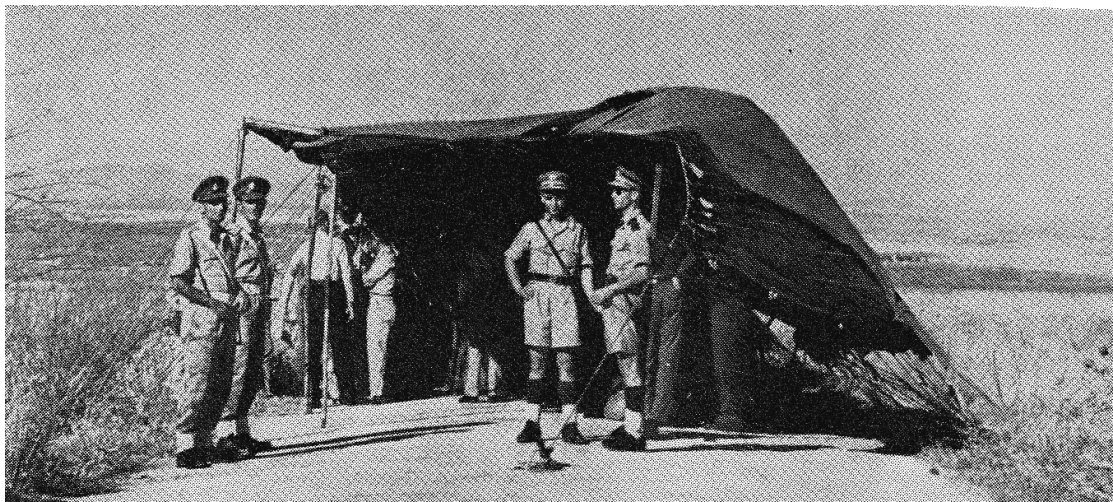# Creating a State of Belligerency

A Study of the Armistice Negotiations between Israel and Syria in 1949

Master thesis in history

By Petter Stenberg

Department of Archaeology, Conservation and History

UNIVERSITETET I OSLO

Spring 2009

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Preface

This spring actually marks the 60th anniversary of the Israeli-Syrian armistice agreement. Even though the armistice agreement between Israel and Syria was supposed to create a foundation for a future peace settlement between the two states, peace has been as far from the reality as it is possible to be. Sixty years later, the armistice agreement signed on 20 July 1949 is the only agreement that has ever been reached between Israel and Syria. Sadly enough, the state of belligerency is thus still the dominant force between the two states, which in other words means that it is still a warlike situation, since in theory an armistice is only a temporary cessation of hostilities. The Syrian-Israeli conflict has been one of the most bitter of Israel's bilateral conflicts with its Arab neighbours ever since the demise of the armistice agreements. Why? Perhaps, part of the reason is that none of the numerous mediating bodies has considered the armistices conducted in 1949 as important in order to reach a deal between Israel and Syria. Therefore, the importance of research is decisive in order to enlighten future mediators when they enter new rounds of negotiations. To have the privilege to be part of that research task has been an honour.

First and foremost, I am deeply grateful to have had the privilege to work with Professor Hilde Henriksen Waage. Her enthusiasm and dedication to the topic has truly been inspirational and not least, decisive for the creation of this thesis. Despite her busy schedule, Waage has always given me excellent guidance and advice necessary to keep me on a steady course. In the early phase of this thesis she saw something I did not see, and encouraged me in an impressive way, until I one day, in Hilde`s own words "saw the light".

I wish to express my deep appreciation to the research assistants, Marte Heian-Engdal and Jørgen Jensehaugen for exceptional guidance and necessary corrections.

A special thanks goes to my fellow student Stian Tiller for his most valuable involvement in the work with this thesis from the very beginning and for making our research trip to Washington D.C. into an unforgettable moment of my life. Thanks to Emil Lahlum and Amund Lundegaard for good times in D.C.

I am deeply grateful to the Depatment of Archaeology, Conservation and History, at the University in Oslo for financing my research trip to the National Archives at College Park in Maryland. I would also like to thank the National Archives in Maryland and the Library at the Nobel Institute in Oslo for excellent service, in particular the Nobel institute`s head librarian Anne Kjelling.

I also want to thank Hilde Henriksen Waage`s skillful group of masterstudents, who has given me the opportunity to read their excellent work at seminars. Your support and comments has been very inspiring. Thanks to all my fellow students, in particular Stian Ruud, Gjermund Rongved and Johannes Due Enstad.

Finally I wish to thank my soon-to-be wife, Jessica Therese Håkansson, and my lovely two daughters, Selma and Ada. Your support has been beyond the imaginable.

All the above individuals and institutions deserve a share of this thesis. For the shortcomings that remain, I am alone responsible.

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Petter Stenberg

Oslo, 4 May 2009

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Introduction

Theme and Research Questions

In the aftermath of the first Arab-Israeli war in 1948, four armistice agreements were signed between Israel-Egypt; Israel-Transjordan (later Jordan); Israel-Lebanon; and Israel-Syria. With the conclusion of the armistice agreement between Israel and Syria on 20 July 1949, the first Arab-Israeli war was over. In order to finish the military phase of the conflict the UN Security Council decided that an armistice should be established in all sectors of Palestine.[1] The first armistice agreement between Israel and Egypt was signed 24 February 1949. This agreement created the basis for three further armistice agreements between Israel and its Arab neighbours, all signed in 1949.[2]

The armistice agreements were, in essence, attempts to create foundations for future peace negotiations between the belligerent states. As soon as the armistice agreements had been concluded, peace talks were supposed to get under way with Israel and all the neighbouring Arab states. With the exception of Jordan, such peace talks never came underway. And, because the armistice agreements only could be replaced by peace agreement, the armistice agreements became permanent. Egypt and Israel signed a peace treaty in 1979, and fifteen years later, in 1994, a peace agreement between Jordan and Israel was signed.

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[1] UNSC Resolution 62 of 16 November 1948 (S/1080). See Appendix III.
[2] Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall, Israel and the Arab World*, W.W. Norton & Company, London 2001, p. 42.

Therefore, as no peace agreements have replaced the armistice agreements between Israel and Lebanon, and Israel and Syria, these armistices in theory still remain in force.

Each set of the negotiations had a distinctive character, conditioned by military and political circumstances peculiar to that front. The common denominator was that they were all conducted under the auspices of the UN. However, there is a need for a closer examination of how the armistice agreements were conducted and what actually influenced the final outcome of the negotiations. Even though there has been written extensively about the first Arab-Israeli war, little attention has been given the armistice agreements in 1949.

This study focuses on how the armistice agreement between Israel and Syria was reached in 1949. Crucial issues with regard to how this agreement was reached have never been carefully studied. Considering that the armistice negotiations between Israel and Syria were the most protracted, lasting from 5 April to 20 July 1949, it is most important to ask why these negotiations took so long. No less importantly, since peace negotiations could not start until the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations were concluded, this question is of major importance. Since the Israeli-Syrian armistice agreement has not been replaced by a peace agreement, it is crucial to study issues related to the armistice, in order to get a better knowledge of the current non-existing relationship between Israel and Syria. To get the parties to sign an armistice agreement, the UN postponed crucial issues related to the contested area. These issues were to be settled in a final peace agreement. However, since the peace talks failed, the UN actually created a state of belligerency between Israel and Syria. Issues that were left open caused further friction between Israel and Syria in the long term.

The first phase of the armistice negotiations ended in a deadlock because the opening positions of Israel and Syria were wide apart and neither side was prepared to budge. During the first Arab-Israeli war, Syrian forces had established a number of bridgeheads inside the borders of Mandatory Palestine, north and south of the Sea of Galilee. All the attempts by Israel to push the Syrian army back across the mandate borders failed. The Syrian positions inside the borders of Palestine became the existing truce lines. Therefore, Syria insisted that the existing truce line should become the demarcation line between Israel and Syria. For the Syrians, ending the war in possession of territory west of the old international border would be a considerable achievement. They would, in comparison with the other Arab states, be in a position to claim that they had ended the war with a concrete gain in hand.[3]

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[3] Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, p. 45.

Israel considered the area of Mandatory Palestine as belonging to the State of Israel. Hence, in the Israeli-Syrian armistice talks, Israel insisted on unconditional Syrian withdrawal to the old international border between Palestine and Syria. This border was established in 1923 by the mandate states, Great Britain and France. The Israelis claimed that the old international border was the only permanent line that had ever existed between Palestine and Syria. Furthermore, when the UN General Assembly passed its partition resolution on 29 November 1947 to end the British Mandate over Palestine, the contested area between Israel and Syria was, in essence, stipulated as belonging to Israel. The border that was supposed to separate Israel and Syria was based on the old international border between Palestine and Syria. However, during the previous armistice negotiations, Israel did not press for the UN partition lines as basis for further discussions. Instead, they demanded the contrary, namely, to base the talks on the existing truce lines. Why did they negate this approach? What other borders should become the starting point for the armistice negotiations between Israel and Syria? The question was open: should the UN base the Israeli-Syrian armistice talks on the existing truce line or on the old international border?

To break the deadlock, Colonel Husni Zaim, the Syrian Prime Minister, surprisingly suggested that instead of signing an armistice agreement, Syria should sign a full peace treaty with Israel. This treaty would include open borders and an immediate exchange of ambassadors, as well as economic and military co-operation. Furthermore, he also offered to resettle 300.000 Palestinian refugees in Syria. In return he asked for a modification of the old international border to give Syria half the Sea of Galilee. Moreover, Zaim wanted to personally meet David Ben-Gurion, Israel`s Prime Minister.[4]

Ben-Gurion, however, rejected the offer and refused to meet Zaim. According to Ben-Gurion, as long as the Syrians did not withdraw to the pre-war lines, there was no point of such a meeting. Even though both the UN Acting Mediator Ralph Bunche and the Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, urged Ben-Gurion to grant Zaim`s request for a meeting, Ben-Gurion refused. Another stalemate was thus unavoidable. The Israelis claimed that the Syrian forces were on Israeli soil, while the Syrians maintained that this area belonged to Mandatory Palestine. Who was right? How did the Syrian peace offer affect the negotiations, considering the Israeli rejection? Husni Zaim`s proposal could reduce Israeli fears about the price to be

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[4] Avi Shlaim, "Husni Zaim and the Plan to Resettle Palestinian Refugees in Syria", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 4. (Summer, 1986), pp. 68-80.

paid for peace, considering that Syria was willing to absorb part of the refugee problem. Why did Ben-Gurion refuse to explore this option?

The Acting UN Mediator appointed to the Palestine conflict, Ralph Bunche, played an important role in three of the agreements, including the Israeli-Syrian armistice talks. Parts of the armistice negotiation between Transjordan and Israel were conducted in direct talks without Bunche`s presence.[5] Due to exhaustion, Bunche decided not to participate directly in the negotiations between Israel and Syria.[6] Bunche left the Middle East and was in the UN Headquarters in New York throughout the remaining period of the armistice negotiations. However, he continued to oversee the negotiations and interfered when necessary. The direct negotiations between Israel and Syria were thus chaired by Bunche`s UN Deputy Henri Vigier and General William E. Riley, the American Chief of the UN Observers.

During the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations, Bunche`s most important substantive contribution was in formulating compromise solutions to issues which the parties most often disagreed. These issues concerned principles, territorial delimitations, and demilitarization agreements. The construction of the framework of the armistice agreements may therefore be considered one of Bunche`s major accomplishments.[7] The temporary suspension of war, which was Bunche`s most important goal, did not require detailed decisions on key issues. As he saw it, the most important step towards peace, were the signatures of armistice agreements between Israel and its Arab neighbours. He believed that peace talks would solve the key issues. Therefore, he decided to postpone important issues in order the get the parties to sign. The construction of the armistice framework was modelled on the Island of Rhodes during the armistice negotiation between Israel and Egypt in the beginning of 1949. Was this framework designed to suit the negotiations between Israel and Syria? And how did the absence of the Acting UN Mediator affect the negotiations between Israel and Syria? How did Vigier and Riley approach the concerned parties? What roles did they play? Were they in the position to influence the negotiations in the same way as Bunche?

The armistice agreements were never intended to be permanent. The agreements were to remain in force until a final peace settlement was achieved.[8] The creation of an era of no

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[5] Saadia Touval, *The Peace Brokers, Mediators in the Arab-Israeli conflict, 1948-1979*, New Jersey 1982, p. 65; Jørgen Jensehaugen, *Friendship Reanimated, The Israeli-Transjordanian Armistice Negotiations 1948-1949*, Unpublished Master thesis, University of Oslo and International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO) 2008.
[6] Brian Urquhart, *Ralph Bunche, An American Life*, New York/London 1993, p. 219.
[7] Touval 1982, *The Peace Brokers*, p. 66.
[8] Jacob C. Hurewitz, "The Israeli-Syrian Crisis in the Light of the Arab-Israeli Armistice System", *International Organization*, Vol. 5, No. 3. (Aug., 1951), pp. 459-479.

war-no peace situation was not the intention of the UN.[9] Even though Bunche`s compromise proposal to demilitarize the area between the old international border and the existing truce line enabled Israel and Syria to sign an armistice agreement 20 July 1949, it was not intended to be a permanent solution.

