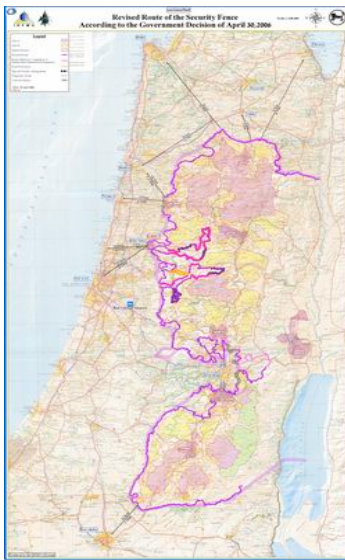


The Wall

A Debate on the Issues of Protecting National Boundaries Amidst an era of Economic Globalization

The members of the Passionist Social Concern's Commission offer this analysis and reflection during a time when our society is confronted with the crisis of Nationalism vs. Globalization on two fronts. In the Middle East the two state issue of Israel and Palestine has become increasingly challenged since the election of the Hamas government in Palestine. Here in the United States the immigration debate continues to generate policies and strong feelings regarding our border relationship with Mexico. Common to both these issues is the proposed solution of building walls to secure the borders.



For Israel the building of their wall is a security issue. The Ministry of Defense for Israel states:

The sole purpose of the Security Fence, as stated in the Israeli Government decision of July 23rd 2001, is to provide security. The Security Fence is a central component in Israel's response to the horrific wave of terrorism emanating from the West Bank, resulting in suicide bombers who enter into Israel with the sole intention of killing innocent people. Sadly, this abhorrent phenomenon has become common practice since September 2000.

The "Security Fence" is a manifestation of Israel's basic commitment to defend its citizens, and once completed, it will improve the ability of the IDF to prevent the infiltration of terrorists and criminal elements into Israel for the purpose of carrying out terrorist attacks or the smuggling of arms and explosives.



For the United State the issue of building our own wall follows a different security concern focused on immigrants and crime. This amendment by Rep. Hunter of California states that the success of the San Diego portion of this proposed wall which

is already completed is successful for accomplishing the following:

- *Illegal alien apprehensions along the fenced region were reduced from over 202,000 in 1992 to approximately 9,000 in 2004. Further, it is estimated that the apprehensions vs. attempts ratio increased to over 90%;*

- *Following the establishment of the San Diego Border Fence, crime rates in San Diego have fallen dramatically. According to the FBI Crime Index, crime in San Diego County dropped 47.3% between 1989 to 2000;*
- *Vehicle drive-throughs in the region have fallen from between 6 to 10 per day before the construction of border infrastructure to only four drive-throughs in 2004, all of which were isolated in locations where secondary fencing is incomplete;*
- *The fence has forced drug smugglers, who once crossed the San Diego border without contest, to focus their efforts of access through America's ports of entry, significantly increasing the likelihood of discovery and seizure of illegal narcotics entering the U.S.*

While the proposals of building walls stem from particular realities that confront both the United States and Israel both of these proposed walls share a common social conflict. Both of them relate to the conflict that is created when you live in a world that is more and more economically global and integrated but remains politically independent and isolated. Where tight national boundaries and open markets allow developed nations to benefit greatly from this open field of resources and production over and sometimes against under-developed nations who do not have the equal means for extracting and producing goods. Thus we currently live in a global world where some nations are far better off than their own neighbors.

This inequality of nations has led to predictable flows of migration. For Israel where the political climate between this nation and its Arab neighbors are volatile this leads to violence and direct issues of national security. For the United States where the economic disparity with its southern neighbor is even greater as is its immigration flows this issue has led to economic and cultural insecurities.

This leads us to debate the issue of the protection of national boundaries amidst economic disparities. The question we leave with our two pseudo-debaters is this "Are the building of walls such as these a viable and appropriate solution?"

James: "Fences make good neighbors."

Two walls primarily are under consideration here: the wall in Israel, and the wall along the southern border of the U.S.

