Introduction

The following four essays are refinements of papers delivered at a conference held at Brandeis University under the auspices of the Schusterman Center for Israel Studies and the Crown Center for Middle East Studies on December 1–2, 2007: “One Land, Two Peoples: Sixty Years since the 1947 U.N. Partition Plan for Palestine.

The full program contains presentations by scholars of the Jewish and Palestinian positions on partition from the 1930s through the present. In the course of the discussion and debate, it became abundantly clear that there has been since the 1930s a vital and often acrimonious debate among Jews over whether Palestine should be divided into two states. Despite internal divisions, the dominant opinion throughout has been acceptance of the division of Mandatory Palestine. The reasons are many, and range from recognizing the merit of some Arab claims to a pragmatic approach that partition is the only course that may allow for a Jewish state even if the price is an Arab one alongside it. The course of this line of thought can be readily followed in the first three essays of Itzhak Galnoor, Colin Shindler, and Asher Susser.

The Palestinian side had been marked by a significant continuity: the rejection of the legitimacy of any Jewish state and an unwillingness to accept a pragmatic approach. While this view may be dominant, it is not exclusive. The shift in the position by the PLO beginning in 1989 and the subsequent signing of the Oslo Accords of 1993 mark radical change. So too, are the articulations beginning in the 1990s of such rare voices as that of Sari Nusseibah, president of Al-Quds University and a significant Palestinian intellectual. This relaxation of opposition to partition may be partial and temporary as witnessed in the essay by As’ad Ghanem, a Palestinian academic on the faculty of Haifa University and a major exponent of the emerging position of Arab intellectuals. Ghanem calls for the end of a Jewish state in favor of a one-state solution, sometimes known as “a state
of all its citizens.” In effect, his essay reflects a continuing tradition of rejection of an independent Jewish state in what had been Mandatory Palestine although the bases for denying it have changed since the proposition first arose during the Mandate.

The entire conference can be accessed at the website indicated below. It contains not only papers by Arab and Israeli scholars but by students of other examples of partition, particularly Ireland and the Balkans. http://www.brandeis.edu/israelcenter/newsEvents/2007_dec/video/index.html
The Zionist Debates on Partition (1919–1947)

ABSTRACT

Between World War I and the founding of the State of Israel in 1948, decisions were made by the Zionist Movement that continue to provide lessons for the dilemma facing Israelis and Palestinians today. In these territorial decisions the Zionist movement was willing to consider trading territory for other values, mainly political sovereignty. Jewish attitudes toward territory in these decisions reflect a duality. On one hand, territorial attitudes were emotional and inseparable from a sense of collective identity, fatherland, motherland, and homeland, leading to expressive positions. On the other, territory was seen as a tangible resource, a means for satisfying specific needs—security, economic viability, social development, natural resources. The Zionist agreement to partition indicates that the pre-1948 decisions of the Zionist movement fell rather consistently on the side of instrumental pragmatism, and this approach dominated Israeli policy until 1967.

INTRODUCTION

Between World War I and the founding of the State of Israel in 1948, three internal decisions were made by the Zionist Movement that reflect its attitudes and position toward territory, boundaries, and partition. These decision crossroads—in 1919, 1937, and 1947—were not only critical during those formative years, but also carry lessons for the dilemma facing Israelis and Palestinians today. At the time they were subject to considerable internal debate, and once these decisions were made, they established precedents that were crucial in forming Zionist consensus around the
relative value of—and the potential trade-offs between—state sovereignty, territory, and boundaries.

The central question discussed here is whether the Zionist movement was willing to consider the partition of Palestine (E.I.), namely, a trade-off between territory and boundaries and other values. The main value at that time was the establishment of a sovereign state. At the end we pose the question of whether the pre-1948 decisions—and especially the public discourse of 1937—contained the parameters of the choices that confront Israel today.

