# Territoriality and nation-state formation: the Yishuv and the making of the state of Israel

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ABSTRACT. Students of the State are to this day bewildered by the subject matter of their discipline, and disagree over the formation of the modern state. In their search for clarity they have dedicated a relatively large part of their attention to redefining the boundaries between the state and society, and questions regarding the independent role of each in the modern nation-state. This probe left the two settings separate from each other. The renewed interest in the origins of the modern manifestation of the polity, the nation-state, assumed that a better understanding of the beginning would shed some light on the question of its future. The study of nation-state-making may produce a common denominator between the two constructs – society and the state. It is the purpose of this article to look at the role of the territoriality factor in the Jewish case of nation-state-building and to develop it as a concept that combines societal and statist elements. The link between territoriality and legitimacy, institution-building and leadership formation, was a major factor in the transformation of a diasporabased society into a modern polity that eventually became a nation-state.

### Introduction

Students of the state are to this day bewildered by the subject matter of their discipline. Close to 200 states presently constitute the international community and disagreement remains as to how the modern state was formed. In their search for evidence, students of state-building dedicated a relatively large part of their attention to redefining the boundaries between the state and society and to questions regarding the independent role of each in the modern nation-state. This exploration left the two concepts separate from each other. Renewed interest in the relationship between the nation and the state caused students to look at the origins of the nation-state, with the assumption that a better understanding of its beginnings would shed some light on the modern polity. While the European experience was accepted as the definitive model of nation-state-making, a common denominator between the two constructs – the nation and the state – was missing. The purpose of this article is to look at the role of territoriality in

the case of Jewish nation-state building and develop it as a concept that combines both spiritual and tangible assets of the modern polity.

# State formation and the Yishuv: theory and empirical studies

Charles Tilly, who based his work on European state-making, drew a distinction between two paths to the state: one, the result of an expansive process by autonomous political units, and the other, the product of the deliberate creation of new states by existing states. In later work he clearly associated European state-formation with war and the creation of armies. Common to both methods is the dominance of statist factors in the construction of the modern polity (Tilly, 1975: 636-8; 1990). Statists like Theda Skocpol, and geopolitical and international system analysts like George Liska, Karen Rasler and William Thompson, despite variations, in essence belong to the same approach.<sup>2</sup> Society-based theories committed the same sin, however, even if from the opposite direction. Edward Shils, Barrington Moore, and S. N. Eisenstadt as well as scholars from political development and political systems schools saw society and its functions as the determinants of the state<sup>3</sup> (Moore 1966; Shils 1975; Eisenstadt 1978). Both approaches have overlooked the national-territorial linkage between the two in the process of state-formation.

A purely statist paradigm is problematic when one examines the origins of the state of Israel. Even though the state of Israel was born out of a war of independence following the 1947 UN partition resolution, it is by now an accepted notion that the Yishuv, as the Jewish community in Mandate Palestine came to be known, functioned as a polity prior to its recognition as such by the international community of states. The functioning of the Yishuv challenges the significance of the main variables considered by many statists to be solely responsible for state-formation. While evolving in a British Mandate framework sanctioned by the League of Nations, the Yishuv was an indigenous national Jewish creation. The failure of the Arab community in Palestine to develop into a similar polity within the British Mandate disqualifies that framework as the cause of state-formation and confirms the assertion that state-building of the Jewish community came from within. Similarly, the failure of the bi-national state idea in Palestine despite some support in the Jewish community, British efforts to build institutions, and the emergence of mixed cities also indicates that there are problems with a purely statist approach. Moreover, the Jewish state's institutional framework was complete prior to the civil war that erupted in Palestine between 1936 and 1939, the partition blueprint that emerged from the 1936 Royal Commission plan, and the transformation of the Haganah from a militia to a professional military organisation. This was even recognised by the British: in 1936 the Royal Commission's partition recommendations stated that the Jewish community in Palestine was

functioning as a state.<sup>4</sup> In short, it appears that the state framework was completed prior to the Holocaust, the 1947 UN Resolution and the 1948 War of Independence.

A purely society-based interpretation is also problematic. The Yishuv grew from a small semi-autonomous community into a solid polity which then was transformed into a strong state in socio-political terms. Most of the studies on the origins of the state and its transformation to a strong state were nevertheless researched from a society-centred approach. Dan Horowitz and Moshe Lissak saw the Jewish society and community in Mandate Palestine as the main force in the shaping of the Israeli state and its political system, defining 'Israel as the product of an ideological movement that created a community that was transformed into a state' (Horowitz and Lissak 1990: 9).

Yonathan Shapiro, in contrast, saw the Israeli regime as the offspring of a power-oriented political elite (Shapiro 1976). Yosef Gorni explained the origin of Israel in terms of socialist ideology and the value system of the ruling Labour elite (Gorni 1973).6 Charles Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya approached the linkage between society and state through a consideration of 'civil religion' (Liebman and Don-Yehiya 1983). Joel Migdal explained the strength of the state in public life by linking it to the weakness of Jewish society prior to the Mandate (Migdal 1988: ch. 4). Some neo-Marxists or post-Zionists related the origins of the Yishuv to the struggle over the labour market or territory in Palestine. Jewish nationalism, according to Gershon Shafir was the result of the Jewish worker's need to guard his employment opportunities from competing cheap Arab labourers. Baruch Kimmerling identified the Zionist struggle over populated territory as a major variable in the shaping of the Yishuv and later Israel. Each of these last two theories interpreted Israeli state-building as a case of settler colonialism, explaining the emergence of a dominant socialist movement and nationalism as the result of the struggle with the native Arab inhabitants, totally detaching it from Zionism as a movement of national liberation (Kimmerling 1983; Shafir 1989; Shalev 1992). Again, all of the above explanations, perhaps with the exception of that of Horowitz and Lissak, fail to explain why a bi-national state dominated by a Jewish power elite did not emerge in Mandate Palestine. The primordial interpretation, namely that the Yishuv was the result of a genuine ethnonational movement that hence attached special significance to the historical territorial element is missing in almost all the explorations. The traditional thesis of a fusion between an ethnonational-territorial motivation and an institution-building process has not been given adequate attention.

The underlying assumption of this study, in contrast to that of Horowitz and Lissak, is that the origins of the state of Israel were in the diaspora, where the Jews constituted a unique polity. This fact explains their survival for almost two millennia, and with the emergence of modern nationalism they started developing the features of an ethnic nation without dwelling on

a defined territory.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, this study places importance on the impact of the Yishuv as a socio-political entity on the state of Israel. Locke's political society and Hegel's civil society, according to which the state is perceived as a related outgrowth of the society from which it emanated, could serve as accurate descriptions for this society.<sup>9</sup> In order for a population to qualify as a political society or a centre, to use Edward Shils' terminology, it must embody values attached to the locus of its institutional authority (Shils 1975: 4). Values sanctify authority and legitimate the central institutional system. In the modern state the centre is all-embracing; it integrates all value systems in one central zone, and there is widespread acceptance of these values, stimulating widespread participation in the centre (Shils 1975: 46). What distinguished the Yishuv from the diaspora and hence transformed it into a political society, and later a state, was the bond between the territorial and the institutional components of the polity.

Territory is the common denominator between a state and nation, even if each component of the modern polity needs territory for a different purpose. It is the territorial dimension, as A. D. Smith pointed out, that separates an ethnic group from a nation or a state. An ethnic group would qualify for a national movement if it develops territorial aspirations and for a nation-state once it controls that territory. In a totally different context, Matthew Crenson, in a book entitled Neighborhood Politics, found territoriality to be the basis of a political society:

There is nothing about territory itself – or about territoriality – that necessarily transforms human groups into political organizations. The political character of a territorial group seems to grow instead out of the kinds of relationships that become possible in organizations that use mere geographic boundaries to define their memberships. Many anthropologists, for example, have regarded the emergence of territorial groups as an essential step toward the development of the state, and what seems to be most essential to political development in this species of organization is the fact that the 'territorial link' offers a substitute for kinship and personal relationships in defining and maintaining a group. (Crenson 1983: 15)

Accordingly, in the Jewish case, territoriality, while replacing kinship, also materialised as the major determinant in giving the Yishuv the characteristics of a state even prior to achieving sovereignty and the means of defence.

Territoriality in the Yishuv will not be looked at in terms of space creation as some Israeli political geographers have done (Reichman and Hasson 1984). From a state-building perspective, territoriality will be associated here with the *physical construction of authority*, and hence related to three elements of state-building: legitimacy, institutions and leadership. What will be demonstrated is how the national ethos surrounding the building of a territorial basis of authority transformed a diaspora-based national movement into a political society or polity even prior to its

achieving sovereignty. The process of transformation will be defined as territorialisation.

Two methodological notes must be made regarding the contribution of the Yishuv to our understanding of other cases of state-building. First, while lacking the advantages of comparative analysis, concentration on the Yishuv is justified as it provides a unique opportunity to analyse the process by which a diaspora-based – rather than territory-based – ethnic community was converted into a polity and ultimately into a state. Second, the Yishuv was influenced by the European process of state-building, was conceived during the national liberation era, but took place outside the continent. The analysis will conclude with a brief comparison of the Yishuv with the Arab-Palestinian case.

## The Zionist diaspora movement and Palestine

Unlike most contemporary national movements, Zionism declared its national aspirations outside its homeland. Zionism called for the transfer of the diaspora Jews to what they considered their ancient homeland. Their demands for a homeland were unique because they were directed at a territory that was inhabited by a small unorganised Jewish minority. At the outset of the movement, organisations were established, institutions were erected and leaders emerged in the diaspora. Within less than four decades after its formal establishment (1897), however, territorial-based Zionism came to dominate the world-wide movement and, with its establishment, the state of Israel claimed to be the centre of the Jewish people all over the world.

What was the situation in the territory at the outset of the Zionist enterprise? At the end of the First World War, the Jewish community in Palestine was war-ravaged and almost completely dependent on Jewish contributions from abroad or from governmental sources (first Ottoman and then British). Nearly all Zionist institutions and leaders were located in the diaspora either permanently or as a result of expulsions during the war. By 1937 the ratio of Jews to Arabs had changed from 1:10 to 1:3; in absolute numbers: from about 50,000 Jews in Palestine at the turn of the century, the Yishuv grew to approximately 384,000 at the end of 1936 (Bachi 1974: 39-41, 399, Table A13). Land ownership also increased significantly: from about 220,000 dunams of Jewish-owned land at the turn of the century to 1.6 million dunams at the end of 1935 (Kimmerling 1983: 43, Table 2.1). The economy of the Jewish community was strong enough to withstand the Arab boycott of 1936 at the outset of the Arab revolt.

The process which took place during that period should be defined, not as colonisation, but as the territorialisation of a diaspora-based movement. Territorialisation denoted, in the Jewish case, both the transfer of the Zionist organisational framework from the diaspora to the territory and its

further development on a territorial basis in Palestine. The founding of a territorial-based institutional setting had far-reaching political ramifications for the future development of the Jewish polity.

Hypothetically, the Zionists could choose from two possible strategies in their attempt to accomplish their goal. One was conquest, which required the mobilisation of resources in the diaspora, to be followed by a military invasion. In the wake of the invasion the invaders could decide what type of regime to establish and what form of relations to institute with the local inhabitants. The subsequent relationship would be a product of one or more of the following processes: integration, power-sharing, subordination, expulsion or even destruction by the conquerors. The second strategy called for a gradual process involving the transfer of public resources and institutions from the diaspora to the desired territory. With the evolution of a local infrastructure, the territorial base of the movement could expand so that the local balance of resources would shift in favour of the territorialising movement, ultimately allowing it to assume political control of the territory. The distinction between these two strategies was the background to one of the struggles within the Zionist movement, primarily between the conquest-oriented Revisionists, on the one hand, and the Labour camp and the moderate faction of the civil camp, on the other. The victory of the latter strategy had repercussions both for emerging Zionist relations with the Arabs and for which elite ruled the emerging state.

Territorialisation implied not only a change in the distribution of power between the communities within the territory, but also a gradual shift in the balance of power between the territorial and the diaspora segments of the movement itself. This process of shifting authority brought the relationship between the diaspora and the territorial segments of the movement to a critical juncture. At a certain stage of its evolution, prior to the establishment of a fully-fledged polity, the movement had to decide which segment was to guide it. The transfer of institutions and leadership had been legitimised by a series of debates in which the issue was when and how to transfer control of the movement to Palestine. The fact that the debates were even held suggests that the transfer should not be taken for granted: the relocation of authority implied a new structure of relations between the diaspora and the territorial centre (Horowitz and Lissak 1977: ch. 1).

# Territoriality and legitimacy

Ethnic groups often find themselves in situations in which their central value systems must compete with other autonomous and sometimes more developed value systems, and with the central institutions of their states. They therefore have difficulty establishing authority over their members. As a result of Jewish dispersion and their general national minority status, 11 the Zionist movement in the diaspora found itself in this kind of situation.

Palestine or Eretz Israel had the potential to provide a central institutional zone imbued with a metaphysical aura. 12

But the task of implementing territoriality in the absence of coercive means, even within Palestine, was not a simple matter. As a non-sovereign entity, the Yishuv leadership lacked formal coercive resources to impose its authority. Moreover, with ideologies ranging from left to right and secular to orthodox, the task of state-building was impeded by severe difficulties of integrating competing value systems within one central zone. Because of these challenges, widespread acceptance by segments of the movement in both the diaspora and Palestine was crucial to the success of the Zionist movement. The Zionist movement eventually accepted the norm that its main work was to be done in the territory despite the fact that the organisation depended on the mobilisation of resources from scattered communities abroad over which it had no formal authority, and regardless of ideological differences over what kind of society should be built in Palestine. The practical implication was that resources mobilised in the diaspora were to be directed to Palestine rather than spent in the diaspora on organisational, political or military activities.

Agreement of the diaspora Zionist organs with territorialisation was cultivated through major debates in the 1920s. The notorious clash that took place between the American Zionists headed by Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis and the European Zionists under Weizmann could be seen as part of this process. Brandeis and his colleagues demanded that colonisation be accomplished through commercial investment, namely through private enterprise, although they nevertheless voiced their support for the relocation of the Zionist Executive to Jerusalem. The Europeans argued that investment in Palestine had to be implemented through a central national effort, and that it should not be measured by criteria of efficiency and business management. They saw the continuation of diplomatic activity in London as important. This debate indicated that the Europeans had to be induced to yield resources assembled in the diaspora to Palestine. 13

A second round of debate erupted in the late 1920s, this time between the 1927 Zionist Executive headed by Harry Sacher, a British Zionist and Weizmann protégé, and the Histadrut (Labour Federation) leaders. Brandeis' demand for economic efficiency and free enterprise was now voiced by the 'experts' report' of 1928, and promulgated by Jewish non-Zionists who were about to join the Zionists through the Jewish Agency. The Histadrut leaders opposed the Zionist Executive's call for an economic approach to the settlement in Palestine, and were joined by middle-class Zionists in Palestine who viewed the attack on the Histadrut as directed against all Palestinian settlers (Shapiro 1976: 235–8).

The results of the debate are made clear in the official paper published by the World Zionist Organisation following the debate. It stated that even non-socialist members of the Zionist organisations 'must support the wishes

of the Jewish labourer even if it entails many concessions, since he is still our main support'. The Jewish labourer, it claimed, is the most loyal and the symbol of the devotion to our national ideal in the country' (quoted in Shapiro 1976: 238).

In defeating diaspora demands in 1928, the territorial elites won a double victory: they not only legitimised their prerogative to disperse resources as they saw fit, but also their moral supremacy in the movement. In effect, they synthesised the 1920 debate between Brandeis and Weizmann: the centre of activity was to be Palestine (Brandeis' demand) and state-building would ensue through a centralised national effort (Weizmann's position). This amounted to an acceptance of the territorial segment of the Zionist movement as both leader and dispenser of resources.

Since territorial institutions were now seen as having the right to control national resources, these institutions essentially took over leadership of the Zionist movement. With time, as we shall see below, the organs and movements that reaped the greatest benefits from this synthesis were those based in Palestine and those that controlled the collective or corporate organisations. Territoriality, institution-building, and party politics were henceforward linked.

# Territoriality and institution-building

Institutions play an indispensable role in the emergence of a political society in new states.<sup>14</sup> In the Zionist enterprise a comprehensive institution-building process took place in Mandate Palestine, a process that went hand-in-hand with the emergence of charismatic leadership. What was unique was the impact of the territorial factor on this process.

The Zionist institutional framework that emerged was composed of two branches, the World Zionist Organization (WZO) and Knesset Israel. Originally the first was diaspora-based, while the second was territorial. With time, the two systems came to be known as the national institutions. What was significant was the take-over of the diaspora organ by the territorial segment of the organisation and leadership.

Territorial institution-building was attempted as early as 1908, when the Palestine Office of the World Zionist Organization was established. The operation came to a halt with the outbreak of the First World War. The fact that the ascendency of Chaim Weizmann to the forefront of world Zionism coincided with Britain's war against the Ottoman empire led to the transfer of the Zionist centre from Central Europe to London. Anxious to make the most of the Balfour Declaration that recognised Palestine as a national Jewish home, Weizmann assembled the Zionist Commission, composed of delegates from various countries, in Palestine, in order to reconstruct the Jewish community there and begin implementing Britain's commitments. In 1921, following the 12th Zionist Congress, the Commis-

sion was replaced by a higher-level Zionist Executive, whose Jerusalem office comprised members of the WZO Executive who had moved to Palestine. This new office was an integral part of the Zionist Executive in London, which was home to Weizmann, meaning that the Jerusalem office continued to receive orders from its counterpart in Britain.