Not surprisingly, the US Government became involved in the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations at an early stage. Bunche turned to the UN and the US Government for help. Indeed, the last stalemate in the negotiations in mid-June was dissolved with the help of US pressure.[10] The American Ambassador in Syria, James H. Keeley, played an active role before and during the Israeli-Syrian armistice talks. In the end of the negotiations, Keeley was instructed by the State Department to support the position taken by the UN chairmen, Vigier and Riley, before he met with the Syrian Prime Minister. How did the US Government approach the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations? Was there a unanimous decision among the US state officials on how to approach the concerned parties? Did the influence of other actors strengthen the imbalance of power between the negotiating parties? The Israeli international position was bolstered by the three armistice agreements it already had concluded under the auspices of the UN and by its admission to UN membership in May. Did the Israeli UN membership affect the armistice negotiations between Israel and Syria?

The major topic for this study is why the armistice agreement between Israel and Syria did not create the basic foundation for a permanent peace settlement between the belligerent states. According to article number 1 in the Security Council resolution on 16 November 1948, the purpose of the armistice agreements in the Palestine conflict was "to facilitate the transition from the present truce to a permanent peace in Palestine."[11] In what way did the armistice agreement affect the relationship between Israel and Syria during spring 1949? Did the armistice agreement complicate the road to a permanent peace settlement between Israel and Syria?

Theory on Mediation Efforts – Influence of a Third Party

A mediator is an intermediary or a third party who intervenes diplomatically in an international conflict. A mediator makes suggestions pertaining to the substance of the conflict, and seeks to influence the parties to make concessions by exerting pressures and

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[9] Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, New York 1992, p. 151.
[10] Itamar Rabinovich, *The Road Not Taken, Early Arab-Israeli Negotiations*, Oxford University Press 1991, p. 71-78.
[11] UNSC Resolution 62 of 16 November 1948 (S/1080). See Appendix III.

offering incentives.[12] Ideally, mediation takes place when enemies discover that the costs of continued conflict are too devastating.[13] The purpose of mediation is to find a solution that is acceptable to the belligerents. It should not be based on the use of force nor should it be aimed at helping one of the belligerents to gain advantages in negotiations. The parties do not have to accept the ideas presented to them by the mediator.[14]

Most importantly, a mediator functions solely as a third party and third parties can exert influence on the belligerents. In international conflicts there are all sorts of outside pressures on the belligerents. The mediator may use some of these outside pressures to influence each of the belligerent parties in order to make them aware of all the possible risks they may face if they decide to follow the path of continued conflict. Indeed, the parties can be persuaded to make concessions when a third party convinces them that it is in their best interest to do so.[15] The belief in the necessity of concessions sustains the process of conflict management and builds up support for its successful conclusion.[16]

Mediators may be divided into various categories: the weak and unbiased, the strong and biased, the strong and unbiased, and the weak and biased. The weak but unbiased mediator is the classic concept of a mediator. The weak but unbiased mediator has been described as someone who is unable to influence the negotiations directly, but who facilitates the negotiations in other ways.[17] The UN has often been described as such an actor.

The strong and biased mediators have often been successful considering their ability to influence and protect the interests of each party in a conflict.[18] This form of mediation can be placed on the US because of their powerful position in world politics. For instance, the Israeli-Egyptian peace agreement signed in 1979 was mainly achieved because the US offered substantial rewards to both Egypt and Israel.[19]

The strong and unbiased mediator has been seen as a perfect mediator, combining the strengths of the weak mediator by offering rewards or encouragements to the belligerents.

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[12] Saadia Touval, *The Peace Brokers,* p. 4.
[13] Hilde Henriksen Waage, *Peacemaking is a Risky business: Norway`s Role in the Peace Process in the Middle East, 1993-96*, International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO) 2004, p. 13.
[14] Waage 2004, *Peacemaking is a Risky Business*, p. 4.
[15] Jacob Bercovitch, *Soscial Conflicts and Third Parties, Strategies of Conflict Resolution*, Colorado 1984, p. 105.
[16] Bercovitch 1984, *Social Conflicts and Third Parties*, p. 105.
[17] Waage 2004, *Peacemaking is a Risky Business*, p. 5.
[18] Waage 2004, *Peacemaking is a Risky Business*, p. 5.
[19] Waage 2004, *Peacemaking is a Risky Business*, p. 6.

These mediators could, however, be interested in protecting the values of peace without demanding something in return.[20]

The weak and biased mediator, the last category, may be seen as hard to imagine being acceptable to the parties, but a mediator in this category can be helpful when it comes to information and communication. Because the mediator has good relations with one of the parties, it may stimulate the other party into cooperation.[21]

Saadia Touval, Professor of Political Science, argues that a successful mediator is one who is believed to have contributed to the abatement or resolution of a conflict by helping to bring mutual relations. Yet the mediator does not possess full freedom of action. His or her conduct is constrained by their need to safeguard their continued acceptability to both sides. No less importantly, to be effective, the intermediary must carry some influence with parties to the conflict. Furthermore, successful mediation may resolve issues that were in dispute, change the images or attitudes of the adversary, or eliminate the basic sources of conflict.[22]

How did Ralph Bunche, the Acting UN Mediator, approach the concerned parties during the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiation? Since he did not participate in the actual negotiations, how did he influence the negotiations? Did the absence of the Acting Mediator affect the outcome of the negotiations? In what way did Bunche`s assistants, UN Deputy Henri Vigier and General William E. Riley conduct the negotiations? What role did the US play? Did other US state officials influence the Israeli-Syrian talks? Did Bunche use power politics to force concessions out of the belligerents?

What is an Armistice?

During the first Arab-Israeli war, the United Nations used cease-fires, truces and finally armistices in order to prevent further hostilities between the belligerents. More importantly, in the long term, the UN hoped that the armistices would lead to peace agreements. Therefore, it is necessary with a brief explanation of the differences between a cease-fire, a truce and an armistice. A cease-fire is no more than a prohibition of violence undertaken by military or para-military forces, which are in contact with the forces of the other side. A cease-fire may be brought about by agreement between the parties. A truce is merely a cessation of

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[20] Waage 2004, *Peacemaking is a Risky Business*, p. 6.
[21] Waage 2004, *Peacemaking is a Risky Business*, p. 6.
[22] Touval 1982, *The Peace Brokers*, pp. 5-16.

hostilities, without allowing little if any space for negotiations.[23] As there already had been a cease-fire and a truce, an armistice was seen as a further step towards a peaceful solution of the Palestine conflict.

However, it is decisive to look at the difference between an armistice and a peace agreement. Shabtai Rosenne, who served as Israel`s legal advisor during the armistice negotiations with the Arab states defines an armistice as follows:

> Armistices or truces in the wider sense of the term are all agreements between belligerent forces for a temporary cessation of hostilities. They are in no [ways] to be compared with peace and ought not to be called temporary peace because the condition of war remains between the belligerent themselves and between the belligerents and neutrals on all points beyond mere cessation of hostilities.[24]

According to the Hague Convention, an armistice is described as a mutual agreement that suspends military operations between the belligerent parties. If the duration of the armistice is not defined, the belligerent parties can resume military operations at any time. However, it is provided that the enemy is warned within the agreed time. With regard to the armistice agreements between Israel and the Arab states, the armistices were meant to be pended on peace talks.[25]

An armistice is also considered to be general or local. This means that the belligerents can suspend military operations everywhere. An armistice must be notified officially and in good time to the competent authorities and to the troops. It rests with the contracting parties to settle, in the terms of the armistice, on how to notify the inhabitants of each party if hostilities were to be resumed. Any serious violation of the armistice by one of the parties gives the other party rights of denouncing it, and even, in cases of urgency, recommending hostilities immediately.[26]

The United Nations Security Council called upon all governments and authorities concerned to enter a cease-fire in Security Council Resolution 50, on 29 May 1948.[27] Consequently, a four-week cease-fire took effect on 7 June 1948. However, after renewed

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[23] Shabtai Rosenne, *Israel`s Armistice Agreements with the Arab States,* A Juridical Interpretation by Shabtai Rosenne, *Legal Advisor to the Israeli Ministry for Foreign Affairs*, Tel Aviv 1951, p. 25.
[24] Rosenne 1951, *Israel`s Armistice Agreements with the Arab States,* p. 24.
[25] Rosenne 1951, *Israel´s Armistice Agreements with the Arab States*, p. 24.
[26] Rosenne 1951, *Israel`s Armistice Agreements with the Arab States*, pp. 24-25. The Hague Convention: http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hague04.asp#art36, 9 March 2009.
[27] UNSC Resolution 50 of 29 May 1948 (S/801). See Appendix V.

hostilities, the Security Council ordered a truce on 15 July 1948.[28] This truce was especially important with regard to the Israeli-Syrian armistice talks, considering that the truce line of 15 July became a disputed issue during the negotiations. According to the Syrians, this line should become the final demarcation line that separated the Israeli and Syrian forces, pending an ultimate peace settlement.

Presentation of the Israeli-Syrian Armistice Agreement in the literature

The Arab-Israeli armistice agreements of 1949 were the first attempts to create peaceful relations between the belligerent parties after the first Arab-Israeli war. However, there has been, and still is, a fierce debate about the outcome of the first Arab-Israeli war among Middle Eastern historians. The debate focuses, mainly, on the absence of peace settlements after the first Arab-Israeli war, without actually discussing the outcome of the armistice agreements. The so-called "old" Israeli historians represent the Zionist view of the conflict. They blamed the Arab world and its intransigence when it came to the refusal to accept Israel´s existence. According to the "old" historians, the Israeli leaders were desperate to achieve peace, but there was no one to talk to on the other side.[29]

The "new" historians or the "revisionist" school of thought, believe that post-war Israel was more intransigent than the Arab states and that it therefore bears a larger share of the responsibility for the political deadlock that followed the formal ending of hostilities. The revisionist interpretation is based on official Israeli archives, which were declassified during the 1980s.[30]

With regard to the armistice negotiations between Israel and Syria, there is little focus on the actual armistice negotiation process in the revisionist interpretation as well. There has been done a lot of research on the period that followed the first Arab-Israeli war, but little attention has been given the atmosphere surrounding the armistice negotiations in 1949. Most importantly research on the Israeli-Syrian armistice talks have been close to non-existing. This is remarkable since the armistice in theory still remains in force.

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[28] UNSC Resolution 54 of 15 July 1948 (S/902). See Appendix IV.
[29] Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, pp. 34-35.
[30] Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, p. 49. Other critical views of the Zionist version has been thoroughly presented in Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*, London/Sydney 1987; Avi Shlaim, "The Debate about 1948", in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 3, 1995; Eugene L. Rogan and Avi Shlaim, *The War for Palestine*, Rewriting the History of 1948, Cambridge 2001; Ilan Pappè, *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict 1947-1951*, London/New York 1992; Ilan Pappè, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, Oxford 2007; Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, Cambridge 2004.

According to the leading "new" historian Avi Shlaim, Colonel Husni Zaim`s peace offer in April 1949 represented the Arab readiness to negotiate with Israel. Together with King Farouk of Egypt and King Abdullah of Jordan, Zaim displayed remarkable pragmatism in approaching the negotiations with the Jewish state. Zaim openly declared his ambitions to be the first Arab leader to make peace with Israel.[31] Shlaim holds the Israeli leader David Ben-Gurion responsible for the missed opportunity to sign peace with its Arab neighbours in the aftermath of the first Arab-Israeli war. His unquestionable strong leadership characterized the Israeli intransigence during this period, Shlaim concludes.[32] Ben-Gurion was only ready to meet the Syrians if they withdraw their forces back to the old international border. Peace was, however, not an option. If Israel signed a peace treaty with Syria, Israel had to make territorial concessions. The dispute concerning border-issues was the major reason for several deadlocks in the negotiations between Israel and Syria. Once Syria withdrew to the old international border, Israel did not have to work towards a permanent peace settlement. An armistice was simply enough. After the conclusion of the armistice agreements Ben-Gurion concluded that, "I am prepared to get up in the middle of the night in order to sign a peace agreement – but I am not in a hurry and I can wait ten years. We are under no pressure whatsoever".[33]

Ben-Gurion´s main priorities were the building of the state and the consolidation of Israel`s newly won independence. Apparently, Ben-Gurion knew that Israel´s bargaining position would be stronger with the passage of time, contrary to his Arab opponents. For instance, Zaim wanted to settle the Israeli-Syrian dispute in order to prolong his hold on power in Syria. Therefore, he was desperate for a direct meeting with Ben-Gurion. Indeed, time was on Israel´s side.[34]

Moshe Ma`oz, Professor of Middle Eastern Studies at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, argues in his book *Syria and Israel, From War to Peace-making*, that Ben-Gurion could not trust Zaim, because he was regarded as a mercurial and mentally unstable individual, an opportunist who sought power for its own sake and for the material benefits it could bring him.[35] Ma`oz continues his argument by saying that Ben-Gurion simply could not sign a

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[31] Avi Shlaim, "The Debate about 1948", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 3. (Aug., 1995), pp. 287-304, pp. 300-301.
[32] Shlaim 1986, *Husni Zaim and the Plan to Resettle Palestinian Refugees in Syria*, pp. 68-80.
[33] Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, p. 52.
[34] Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, pp. 51-53.
[35] Moshe Ma`oz, *Syria And Israel, From War to Peace-making*, Oxford 1995, p. 24.

formal peace treaty with an unpredictable and corrupt Syrian dictator, who might not be willing or able to fulfil Syria`s peace commitments to Israel in the future.[36]

Shlaim, however, emphasizes in his article, *Husni Zaim and the Plan to Resettle Palestinian Refugess in Syria*, that Zaim had every reason to put a dark veil over the past and address the problem of the present. First, Zaim wanted to neutralize the threat from the Israeli army by means of a peace agreement with Israel. Secondly, he urgently needed to end the war to consolidate his precarious hold over power, and to deal with the new threat posed by Jordan and Iraq, and third, his lack of ideological and practical commitment to Arab nationalism.[37]

Moshe Ma`oz, together with Itamar Rabinovich, President of Tel Aviv University and a leading Israeli expert on modern Arab politics, argues that Ben-Gurion simply could not accept the peace offer from Syria because of the instability of the Arab regimes.[38] Ma`oz and Rabinovich have chosen to overlook the imbalance of power as a result to the first Arab-Israeli war. This theory does not engage directly in the debate between the "old" and the "new" historians, but they blame the failure of the peace talks on the instability of the Arab regimes.