**DECISIONS CROSSROADS**

**The 1919 Memorandum**

Although Britain had pledged in the Balfour Declaration of 1917 to help establish a “Jewish national home” in Palestine—an area not then under its control—it did not delineate boundaries. Following World War I, representatives of the major powers met at the Versailles Peace Conference to carve up the territories of the Habsburg and Ottoman empires, among them the “Near East”. This was the first time that the Zionist movement had to consider the practical implications of its territorial aspirations and define the area desired for the Jewish “national home”. The memorandum submitted in February 1919 by a delegation headed by Chaim Weizmann outlined the goals, principles, and arguments of the Zionist Organization.

There were two types of claims in the memorandum: first, the historic right of the Jewish people to Eretz-Israel, and the link to the fertile plains east of the Jordan River; second, the need for a territory large enough to sustain settlement and viable economic development. In addition, the memorandum emphasized the need for political, administrative, and economic conditions that would ensure the growth of the national home and eventually lead to the establishment of an “autonomous commonwealth”. The territory described in the memorandum covered an area of some 45,000 sq km including the “northern Galilee” (today southern Lebanon), the Golan Heights, the Gilad mountains, and approximately 18,000 sq km of land across the Jordan River.

The Zionist Organization, however, had already built into the document several significant political compromises: First, it drew the northern border at Sidon, in an attempt to include most of the Litani River within the area of the Jewish national home, but also to help the British in their negotiations with the French.
Second, it did not ask to include the entire area of Trans-Jordan in the Jewish national home, in an attempt to attain support from the Arab national movement, headed by Emir Faisal. The most they could hope for was a border running east of the Jordan River along the Hajas railway.

Third, the initial proposal set a southern border along the El Arish-Aqaba line to include part of the Sinai Peninsula, but in the official 1919 memorandum, due to British pressure, the matter was left open for negotiation with the Egyptian government.

The 1919 map presented the Zionist territorial aspirations, but it already included a “partition element”, a pragmatic willingness to weigh non-territorial goals, and the political constraints of that time. The territory claimed was smaller than the definition of the “Land of Israel in its natural boundaries”, encompassing approximately 59,000 sq km or the “promised boundaries”. Zionist claims in 1919 concerning Trans-Jordan were also much more limited than the territory of 90,000 sq km that would become the British Mandate there.

Although the 1919 map was based on several internal drafts, its preparation was not accompanied by a heated debate within the Zionist movement about territory versus other considerations. Therefore it was not as divisive a decision as the next crossroad of 1937.

In the 1920 San Remo Agreement, the League of Nations allotted the mandate for Syria and Lebanon to France, and the mandate for Iraq and Palestine to Britain, thus fixing the northern border south of the Zionist 1919 map.

In September 1922, the League of Nations approved the separate status of Trans-Jordan and the establishment of an independent administration there. Emir Abdullah became its ruler in 1923 under the formal jurisdiction of the British High Commissioner for Palestine. The articles of the mandate concerning the Jewish national home did not apply to Trans-Jordan. The Zionist movement expressed its opposition to this “partition”, but was helpless in the face of British policy and the League of Nations mandate. Thus, despite the continuing opposition of the Revisionist movement, the subsequent debate within the Zionist movement was confined to the 27,000 sq km of “western Eretz-Israel”, even though claims to include Trans-Jordan or parts of it in the national home continued throughout the Mandate period.

The 1919 memorandum was nevertheless precedent-setting. It sought to establish the legitimacy of Zionist claims in an international forum. Furthermore, the attempt by the Zionist movement to define the map and the boundaries of the national home was already understood internally to be a compromise between expressive aspiration and instrumental needs.
The Zionist Debates on Partition (1919–1947)

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The 1937 Decision

As a result of the “Arab Revolt” that broke out in April 1936, the British Cabinet appointed a Royal Commission headed by Lord Peel to look into “the underlying causes of the disturbances . . . [and whether] either the Arabs or the Jews have any legitimate grievances.”

The Peel Commission published its report in July 1937, concluding that the situation in Palestine (E.I.) was deadlocked and that under the British Mandate there could be no permanent settlement between Jews and Arabs. Hence, the Commission proposed “partition”—dividing up the territory of Palestine (E.I.) as follows:

A. An independent, sovereign Jewish state along the coast, the northern valleys, and the Galilee that would comprise a territory of about 5,000 sq km.
B. An independent, sovereign Arab state in the rest of Palestine to be attached to Trans-Jordan [note: no independent Palestinian state].
C. A new mandate would be given to Britain on an enclave in the shape of a corridor extending from Jaffa to Jerusalem and a number of cities.
D. As far as possible, there would be a transfer of land and an exchange of population between the two proposed states.

The British government endorsed the Commission “partition plan”, but soon had second thoughts with the gathering storm in Europe that increased the strategic value of Palestine (E.I.). Before Britain reneged, the Zionist movement and the Yishuv [Jewish community in Palestine] were caught up in a swirling debate (the “Great Pulmus”) over the offer to turn part of the national home into a Jewish state: should they accept sovereignty over a mere 5,000 sq km, far less than anyone believed was practical for a viable state, or no sovereignty at all, at least not at that stage?

For the first time, the possibility of establishing a Jewish state was discussed not only among Jews or under the vague rubric of a “national home”, but as a proposal by the ruling power in the Middle East. For the first time, the Zionist movement faced a real decision concerning statehood and its territorial dimension. The need to formulate a response to the Royal Commission proposal presented a decision crossroads, forcing unprecedented ideological soul-searching and practical deliberations among both supporters and opponents of partition. The debate began before the publication of the Peel Commission report (July 7, 1937) and it caused a schism between
and within the political parties, youth movements, voluntary organizations, academics, teachers, writers, and rabbis. The “pulmus” engulfed not only the Yishuv in Palestine, but also the Zionist movement abroad. The initial reaction was negative because the British proposal seemed so unattractive and risky. However, the official Jewish reply announced one month later at the 20th Zionist Congress on August 11 and the Jewish Agency Council on August 20 was different.

The final position was rooted in two contradictory factors: the weakness of the Zionist movement at the time, which dictated absolute dependence on Britain, and its strong and rather united dedication to its main goal—establishment of a state—even at the expense of other goals.

Accordingly, the decision was a fusion of the political hallmarks of Weizmann and Ben-Gurion. Weizmann’s realism stemmed from being essentially “non-ideological”, in the European sense of those days, and from representing the “General Zionists”, as he and his associates called themselves. Striving to establish a Jewish state stood at the center of Weizmann’s spiritual and practical world.

In contrast, Ben-Gurion was a Zionist and a socialist—in that order. When these two beliefs conflicted, such as over the question of partition, he rejected the socialist solutions of the left-wing parties, including his own, and adhered to Weizmann’s brand of pragmatic political Zionism. Berl Katznelson, a central Mapai leader, was a crucial figure in the 1937 decision. In his initial strong opposition to partition, he had avoided both the ideological arguments of the socialist left and the religious fundamentalist arguments of the right. Since his reservations stemmed mainly from his distrust of British intentions, he was able to help formulate a compromise resolution in qualified support of the principle of partition.

Thus, a very intensive debate between the “ja sagers” (supporters of partitions) and the “nein sagers” (opponents) ensued up to the Zionist Congress. The main arguments are summarized in Table 1 below.