Nevertheless, some organisational expansion did occur in Palestine. A political office, designed to represent the concerns of the Jewish community to the British administration and act as a watchdog for the London office, was established. Members of the Executive took upon themselves the task of developing and managing functional departments. Indicative of territorialization was the relocation of the headquarters of the two main fundraising arms of the WZO – Keren Kayemet LeIsrael and Keren HaYesod – even though the Jewish resources were coming from the diaspora. With the nomination in 1922 of Menahem Ussishkin, the great opponent of Herzl in the Uganda debate, as head of Keren Kayemet (in English known as the Jewish National Fund – JNF), the main office was moved to Jerusalem. Keren HaYesod, established in 1920 to appeal to both Zionists and non-Zionists for funds for Palestine, opened its main office in Jerusalem in 1926 (Eliav 1976: 136–42).

Growing activity in Palestine required new sources of funding. Building on the recommendations of the League of Nations Mandatory Charter (Article 4) which called for the establishment of a Jewish Agency, in 1929 a new organisation comprising Zionists and non-Zionists was created to serve the Jewish community of Palestine. The Jewish Agency was formally structured on the principle of parity between Zionists and non-Zionists, but the president of the WZO was also the head of the Jewish Agency. In effect, the Jewish Agency and the WZO executives acted as one, thus allowing the Zionist component to predominate.

Despite these inroads, the Jewish Agency was still divided between London and Jerusalem. Moreover, the high expectations of galvanising the non-Zionists into forming a partnership for building the Jewish homeland in Palestine were not realised. The Jewish Agency was dominated by the Zionists and the non-Zionists held back from mobilising the needed resources and abstained from full participation. The different outlook among the Zionists, who saw the institution's main goal as political, and the non-Zionists, who regarded it as philanthropic, did not lead to a harmonious situation (Stock 1987: 59-67).

The second branch of national institutions in the Yishuv – Knesset Israel – came into being immediately following the First World War, but did not receive formal recognition from the Mandate government until 1926. The emerging structure comprised both representative organs – the National Assembly (Asefat ha-Nivharim) and the National Council (ha-Va'ad ha-Leumi) – and executive organs, the National Council Executive (Va'ad ha-Poel). Significantly, despite its territorial advantage, Knesset Israel did not emerge as the central institution in the Yishuv during the 1920s. Hampered

by the limited resources that it could raise from the Jewish community in Palestine and constrained by the Mandatory government's refusal to extend its legitimacy beyond that of a religious community, it was overshadowed by the WZO/Jewish Agency. Even after the Mandate government permitted it to collect taxes in 1930 and made it responsible for Jewish education, the National Council still played a secondary role to that of the WZO/Jewish Agency, which controlled fund-raising in the diaspora.<sup>15</sup>

In order to fully appreciate institution-building in Palestine one must look also at the emergence of territory-wide functional institutions. The Histadrut was the most important of these. Created as a trade union in 1920, the Histadrut provided the employees of the economic enterprises it set up with social services in such fields as health, education, labour and immigration. From its inception, it perceived itself as a territory-wide organisation, involved in settlement and even in defence. By 1928, the Histadrut membership comprised 70 per cent of the Jewish labourers in Palestine. This development provided the Labour elite with an instrument for mobilising manpower and resources. The Histadrut, in association with other territory-wide organisations such as kibbutzim, youth movements and party organisations, provided cadres of political activists who were not at the disposal of the diaspora leadership. <sup>16</sup>

The emerging Zionist political parties also contributed to the emergence of a territorial-based polity in Mandate Palestine. The large number of party-lists, which in the various elections ranged from twelve to twentyfive, theoretically reflected the importance of ideology in Palestine rather than the territoriality of the Yishuv. In reality this party-pluralism contributed to territory-wide mobilisation of a divided society composed of manifold contending ideologies. The need to mobilise the masses in the absence of formal instruments of government, both in the diaspora and Palestine, promoted a system of proportional representation, which in turn produced territory-wide political parties instead of regional or Hamula (familial) parties, as was the case for instance among the Palestine Arabs. In time the parties also functioned as providers of day-to-day services (Horowitz and Lissak 1977: 104-7). The provision of services such as education, health care and employment enabled the parties to function as territorial agents, reducing the revolutionary fervour that better suited a strategy of conquest.

The political importance of these institutions is confirmed by the fact that those parties which had established themselves in Palestine later controlled the WZO/Jewish Agency. Thus despite their weakness in the diaspora-based institutions throughout the 1920s, the Labour parties that had achieved an advantage in the territorial Knesset Israel bodies<sup>17</sup> eventually dominated both branches of the Zionist organisations. The territorial dimension of these parties accounted for their ability to gain control of the national institutions in the 1930s (see Table 1).

The Labour parties stood out from the others in one major respect - the

Congress	12th	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
Year	1921	1923	1925	1927	1929	1931	1933	1935	1937	1939	1946
Labour Centre- Right	8 73	21 56	18 64	22 62	26 58	29 57	44 44	48 35	46.3 37.2	46.8 39	39.9 45
Relig.	19	23	18	16	16	14	12	16	16.5	14.2	15
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table 1. Election results at the various World Zionist Congresses (%)

Source: Adapted from Horowitz and Lissak 1990: 144.

ratio between territorial and diaspora party leadership. Each of the major Zionist parties was composed of branches in both Palestine and the diaspora. In the case of the Labour movement, the leadership was based in Palestine while the leaders of its sister-parties in the diaspora were merely emissaries from Palestine. The situation was different in the other parties. Most of the centre General Zionist party leadership was situated outside of Palestine. Similarly, Zeev Jabotinsky, the leader of the right-wing Revisionist Party, which perceived itself from its inception as the alternative to the established Zionist leadership, was exiled in 1929. In the religious Zionist camp, the leadership was divided between the two locations: ha-Poel ha-Mizrahi (the branch closer to Labour) leaders were mainly in Palestine, while Mizrahi's leaders were chiefly located in the diaspora. The Palestine-based Labour camp leadership succeeded in taking over the Zionist institutions, and ha-Poel haMizrahi emerged as the stronger of the two branches in the religious Zionist movement.

The proportions of diaspora versus territorial political support are evident in the election results for the Zionist Congress. Table 2 indicates that while all the other major parties received a larger share of their votes from the diaspora, the Labour camp's proportional electoral vote in Palestine was consistently significantly higher than that received in the diaspora. In direct contrast, the General Zionists' most significant source of support was in the diaspora. Among the Revisionists and Mizrahi the situation was more evenly balanced.

The victory of Mapai (an acronym for the party of the workers of Eretz Israel, first used in 1930), in the 1933 elections to the Zionist Congress has been traditionally attributed to the power of organisation. What has been ignored is the role territoriality played in the struggle over the Zionist institutional network. To be sure, Labour's organisational superiority was in large part the result of its territorial base; the strategy of territorial institution-building better suited the Labour apparatus leadership than the free enterprise General Zionists or the military conquest-oriented Revisionists. However, as will be demonstrated in the analysis of the political

Table 2.	Α	selected	comparison	of	votes	to	the	Zionist	Congresses	in
Palestine v	wit	h total vo	otes, 1931-19	46	(%)					

Year	1931		1933		1935		1937		1939		1946	
Location	P	P+D	P	P+D	P	P+D	P	P+D	P	P+D	P	P+D
Party						-						190 1 10
Labour	62	29	68	44	66.8	48.8	69.5	46.3	70.6	46.4	60.5	39.9
Mizrahi	9.1	14	8	12	13.9	16	15.4	16.5	10.4	14.2	12.4	15
Revists.	16.8	21	12			_	_		-	_	13.7	10.6
Gen.Zion	. 7.8	36	6.6	28	16	32.2	14.9	35.3	17.6	36.4	12.2	33.2

P = Palestine: D = Diaspora

Source: Horowitz and Lissak 1990: 117.

power struggle over leadership, the territorial association provided the Labour camp with a decisive advantage that went beyond organisation.

# Territoriality and leadership

The shifting emphasis of the Zionist movement from the diaspora to Palestine was reflected quite clearly in changes in the movement's leadership. By the late 1920s the institutional infrastructure required for the establishment of a viable polity had been built. The crucial factor was the shift in power from a diaspora-based leadership to a Palestine-based leadership. Such a relocation of authority had both political and individual aspects.

Labour's rise to hegemony was the result of a decision by its leaders and especially its main ideologue, Berl Katzenelson, to make a bid for control of the WZO, a decision that was followed by an aggressive campaign in Palestine. Labour received only 22 per cent of the vote for the 1927 Congress and increased its margin only slightly in the following two Congresses. The turnabout came in 1933, following an intensive campaign by David Ben-Gurion and other Mapai leaders in Eastern Europe, where the majority of the Jewish people resided. Even following Labour's victory over the other parties, its dominance would have been imperilled had the centre-right and religious parties been able to form a coalition (See Table 1).

In effect, Labour's ascendency was contested by the revisionist party which, in 1925, began acting as an independent political faction, both in the diaspora and in Palestine. Gathering strength in Poland, home to the greatest Jewish population anywhere, and augmenting its support in Palestine, the revisionists increased their share of the electorate in the National Assembly from 6.7 per cent in 1925 to over 20 per cent in 1931. Likewise, starting with four delegates in the 14th Zionist Congress of 1925, the revisionists' strength grew to 21 per cent of the delegates in 1931, not far behind the 29 per cent obtained by the Labour factions. Led by Zeev

Jabotinsky, a charismatic leader with extraordinary oratory skills and an innovative ideologist, the revisionist steamroller rapidly gained momentum and Jabotinsky became a potential heir to the conservative WZO leadership. When Weizmann, at the 1931 Congress, failed in his re-election bid for the presidency of the WZO, Jabotinsky was a serious contender to succeed him.

From the perspective put forward by the article, the revisionists blundered twice and determined the results of the political struggle for leadership over the Yishuv. First, Jabotinsky believed in the conquest of Palestine strategy instead of a strategy of territorialisation. While not objecting to the development of the Yishuv, he nevertheless believed that the decisive turning-point would be a massive immigration of Jews to Palestine, accompanied by a military campaign in association with the British empire. Second, because they rejected the gradual approach endorsed by Weizmann, the revisionists refrained from the infrastructure-building pursued by Labour. This approach put them in an inferior position vis-à-vis Mapai which, despite its socialist ideology, surfaced as the party dedicated to the conquest of the land. Jabotinsky's natural allies on social and economic issues, the middle-class General Zionists, rallied around Ben-Gurion who assembled a ruling coalition based on the territorialisation strategy.

Appearing in major Jewish centres in the diaspora as the representatives of the movement that was actually implementing the Zionist ideals of settling the land in Palestine, Ben-Gurion and his associates received 44 per cent of the vote for the 18th Congress compared to the 16 per cent for the revisionists and 28 per cent for the general Zionists (see Table 1). In the ensuing years, without ever reaching a majority Mapai gained control over the world Zionist institutions by virtue of its control over the territorial base of the movement. Labour's triumph in the early 1930s reflected two dimensions: its prominence as the territorial leaders of the Yishuv, and the victory of the Yishuv as the leading component in the Zionist movement.

The composition of the Zionist Executive reflected the new realities. Up to 1933, at least half of the Executive's members lived abroad; in 1935 six of its seven members resided in Jerusalem. Dr Chaim Arlosorov, the rising star of the Labour movement, replaced Colonel Kish, Weizmann's man in Jerusalem, as head of the political department of the Zionist Executive. Following the 1933 elections, Labour gained three members in the Executive: Moshe Shertok, political department; Eliezer Kaplan, treasury; and David Ben-Gurion who, although he continued to serve as Histadrut's general secretary, became chairman of the Zionist Executive and the Jewish Agency – a post that had been formally vacant since 1923. The fact that Yitzchak Ben-Zvi, one of Ben-Gurion's closest associates, was elected chairman of the National Council Executive in 1931 secured the latter's authority over both branches of the national institutions and their resources. Ben-Gurion, the leader of the strongest political party, now controlled all the main institutions (Bar-Zohar 1980: 114-23).