Both walls have much in common: security and defense. However, the dangers that are threats to security and against which defense is sought differ somewhat from each other: in Israel, the danger is mainly attacks by suicide bombers from the Palestinian territory (the West Bank or the Gaza strip) against the civilian Jewish population; in the U.S. the danger is largely uncontrolled immigration that is destabilizing American society on the part of people, usually Mexicans, who are undocumented (illegal), and so unaccounted for by U.S. authorities (not on the books), placing demands on the American economy, and potentially containing a criminal, and even a terrorist, element. In addition, this flood of illegals establishes a huge flaunting of the (immigration) law of the land, resulting in a population of law-breakers that undercuts attempts at maintaining a law-abiding citizenry in this large nation. There is nothing worse than having people who, with impunity,

violate the law. It leads to the break-down of civility and respect for the basic fabric of society.

The immigration law in question traces back to a 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act of Congress, significantly amended in 1965 abolishing natural origin provisions and establishing a new quota system. Efforts to stem illegal immigration led to the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 and the Immigration Act of 1990 tightening up on visas, whose 1995 cap was 675,000. It's the violation of this act and its amendments that stands at the heart of the illegality of undocumented crossing the southern border. But, despite all these efforts at improving the law, it is a failure: witness the millions of undocumented living in this country at the present time.

The current House of Representatives passed H.R. 4437 recently (The Border Enforcement Bill) in reaction to the blatant disregard of the above legislation. Though it contains several provisions, for purposes of this article about the wall, only the following remarks will be made. The wall is proposed to run 700 miles, in five strategic places, costing \$1.5 to \$2 million dollars per mile. (A Senate version of this programs 370 miles of triple-barrier fencing plus a "virtual" wall fortified by elaborate electronic surveillance systems.)

All of this, especially the more ambitious House project, deserves support as commentary on such statements in the Preamble to the Constitution of the U.S. as:

We, the people of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, insure domestic Tranquillity, provide for the common defence, ...do ordain and establish this Constitution ...

Obviously, self-defense is the first and major law of the land and the primary obligation of government. The wall is designed to carry out the provisions of this Preamble.

The Israeli wall runs 72 miles (from Salem in the north to Kafr Qasem in the south, and will cost \$115 million. Part of it runs through the garden of the Passionist community in Bethany (on the west bank).

Portions of the Israeli wall are already in place and demonstrate its effectiveness against incursions of suicide bombers, which have notably decreased since the installation of major portions of the wall. Similarly, the one, small portion of a wall already built along our southern border, in the San Diego area, has proven very effective, for instance, in reducing the crime rate in the surrounding county by 47.3%.

It should be noted that this is not the first time such walls have been erected, for similar purposes. The Great Wall of China runs 1500 miles, from the Yellow Sea to the central Asian desert, initiated prior to 214 BC. It is over 25 feet high and up to 30 feet thick. So formidable was it that it exists today as a tourist site. It was so well maintained over the centuries since it served the interests of the Chinese rulers.

The Berlin Wall was 30 miles long, dividing East and West Berlin from 1961 to 1989, again quite effectively, though for questionable motives.

The DMZ (Demilitarized Zone) dividing North and South Korea winds 155 miles across the peninsula, from the Han River to the East coast. Though not a wall in the masonry sense of the term (consisting of barbed wire atop fencing), it too has more than repaid the effort at constructing it.

Walls are worth the expenditures of money, time and effort to install them. The old saying goes; "Fences make good neighbors". They establish identity, provide privacy, avoid disputes before they begin, protect assets. The money, for instance, expended on this project will, in the long run, be far less than the kind of expenditures that the Senate version of border defense, for instance, calls for, with its mandate for 4,000 additional border patrol agents, 6,000 National Guard troops, 2,500 port of entry inspectors, and 10,000 agents to enforce verification laws. And this doesn't include the elaborate equipment the Senate bill proposes such as unmanned aircraft and cameras.

Building this wall makes eminent sense. It has historical precedent, proven effectiveness, economic feasibility and support of the American public, especially those living close to the southern border.

Paul: 11-9, 1989 Changed our Lives.

Our current political leaders remind us time and time again how 9-11 has changed our political realities and public policy both at home and abroad. This statement is true enough and I for one believe that as a nation we must refocus our priorities and policies to address the new world that has violently expressed itself on that day. What gets me upset however is that after making this recognition (and after accusing political opponents of having a cold war mentality) our political leaders seem to revert back to pre World War II nationalistic policies of border security, isolationism and national wars of aggression. Shall we perhaps build trenches around the U.S. and Israel and maybe a few castles as well.

The fact is that 9-11 was not an isolated event that gave birth to a new world order. 9-11 was a violent expression of a new global reality that gave way back on Nov. 9, 1989 when the Berlin Wall was brought down. Both the United States and Israel are nations who are economically dependent on the global world for resources and products. When the Berlin wall came down not only did it signify the end of the Cold War but it also gave birth to the world of economic and political globalization. For many of us progressives this was an astounding victory.

Unfortunately our political organization and rhetoric have not been able to fully digest what this means. Between 11-9 and 9-11 we have only utilized this new global world for our own self-interest by promoting the economic structures of globalization while isolating the political and social global structures. In doing this we enhance our consumption and investments by making sure that we had easy access to global resources and that political corruption kept wages and environmental cost down. We patted ourselves on the back for the great economic success we reaped in the 90's without

paying any attention to the social and cultural ramifications of our global economic system. And somehow we found ourselves surprised when 9-11 and the 1993 bombing in New York both took place in a very deliberate target known as the **World Trade Center**.

9-11 was an opportunity for us to truly make sense of our global world, but instead we dug in our heels, went on the defensive, and are now talking about building walls. Why is it that the issue of globalization is so uncomfortable to discuss that we choose to politically and socially ignore it while economically we silently accept our dependence to it. Any attempts to develop policies of national security must take this global reality into account or otherwise it is doomed to failure.

In 1994 both the United States and Israel signed economic trade agreements with their neighboring underdeveloped nation. The North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement created a regional economic integration that created a state of economic dependence between Mexico and its northern neighbors. Through this agreement North American companies enjoy free mobility in promoting their operations in Mexico thus enjoying the cheaper standards of living and lack of social and environmental regulations. Mexico of course enjoys the presence of North American industry in its own backyard. One hope was that the gap in the standard of living between these two nations would close, thus eliminating migration into the U.S. Unfortunately the gap between the two nations remains high and levels of migration have also grown. As a result the U.S. has promoted the border patrol wall and as we see this issue was underscored in the last Mexican election.

Similarly the Protocol on Economic Relations between Israel and Palestine also created a state of economic integration and dependence between these two communities. Palestine was and still is dependent on Israel for use of their ports and airports in order to engage in trade. Both sides enjoyed freedom of movement between goods and labor. Palestinian trade with other surrounding neighbors, specifically Egypt and Jordan, became severely limited. Unfortunately the Israeli Separation wall has created severe restrictions on Palestinian development and the humanitarian crisis that came into existence before Hamas was elected into power.

Through both agreements both Mexico and Palestine share an economic dependence with the U.S. and Israel. Yet both nations face social crisis stemming from economic inequality and ensuing social instability. To date so far our response continues to be defensive. We continue to be in denial of the need to address political and social ramifications to our economic integration and instead we choose to debate the effectiveness of building walls. What we need to do instead is to take a lesson from the European Union. We need to analyze the political and social ramifications of our neighboring economic integration and to develop regional policies that support the development of our neighbors and can address the existing economic inequalities.

Yes, walls may prove to effectively restrict migration into both Palestine and the U.S. This solution however is nothing more than a mere band-aid that will limit neighboring migration but will also usher in a new and more violent response from our neighbors. Shall we be surprised when a radical political shift takes place in Mexico and Palestine.