The strong opponents endorsed the idea of a Jewish state (unlike some who rejected it completely), but only on the “whole Land of Eretz-Israel”. Their main arguments were social (Hashomer Hatzair and Hakibbutz Hameuhad), religious (Hamizrachi), and national (the Revisionist Movement, part of the General Zionists and Hakibbutz Hameuhad). The moderate opponents, including parts of Mapai and the American Zionists, argued mainly in terms of economic viability and absorption capacity. Security was not a major consideration in 1937 because the assumption was that the British army would remain and maintain law and order.
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Table 1:  
Partition in Exchange for Sovereignty: Positions and Arguments.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Main Argument</th>
<th>Main Counter-Argument</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(A) Strong Opposition</td>
<td>Prevent a precedent for partition of the Land of Israel.</td>
<td>Rejection of partition would result in an Arab state in the entire land of Israel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(B) Moderate Opposition</td>
<td>Chance to continue the Mandate and international sponsorship of the National home.</td>
<td>The Mandate would continue under worsened conditions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C) Undecided</td>
<td>Prevent an internal rift and clarify the conditions for implementation of the Royal Commission’s proposal.</td>
<td>Lack of influence on events increases the chance of worse options.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(D) Moderate Support</td>
<td>Create a commitment for establishment of a state and improve the territorial proposal.</td>
<td>Agreement to territorial concessions will become the minimum demand of the other side.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(E) Strong Support</td>
<td>Create a sovereign territorial hold, especially to rescue European Jews.</td>
<td>A state of 5,000 km(^2) has no right to exist; boundaries cannot be changed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The proponents, on the other hand, argued that sovereignty was the main vehicle to achieve the Zionists’ goals. They were pragmatists presenting tactical considerations, arguing, among other things, that the Peel Commission’s proposal could be improved and the borders could be expanded in the future. The strong proponents were willing to support the suggested partition proposal, arguing that either it would increase the prospects of Jewish-Arab co-existence or that self-rule (even a spiritual center) is more important than the size of the territory. The undecided presented four pre-conditions before they would consider partition:
1. The size of the proposed Jewish State should be “sufficient” for sustaining a viable state. Ben-Gurion was the only central leader to say openly that 12,000 sq km would suffice, at least for the time being.\(^8\)

2. The boundaries should be defensible. Defense considerations were not central because it was assumed Britain would remain responsible. The main concern, however, was for the safety of the Jewish settlements.

3. The Jewish majority should be significant and the number of Arabs in the Jewish state should be minimal. This was a major concern because of the importance of free immigration. According to the Report’s estimates, an annual immigration of 60,000 would produce a Jewish majority no earlier than the 1950s. The Report proposed that since 225,000 Arabs would remain in the Jewish state (and 1250 Jews in the Arab state), “there should be a transfer of land and, as far as possible, an exchange of population.” All Jewish leaders publicly opposed this proposal; privately, some supported the idea if Britain should enforce it.

4. There should be clear consent on the part of the Palestinians and the Arab states to the partition plan. The undecided, notably Berl Katznelson, feared that the Jewish state would remain without territories and without peace.

The pragmatists’ main argument in favor of qualified support was that agreement in principle to partition would pave the way for Jewish sovereignty. If partition were rejected, they feared a change in British policy that would strangle the Yishuv or establish an Arab state in all of Palestine. By accepting the principle of partition, they believed that it would grant the Zionist endeavor international legitimacy and provide a solution for distressed Jews in Europe. Many hoped that it would also pave the way to ending the Arab-Jewish conflict.

**The Debate**

The Peel Commission proposal would have given the Jews 10% of their 1919 demands, and about 20% of western Eretz-Israel. On the other hand, there was an opportunity to establish a sovereign state. This was the essence of the debate in 1937. If the first negative reaction to the proposal prevailed, the opponents and the undecided had a majority in the Zionist Congress.

The debate encompassed all the institutions in the Yishuv and the Zionist Movement abroad, the voluminous deliberations were passionate,
impressive, and of a very high quality. There were also some surprising paradoxes. The opponents, who were generally anti-British, favored continuation of the British Mandate. The expressive opponents, whose arguments were moral, were willing to form political alliances with ideological opponents, while the pragmatic proponents displayed stronger organizational loyalty to their parties. Another interesting feature of the debate was the arguments on whether time was working in favor of or against the Zionist endeavor, underscoring the sense of urgency and the strong belief that having a state would enhance immigration of distressed Jews from Europe, both for rescue and as a realization of Zionist goals.