The rise to dominance of the territorial leadership also contained an individual component: the transfer of command from Chaim Weizmann, the diaspora leader, to David Ben-Gurion, the territorial leader. Weizmann, who had emerged as the uncontested world Zionist leader following the Balfour Declaration, based his claim to leadership on his close association with the British leadership (Laqueur 1972: 471). As a result of the centre of the movement's shift to Palestine, Weizmann's authority was usurped by Ben-Gurion.

Like Ben-Gurion, Weizmann was a gradualist and believed that following the establishment of the Mandate, efforts should be directed towards building up the Yishuv in Palestine. But he was a diaspora leader living in Manchester who felt that the locus of Zionist action was London. Furthermore, Weizmann presided over the WZO without a party apparatus. Ben-Gurion, in contrast, rose to power in Palestine, where he and his colleagues stabilised and controlled the Histadrut as well as the largest political party in the Yishuv. While acting as a silent accomplice to Weizmann's demotion in 1931 and 1933, upon his promotion to the chairmanship of the Zionist Executive, Ben-Gurion insisted that Weizmann should return to the presidency of the WZO. Weizmann, however, had become a pawn in the hands of the territorial leader. Ben-Gurion needed Weizmann as a figurehead for the Jewish people in the diaspora, and for negotiations with the British government in London, at which Weizmann was most adept. 18 As chairman of the Zionist Executive, Ben-Gurion controlled the resources of the movement and their allocation within Palestine.

The election of Ben-Gurion to the Zionist Executive chairmanship in 1933, and his emergence as the leader of the world-wide Zionist movement emanated from his territorial power-base. The suggestion that it was socialist ideals which swept the Zionists in the direction of Palestine-based elites is unsatisfactory, as the majority of Zionists were middle class. Even in 1935 the non-socialist parties in the WZO enjoyed a majority, and those who voted for the socialists were not influenced by their accomplishments in realising their proletarian orientation. Once Labour leaders and ideologues understood that they would not be able to change diaspora Jews to labourers, they concentrated on getting their votes. Ben-Gurion's personal charisma cannot account for their success; the evidence from that period tells us that both Weizmann and Jabotinsky were more charismatic than the socialist leader from Palestine. Ben-Gurion was neither a great orator nor an impressive writer or intellectual. He was a product of labour struggles and a party apparatus, climbed to power the hard way. Yet, he defeated Weizmann, the diplomat and scientist, and Jabotinsky, the eloquent orator and publicist.

Labour's victory was the result of its having provided the inspiration for the Jewish masses in the diaspora. Had the ideas of the Labour camp stood in total contrast to those of the majority of the WZO, it could not have ruled the organisation in the ensuing years. Instead, it was Labour's ability to display the fulfilment of Zionist maxims in Palestine that attracted the imagination of the Jewish diaspora. It was the territorial element in its enterprise that sanctified Labour's authority and legitimised its leadership over the diaspora-based movement.

# Territoriality and palestinian attempts at state-formation

Prior to presenting the conclusion of this study, it is germane to apply the above terminology to the Arab community in Mandatory Palestine, the society most affected by the success of the Zionists in territorialisation. The following is not a comparative study; the analysis in this section will be brief and will be based on existing literature, in anticipation of a more conclusive treatment by experts of Palestinian history.

The failure of the Palestinian Arabs to attain a state during the Mandate years is a consequence of their failure to engage in territorial institutionbuilding rather than a product of their military or diplomatic deficiencies. Although rooted in Palestine, and despite encouragement from the Mandate government, they failed to build modern political institutions with a territorial base. The Arab counterparts of the Jewish national institutions were sectarian. Both the Supreme Moslem Council and the Arab Executive, the governing body of the Arab Congress, were controlled by influential Palestine-based families, primarily the Husaynis and the Nashashibis. Similarly, the Arab political parties were not based on modern ideological or territorial movements, but were identified primarily with the interests of the above-mentioned families and their allies, such as the Khalidi and Dajani families. The National Defence Party was identified with the Nashashibis; and the Palestine Arab Party with the Husaynis. The closest the Arabs came to a modern party was the Hizb al-Istiqlal (Independence Party) formed in 1932. It had a strong urban base and professional leadership. The three other parties were weaker and identified with specific personalities.<sup>19</sup>

The only organ that came close to being territorial-wide was the Arab Higher Committee, formed in the wake of the collapse of the Arab Executive in 1934. Including representatives from each of the six political parties and headed by the mufti of Jerusalem, Al Haj Amin al-Husayni, the Arab Higher Committee supervised the general strike that broke out on 25 April 1935, an event that eventually triggered what came to be known as the Arab Revolt of 1936–9. However, internal strife prevented the committee from becoming an all-territorial institution, and by the spring of 1937 it was already moribund (Lesch 1973: 243–52). Unlike the Zionists, the Palestinians did not develop institutions with conflict resolution mechanisms. This is partly because such institutions are more difficult to build when feuds have a familial-personal basis.<sup>20</sup> Further attempts to build a framework of national institutions in the ensuing years failed.

Three additional factors were responsible for the Palestinian failure. While the Zionists' route to Palestine received its final endorsement following the 1904 Uganda Controversy (Vital 1986: 83–7); the Palestinian Arab goals were still not clearly demarcated as late as the 1920s. The Palestine Arabs' identification with southern Syria only started to wane when they recognised that the Syrian nationalists had their own agenda and they started to comprehend the strength of the Zionists, both in Palestine and abroad (Lesch 1973: 217; Porat 1976: 247–8). Zionist inroads to Palestine, and the emergence of a functioning state structure, constituted the prime motivation for the emergence of a Palestinian territory-wide nationalist goal. However, at this stage the Zionist institutional infrastructure was already fortified and therefore in the confrontation that ensued the weaker side in socio-political rather than military terms, lost the battle.

