

The 5 Percent Solution

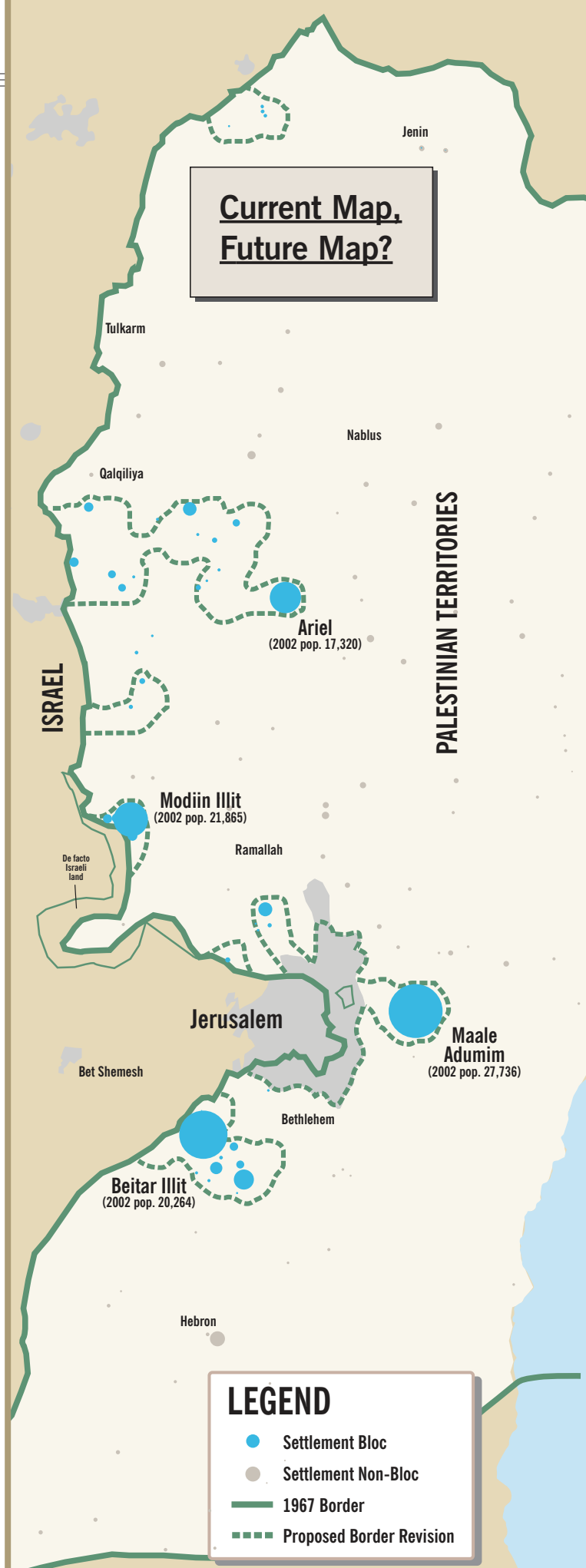
By almost any measure, the Israeli settlement movement has failed. Despite religious, ideological, and financial incentives, only around 5 percent of Israel's Jewish population has relocated to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip since the land was captured in the 1967 war. Moreover, polls indicate a majority of Israelis are now prepared to evacuate the settlements and accept the establishment of a Palestinian state if doing so would bring lasting security.

At the Camp David summit convened by then U.S. President Bill Clinton in 2000, a plan emerged that would have allowed Israel to annex land accommodating 80 percent of the settlers while creating a contiguous Palestinian nation. A closer look at the settler movement suggests the Clinton plan remains feasible. Approximately 63,800 people, or just 1 percent of Israel's Jewish population, would need to be uprooted to make a two-state solution possible. Habitually described as a "major obstacle to peace," the settlement issue can be resolved by using a careful hand to redraw just 5 percent of the West Bank map—and by summoning the ample political will required to see the process through.

| By David Makovsky and Eran Benedek

Plotting the Future

Disentangling 226,000 Israeli settlers living in 144 settlements from 3.5 million Palestinians is a daunting task. Most Israelis acknowledge that the 7,500 or so settlers in Gaza will have to go. The West Bank poses a bigger problem. However, the Green Line marking Israel's pre-1967 border will likely serve as the border dividing Israel from a future Palestine. Nearly 75 percent of the West Bank settlers reside in blocs—clusters of settlements—adjacent to the Green Line. The rest are in small settlements—"non-blocs"—scattered throughout the West Bank. The Clinton plan called for redrawing the border so that the blocs, comprising 5 percent of the West Bank, could be incorporated into Israel proper. In exchange, Israel would hand over compensatory land to the Palestinians.