Will we choose to gasp in astonishment when a disgruntled Mexico that politically leans more to the left allows its citizens to ransack or nationalize U.S. Corporate holdings in Mexico? Do we really choose to be shocked that a desperate Palestinian community chose a radical anti-Israeli political faction to lead its government. Do any of us really believe that these walls will offer us any real security? Perhaps it is important to learn an important historical lesson here. The Chinese built the great wall to keep away the Mongolian and later the Manchu threat of the north. That wall did not stop either of those groups from entering and conquering China and resulted in the Mongolian Dynasty of the 1200's and the Manchu Dynasty of the 1600's.

James: Walls not only protect our people but also our democracy and freedom.

There is a history to the defense of the wall as a protector of national boundaries. This history applies primarily to the wall between the U.S. and Mexico, but some of the observations appended to this defense apply also to the wall between the Israelis and Palestinians.

This history starts with the Monroe Doctrine, the foreign policy statement delivered to Congress in 1823 by President James Monroe, in which he stated that the U.S. enjoyed authority and responsibility, not only for its own continental territory, but also for the entirety of the western hemisphere. He declared this as a warning to any European nations with designs on this part of the world, remarking that their overtures would be regarded as "dangerous to peace and security".

Monroe laid the groundwork for the security consciousness that thereafter entered the American psyche. He also implicitly articulated the appropriateness of boundaries between nations. This was primarily a political statement, not an economic one, and responds to Paul's concern that globalization should include not only economic factors, but also political ones. There IS a political doctrine in place, with global implications, and the wall is an instrument of its implementation. The designs of other nations on the territorial integrity of this nation, with its protective mantle over this hemisphere, are to be opposed.

The political implication of this doctrine is that a strong democratic government, such as the U.S., is essential to the well-being of this part of the world. With this piece in place, then the atmosphere for similar democratic institutions throughout the rest of the hemisphere is in place. A strong U.S. democracy is good for every nation from Argentina to Canada.

A wall has become necessary to support this position. The current uncontrolled flow of undocumented people into this country threatens to weaken the basic foundation of a democracy: respect for law. For they are illegals, flaunters of the law, and so they undermine the very foundations of political democracy, here and throughout the hemisphere. The wall is the key to the globalization movement, not only economically, but also politically.

Once the wall is constructed, the U.S. can re-establish order in its own house, and then can proceed to export that same order to the rest of the hemisphere, and even to the world at large. And we can also pursue the economic problems behind so much of the current influx of undocumented peoples. The principle here is: Political stability must precede economic stability. The U.S. undoubtedly holds a preeminent place in this scenario. If political stability cannot prevail here, it cannot succeed anywhere.

A similar position underlies the defense of the wall between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Again, the political aspect of this structure looms large over other issues, even the economic ones. Israel stands out almost alone in the Middle East as a beacon and haven of democracy. If its democratic standing is impugned, hope for democratic government in that entire region comes crashing to the ground. Current incursions of hostile Palestinians into Israel can easily undermine its democratic process; lack of security for Israeli citizens can easily prod them to abandon democracy, and adopt a fascist or highly centralized style of government. The hegemony of a democratic Israel is even more important for that part of the world than it is for a democratic U.S. in this hemisphere. The wall guarantees this very worthwhile goal.

The Israelis have already shown that, once their own political security is established, they are ready to address the economic problems afflicting the Palestinians, many of whom, in the past, have found financial security under an Israeli umbrella. Again, it is the political security in this nation that must precede any effort at economic reconstruction.

In both cases, the U.S. and Israel, the wall becomes an indispensable means for achieving stability in two nations, whose subsequent strength and well-being can then redound to the betterment of nations surrounding them.

Paul: Walls offer us only an image of security.

For the progressive the issue with the proposed walls that are being built is not so much in their structural existence. The issue is that these walls are being proposed and built on a presumption that they offer us a solution to complex global problems. Terrorism and illegal immigration are complex issues that we must address now. These issues will not go away with the construction of walls. For us to truly address these issues it is essential that we come at the root causes of widespread immigration on the one hand and violent retribution on the other. As I said in my earlier argument these two issues exist because of our global economic and cultural realities. Globalization has brought economic disparity and cultural insecurity to our neighbors and the way they will react to this reality will not stop because of a wall.