In retrospect, the division into two camps—opponents and proponents—helped to create a wide and comprehensive public discourse about choices that had to be made. The Zionist leaders rejected the option of “deciding not to decide”. Unbeknownst to the Zionists, Britain had already changed its previous position in favor of partition, and thus the immediate impact of the Zionist decision was not important. This fact, however, does not diminish the great importance of the internal debate.

**The Decision**

The carefully worded compromise of the resolution adopted by the Zionist Congress in 1937 supported the principle of partition in return for a sovereign state:

- It reaffirmed the historic connection of the Jewish people with Eretz-Israel and its inalienable right to its homeland.
- It rejected the assertion of the Royal Commission that the Mandate was unworkable and demanded its fulfillment.
- It rejected the Commission’s conclusion that the national aspirations of Jews and Arabs in Palestine were irreconcilable, and declared the readiness of the Jewish people to reach a peaceful settlement with the Arabs of Palestine based on mutual recognition of respective rights.
- It declared that the scheme of partition proposed by the Royal Commission was unacceptable.
- It empowered the Zionist Executive to enter into negotiations to ascertain the precise terms of the British government for the proposed establishment of the Jewish state.
- Agreement was reached that if a definite scheme for the establishment of a Jewish state emerged, this scheme would be brought for decision before a newly elected Congress.
Although the resolution was not unanimous (a nearly two-thirds majority), a compromise reached between the supporters and the undecideds had important repercussions for future democratic decisions in the Zionist movement.

Some opponents claimed after the Zionist Congress that they had not voted for partition, as the final decision had been postponed. They argued that the Executive was empowered only to explore the British proposal to establish a state—i.e., the sovereignty aspect and not partition. Nonetheless, the political meaning of the Congress resolution was clear. A resolution to reject the idea of partition altogether failed to reach a majority in the Congress. The Zionist Executive was empowered to negotiate with the British government. Since the only relevant proposal for a Jewish state was based on partition, it was patently clear to Britain that the Zionist movement was willing to talk. The principle of partition (not the particular proposal of the Peel Commission) was therefore endorsed.

**The Palestinian Position**

All factions of the Palestinian national movement officially rejected the partition principle—not only the Arab Higher Committee, headed by Haj Amin el-Husseini, but also the more moderate Nashashibis, who were close to Emir Abdullah. In their view, the Arab revolt that had led to the establishment of the Commission had failed to achieve its goals if the result was a partitioned Palestine. Despite differences of opinion on other subjects, the Palestinian leadership clung to the demand to establish an Arab state in all of Palestine and opposed partition for reasons similar to those of the extreme opponents among the Jews.

The position of the Palestinians and the Arab States was that the Jews had no legitimate claims to their territory, and the sheer idea that a Jewish state would be established on any part of Palestine was unjust and unacceptable. Agreement to partition, that is Jewish territorial control, would have implied recognition of their rights in Palestine and would have constituted a turning point in the Palestinian position. Indeed, such a development, caused by Jewish immigration, was precisely what the Arab revolt was intended to prevent.

The adherence of the Palestinians to this position ignored the emerging political reality. They resolved to choose between an all-or-nothing approach, similar to the extreme Jewish opponents: rule over all of Palestine or continued subjugation to the British. As a result of this reduction of the choices, the first option was selected, leading to the demand to replace the Mandate with an Arab-Palestinian state in the entire territory. In the short
term, the second option materialized—continuation of the Mandate, but in the long term, all of Palestine was lost. Moreover, the Palestinians were less ready to examine partition when it was offered by the 1947 UN resolution.

**The Importance of 1937**

In October 1938, the new Palestine Partition Commission (the Woodhead Commission) put an end to the British offer of partition. Subsequently, Britain convened the London Conference of 1939, inviting representatives of the Zionist and Palestinian movements and the Arab states to seek an accommodation. The failure of the conference was followed by the “White Paper” of May 1939, which imposed severe limitations on Jewish immigration and land acquisition in Palestine.

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The immediate impact of the Zionist movement’s 1937 decision was relatively limited. Its internal significance, however, was crucial, affirming in principle the willingness to consider partition and compromise over territory when sovereignty was at stake. The 1937 decision paved the way for 30 years (1937–1967) of consensus among the majority of Jews on the territorial partition of Eretz-Israel.

Many of the terms used today were first coined in 1937: partition of Eretz-Israel, historic rights, secure borders, natural boundaries, transfer, drawing (and not drawing) maps. Among the opponents: not an inch (of land), greater (undivided) Israel, the integrity of the land, two banks of the Jordan river (also a state on the two banks of the Yarkon river), the land of our forefathers, a cry for generations to come. Among the proponents: historical compromise, peace in exchange for sovereignty, a state now, the Masada complex, political boundaries, the Promised Land as mere aspiration.

**The 1947 Confirmation of Partition**

The Jewish world was totally transformed between 1937 and 1947 as a result of World War II and the Holocaust. With the end of the war, there was a more urgent need to find a solution for the Jewish refugees in Europe. Several events regarding territory and boundaries led up to the U.N. partition proposal.

The Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry (April 1946) proposed the establishment of a trusteeship in Palestine—not a division between
Arabs and Jews—and 100,000 immigration visas to Jewish refugees from Europe. The Morrison-Grady Plan of July 1946 proposed a kind of canton plan for Palestine.

Internally, the most important decision was taken by the expanded Jewish Agency Executive in Paris in August 1946, stating that: “The Executive is prepared to discuss the proposal to establish a viable Jewish state in an appropriate territory of Eretz Israel.”

Compared to the 1937 decision, in which partition was not mentioned and only the principle was indirectly endorsed, the term “appropriate territory” implied partition. It was an attempt by the Jewish Agency to break up the British logjam of deliberations and, primarily, to convince the United States to endorse the establishment of a Jewish state.

In December 1946, the 22nd Zionist Congress, drawn together by its anguish over the destruction of European Jewry and the plight of the Jewish refugees, declared outright support for the immediate establishment of a Jewish state. The critical need for sovereignty under these conditions compelled most Zionist leaders to agree to partition, which by then was a foregone conclusion for most except the ardent ideological opponents on the right (Revisionists) and the left (Hashomer Hatzair).

The United Nations Special Commission on Palestine (UNSCOP) published its report in August 1947. The majority called for termination of the British Mandate, the establishment of two independent states in Palestine—one Jewish, one Arab—and turning Jerusalem into an international trusteeship under U.N. supervision. The proposed territory of the Jewish state was approximately 16,000 sq km, some 62% of Palestine (E.I.). The UNSCOP plan also proposed, for the first time, a separate Palestinian Arab state, independent of Trans-Jordan.

While the Palestinian leadership and the Arab states rejected the UNSCOP proposal, the Zionist movement regarded it as a victory, despite the awkward territorial structure and the very long boundaries of the proposed Jewish state and the exclusion of most of the Galilee, Jerusalem, and 39 Jewish settlements. The UNSCOP report was approved by a large majority of the enlarged Zionist General Council and welcomed by most Jews; the Jewish Agency lobbied for its adoption by the U.N. General Assembly.

In November 1947, more than two-thirds of the U.N. General Assembly voted in favor of the partition plan. The plan was essentially the same as the majority proposal of UNSCOP, although the territory proposed for the Jewish state was reduced to 14,000 sq km, which constituted about 55% of Palestine (E.I.). The U.N. decision was greeted with enthusiasm among most Jews in Palestine and the Zionist movement.