Settling Differences

Broadly speaking, there are two types of settlers: nationalist-ideologues and suburbanites (a mixture of religious and secular Israelis). Nationalist-ideologue settlers live in the West Bank because they consider the land part of Jewish biblical patrimony. Two thirds of West Bank settlements—some 80 in total—are populated by nationalist-ideologues, but a growing majority of West Bank settlers are suburbanites, and nearly all of them live along the Green Line. The suburbanites share a sense of attachment to the land but it is not as strong; they are in the West Bank in no small part because they want affordable housing. The same practical considerations lead them to the settlement blocs: They want to live within commuting distance of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, where they usually work.

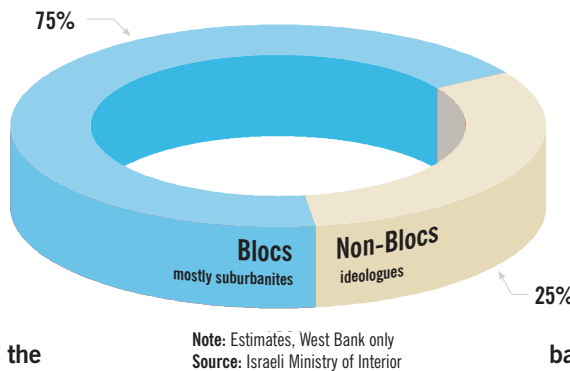
But they also choose the settlement blocs because, like most Israelis, they have a vague idea of how the map will be redrawn if and when a Palestinian state is created. Not wanting to be evicted from their homes, they gravitate to areas they think Israel will be allowed to keep. Indeed, two settlements near the pre-1967

border, Beitar Illit and Modiin Illit, accounted for 43 percent of the new West Bank settlers in 2002. These Israelis are creating “facts on the ground” consistent with the Clinton plan.

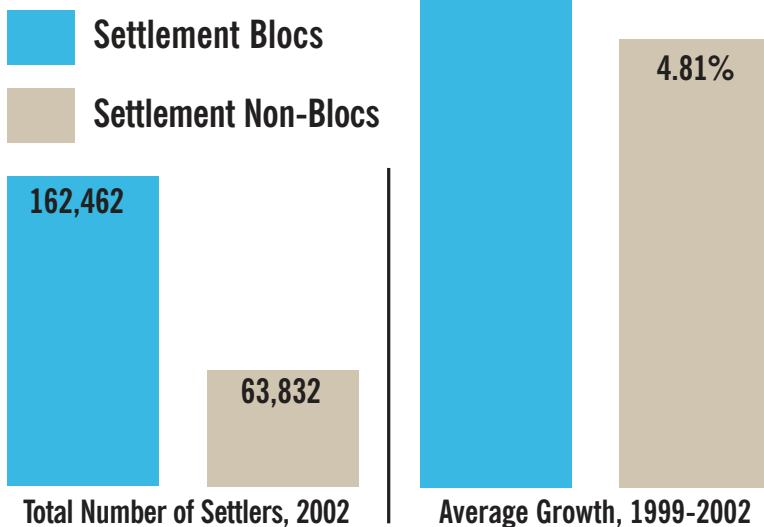
Peace Now?

Around 25 percent of the West Bank settlers, some 56,300 people, live in non-blocs away from the pre-1967 line. They are all nationalist-ideologues, most of whom have placed themselves near densely populated Palestinian cities in the hope of preventing the emergence of a Palestinian state. As many as one third of them may relocate to the settlement blocs if the Palestinians achieve independence—thus, the 80 percent figure cited in the Clinton plan. The remaining 38,000 or so people are likely to resist if the Israeli government attempts to evacuate their settlements. Fearing the consequences for Israel’s social and political stability, the government has long been reluctant to confront the militants, and it may yet balk at the idea. But should it decide that forcing them off the land is a risk worth taking for peace, the settlement issue can be resolved to the satisfaction of both sides. The Clinton plan made sense in 2000; the evidence suggests that it makes just as much sense now.

Where the Settlers Live



Settling Down



Map Projection of The Clinton Plan



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