The second factor was the expulsion of the Palestinian national leadership by the British Mandate authorities following the assassination of the acting district commissioner of the Galilee on 26 September 1937 (Elpeleg 1993: 48–50). Just as the expulsion of Jabotinsky was detrimental to the Revisionists in their struggle for leadership within the Zionist movement, the Arab Higher Committee never recovered from the expulsion of most of its leadership and the flight of the Mufti Husayni to Lebanon and then to Nazi Germany at one of the most critical moments in its history. This event constituted a grave setback for Palestinian institution-building from which they were not able to recover (Horowitz and Lissak 1977: 28).

The third, and most significant, factor precluding Palestinian territorialisation was the intervention of the Arab states in Palestine. This act in the short run seemed to shift the balance of power in favour of the Palestinian Arabs over the Zionists and forced the British government to abandon the Peel partition plan and issue the 1939 White Paper. Ultimately, however, it took authority out of the hands of the Palestinian Arabs. In contrast to the Zionists, among whom command shifted from the diaspora to the territory, the Palestinian Arabs lost their capacity to guide their movement and their leadership role. In the following years, the Arab states assumed an even more dominant position in the struggle over Palestine, whether via the individual states or the Arab League. In both cases Palestinian interests were given secondary priority, subordinate both to the particularistic goals of Arab leaders like Jordan's King Abdullah and to the tenets of Pan-Arabism (Lesch 1973b: 22-4). Indeed the Palestinian Arabs had no national capacity in either the 1948 war or the subsequent negotiations between territorial states. Henceforth the Palestinians ceased playing a national role for almost two decades and became a diaspora.

In the years that followed the establishment of the state of Israel, the Palestinians felt the drawbacks of not having a territorial institutional base. Although residing on territories that historically constituted Palestine, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, they were not granted a state by their Arab host nations. Nor did they struggle for a state in these territories.

Paradoxically, it was only under Israeli rule that territorial institution-building started to take place.

The Palestinian experience since 1967 demonstrates the importance of what we mean by territorialisation. The major lesson, eventually learned by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), is that state-building entails more than conquest or international recognition: it requires territoriality. The process of institution-building that has been taking place in the West Bank since 1967 was studied by this author and Hillel Frisch in the early 1980s (Sandler and Frisch 1984). This process of combining territory and institutions ultimately proved to be more consequential for Palestinian statebuilding than the PLO's attempts to conquer Palestine from Jordan or Lebanon, or its international diplomatic ties. Despite its initial refusal, the PLO eventually had to grant legitimacy to the political role of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (the territories) in the Palestinian national enterprise. While the process is not yet concluded, the arrival of the PLO leadership in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in the wake of the 1993 Oslo agreement has marked a significant step in the territorialisation of the movement. From the perspective of state-building, this territorialisation through the autonomous Palestinian Authority is a significant achievement.

In short, as the Palestinian experience also indicates, political societies, or ethnonational ideological movements, need territorial bases to their institutions in order to pursue state-formation. It is territoriality that transforms them into national polities. As demonstrated by the Zionist experience, and verified by the ordeal of the Palestinian Arabs, the process of state-building involves more than territorial habitation and international support or recognition. What is most important is the formation of territorial authority.<sup>21</sup>

## Conclusion

The experience of the Jewish community in Palestine and the evolution of the Zionist movement into a polity during Mandate Palestine demonstrates that state-building is not a purely statist event. The story of the Yishuv is one of indigenous territorial institution-building; it is not a case of military conquest by autonomous units or state-making by existing (external) states. Critical to the successful emergence of a polity in Palestine in the early to mid-1930s was the territorial variable; territoriality was crucial in the transformation of a diaspora-based society into what later emerged as a strong state. Both material and human resources, even among Zionists, were located in the diaspora. The Jewish community in Palestine comprised only a small fraction of world Jewry. In terms of diplomatic activity, London was the critical centre for Zionist international politics and the British government formulated policies for the Mandate government in Palestine. The fact that the focal point moved from London to Palestine supports the

thesis that the Yishuv was a Jewish rather than a British product. The success of the Zionist movement must relate to the fact that the movement, as a whole, identified the critical role of territory in the transformation from a diaspora-based society to a state and adopted territorialisation as its official strategy.

Consequently, the structure that emerged in the mid-1930s was the mirror image of that of the Zionist movement at the outset of territorialisation. The Zionist territorial segment now controlled all the main resources of the world-wide movement, namely its institutions, leadership, and resources. The terms of the transition in practice were worked out in a series of battles within the WZO in the 1920s. The political overtones of the debate indicated that the disagreements were not about tactics. But, since universal agreement concerning the importance of territoriality both in theory and in practice was achieved, the new structure was legitimised. This process came to fruition through the building of territory-wide institutions and the shift of the leadership from the diaspora to the territorial centre. While the diaspora accepted its main function from the outset – to mobilise resources for the territorial segment - the acid test came as it conceded its leadership within the Zionist movement to the territorial segment. Territorialisation implied the transformation of power to those political elites whose activities concentrated in Palestine. In turn, it was the territorial segment which perceived itself as the vanguard of the Zionist movement and thus aspired to take this role upon itself.

The emergence of a territorial centre, in retrospect, constituted a crucial step for the Zionist movement in the years that followed. First, it enabled the movement to withstand: (1) the onslaught of the Palestinian Arabs against the Yishuv and the Mandate during the years 1936-9; (2) the de facto British withdrawal from the Balfour Declaration in 1939; and (3) the horror of the Holocaust. Second, the Yishuv was a polity prior to achieving sovereignty, even though it lacked official borders and international recognition. This development influenced the Yishuv leadership's behaviour during the 1937 partition debate which evolved in response to the British Royal Commission's partition proposal. It was this reality that ultimately lead to the establishment of a Jewish state a decade later, despite the Arabs' numerical superiority and the support given to them by neighbouring Arab states. Third, the transformation of the structure of the Zionist movement from a diaspora-based movement to a territorial one had major implications in years to come for the centre-periphery relationship between the Jewish state and the Jews of the diaspora. A purely statist approach would interpret all the above events as responsible for the emergence of the state instead of vice versa.