Revisionist historians have criticized the mediation efforts done by the UN in the aftermath of the first Arab-Israeli war.[39] "New" historians such as Ilan Pappe, argue in his book *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict 1947-1951*, that it should be born in mind, that Ralph Bunche, the UN Acting Mediator to Palestine, never achieved political solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Moreover, according to Pappe it should be stressed that Bunche was never seen as a successful mediator in the Arab world, because he, according to the Arabs, helped the Israelis to defend status quo.[40]

Generally, it has been a tendency among several Middle Eastern historians to describe the armistices between Israel and the Arab states in 1949 as successfully concluded, without describing the actual process of the armistice negotiations. On the Arab side, Bunche is still regarded as someone who assisted the Israelis in completing the occupation of Palestine by diplomatic means.[41] Therefore, the roles and approaches of the mediators involved in the

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[36] Ma`oz 1995, *Syria And Israel, From War to Peace-making*, p. 24.
[37] Shlaim 1986, *Husni Zaim and the Plan to Resettle Palestinian Refugees in Syria*, p. 72-73.
[38] Rabinovich 1991, *The Road Not Taken*, pp. 65-110. See also Itamar Rabinovich, *Waging Peace, Israel and the Arabs 1948-2003*, Princeton and Oxford 2004.
[39] Avi Shlaim and Ilan Pappe are among the revisionist historians who have been sceptical of the work done by the UN appointed mediator Ralph Bunche.
[40] Ilan Pappe, *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1947-1951*, London 1992, p. 194.
[41] Pappe 1992, *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1947-1951*, p. 194.

Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations deserve special attention, with the question in hand – what constitutes effective mediation?

Primary Sources

The sources used in this thesis are both published and unpublished material. The primary sources found, comes mainly from Israeli and US state archives. A large part of the Israeli and US sources are found in two collections of foreign policy documents. The Norwegian Nobel Institute in Oslo has a collection of published US documents, the *Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS) and a published collection of *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*.[42] These collections have been thoroughly used throughout this thesis.

The most important material for this thesis, however, was collected at the United States National Archives at College Park in Maryland. The American archives are very thorough and detailed concerning international relations, and proved to be of great value to this thesis. The primary sources used, come in the form of cables, drafts, memos and notes. Some of these documents have never, to my knowledge, even been utilized in research before. Surprisingly, there were more to collect than expected. Considering the lack of secondary literature on the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations, it was expected that the primary sources on the subject were equally poor. In addition, valuable UN material was found in the American archives.

The Israeli State Archive in Jerusalem contains valuable material. Unfortunately, I do not read Hebrew. However, a number of these documents are available in English: The *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*. These documents have been of great value to my study. The collection of Israeli documents contains a large number of personal letters and memos from Israeli delegates, UN chairmen, and Israeli State officials. These materials are very well organised. In addition, it is the only published material that gives a chronologically detailed description of the actual meetings of the Israeli-Syrian armistice talks. Indeed, some information has been excluded from the Israeli documents. However, to bridge this gap, literature based on the Israeli archives has been used throughout. Most valuable amongst these are Aryeh Shalev`s *The Israel-Syria Armistice Regime 1949-1955* and Nissim Bar-Yaacov`s *The Israel-Syrian Armistice, Problems of Implementations, 1949-1966*.[43]

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[42] Yemima Rosenthal [ed]: *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3, December 1948-July 1949, Jerusalem: Israel State Archives 1983.
[43] Shalev, Aryeh, *The Israel-Syria Armistice Regime 1949-1955*, Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University 1993; Bar-Yaacov, Nissim, *The Israel-Syrian Armistice, Problems of Implementation, 1949-1966*, Jerusalem 1967.

Shabtai Rosenne, legal advisor to the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who was present at all four armistice negotiations, has written exclusively about the armistice agreements.[44] His juridical observations of the agreement are valuable concerning the negotiations with Syria. Furthermore, there are also a vast number of autobiographical books and diaries from this period written by Israeli politicians. However, these have reported little, if any, valuable information from the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations.[45] There is a vast representation of sources and literature written by Israelis, in English, about the conflict. Unfortunately, there is a lack of material written by Syrians. This thesis has tried not to be coloured by this imbalance.

There is no equivalent declassification rule on the Arab side. In general, researchers know extremely little about the archival situation on the Arab side. The result is little access to materials on the first Arab-Israeli war and its aftermaths. This restriction, however, does pose a serious problem to the researcher.[46] Due to Arab policy regarding national archives, this study has not had the opportunity to examine primary sources in Syria. But the primary sources examined, still contained valuable information also about the Syrian part in the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations in 1949.

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[44] Shabtai Rosenne, *Israel`s Armistice Agreements with the Arab States*, A Juridicial Interpretation by Shabtai Rosenne, Legal Advisor to the Israel Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Tel Aviv 1951.
[45] David Ben-Gurion, *Israel: A Personal History*, Tel Aviv/New York 1972; David Ben-Gurion, *My Talks with Arab Leaders*, Jerusalem 1972: Moshe Dayan, *The Story of My Life*, New York 1976; Abba Eban, *Personal Witness, Israel through my eyes*, London 1992; Abba Eban, *An Autobiography*, Tel Aviv 1977; Golda Meir, *My Life*, New York 1975; Walter Eytan, *The First Ten Years*, London 1958.
[46] Shlaim 1995, *The Debate about the 1948 War*, p. 290.

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The Road to the Establishment of the Israel-Syria Armistice Regime in 1949

Everyone who has discussed that matter with Za`im is impressed

by his sincerity and broadminded attitude towards Israel (far cry

from [the] stubborn intransigence [of] [the] previous Syrian Government).

       - The American Ambassador in Damascus, James H. Keeley.[47]

In the aftermath of the first Arab-Israeli war, Syria adapted a surprisingly new political approach towards Israel. Instead of negotiating an armistice, the Syrian Prime Minister, Husni Zaim, wanted to be the first Arab leader to make peace with the Jewish State. Although Zaim had promised his co-conspirators a fight against the Israelis, once he gained power he made a determined effort to come to terms with Israel.[48] During his time as Prime Minister, and later President, Zaim radically changed Syrian politics. However, Zaim also carried out the first coup and thereby set the trend for military intervention in Syrian politics, as well as in a number of other Middle Eastern states. Therefore, in order to understand how this situation became such an extraordinary episode in the relationship between Israel and Syria, it is necessary with a brief account of the relationship between the belligerent parties, their national struggle for independence and the first Arab-Israeli war.

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[47] Keeley to Acheson, 19 May 1949, *FRUS* Vol. IV, 501.BB.Palestine, pp. 1031-1032.
[48] Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, p. 45.

Troubled Path to Independence

The legal basis of French rule in Syria was a mandate from the League of Nations, approved in 1922. The mandate defined the objects of French rule as "to facilitate the progressive development of Syria and Lebanon as independent states".[49] However, Syrian independence was far from the reality. France initiated a policy of French power and on a detailed administrative reorganization of Syria.[50] In an effort to divide the Syrian population, the French provided each of the two largest regionally minority groups, the Alawites and the Druze, with a separate state. Except for a short period between 1936 and 1939, both of these states were administratively separate from Syria until 1942.[51] The French method of governing Syria discouraged the acquisition of political responsibility and administrative experience by the local population. Instead of encouraging the formation of indigenous administrative institutions to prepare Syria for independence, the French created conditions that would prolong their rule.[52]

Furthermore, in 1924 France introduced a new political arrangement, which combined the two largest urban centres Damascus and Aleppo into a single unit called the State of Syria. In addition to Damascus and Aleppo, the reconstituted State of Syria comprised the cities of Homs and Hama. Social and political life in these four cities was mainly dominated by Sunni Muslim merchants and landowners, which the French controlled. In effect, France had isolated the Druze and the Alawites from national politics. Consequently, Syrian political life was to be dominated by a propertied and conservative class of urban Sunni Muslims.[53] The French were thus in temporary control of the political bases in the Syrian cities.[54]

The imposition of French authority met with local resistance in various regions of Syria during the first two years of the mandate. Evidently, the French army was able to isolate these uprisings and subdue them before they spread to other areas of the country. However, this was not the case with the Syrian rebellion of 1925-1927. Beginning as a tribal disturbance in the

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[49] M. E. Yapp, *The Near East since the First World War*, Longman Group, New York 1991, p. 86.

[50] Yapp 1991, *The Near East since the First World War*, p. 86.

[51] William L. Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, Westview Press, Oxford 1994, p. 204. The Alawite state was situated around the northern coastal city of Latakia; the Druze area was concentrated south of Damascus, Cleveland 1994, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, p. 204.

[52] Cleveland 1994, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, p. 203.

[53] Cleveland 1994, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, p. 204.

[54] Philip S. Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, *The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945*, New Jersey 1987, p. 7.
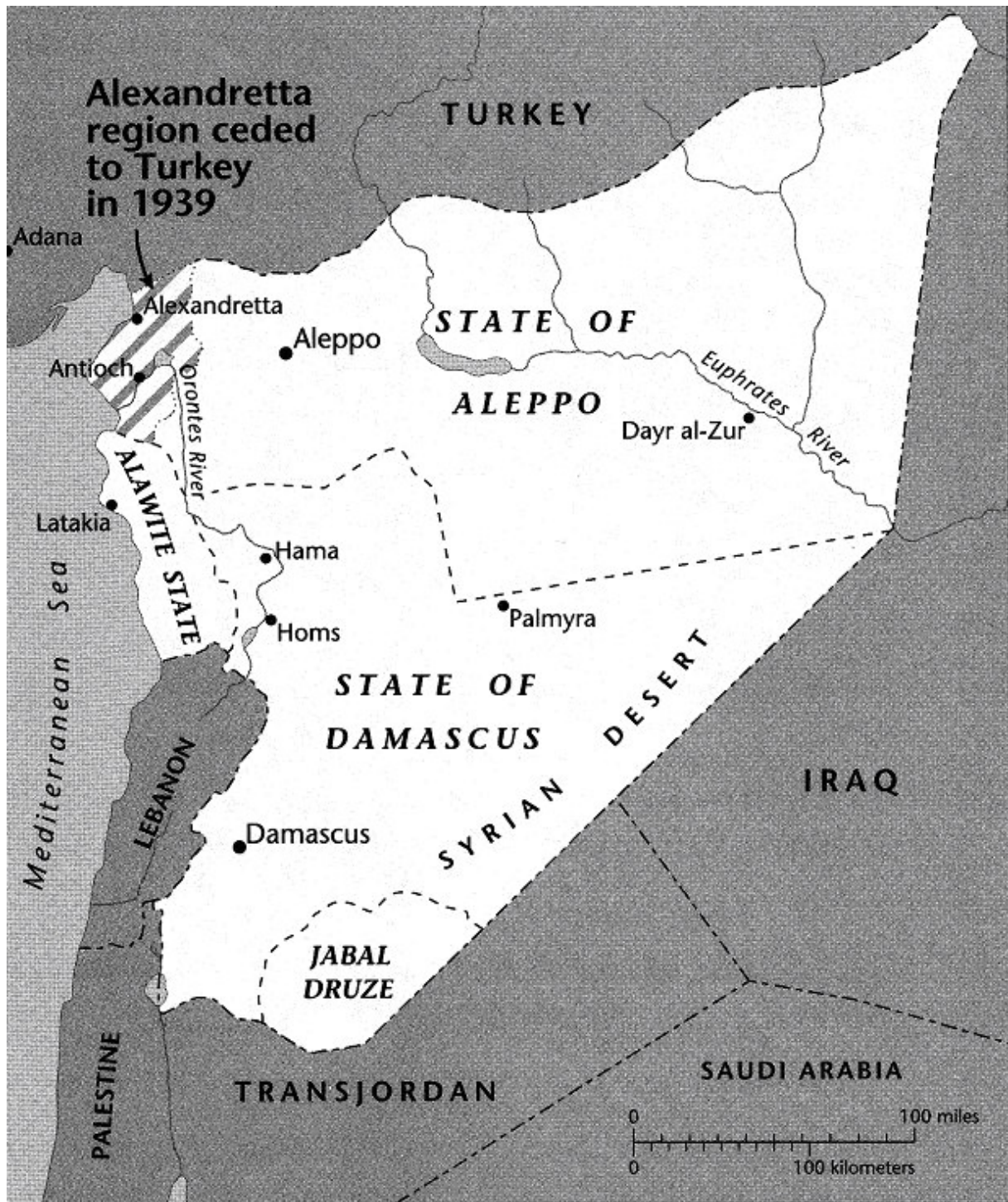
Map 1 The Division of Syria under the French Mandate
Source: Cleveland, William: *A History of Modern Middle East*, Westview Press, Oxford 1994, p. 206.

Druze region, it soon spread to many parts of Syria.[55] The Syrian rebellion became a symbol – one of the few – of common Syrian objection to the mandate and all that it represented. The revolt convinced the French to revise, but not to renounce, their plans for controlling Syria. On the contrary, the Syrian leadership came to concentrate its efforts on securing Syrian independence before all else.[56]

In the aftermath of the Syrian rebellion, Syrian leaders formed a new political organization, the National Bloc, which became the central point of Syrian political life for the remainder of the mandate.[57] The National Bloc was to be dominated by Sunni Muslim notables, concentrated in the cities. More importantly, the members of the Nationalist Bloc became engaged in the struggle for Syrian independence against the French mandate. This led to a complete change in French policy in Syria. Instead of isolating the rural population from politics in Syria, as they had done before the rebellion, the French began to cooperate with the largest minority groups, the Alawites and the Druze. In order to fight the Syrian nationalists, the French decided to build a new army. The new Syrian troops were consequently recruited from Syria`s minority and rural communities, since they were the least likely to hold strong nationalist loyalties. The most dominant minority group in the Syrian army was the Alawites. When Syria became independent in 1946, the infantry battalions were composed entirely of Alawites. Thus, they became the core of the Troupes Spéciales through the mandatory period in Syria. Consequently, Syrian Sunni nationalist leaders excluded the Syrian army from politics completely.[58]

After nearly twenty years of French rule, Syria remained without independence, without institutions of self-government, and without territorial unity in the beginning of the Second World War. To make matters worse, the fall of France in 1940 led to the establishment of the Axis collaborationist Vichy regime under Marshal Philippe Pétain. As a consequence, this had repercussions for all France´s overseas territories. In Syria the French administration was taken over by officials loyal to Pétain`s government.[59] The Syrian population was subjected to economic deprivation, armed invasion, and political repression. In addition, Syria`s population was divided into a rural and an urban sector. The destructive political instability

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[55] Yapp 1991, *The Near East since the First World War*, p. 91.
[56] Khoury 1987, *Syria and the French Mandate*, p. 7.
[57] Cleveland 1994, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, p. 207-208; Khoury 1987, *Syria and the French Mandate*, p. 265.
[58] Yapp 1991, *The Near East since the First World War*, pp. 91-99.
[59] Cleveland 1994, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, p. 212.

that came to characterize Syria after its independence in 1946 must be traced, in part, to the institutionalized fragmentation practiced by the French mandate authorities.[60]

The French legacy to Syria was almost a guarantee of political instability. In June 1941, fearing that Syria might become a base for Axis operations in the Middle East, British and Free French forces invaded Syria and replaced the Vichy government with a government constituted of Free French forces. On 8 June 1941, the local Free French commander, General Georges Catroux stated that "I come to put an end to the mandatory regime and to proclaim you free and independent".[61] Although the Syrian constitution was restored, and the Druze and Alawite areas returned under the control of Damascus, Syria was not given its independence.[62]

The Free French forces hoped to safeguard French interests, while the nationalists demanded independence immediately. In July 1943 the nationalists won the Syrian election.[63] Even though the election constituted a popular renunciation of any continued French interference in the domestic affairs of Syria, the French authorities refused to transfer power to the new local governments. In taking this position, the French started a round of confrontations that did not end until 1945.[64] As long as the French retained control of the Syrian army, they controlled Syria. Consequently, in May 1945, deadly clashes erupted between the French and the Syrian nationalists.

However, it was Britain who ultimately was responsible for ending French rule. During 1941-1945 the British supported the Syrian nationalists. Hence, when the clashes took place between the French and the Syrian nationalists, the British delivered an ultimatum obliging France to give way. This brought an end to the French authority and victory for Syrian independence. On 17 April 1946 the French left Syrian soil.[65]

The Fear of Greater Syria

Syrian independence was a victory for the Sunni notables and it was they who inherited power. The Syrian hero of the struggle for independence was Shukri al-Quwwatli. In 1943 he played a leading role in the reform of the National Bloc and its conversion into the National

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[60] Cleveland 1994, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, p. 204.
[61] Yapp 1991, *The Near East since the First World War*, p. 96.
[62] Yapp 1991, *The Near East since the First World War*, pp. 96-97.
[63] Yapp 1991, *The Near East since the First World War*, p. 97.
[64] Cleveland 1994, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, p. 214.
[65] Patrick Seale, *Asad of Syria, The Struggle for the Middle East*, I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, London 1988, p. 33; Yapp 1991, *The Near East since the First World War*, p. 97.

Party. It was Quwwatli`s coalition who won the election in 1943, where he also became the Syrian President.[66] Indeed, the relationship he had formed with the British was an important factor when he persuaded them to back him against the French in 1943-1945. However, the army that President Quwwatli inherited from the Mandate was neither disciplined nor loyal. Remembering the Syrian army under the French, when it had been used against the Sunni notables, and the predominance of the minorities within the force, it was not surprising that Quwwatli viewed the army with suspicion.[67] Therefore, he kept it small and divided in order to protect his government from uprisings and military coups.[68] Between 1946 and 1948 the Syrian government reduced the size of the army from 7.000 to 2.500 seeing it as an unnecessarily large and expensive burden on the state.[69]

However, Quwwatli`s fear of King Abdullah of Transjordan came to dominate Syrian politics during the first years of Syrian independence. After becoming the ruler of Transjordan, King Abdullah made no secret of his ambition to unite the central Arab lands of Greater Syria, which included Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, and Transjordan. The ultimate object of his desire was a throne in Damascus.[70] After the Second World War, Abdullah publicly stated his vision of Greater Syria on many occasions. He constantly maintained that Transjordan was only the southern part of Syria. The motto Abdullah adopted was: "All Syria to come under the leadership of a scion of the House of Hashem; Transjordan was the first step".[71]

Once the French left Syria in 1946, Abdullah promoted his Greater Syria plan by fomenting rebellion in Syria, encouraging dissent within the Syrian army, and forming alliances with Syria`s neighbours. Not surprisingly, Quwwatli lived in constant fear that King Abdullah would exploit every possibility that existed to carry out his Greater Syria project. According to Adil Arslan, one of the president`s inner circle of advisors who later became Syria`s Foreign Minister, described Quwwatli`s "obsession" with Abdullah as follows: "The fear of a Greater Syria under the rule of ´Abdullah has become an obsession in the Syrian government".[72]

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[66] Yapp 1991, *The Near East since the First World War*, p. 97.
[67] Yapp 1991, *The Near East since the First World War*, p. 99.
[68] Joshua Landis, "Syria and the Palestine War: fighting King Abdullah`s "Greater Syria Plan" in Rogan and Shlaim (red.) *The War for Palestine*, Cambridge 2001, p. 180.
[69] Yapp 1991, *The Near East since the First World War*, p. 99.
[70] Landis 2001, "Syria and the Palestine War" in Rogan and Shlaim, *The War for Palestine*, pp. 179-180.
[71] Avi Shlaim, *Collusion Across the Jordan, King Abdullah, The Zionist Movement, and the Partition of Palestine*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1988, p. 33.
[72] Landis 2001, "Syria and the Palestine War" in Rogan and Shlaim, *The War for Palestine*, p. 185.

Part of the reason for Quwwatli`s obsession with the Hashemites and Abdullah`s Greater Syria project, might be understood as a product of Syria`s internal weaknesses. Had Quwwatli been more assure of his army`s competence and loyalty, he would perhaps have had less to fear. Nevertheless, in the beginning of 1947, Quwwatli had abandoned all hope of producing an effective or loyal army. Fearing a coup, he paralyzed the army by keeping it badly equipped, badly trained and divided. Quwwatli stationed the troops as far away from the Syrian capital as possible and gave the responsibility of the army to the most corrupt officers.[73] Quwwatli`s worst fear was that his officers would act as a fifth column for King Abdullah. To make matters worse, his agents reported that many of the leading officers had been in contact with Abdullah, including Colonel Husni Zaim, who ultimately would overthrow Quwwatli in March 1949. When Quwwatli confronted these officers they confessed that they had been in contact with King Abdullah. Evidently, the military officers promised to make no future contact with the King again. However, Quwwatli could never be certain of the army`s loyalty and was thus haunted by fears of Hashemite conspiracies.[74]

Syria`s policy toward the Palestine conflict grew directly out of its policy to contain Transjordan. In August 1947, Quwwatli launched his attempt to form a military alliance between Syria, Saudi-Arabia, and Egypt. This was a direct catalyst to form an anti-Hashemite military alliance and to stop Abdullah`s expansionist plans.[75] As a consequence, Syria enthusiastically adhered to the pan-Arab, anti-Jewish policies of the newly established Arab League, in addition to initiate its own military measures against the Jewish *Yishuv*.[76] The Arab League, since its foundation in 1945, was the highest forum for the making of pan-Arab policy. But the League was divided between a Hashemite bloc consisting of Transjordan and Iraq and an anti-Hashemite bloc led by Egypt and Saudi-Arabia. These dynastic rivalries played a major part in shaping Arab approaches to Palestine.[77]

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[73] Landis 2001, "Syria and the Palestine War" in Rogan and Shlaim, *The War for Palestine*, pp. 180-182.
[74] Landis 2001, "Syria and the Palestine War" in Rogan and Shlaim, *The War for Palestine*, pp. 182-185.
[75] Landis 2001, "Syria and the Palestine War" in Rogan and Shlaim, *The War for Palestine*, pp. 187-188.
[76] Ma`oz 1995, *Syria and Israel, From War to Peacemaking*, p. 17. The *Yishuv* is another word for the Jewish Community in Palestine.
[77] Avi Shlaim, "Israel and the Arab coalition in 1948" in Rogan and Shlaim, *The War for Palestine*, Cambridge University Press 2001, p. 82.

Map on labels:

S Y R I A

Mediterranean

Sea

Haifa

Sea of
Galilee

Tel Aviv
Jaffa

Ramallah

River Jordan

○ Amman

Jerusalem ○

Hebron

Gaza

Dead Sea

TRANSJORDAN

Beersheba

E G Y P T

N e g e v

S i n a i

— · — · — International border

Proposed Arab state

Proposed Jewish state

United Nations Zone

| 0 | 25 | 50 kilometers |

| 0 | 10 | 20 | 30 miles |
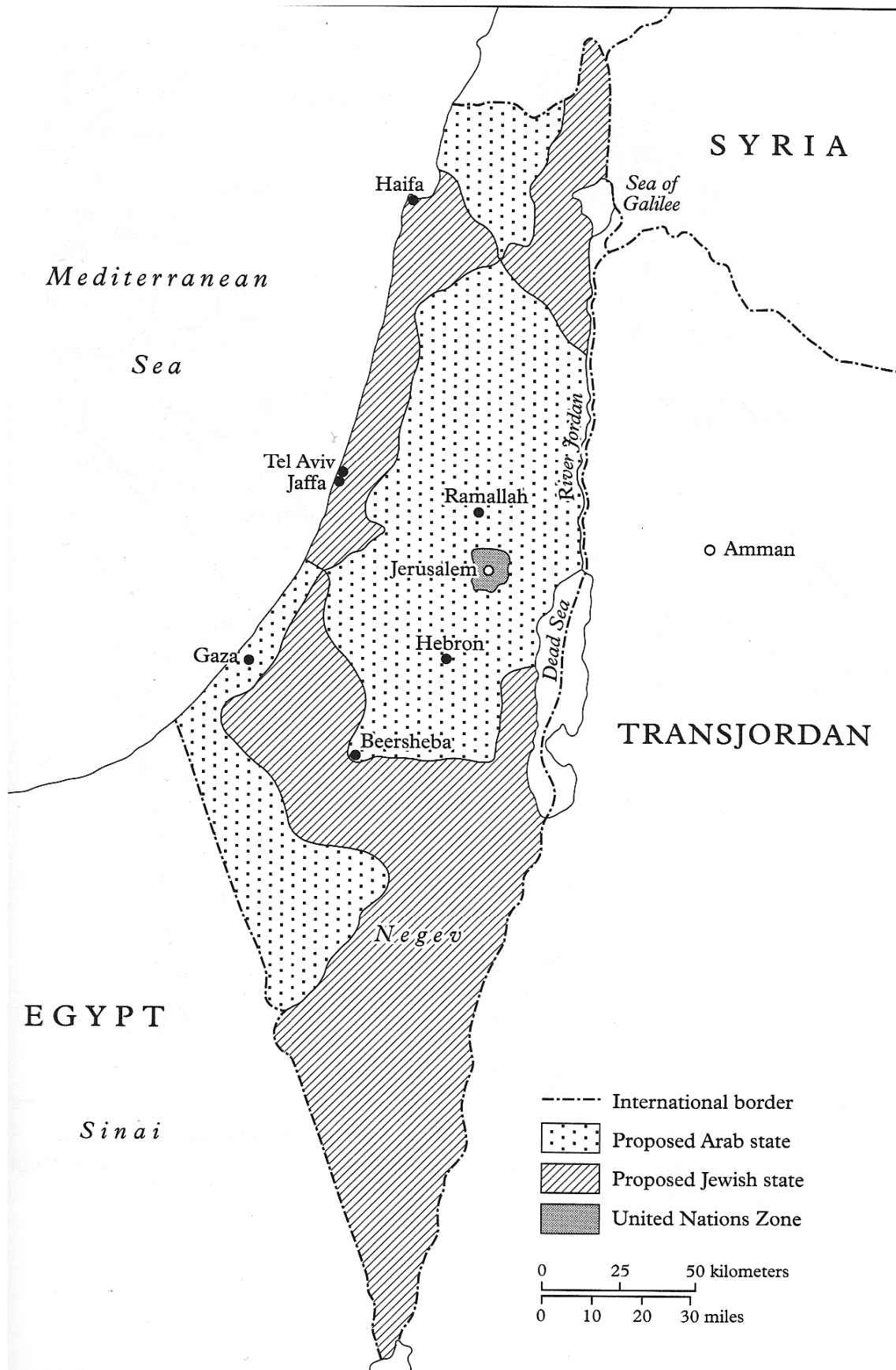
Map 2 The UN Partition Plan adopted 29 November 1947
Source: Rogan, Eugene L. and Avi Shlaim (eds): *The War for Palestine*, Cambridge University Press, p. xiii.

From British Mandate to UN Partition

Palestine was another creation of the post First World War settlement. The mandatory power was Great Britain. Since the Balfour Declaration in 1917, Jewish immigration to the area grew rapidly throughout the interwar years, despite huge Arab protests.[78] During the 1930s, as a result of the growing anti-Semitism and persecution of Jews in Europe, Jewish immigration to Palestine increased massively. The British tried to limit the Jewish immigration by issuing restrictions.[79] They saw the Jewish community as a permanent minority in a future independent Palestinian state. As a consequent, Jewish terrorism towards the British became habitual.[80]

In the aftermath of the Second World War, Great Britain realized that the situation in Palestine had become unbearable. British policy had undoubtedly been affected by Jewish terrorism. By February 1947 the British realized that Palestine, which had been under British rule since 1918, had come to an end. The question of Palestine was entrusted to the United Nations. The Security Council established the UN Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) in order to investigate questions and issues relevant to the problem and come up with a suggestion on how to solve the conflict by September 1947.[81] UNSCOP`s report was presented to the United Nations General Assembly on 1 September 1947. The Committee advised that the British mandate be terminated and endorsed the idea of partitioning Palestine into a Jewish and Arab state.[82]

On 29 November 1947 the General Assembly passed Resolution 181 in favour of the partition of Palestine. The resolution laid down a timetable for the establishment of a Jewish and a Palestinian state, linked by an economic union and an international regime for Jerusalem.[83] The proposal was passed by 33 votes to 13, with 10 abstentions. The British mandate was to be terminated on 1 May 1948. The UN had reached its decision on the future of Palestine.[84]

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[78] The British Foreign Secretary, Arthur James Balfour wrote a letter to the British Zionist leader, Lord Rothschild, on 2 November 1917. According to Balfour, the British Government supported the creation of a "Jewish homeland" in Palestine, Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, p. 7.

[79] A white paper of 17 May 1939 abruptly reversed British support for a Jewish state, Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, p. 22.

[80] See Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, pp. 22-25, for more information about Jewish terrorism against the British during the mandatory period.

[81] Evan Luard, *A History of The United Nations, Volume 1: The Years of Western Domination, 1945-1955*, The Macmillian Press Ltd, London 1982, p. 165.

[82] Pappe 1992, *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict 1947-1951*, p. 28.

[83] Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, p. 25.

[84] Luard 1982, *A History of the United Nations*, p. 173.

The Jewish Agency, the Jewish semi-government in Palestine, officially accepted the UN partition plan. The UN resolution represented a tremendous gain of international support for the establishment of a Jewish state. However, the leaders of the Jewish Agency did not endorse the plan for an independent Arab Palestinian state. Furthermore, the Jewish Agency was disappointed with the exclusion of Jerusalem, and they had grave doubts about the UN borders.[85] According to the Jewish Agency, the UN had given them less land than they had expected to receive. Indeed, during the interwar period, the Jewish community in Palestine had systematically built, in secret, a state within a state.

In comparison with the Jewish community, the Palestinian Arabs had not prepared themselves for statehood. They were divided and fragmented. Consequently, the Palestinian Arabs rejected the UN partition plan completely. The Arab Higher Committee, which represented them, denounced the plan as "absurd, impracticable and unjust."[86] The adopted plan for Palestine was totally unacceptable to the leaders of the Arab world. The Arab League claimed that the UN plan was illegal and threatened to use force if the resolution was implemented. On 1 December 1947, the Arab Higher Committee initiated a three-day strike, which was accompanied by violent attacks on Jewish civilians.[87]

Preparations for Battle

The UN partition resolution allocated half of Palestine to a Jewish state. This led to a storm of protest across the Arab world. Nowhere was the protest more violent than in Syria where Palestine was felt to be an organic part of ancient Greater Syria.[88] The instinct of many young Syrians was that they wanted to defend Palestine against this recent amputation.[89] Parties on both left and right in Syria led frequent demonstrations, demanding war and increased action from Quwwatli and the government. The Syrian public opinion demanded that the Syrian government should go to war in Palestine in order to keep it Arab.[90]

The only Arab leader who was receptive to the UN partition plan was King Abdullah of Transjordan. For Abdullah, the Jews represented a potential source of support for realizing his dream of Greater Syria. The King was an immensely valuable ally for the Jews. Indeed, Abdullah was prepared to accept the partition of Palestine and to live in peace with a Jewish

[85] Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, p. 25.
[86] Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, p. 25-27.
[87] Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, p. 27.
[88] Ancient Greater Syria included contemporary Syria, Lebanon, Israel and Jordan.
[89] Seale 1988, *Asad of Syria*, p. 34-35.
[90] Landis 2001, "Syria and the Palestine war" in Rogan and Shlaim, *The War for Palestine*, p. 191.

state after the conflict had been settled. Part of the reason for the special relationship that had developed between Abdullah and the Jews, can be traced to 1922, when Abdullah tried to come to terms with the aspirations of the Jewish people.[91] However, it did not significantly develop until 17 November 1947, less than two weeks prior the passing of the UN partition resolution. In a most secret meeting between King Abdullah and Golda Meir, the acting head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency, it was agreed that the Arab Legion would capture the Arab part of the Mandate. The Jewish Agency would not oppose this action. In return, King Abdullah would not oppose the declaration of the Jewish state.[92]

Evidently, King Abdullah`s plan to avoid war and to annex the Arab portion of Palestine to Transjordan, forced Quwwatli to take the lead against the partition of Palestine. According to Quwwatli, King Abdullah`s plan for Palestine was a direct threat to Syrian independence.[93] Syria became the most active member of the Arab League in promoting the general preparations for the first Arab-Israeli war in 1948.

No less importantly, whatever the Arab leaders may have suspected of Abdullah, in April 1948 he was simply indispensible to them. Abdullah`s army, the Arab Legion, was the best trained and most professional of the armies of the Arab states.[94] Without Transjordan`s Arab Legion there was little room for Arab ambitions in Palestine. Faced with this reality, the League had to do its utmost to persuade the king to join.[95] Already in January 1948 there were indeed indications that the Arab countries were pressing Abdullah to alter his position. Consequently, he sought to withdraw somewhat from his commitments with the Jews. But still Abdullah preferred a strategy of obfuscation and deception: publicly, he declared his loyalty to the plans of the Arab League; secretly, he held far more independent plans that were based on collusion with his declared enemy.[96] Thus, each stage of the Syrian preparations to go to war makes sense when seen trough the eyes of President Quwwatli`s fear of Abdullah.[97] There was no doubt that the public opinion played an important part in convincing Quwwatli

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[91] Shlaim 1988, *Collusion Across the Jordan*, pp. 44-45.

[92] Jensehaugen 2008, *Friendship Reanimated, The Israeli-Transjordanian Armistice Negotiations 1948-1949*, pp. 24-25. For more information about the Meir-Abdullah meetings, see Shlaim 1988, *Collusion Across the Jordan*, pp. 110-121.

[93] Landis 2001, "Syria and the Palestine war" in Rogan and Shlaim, *The War for Palestine*, p. 191.

[94] Shlaim 2001, "Israel and the Arab Coalition in 1948" in Rogan and Shlaim, *The War for Palestine*, p. 83.

[95] Pappe 1992, *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conclict 1947-1951*, p. 122.

[96] Uri Bar-Joseph, *The Best of Enemies*, *Israel and Transjordan in the War of 1948*, Frank Cass & Co Ltd., London 1987, pp. 23-25.

[97] Landis 2001, "Syria and the Palestine war" in Rogan and Shlaim, *The War for Palestine*, p. 179.

to go to war. Nevertheless, he did little to try to moderate the public to the realities of Syria`s political and military weakness.[98]

The Syrian government started to prepare for war and took the initiative to build the Arab Liberation Army, which was to be paid for and armed by all the Arab League countries. President Quwwatli knew that the Syrian army was not prepared for a major war in Palestine. Apparently, Quwwatli found it much safer to influence the situation in Palestine by building up such an Arab force.[99] More importantly, the ALA could be sent to fight in Palestine, without forcing Syria officially to open hostilities against Great Britain, since the British had supported Quwwatli and the Syrian nationalists against the French. In particular, Quwwatli also hoped that the ALA could be used to block Abdullah`s Greater Syria plan. In late 1947, the Arab Liberation Army was hastily put together. The ALA consisted of volunteers from a broad variety of backgrounds.[100] Most had come without arms or training, and the majority of the officer corps was Syrian, drawn from the army volunteers. Officially, the Arab League stated that the Arab Liberation Army was to have 16.000 men. In reality, such a number was far from achieved.[101]

The Arab Liberation Army, commanded by Syrian army officers, moved into Palestine in December 1947, and again early in 1948, with a public proclamation to nullify the United Nations partition resolution. Furthermore, the ALA was not only dispatched to fight the Jewish communities, but also to forestall Transjordan`s Arab Legion.[102] Indeed, the Arab governments hoped that the military actions by the Arab Palestinians aided by the volunteers from the neighbouring Arab countries, would succeed in preventing the world community from implementing the partition resolution. However, all hopes for local successes were shattered. The Arab public opinion certainly demanded a more drastic approach. The pressure from the crowds in the Arab capitals increased in the wake of Jewish successes in Palestine.[103]

The Haganah had started a policy of "aggressive defense", accompanied by economic subversion and psychological warfare. Among these offensive strategies was Plan D or Dalet, prepared by the Haganah chiefs in early March. The aim of Plan D was to secure all areas

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[98] Landis 2001, "Syria and the Palestine war" in Rogan and Shlaim, *The War for Palestine*, p. 193.
[99] Egypt was to pay for 42 percent of the costs, Syria and Lebanon 23 percent, Saudi Arabia 20 percent, and Iraq the remaining 15 percent, Landis 2001, "Syria and the Palestine war" in Rogan and Shlaim, *The War for Palestine* p. 193.
[100] The Arab Liberation Army included 1.100 Iraqis, 700 Palestinians, 100 Egyptians, 40 Transjordanians, 40 Jugoslavs, and 1.800 Syrians; many were from the region`s ethnic and religious minorities, Landis 2001, "Syria and the Palestine war" in Rogan and Shlaim, *The War for Palestine*, p. 195.
[101] Landis 2001, "Syria and the Palestine war" in Rogan and Shlaim, *The War for Palestine*, p. 195.
[102] Ma`oz 1995, *Syria and Israel, From War to Peace-making*, p. 18.
[103] Pappe 1992, *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, pp. 104-105.

allocated to the Jewish state under the UN partition resolution as well as Jewish settlements outside these areas. Arab civilians were thus forced to leave their homes, which caused the beginning of the Palestinian refugee problem. Evidently, the first and largest wave of refugees actually occurred before the outbreak of the war on 15 May 1948.[104]

Consequently, the level of violence in the region grew worse day by day. During the spring of 1948, the conflict escalated into a full-scale war. In the first phase of the conflict, from the passage of the United Nations partition resolution 29 November 1947 until the proclamation of a Jewish statehood on 14 May 1948, the Jewish community had to defend itself against attacks from Arab guerrilla forces. The leaders of the Jewish Agency were convinced that these attacks were merely a prelude to a full-scale military confrontation with the regular armies of the neighbouring Arab states. Thus, the commanders of Haganah advocated hard-hitting military reprisals.[105]

On 14 May 1948 the State of Israel was proclaimed directly after the British announced their withdrawal from Palestine. As a result, on 15 May the regular armies of Egypt, Transjordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq invaded Palestine. Israel was born in the midst of war.[106]

The first Arab-Israeli War[107]

In the week following the end of the British mandate the Arab armies entered Palestine and attacked Jewish settlements in the north and the south. Egypt informed the Security Council that Egypt had entered Palestine "to establish security and order in place of chaos and disorder" and to put an end to the Jewish atrocities. Similar messages were received from Transjordan and the Arab League.[108] The war consisted of three rounds of fighting. It was interrupted by two UN-decreed truces. The first round lasted from 15 May until 11 June, the second from 9 to 18 July, and the third from 15 October until 7 January 1949.[109]

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[104] Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, pp. 30-31.
[105] Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, p. 30. Haganah was a paramilitary organisation developed by the Jewish Agency. In Hebrew, Haganah means defense, Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, p. 22.
[106] Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, pp. 33-34.
[107] The Israelis call this the War of Independence and the Arabs call this the *al-Nakba*, the Disaster, Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, p. 28.
[108] Sydney D. Bailey, *Four Arab-Israeli Wars and Peace Process*, The MacMillan Press, London 1990, p. 21.
[109] Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, p. 34.
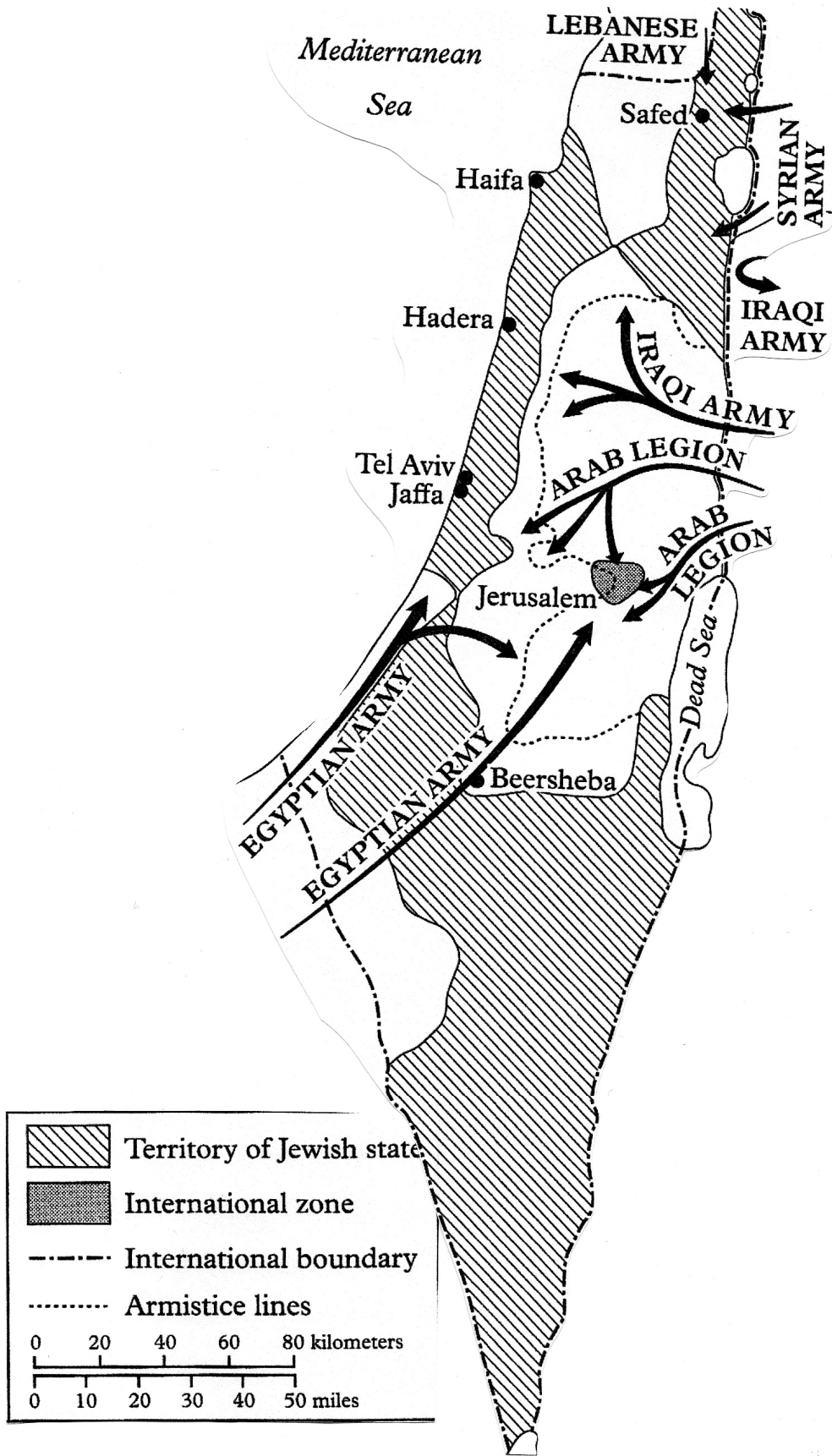
Map 3 The Arab Invasion

Source: Rogan, Eugene L. and Avi Shlaim (eds): *The War for Palestine*, Cambridge University Press 2001, p. xiv.

The Security Council immediately tried to stop the fighting and Count Folke Bernadotte of Sweden was appointed UN Mediator on 21 May 1948.[110] On 29 May, the UN Security Council passed a resolution that called upon the parties to observe a cease-fire for four weeks.[111]

During the first week of the war, Egyptian forces entered the Negev and captured areas, which according to the UN plan had been stipulated as belonging to the Jewish state. Another Egyptian division was stationed in the Bethlehem area. Furthermore, Tel Aviv was bombarded from the air by Egyptian aircraft and Jerusalem remained cut off from the coast by Palestinian and Arab Legion forces. Meanwhile, the Syrians succeeded in establishing a bridgehead in the Jordan Valley. More importantly, just before the first cease-fire, Syrian forces captured Mishmar Hayarden, south of Lake Hula.[112] The Iraqis entered the area of Samaria, thereby facilitating the annexation of that area to Transjordan. However, Abdullah decided to abandon the Arab war plan, and concentrated most of his troops in the vicinity of Jerusalem.[113] The earlier agreement between Golda Meir and Abdullah did not cover Jerusalem, which under the UN partition plan was supposed to become a separate entity under an international regime. The battle for Jerusalem was thus initiated by an Israeli offensive immediately after the termination of the British mandate. As a response, King Abdullah ordered the Arab Legion to defend the Old City of Jerusalem. On 18 May, the Arab Legion succeeded in capturing the Jewish quarter in Jerusalem.[114]

On 11 June 1948 the first truce came into effect.[115] In spite of the initial shock and anxiety that came with the Arab invasion, Israel was in the control of the mixed Arab-Jewish towns in Palestine already captured in April. The Israel Defence Force (IDF) had driven back the invading Arab armies from the north of Palestine, and had also caused the Egyptians losses in the south.[116] Part of the reason for this outcome was Abdullah`s deviation from the

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[110] Brian Urquhart, *Ralph Bunche, An American Life*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York 1993, p. 158. Count Folke Bernadotte was a nephew of the King Of Sweden and president of the Swedish Red Cross. He was known for his humanitarian work during and after the Second World War. He helped securing the release of thousands of prisoners from Nazi camps in the closing days of the Second World War. Many Jews therefore expected that he would sympathize with the Jewish people in the Palestine conflict. A committee of the Assembly composed of representatives of China, France, the U.S.S.R., The United Kingdom and the United States met on May 21 1948 and appointed Count Folke Bernadotte, Touval 1982, *The Peace Brokers*, p. 26.
[111] Touval 1982, *The Peace Brokers*, p. 30; UNSC Resolution 50 of 29 May 1948 (S/801), See Appendix V.
[112] Bailey 1990, *Four Arab-Israeli Wars and the Peace Process*, p. 28.
[113] Pappe 1992, *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, p. 137.
[114] Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, pp. 36-37. For more information about the war over Jerusalem, see Bar-Joseph 1987, *The Best of Enemies*, pp. 64-79.
[115] UNSC Resolution 50 of 29 May 1948 (S/801). See Appendix V.
[116] Pappe 1992, *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict 1947-1951*, p. 140. The Haganah was renamed the Israel Defence Force immediately after the proclamation of the Israeli state, Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, p. 34.

original plan of the military committee of the Arab League. As long as the Arab Legion was concentrated in Jerusalem, the Israelis had little difficulty in confronting the rest of the Arab units. The Israelis seemed to be on the path of victory when the truce went into effect.[117] They also used the truce to recruit more soldiers, retrain, reorganize, and most importantly, to rearm. The Arabs, on the other hand, found it increasingly difficult to strengthen their frontline units. Consequently, the military balance tipped in favour of Israel.[118]

The first truce lasted about a month. After both the Arabs and the Israelis rejected the Bernadotte proposals for a settlement, the war was resumed on July 8. The fighting only lasted for ten days, but major Israeli victories were won during this short period. When Egypt violated the truce on 8 July, the IDF was ready to launch its counteroffensive. The main target of the counteroffensive was the Arab Legion. Operation Danny aimed at destroying the Lydda-Ramle wedge, which was a strategically important road to Jerusalem for the Arab Legion. In addition, the IDF tried to capture Latrun and Ramallah. All these places had been assigned to the Arab state according to the UN partition plan. Lydda and Ramle were captured by the IDF, and all its inhabitants were forced to leave. In Latrun, Ramallah, and the Old City of Jerusalem, the Arab Legion managed to defend its positions. However, all the other Arab armies lost ground to Israel as a result to the ten days fighting. This position was retained until the end of the war.[119]

The fighting ended on 18 July as a result of the Security Council resolution of July 15, which ordered the parties to cease-fire and threatened with sanctions in the event of noncompliance. Unlike the resolution of 29 May that called upon the parties to observe a cease-fire for four weeks, the 15 July resolution stated that the truce should remain in force "until a peaceful adjustment of the future of Palestine is reached".[120] The truce was even less effective than the earlier one. There was sporadic fighting everywhere. Snipers, night raids and bomb attacks replaced the fighting by the regular armed forces.[121] However, throughout the war King Abdullah continued to pursue limited objectives and made no further attempts to win territory from Israel. The special relationship between Israel and Transjordan slowly began to reassert itself.[122]

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[117] Pappe 1992, *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict 1947-1951*, pp. 140-141.
[118] Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, p. 37; Pappe 1992, *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict 1947-1951*, pp. 142-143.
[119] Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, pp. 37-38.
[120] Touval 1982, *The Peace Brokers*, p. 37; UNSC Resolution 54 of 15 July 1948 (S/902). See Appendix IV.
[121] Luard 1982, *A History of the United Nations*, pp. 193-194.
[122] Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, p. 38.

During the first truce Bernadotte had worked on attempts at securing a more long-term settlement. The plan, which was to be known as the Bernadotte Plan, consisted of two parts, one Jewish and one Arab, with common directives regarding foreign and defence policies.[123] The plan also consisted of common development policies and the refugees were entitled to return to their former residences.[124]

However, the plan was particularly unacceptable to Israel. The Israelis rejected the Bernadotte Plan mainly because it ignored the UN partition resolution. As they saw it, Israel would loose areas that were already assigned to them by the UN partition resolution.[125] The Arab governments authorized the Secretary General of the Arab League, Azzam Pasha, to reject the plan on their behalf. Indeed, Azzam told the UN Mediator that he had expected that Bernadotte would abandon the UN partition resolution. Instead, according to Azzam, all Bernadotte had done was to present a revised version of it. At a meeting with the Arab League in Cairo, Bernadotte had been warned by the Arab leaders that any mention of the UN partition resolution in his recommendation would result in a categorical rejection of his plan.[126]

On September 16 Bernadotte signed his final report at the Hôtel des Roses on Rhodes.[127] The next day Bernadotte was assassinated, together with Colonel Serot, a senior French officer of the UN observer force, in Jerusalem by Jewish extremists. The Jewish terrorists saw Bernadotte as the main obstacle both to Israeli annexation of Jerusalem and to Jewish control of the whole of Palestine. The assassination shocked the world and made the international community further aware of the intricate situation in the region.[128] Ralph Bunche, previously head of the UN team working with Bernadotte, was appointed Acting Mediator immediately after the assassination.[129] But Bunche had no better success than his

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[123] Luard 1982, *A History of the United Nations*, p. 193.
[124] Touval 1982, *The Peace Brokers*, p. 24.
[125] Urquhart 1993, *Ralph Bunche, An American Life*, p. 165.
[126] Pappe 1992, *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, p. 148.
[127] Urquhart 1993, *Ralph Bunche, An American Life*, p. 176. To facilitate the mediation effort, Bernadottes headquarters was moved to the Hôtel des Roses on the island of Rhodes on June 13, Urquhart 1993, *Ralph Bunche, An American Life*, p. 162.
[128] Luard 1982, *A History of the United Nations*, p. 194. Bernadotte was killed by members of the Stern Gang. One of the key figures in the assassination was Yitzhak Shamir (later prime minister in Israel). The assassination of Bernadotte forced the government to merge the extremist organisations into the IDF. Bernadottes killers were never brought to justice. The man who shot Bernadotte was probably Yehoshua Cohen, later a friend of David Ben-Gurion, Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, p. 37; Urquhart 1993, *Ralph Bunche, An American Life*, p. 179.
[129] Luard 1982, *A History of the United Nations*, p. 194. Ralph Bunche chose the title "acting mediator" out of respect for the late Bernadotte, Ingrid Næser, *Right Versus Might*, A Study of the Armistice Negotiations between Israel and Egypt, University of Oslo 2005, p. 30.

predecessor in securing the truce. At the end of September he could only report to the Security Council that both parties had violated the truce.

On 15 October 1948, Israel broke the cease-fire and attacked the Egyptian army, which ultimately resulted in the Israeli occupation of the Negev.[130] The last phase of the first Arab-Israeli war was between Israel and Egypt. In October, the Israelis were no longer engaged on the eastern front, but concentrated all their efforts at capturing the Negev. Operation Yoav, the campaign for the occupation of the Negev was a success. Evidently, the other Arab countries did not move an inch to assist the Egyptians. The Arab Legion remained neutral, and the Arab Liberation Army was almost destroyed. At this point, Israel completely dominated the conflict. Even though the Arab armies did not openly fight each other, their actions were mutually destructive because they refused to cooperate and wilfully stood by as the Israelis destroyed Palestinian militia as well as Arab armies.[131] On 19 October, the Security Council passed a resolution calling for an immediate cease-fire.[132] However, the Israelis decided not to observe the UN call. Two weeks after the invasion of Negev, Israel moved against the north and eastern borders, capturing the entire Galilee, except for a small part along the eastern border occupied by the Syrians. The remaining Arab Liberation Army was driven into Lebanon by the IDF. The IDF then occupied small villages on Lebanese territory.[133] As a consequence, on 4 November, the UN passed a resolution stating that, "no party is permitted to violate the truce on the ground that it is undertaking reprisals or retaliations against the other party." The 4 November resolution was mainly directed against the Israelis, since it emphasized the necessity "to withdraw those of their forces which have advanced beyond the positions held on 14 October."[134]

Thus, in two private meetings in the UN Security Council, held on 9 and 10 November 1948, Acting Mediator Ralph Bunche expressed the opinion that the only solution for the attainment of permanent peace was the establishment of an armistice.[135] These talks resulted in the 16 November resolution, which stated that in order "to eliminate the threat to the peace

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[130] Shlaim 1988, *Collusion Across the Jordan*, p. 312. The attack on Egypt is also known as "Operation Ten Plagues", because according to the Bernadotte plan, the Negev would be a part of an Arab state. It became an Israeli obsession to absorb this part into the Jewish state. It started when the IDF sent supply convoys into the Negev on 14 October. As expected the Egyptians opened fire, giving the IDF a blueprint for invasion, Morris 2004, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, p. 463.

[131] Landis 2001, "Syria and the Palestine War" in Rogan and Shlaim, *The War for Palestine*, p. 200.

[132] Luard 1982, *A History of the United Nations*, p. 194.

[133] Hilde Henriksen Waage, *Da staten Israel ble til: Et stridspørsmål i norsk politikk 1945-49, [When the State of Israel was born : A Matter of Political Conflict in Norwegian Policy 1945-49]*, Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, Oslo 1989, p. 171.

[134] UNSC Resolution 61 of 4 November 1948 (S/1070). See Appendix II.

[135] Bar-Yaacov 1967, *The Israel-Syrian Armistice*, p. 31.

in Palestine and to facilitate the transition from present truce to permanent peace in Palestine, an armistice shall be established in all sectors of Palestine".[136]

However, the war was not over yet. At the end of 1948 the Israeli army was at its peak of military success. Ignoring the calls of the UN for a cease-fire, the Israelis launched a second offensive in the south, Operation Horev, on 22 December. The aim of the operation was to complete the destruction of the Egyptian forces, to drive them out of Palestine, and force the Egyptians to negotiate an armistice. Egypt appealed to her Arab allies for help, but without any success. Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and the Yemen all promised assistance, but failed to keep their promises. In solidarity, the Iraqis shelled a few Israeli villages near their front line. The Egyptians did not receive any answer from King Abdullah and the Syrians tried to scare the Israelis rhetorically. As a result, Israeli troops moved forward and expelled the Egyptians from the south east of the Negev. However, Operation Horev did not fully attain its aim. The Egyptians remained in the Gaza Strip and in the enclave at Faluja. Hence, on 4 January 1949, the Egyptians announced their willingness to start the armistice negotiations. The UN-decreed cease-fire was accepted on 7 January, marking the end of the first Arab-Israeli war.[137]

The first Arab-Israeli war left enormous problems concerning borders and refugees. Israel occupied 77, 4 percent of Palestine. Compared with the UN proposal, Israel had grown by about approximately 22 percent.[138] The truce lines at the end of the fighting were completely different from the UN partition lines: the Western Galilee, El Auja, Lydda, Ramla, Jaffa, parts of southern Judea and the northern Negev, including Beersheba – all of which according to the UN partition plan had been assigned to the Palestinian state – were now under Israeli control.[139] Transjordan and Egypt took their parts of the former British mandate as well. Transjordan had conquered and occupied the West Bank and Egypt was in the possession of the Gaza Strip.[140] However, Israel had proven to be the undisputed strongest power in the region. Except from Transjordan, the Arab countries were militarily and economically ruined.

The total number of refugees who had fled their homes after the adoption of the UN partition plan was eventually estimated between 680.000-800.000 men, women and children.

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[136] UNSC Resolution 62 of 16 November 1948 (S/1080). See Appendix III.
[137] Shlaim 1988, *Collusion Across the Jordan*, pp. 367-368.
[138] Donald Neff, *Fallen Pillars*, *U.S. Policy towards Palestine and Israel since 1945*, Institute for Palestine Studies, Washington D.C. 1995, p. 93.
[139] Shlaim 1988, *Collusion Across the Jordan*, p. 393.
[140] Benny Morris, *Israel`s Border Wars 1949-1956*, Oxford 1993, pp. 6-8.

The majority of the refugees escaped to the remaining Arab parts of Palestine, the West Bank (280.000) and the Gaza Strip (190.000). The rest fled to Lebanon (100.000), Syria (75.000), Transjordan (70.000), Egypt (7.000) and Iraq (4.000).[141] The Gaza Strip, controlled by the Egyptians was turned into an enormous refugee camp. Furthermore, the refugee camps in Lebanon and Syria were transformed into ghettoes where the refugees were given limited political rights. For the Arab countries, the refugees became an enormous economic burden. No less importantly, the Palestinian refugees also threatened the stability of the already fragile Arab regimes.[142] However, as long as Israel refused the Palestinians to return to their homes, the Palestinian refugee problem remained a bone of contention between Israel and the Arab states. Evidently, for the Arab countries, the Palestinian refugees became a reminder of the humiliating defeat during the war.

The Syrian army had, however, played a very limited role. The regular Syrian army, which invaded Palestine with 3.000 troops, was far from prepared for the war, partly because of bad organization and intelligence, and partly owing to deficiencies in both the quantity and quality of weapons.[143] President Quwwatli`s failure to reform the Syrian army influenced his decisions throughout the war and the Arab Liberation Army became a great nuisance to him as well.[144]

Despite Syria`s initial loss, Syrian forces had been able to occupy a thin, but strategically important strip of Palestinian land during the first two months of the war. All of the territory east of the Jordan River and the Sea of Galilee had easily been taken by the Syrian troops. The Syrian army had also managed to cross the river just south of Lake Hula to occupy Kibbutz Mishmar Hayarden and defend it against several Israeli counter-attacks. In all, these three enclaves as well as the thin strip stretching along the eastern perimeter of the Jordan River and the Sea of Galilee, added up to 66,5 square kilometres of land. Except from these two small operations, the Syrian army had remained largely inactive during the first Arab-Israeli war.[145]

Syria`s military policy during the first Arab-Israeli war in 1948 was a result of its own political and military weakness. Fearing domestic unrest if it did nothing, and military defeat

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[141] Sune Persson, *Palestinakonflikten, [The Palestine Conflict]*, Lund 1994, p. 64.

[142] Hilde Henriksen Waage, *Norge – Israels beste venn, Norsk Midtøsten-politikk 1949-1956, [Norway – Israel`s Best Friend, Norwegian Middle East Policy 1949-1956]*, Universitetsforlaget, Oslo 1996, pp. 101-102; For more information about the origins of the Palestinian refugee problem, see Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, Cambridge University Press 2004.

[143] Ma`oz 1995, *Syria and Palestine, From War to Peace-making*, p. 18-19.

[144] Landis 2001, "Syria and the Palestine War" in Rogan and Shlaim, *The War for Palestine*, p. 200.

[145] Landis 2001, "Syria and the Palestine War" in Rogan and Shlaim, *The War for Palestine*, p. 199.

and possible conquest if it entered the fighting, Syria contented itself with a few small towns on the Palestine side of the old international border. In order to establish a negotiating position and to stand guard against King Abdullah`s Greater Syria plan, the Syrians could do no better.[146] Consequently, Shukri al-Quwwatli`s war policy during the conflict in Palestine came out to be a complete disaster both for his presidency and for the internal political situation in Syria. When the army failed in Palestine, the government blamed the army and the army blamed the government. Under these circumstances it was unfortunate that the Syrian government called upon the army to restore order in December 1948, since it was exactly that army, which took control over Syria in March 1949.[147]

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[146] Landis 2001, "Syria and the Palestine War" in Rogan and Shlaim, *The War for Palestine*, p. 200.
[147] Yapp 1991, *The Near East since the First World War*, p. 99.

3

The UN Mediation Effort

The Security Council [...] *Decides* that, in order to eliminate the threat to
the peace in Palestine and to facilitate the transition from the present truce
to permanent peace in Palestine, an armistice shall be established in all
sectors of Palestine.

- Security Council Resolution of 16 November 1948.

On 7 January 1949, the UN-decreed cease-fire went into force marking the end of the first Arab-Israeli war.[148] The Security Council Resolution of 16 November 1948 ordered the parties involved in the Palestine conflict to negotiate an armistice in Palestine, either directly or through the UN-appointed Mediator. The Resolution instructed the parties to agree on permanent armistice demarcation lines, which included withdrawal and reduction of armed forces during the transition to permanent peace in the area.[149] The task of mediation was passed to Dr. Ralph Bunche, who had previously been appointed to be Acting Mediator after the assassination of Count Bernadotte.[150] During his time in the UN Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP), Bunche had become familiar with the issues related to the conflict. His

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[148] Shlaim 2001, "Israel and the Arab coalition in 1948" in Rogan and Shlaim: *The War for Palestine*, p. 100.

[149] UNSC Resolution 62 of 16 November 1948 (S/1080). See Appendix III.

[150] Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, p. 41. Ralph J Bunche (1904-1971) was born in Detroit, Michigan, and was educated at the University of California and at Harvard University. During World War II, Bunche worked for the Office of Strategic Services and for the US State Department as a specialist on Africa and dependent areas. In 1946, Bunche was attached to the Trusteeship Division of the United Nations, soon becoming its Director, Sune O. Persson, *Mediation & Assassination: Count Bernadotte`s Mission to Palestine 1948*, Ithica Press, London 1979, p. 263; See also Walter Eytan, *The First Ten Years*, London 1958, pp. 30-31.

knowledge of the region became even broader during the time as Bernadotte's assistant. Bunche was often seen as the man with the ideas. For his conduct and achievements as Acting UN Mediator and as the principal armistice negotiator he was awarded the Nobel Peace Price in 1950.[151]

UN Invitation to Rhodes

The response of Israel and the Arab states to the Security Council's call for an armistice was primarily motivated by their respective successes or setbacks on the battlefield.[152] The parties instructed to start the negotiations were: Israel, Egypt, Transjordan, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Saudi Arabia. Israel accepted the terms of the resolution only two days after it was adopted. Compared to the Arab states, Israel had a lot more to gain by accepting the negotiations. For the Arabs, accepting the invitation to negotiate with Israel would be seen as an acknowledgement of their new neighbour, which no Arab country at that time was willing to accept.[153] Egypt decided to join the negotiations 4 January 1949, after having been defeated by the Israelis in the Negev in the last phase of the war. All the other Arab states were in an inferior military position. Egypt, however, was perhaps in the worst, and decided to start the armistice negotiations immediately. The other Arab states followed in suite.[154]

On 30 January 1949, while Bunche was conducting the Israeli-Egyptian negotiations, he sent formal invitations to all the other Arab states to negotiate an armistice. The invitation was accepted by Lebanon and Transjordan. For King Abdullah of Transjordan, Palestine represented part of his ambition in the establishment of a Greater Syria. Therefore, the negotiations were of major interest to the King. Lebanon also accepted, stating that the Lebanese wished to follow in the steps of Egypt. The Government of Saudi Arabia declared that they would accept decisions adopted by the Arab League on the Palestine issue. The Saudis had no territorial disputes with Israel. Iraq answered that the terms of the armistices agreed upon by the Arab neighbours of Israel, would be acceptable to the Iraqi Government. Later, 20 March 1949, the Iraqi Government informed the Acting Mediator that it had authorised the delegation of Transjordan to negotiate on behalf of the Iraqi forces. However, the Iraqis never entered the negotiations. They maintained the principle that if Iraq entered the

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[151] Persson 1979, *Mediation and Assassination*, p. 263.
[152] Bar-Yaacov 1967, *The Israel-Syrian Armistice*, p. 35.
[153] Waage 1996, *Norge – Israels beste venn, Norsk Midtøsten-politikk 1949-1956, [Norway – Israel`s Best Friend, Norwegian Middle East Policy 1949-1956]*, p. 48; Shlaim 1988, *Collusion Across the Jordan*, p. 404.
[154] Næser 2005, *Right Versus Might*, p. 51.

negotiations, they would implicit recognize the state of Israel. No one heard from Yemen during the negotiations.[155]

The Syrians waited nearly two months before they accepted the UN invitation. On 2 March 1949, Bunche reminded the Syrian Government that his previous invitation regarding armistice negotiations remained unanswered, and again urged the Syrians to enter into such negotiations. This time the Syrian Government consented, and on 20 March, Bunche received a telegram from the Government of Syria, where the Syrians officially accepted the UN invitation to enter the armistice negotiations.[156]

The Israeli-Egyptian Armistice: Construction of a Framework

By the beginning of 1949, Israel had achieved her aim in containing the combined attack of the Arab States and was interested in concluding armistice agreements with all of them in order to consolidate her internal and international position. This was Israel's official position because of her great success in the first Arab-Israeli war. Egypt, the theoretically strongest of Israel's opponents, was compelled to seek an armistice with Israel only after suffering a devastating defeat, and with the prospect of a further military breakdown.[157] As Egypt and Israel accepted an unconditional truce, they were the first to start the negotiations.

The conducting of the armistice negotiations was originally, according to the UN General Assembly of 11 December 1948, a task of the Palestine Conciliation Commission (PCC).[158] The PCC was composed of American, French, and Turkish representatives. According to the resolution, the commission was instructed to assist the governments concerned to achieve a final settlement of all questions outstanding between them. Furthermore, the PCC was assigned to draw up a scheme for a permanent international regime for Jerusalem and to facilitate the repatriation, resettlement, and economic and social rehabilitation of the refugees.[159]

However, the commission was unable to make progress due to problems with getting organized. Indeed, Bunche felt that the military situation between Israel and Egypt was extremely tense, and the cease-fire agreement of 7 January could easily evaporate. Bunche

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[155] Rosenne 1951, *Israel`s Armistice Agreements with the Arab States*, pp. 29-30.
[156] Bar-Yaacov 1967, *The Israel-Syrian Armistice*, p. 35.
[157] Bar-Yaacov 1967, *The Israel-Syrian Armistice*, p. 35
[158] Tiller, Stian Johansen, *Defending the UN Agenda: The Peace Effort of the Palestine Conciliation Commission, 1949-1951*, University of Oslo and Peace Research Institute in Oslo (PRIO), Oslo 2009.
[159] Shlaim 1988, *Collusion Across the Jordan*, p. 461. For more thorough presentation of the Palestine Conciliation Commission see Pappe 1992, *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict 1947-1951*, pp. 195-202; Tiller 2008, *Defending the UN Agenda*, pp. 24-28.

consequently decided to go ahead with the negotiations without waiting for the PCC, and on 13 January the armistice talks between Israel and Egypt opened on the isle of Rhodes.[160]

In the beginning of the armistice negotiations between Israel and Egypt, the Israelis wanted to turn the negotiations into political discussions. Therefore, Israel sent two delegations to Rhodes, one political and one military. However, one of the Egyptian delegates complained to the UN that Israel was trying to use the armistice negotiations as a political weapon to obtain more territory than it already had acquired. Even though the Acting Mediator first shared the Israeli view and also expressed his wish to introduce political issues, he realized the rigidity on both sides. Bunche abandoned the idea, and thereafter concentrated the armistice talks strictly on military matters.[161] This was also the view, expressed by the Acting Mediator in his opening remarks to the Israelis and Egyptians gathered on Rhodes on 12 January 1949: "We are not holding a peace conference here; we are not expecting to settle the complicated political issues which bedevil this problem and to which the Conciliation Commission will soon direct its attention".[162] The construction of the framework that would lead to the successful signing of the armistice agreements between Israel and the neighbouring Arab states was Bunche's major accomplishment. This framework was modelled on the Island of Rhodes during the armistice negotiations between Israel and Egypt.

The other Arab States were watching Egypt's performance. Bunche was also anxious to have the support of them for the armistice negotiations. He therefore sent his associate to Amman, Beirut and Damascus on 14 January, to line up similar negotiations to follow immediately after the accomplishment of the Egypt-Israeli talks.[163]

The Israeli-Egyptian negotiations began with a fundamental contradiction between the Egyptian and Israeli views about the principles that were to guide territorial apportionment. Egypt, seeking to retain as much of the Negev as possible, proposed that the Security Council resolution of 4 November 1948, regarding the withdrawal of forces held on 14 October, be implemented as a starting point in the negotiations. On 14 October 1948, Israel had started "Operation Ten Plagues". The IDF had initiated the operation by provoking Egypt by sending a supply convoy into the Negev on 14 October 1948. As expected, the Egyptians opened fire. During the fighting, Israel had captured the Northern Negev. This situation, among others, led

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[160] Urquhart 1993, *Ralph Bunche, An American Life*, p. 199 The Commission`s morale was weakened by the behaviour of the United States representative, Joseph B. Keenan, who did not attend one single meeting during his leadership of the PCC. He was replaced by Mark Ethridge, Urquhart 1993, *Ralph Bunche, An American Life*, p. 199.
[161] Pappe 1992, *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict 1947-1951*, p. 177.
[162] Pappe 1992, *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict 1947-1951*, p. 178.
[163] Urquhart 1993, *Ralph Bunche, An American Life*, pp. 201-202.

to the passing of the resolution of 4 November 1948, which called on "the governments and authorities involved" to withdraw their forces to their 14 October positions.[164]

Israel, on the other hand, claimed that the situation existed prior to 14 October, with Egypt interfering with supplies to the Israeli-held portions of the Negev. Furthermore, the Israelis referred to the UN partition plan and claimed that the southern part of the Negev belonged to Israel. The Israeli claim over the Negev was the first example of how the Israelis used different borders in order to achieve more territory. Changing argument to their advantage became an important tactical weapon for Israel during the rest of the armistice negotiations with the other Arab states. When the negotiations concerned areas that according to the UN plan were not stipulated as belonging to Israel, the Israelis demanded that the negotiations should be based on the existing truce lines.[165]

Another controversy arose when Israel refused to release the besieged Egyptian forces in Faluja by 25 January 1949.[166] Furthermore, the city of El Auja was situated on the Palestinian side of what was the old international border between Palestine and Egypt. The city was of great strategic importance to the Israelis as well as the Egyptians. When Egypt attacked Israel on 15 May 1948, El Auja had served as a gateway for the Egyptian forces. Seven months later, in December 1948, the same city provided the gateway for the Israeli forces in their counterattack on Egypt.[167] The question of Beersheba was also a difficult issue during the negotiations. The city had status as capital of the desert and was thus the most important and strategic city in the Negev.[168]

Both sides had to move a long way from their opening positions to make an armistice agreement possible. Israel had to agree to Egyptian military presence in the Gaza Strip, to the release of the Egyptian brigade from Faluja, and to the demilitarization of El Auja. Despite these concessions, the agreement carried significant gains for the Israelis. Israel secured control over the northern Negev and the city of Beersheba, which gave them the opportunity to capture the southern part of the dessert.[169] However, already on 10 March 1949, Israel violated the truce and initiated Operation Uvda, *Fait Accompli*, whereby the IDF occupied the

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[164] Touval 1982, *The Peace Brokers*, p. 66; UNSC Resolution 61 of 4 November 1948 (S/1070). See Appendix II.
[165] Jensehaugen 2008, *Friendship Reanimated, The Israeli-Transjordanian Armistice Negotiations 1948-1949*, p. 64.
[166] Touval 1982, *The Peace Brokers*, p. 67.
[167] Næser 2005, *Right Versus Might*, p. 90.
[168] Næser 2005, *Right Versus Might*, p. 93.
[169] Shlaim 1988, *Collusion Across the Jordan*, p. 390.

remaining parts of the Negev.[170] More importantly, the conclusion of the armistice negotiations with Egypt strengthened Israel's international position and helped to establish Israel's credentials for membership in the United Nations. The armistice agreement between Israel and Egypt was signed 24 February 1949.[171]

The Israeli-Lebanese Armistice: The Syrian Link

The armistice negotiations between Israel and Lebanon began 1 March 1949 and lasted three weeks. In secret talks with Elias Sasson, the Director of Foreign Affairs in Israel, the Lebanese delegation had intimated that they could not be the first Arab state to negotiate directly with Israel, but they expected to be the second.[172] Lebanon, along with many other Arab states regarded Egypt as the leading Arab country. The outcome of Israeli-Egyptian armistice was therefore of great importance to the Lebanese.

The Israeli-Lebanese talks were held in Ras al Naqura, alternately in the customs house behind the Lebanese line and the police station on the Israeli side. The armistice negotiations between Israel and Lebanon were to be chaired by the Acting Mediator's assistant, the UN representative Henri Vigier. Henri Vigier, nicknamed "the French fox", had served as one of Ralph Bunche's deputies during the armistice negotiations between Israel and Egypt. Indeed, during the negotiations between Israel and Lebanon he played a much less active role than Ralph Bunche had done during the Israeli-Egyptian negotiations. The atmosphere was thus more relaxed and informal than in Rhodes.[173] Even though Bunche directed the Israeli-Lebanese negotiations, he did not attend the actual meetings. Bunche was busy preparing for the Israeli-Transjordanian armistice talks, which were to begin on Rhodes on 4 March, three days later.

When Israel moved against the north and eastern borders in October 1948, the IDF occupied a narrow strip of Lebanese territory, which contained fourteen villages. Since both sides expected that the old international border between Lebanon and Palestine would become the final demarcation line between Israel and Lebanon, there were no fundamental problems.

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[170] Shlaim 1988, *Collusion Across the Jordan*, pp. 401-402; Bar-Joseph 1987, *The Best of Enemies*, pp. 199-207.
[171] Shlaim 1988, *Collusion Across the Jordan*, p. 390.
[172] Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, p. 42. Privately the Lebanese delegation told both the Israelis and the UN observers that they were not really Arab and that they had been dragged into the Palestine war against their will, Shlaim 1988, *Collusion Across the Jordan*, p. 391.
[173] Shlaim 1988, *Collusion Across the Jordan*, pp. 391-392.

With the signature of the armistice agreement, the IDF would simply withdraw from Lebanese territory.[174]

However, the Israelis tried to make their withdrawal from the fourteen Lebanese villages conditional upon Syrian withdrawal to the old international border between Palestine and Syria. The Syrian army still held positions along the Jordan River and on the east bank of the Sea of Galilee. The Israelis claimed that these positions were inside Israeli territory. The Israeli argument was that the entire northern border from Ras al Naqura to the Sea of Galilee constituted one geographical unit and that the principle of withdrawal to the old international border should apply to all.[175] Israel, for its part, was thus interested in linking their withdrawal from Lebanon with a Syrian pullback. As Moshe Sharett, Israel's Foreign Minister put it, "We will not be able to withdraw from Lebanon if the Syrians also do not withdraw to the east of our boundary, along the Jordan River and Lake Tiberias [Sea of Galilee]."[176] This was a purely tactical move from Israel. Apparently, Israel had decided to exploit its bargaining position in Lebanon in order to compel Syria to enter the negotiations and to agree to the principal of withdrawal. However, Bunche emphasized that the Israelis had agreed to withdraw from Lebanon as a prior condition to the negotiations. Evidently, on 1 January 1949, Sharett confirmed that Israel would be ready to evacuate the Lebanese villages as soon as Lebanon stated its willingness to start the armistice negotiations.[177]

Bunche and Vigier rejected the Israeli attempt to link the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon with the Syrian withdrawal from the area Syria occupied in the former area of Palestine.[178] On 7 March, during the second meeting in the Israeli-Lebanese armistice negotiations, Vigier said that, "this difficulty is of a political nature, and I would suggest that we leave it aside."[179] The negotiations nevertheless took three weeks to complete. On 17 March, the Acting Mediator declared that the Israel-Lebanon armistice accord "[was] held up solely by Israeli intransigence."[180]

However, in the end, a high-level decision in the Israeli Government was taken to abandon the attempt to link Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon and Syrian withdrawal from

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[174] Shlaim 1988, *Collusion Across the Jordan*, p. 391.
[175] Shlaim 1988, *Collusion Across the Jordan*, p. 391.
[176] Shalev 1993, *The Israel-Syria Armistice Regime 1949-1955*, p. 20; