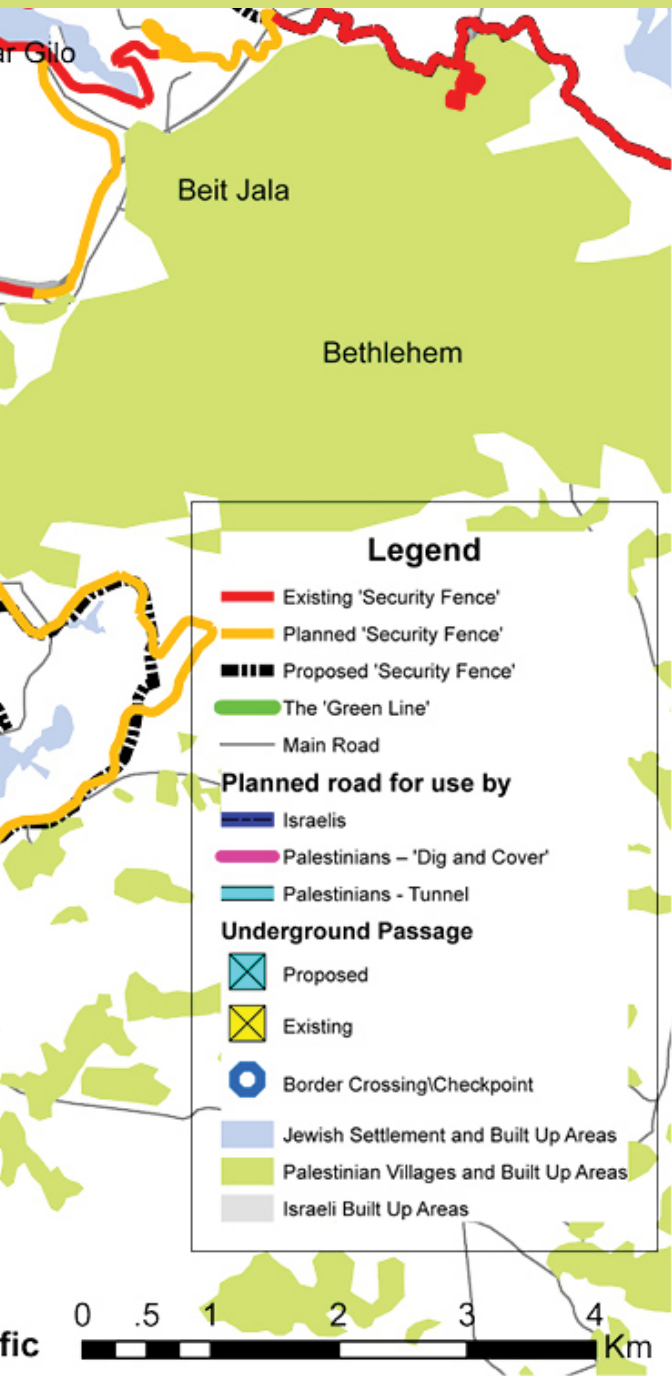


Map 3

THE GUSH ETZION GAP

The Gush Etzion gap is a distinct security threat to Israeli citizens.



The lack of a barrier in this area enables thousands of Palestinians to enter Israel illegally every day. Palestinian terrorists have also used this gap to enter Israel and carry out attacks. This is the region where three Israeli teenagers were kidnapped in the Gush Etzion bloc settlement of Alon Shvut in 2014, and where terrorists from Hebron infiltrated Israel on their way to killing 4 Israelis in a shooting spree at a Tel Aviv restaurant in June 2016.

Government plans originally called for surrounding Gush Etzion with a barrier on all sides: north, south, east, and west (solid orange line). Due to pressure from settlers rather than security considerations, however, the barrier was never built along the approved route, with minor exceptions (solid red line) in the Bethlehem – Beit Jala area and west of the village of Surif. The Security First Plan (dotted black line) calls for the security barrier to be built along the route originally approved by the government, with adjustments that would place six Palestinian villages – Walaja, Batir, Husan, Wadi Fuqin, Nahalin, and Jab’ah, along with their lands – outside of Gush Etzion.

Completing the barrier in this manner would increase the level of security for Gush Etzion residents, create territorial contiguity with the Jewish settlements of the bloc and Israel proper to the west, while also creating territorial contiguity between the Palestinian villages and the city of Bethlehem to the east.

In addition, Palestinian and Israeli traffic should be separated on route 60 (solid blue and purple lines) from the point at which it crosses Gush Etzion from north to south, to facilitate continuous, free, and safe movement for Israelis between Jerusalem and Gush Etzion, while avoiding friction with the Palestinians, who would travel directly on the Bethlehem — Hebron road.

Any Israeli initiative to complete the barrier, even with these rerouting proposals, will be met with international opposition. In the context of restored credibility to Israel’s commitment to an eventual two-state solution, the United States should be prepared to encourage and support Israel taking such steps that would improve security for its citizens while create a de facto two-state reality on the ground that could preserve conditions for future peace talks.

Separation & Contiguity

The signing of the Oslo II Accord in 1995 led to the establishment of Areas A, B, and C in the West Bank (see Map 1). It does not provide for either Israeli or Palestinian contiguity – and has led to consequences for the Israeli and Palestinian residents.

EXPANDING AREA B

Creating greater Palestinian territorial contiguity is directly beneficial to Israel's security, as it will reduce friction between Israeli settlements and Palestinian towns while improving daily security for Israelis traveling on West Bank roads. This proposal is designed to reduce unnecessary confrontation between the two communities and create conditions for two states.

As is presented in Map 1, 239 square miles of territory constituting some 10.5% of the West Bank can be redesignated as Area B from Area C with no adverse security consequences and without removing any settlements.

The redesignation from C to B requires no legislation and can be done via an Israeli cabinet decision. Alternatively, it can be accomplished by transferring to the PA some of the authorities over those specific segments of Area C – especially zoning and planning – that are presently under the authority of the IDF regional commander.

The 10% Plan

Promoting security-driven gradualism and Palestinian rule of law.

The 1995 Oslo II Agreement's division of the West Bank into Areas A, B, and C, created 169 Palestinian enclaves cumulatively constituting Area A and Area B. Commuting between them often requires crossing Area C, which is under exclusive Israeli control. This proposal aims to cut the number of Area B islands from over 169 to 43. Doing so would enhance Palestinian territorial contiguity in the West Bank and advance key security objectives:

- Improve the Palestinian Authority's (PA) capacity to provide basic law and order.

- Boost the capacity and effectiveness of the PA security agencies and their ability to maintain a high level of coordination with their Israeli counterparts.

- Reduce friction between Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank.

- Strengthen the Palestinian economy.

- Establish conditions for a two-state reality that would ensure a secure, Jewish, and democratic Israel.

The measures outlined in this initiative are limited and meant to be applied on an interim basis. As such, they require no settlement evacuation or negotiating amendments to existing agreements. Rather than introduce more chaos into a potentially explosive environment, they will create a calmer atmosphere by changing dynamics on the ground.