a right-wing coalition that excluded Labor. Along the way, Sharon cemented ties with the Bush administration which, due largely to 9/11 and the

20. Peter Hirschberg, “Background/Sharon Talks Regional Peace to American Jews,” *Haaretz*, April 24, 2002.

resulting War on Terror, had come a long way from its periodic scolding of Sharon for military thrusts taken in response to terrorist incidents.

That did not happen overnight. After the World Trade Center destruction, Washington gave Arafat an opportunity to pull the plug on the Second Intifada. On April 4, 2002, as Israeli forces responded to the Passover bombing with incursions deep into Palestinian territory, President Bush urged Israel to pull back, embraced the recent call of peace broker George Mitchell for an end to both terrorism and new Israeli settlement activity, and articulated his vision of a just settlement as “two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.”²¹

But as Arafat again shunned an opening for productive talks and was forced by Israeli military power to take refuge in the Muqata, his administrative complex in Ramallah, the president delivered a message on June 24, 2002 with an entirely different tone:

Peace requires a new and different Palestinian leadership so that a Palestinian state can be born. I call on the Palestinian people to elect leaders, leaders not compromised by terrorism [. . .] And the United States will not support the establishment of a Palestinian State until its leaders engage in a sustained fight against terrorism and dismantle its infrastructure.²²

Sharon could reasonably conclude that the president had given him a period of grace in which to focus on combating the terrorist campaign against Israel's very existence. In such an environment major political initiatives could be shunned while security measures took precedence. Arafat—under pressure from Egypt's Hosni Mubarak and much of the international commu-

21. President George W. Bush, the Rose Garden, “President to Send Secretary Powell to Middle East,” April 4, 2002, 11:00 a.m. EST.

22. President George W. Bush, the Rose Garden, “President Bush Calls for New Palestinian Leadership,” June 24, 2002, 3:47 P.M.

nity—seemed finally to grasp the message, naming Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) prime minister. Abbas, a longtime Arafat colleague and one of his fellow “Tunisians,” was regarded by the Israelis as a promising personality, assuming Arafat gave him room to breathe. True, he had authored a book suggesting the number of Jews killed in the Holocaust was closer to one million than six million; true, he lacked a political base of his own. And, like many of the insiders he had made a fortune during the Oslo period, residing in a four-story multimillion dollar Gaza villa that was probably not built with the proceeds of soccer bets, so he could be vulnerable to an anticorruption campaign. But very early on—even before it became a suicide bombing campaign—he had expressed opposition to the Second Intifada, arguing that violence at that point was harmful to the Palestinian cause. Furthermore, he seemed to recognize the need to streamline and control the security forces, which to that point had been organized by Arafat in a fashion that both minimized the threat any single armed faction could pose to the PA leadership and made it next to impossible to control any maverick unit from doing what it pleased.

As Sharon turned to combating terrorism in the newly reoccupied areas, the proposals for unilateral separation had been reduced in terms of policy to construction of a wall and little else.