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Partly</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sufficient Territory?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The Galilee omitted from the Jewish state; most of the added territory in the arid Negev.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defensible Boundaries?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Approximately 1,500 km of winding boundaries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish Majority?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Approximately 40% Arabs in the Jewish state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab Consent?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Absolute Arab opposition; slim chance for peace.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

The problems raised by the moderate opponents of partition and the doubts that had troubled the undecided in 1937 did not evaporate in 1947, as shown in Table 2.

The four conditions raised in the 1937 debate were fulfilled only partially or not at all. The size of the Jewish state as proposed in the 1947 partition plan did not add significantly to the arable land, which was then regarded as too little to absorb millions of Jews. The proposed borders did not provide a solution to the problem of security, when it became clear that the Jewish state would not win the agreement of the Arabs from within or without. Finally, although the partition lines were drawn to ensure a Jewish majority in the Jewish state, it was only a 60% majority.

Willingness to ignore all these shortcomings testifies that the Zionist decision to adopt the 1947 partition plan was based on giving priority to sovereignty over other goals, as well as over expressive values. Politics, not geography, tipped the scale toward Zionist agreement to the partition plans of 1937 and 1947.

As a result of the war of 1948–1949, the expanded boundaries of the State of Israel included 20,600 sq km. The rest was annexed to Jordan and the Gaza Strip to Egyptian administration. A Palestinian state was not established and the partition was between Israel and two Arab states until 1967.
CONCLUSIONS

In the key territorial decisions made by the Zionist movement in the pre-state period, it was willing to consider trading territory for other values. The primary “other” value was political sovereignty. Jewish attitudes toward territory in the decisions of 1919, 1937, and 1947 reflect a duality. Territorial attitudes were emotional and inseparable from a sense of collective identity, fatherland, motherland, and homeland, leading to expressive positions. Territory was seen as a tangible resource, a means for satisfying specific needs—livelihood, security, economic viability, social development, natural resources, etc.—leading to instrumental positions.

The Zionist agreement to partition in 1937 and 1947 indicated a willingness to define national interests as a choice between values that are contradictory in a particular political context. It is irrelevant whether the willingness to forego territory was merely tactical, as territorial concessions were viewed as a very big risk and irreversible. Accordingly, the pre-1948 decisions of the Zionist movement fell rather consistently on the side of instrumental pragmatism, and this approach dominated Israeli policy until 1967.

Comparison of the pre-state decisions with those currently confronting Israelis and Palestinians does not ignore the very different circumstances that exist today. For example, since 1948 the issue of sovereignty has become secondary as illustrated by the transformation of the slogan “territories for sovereignty” to “territories for peace”. Both, however, are still relevant for Palestinians. Therefore, the comparison is not between the content of the decisions, but the very willingness to define choices in terms of conflicting values.

This kind of choice exists in territorial decisions only when the territory itself is viewed instrumentally and its value is weighed against the probability of attaining other values, e.g., sovereignty, peace. The choice completely disappears when the whole territory is an expressive value—not negotiable under any conditions. In retrospect, the words of Ben-Gurion before the 1937 decision still stand the test of time: “Before us is a decision, not a verdict.” 17
Notes

1. Palestine (E.I.) is the official name used by the British to designate the area west of the Jordan River.


5. This territory includes 27,000 sq km of western Palestine; approximately 17,000 in Trans-Jordan, 11,000 in Syria (the Golan Heights and Bashan), 1,000 in southern Lebanon (up to the Litany River), and 3,000 sq km in Sinai. See M. Brawer. “Boundaries [of Eretz-Israel],” in *Hebrew Encyclopedia* (Jerusalem, 1957) 6:31–35 [Hebrew].

6. Instrumental arguments invoke “needs” such as defense, economic viability, and transportation, and are willing to compare cost to benefits. Expressive arguments invoke a higher principle of religion, ideology, history, language, nationality, or culture to prove that a certain territory “belongs” and should not be a subject of compromise or even debate.