As developed nations Israel and the United States must accept the following responsibility: regional economic integration (which we desire) has negative social and cultural ramifications to our underdeveloped neighbors. If both nations wish to pursue this course of economic integration then we must address these negative ramifications.

Just like NAFTA offers Mexico, Canada and the United States a common court for addressing issues of tariffs and trade regulations so should a North American Federation be developed to address social, cultural and political regional issues. Safeguards and regulations should be established to see to it that our underdeveloped neighbor have every opportunity for industrialization and development so that Mexico can indeed have a comparative advantage for trading with Canada and the U.S. Once this happens, then and only then will you see the issue of illegal immigration (at least from our southern neighbor) addressed.

Israel and Palestine have unsuccessfully attempted to create a two state solution for the past 50 years now. It is time to consider an alternative. Perhaps it is time for a new constitutional convention for a new unified state based on common social principles rather than ethnic or religious identity. Perhaps local political party's can be given the local autonomy to develop regional cultural identities (so long they do not infringe on constitutional freedoms.)

While some fringe groups may continue to exist from both solutions they will be politically marginalized (like White Supremacist groups are in the U.S.). Yet consider the advantage of both possibilities. With the U.S. you will not only have addressed the issues of immigration but also have created a stronger North American economic unit that can relate better with its other southern neighbors and which can demonstrate to the world the advantage U.S. led globalization and thus create further opportunities for stable economic integration. With regards to Israel the advantage is even greater. Not only would this regional solution begin a new era of cooperation between two people but it will automatically defuse the greatest challenge to Mid-East peace and the war on terror which is the Palestinian issue.

Walls will not offer this solution. Instead walls keep relegating an issue to another generation which will have to address an even more aggravated and volatile reality. Putting all your hopes on Walls is following the course of the late great Byzantine Empire which perhaps had the greatest and most effective fortifications ever known. Those walls did hold out for many decades when their Ottoman neighbors surrounded them in the early 1400's. Eventually however the great Ottoman bombard cannons took those walls down. Do we really want to go the way of the Byzantines?

The Wisdom of the Cross

There are a couple of ways to understand the roll of walls in history. One way is to see their necessity. With hurricane Katrina we saw how necessary the walls, or levies were to keep the water out of the streets and homes of the inhabitants of New Orleans. When these walls caved in, the people were flooded and forced to flee for their lives. With the walls in place, they lived in peace. The protection of the walls provided safety and prosperity for the people.

There are walls around the old city of Jerusalem built to protect it from its enemies. The psalmist mourns being a victim – “a wall already damaged” (Ps 62: 3). A strong wall would be oneself standing unshaken. Joshua, after marching his army around

the city of Jericho seven times was able to bring down the walls and secure a safe place for his people (Joshua, 6: 1-21).

Amidst the walls in Jerusalem, there is the “Wailing Wall”. It is against this wall at its bottom that the Jews cry out to Yahweh mourning their sufferings and persecutions of the past. At the top of this same wall and supported by this wall is the temple mount area where the Mosque dedicated to Mohamed the prophet is situated. Here the Arabs and Palestinian people cry out to Allah in praise and help. The Wailing Wall could serve as a symbol of possible unity between two estranged peoples. This a common wall – a place of prayer, of coming together and approaching God.

The other way to look at walls is to see them as divisive or as setting boundaries that separate peoples who should be living together. The devil’s diabolic goal is to divide people, or even divide a person to take possession of that person and put up walls within the soul, so that he/she no longer knows him/herself. As mentioned before, the Berlin wall came down and united the people of Germany. Jesus periodically broke the barriers of sinner and saint, of male and female separation, and of Jew and Gentile. Finally when Jesus died, “. . .the veil of the Sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom” (Mk: 15, 38). Does Mark want his community to understand that the holy of holies no longer separates God from his people? Does this symbolize the separation of God and humans being destroyed by death of Jesus, and humans now have direct access to God? Could the symbol be broader and speak to us today about walls?

Our purpose of this position paper is to help us reflect on the walls that divide and the walls that unite and support us in our changing world. Do the walls help promote or destroy the Kingdom of God among us?