An additional conclusion to be drawn from this essay is that in contrast to the common belief that the Labour camp's victory was related to its ability to promote a value system that was in accordance with the norms of the emerging international system, as well as its organisational and leadership talents, it can be argued that Mapai's hegemony was accomplished through the use of territoriality values based on both institutional and symbolic meanings. The territorial centre served both as a source of inspiration and as a focus of authority and commitment for its people, whether in Palestine or in the diaspora (Horowitz 1982: 331). It was the ethnonational attachment that sanctified the work of the pioneers in the Land of Israel rather than the socialist ideology and value system. However, it is an understanding of this nexus between territoriality and the political system of the Yishuv that is indispensable to an explanation of the success of the Zionist enterprise in Palestine.

The implications of this study for theories of state-formation were stated at the outset of this article. More attention should be given to territoriality in understanding the transformation of societies into polities and especially understanding nation-states. The territorial dimension of institution-building and leadership should not be taken for granted in European state-formation because states there emerged from territory-based communities. The importance of territorial institution-building in state-formation has implications for the new states outside Europe. Many of the new states enjoyed the territorial dimension of state-making but lacked the process of territorial institution-building. Ultimately, the process of moving the Zionist centre to Palestine produced not only a strong state structure, but also a democratic one in an era when newly established states often fell under the rule of authoritarian regimes. The hypothesis, which seems to be supported by this study, that the territorial nature of the institution-building endorsed democracy needs to be further investigated through comparative work. <sup>22</sup>

The experience of the Arab community of Mandate Palestine, here dealt with briefly, confirms our thesis and also clarifies what we mean by territorialisation: it goes beyond either institution-building or societies being territorially based. During the Mandate era the Palestinians were a territorially-based community, but in comparison to the Jewish community they lacked a developed institutional framework. Only in recent years have they began to adopt a strategy of territorialisation.

## **Notes**

- 1 For a good sample of articles see Evans et al. (1985); articles by Gabriel A. Almond and Eric Nordlinger on this issue in American Political Science Review, 1988: 853-85; for a more recent critique see Mitchell (1991: 77-96); see also Nordlinger (1987).
- 2 The borders between these three theories are not always distinguishable. A scholar who combines statism, international system analysis and geopolitics is George Liska; see his most recent work (1990); see also McNeil (1982); Rasler (1989); Skocpol (1979).
- 3 For the classical work in political development see Almond (1970), and Apter (1965). From this perspective Marxists and Neo-Marxists like Immanuel Wallerstein would belong to the same category, Wallerstein (1988).
- 4 Report of the Palestine Royal Commission Parliamentary Document no. 5479, July 1937:

- 270-4. For more research on Palestine on this issue see a collection of articles in Avizohar and Friedman 1984; and Galnoor (1991: 211-40). (Hebrew) For the Zionist proposal see The Central Zionist Archives (CZA), Jerusalem (CZA) file S25/5156 Jerusalem, 23 May 1938.
- 5 The political nature of that community was recognised by the Yishuv leaders who dubbed it *Medina Shbaderech* meaning 'a state in-the-making', or in retrospect as 'statehood without sovereignty'. These references are in common use in books on Israeli politics and Israeli historiography. The most comprehensive book on the Yishuv is Horowitz and Lissak (1977); see also Eliav (1976) and Shavit (1983), all in Hebrew.
- 6 See also a debate between Shternhal (1977) and Horowitz (1977: 168-74) (Hebrew).
- 7 Other explanations given by Migdal were the policies of the Mandatory government, as well as the conflict situation, the personality and talents of David Ben-Gurion and the other state-builders.
- 8 The amount of literature in this regard is enormous. The following is only a sample: Baron (1952-83); Elazar and Cohen (1985); Dinur (1969); Shmuel Triganon (1992-3).
- 9 On civil society see Bratton (1989: 407-30). For a different approach see Seligman (1992). On political society see Crenson (1983: 9-20).
- 10 On territory as the common denominator between state and nation see Smith (1982: 158-9); Connor (1972: 332-3). See also Anderson (1992).
- 11 'A diaspora is a minority in every polity in which its members reside', is a definition given by Armstrong (1976: 393-4). See also Shefer (1986), and Ayal and Chiswick (1983: 861-75).
- 12 One of the leading Zionist thinkers, Ahad Haam, understood the challenge of modern society and nationalism to the Jewish spiritual survival and expressed it in a demand for the establishment of a spiritual centre. See Ahad Ha-Am (1981: 270-7). For an analysis of Ahad Haam's approach see Vital (1982: 26-8).
- 13 The details of the debate are in Laqueur (1927: 458-61).
- 14 This is a quote of Shils taken from Lipset (1979: 23).
- 15 For further elaboration on the Jewish institutions in Palestine see Elyakim Rubinstein, in Eliav (1976: 150-90).
- 16 On the emergence of the Histadrut and its political significance see Shapiro (1976: chs. 2-3).
- 17 Horowitz and Lissak (1977: 142 Table 9). It must be pointed out that starting with 4.1 per cent of delegates in the (1921) Zionist Congress, the Palestine delegation even in (1935) did not reach 20 per cent of the number of delegates. See Horowitz and Lissak (1977: 338).
- 18 For the role that Ben-Gurion assigned to Weizmann see Bar-Zohar (1980: 331).
- 19 This analysis is based on Porat (1976), see especially, chs. 2, 4, 6 and the concluding chapter; see also Lesch (1973), especially, chs. 6 and 7.
- 20 For a comparison between the two mechanisms of conflict resolution see Horowitz and Lissak (1977: 27-8). For the role of kinship in protracted conflicts see Azar et al. (1978).
- 21 The idea that the Palestinians learn from the Zionists was pointed out by Sandler and Frisch (1984: ch. 2). See also Al-Azm (1988) and Frisch (1993: 10-13).
- 22 Some pioneering work on territoriality and democratic institutions has been done by Connolly (1991: 463-84); see also Elazar (1978).

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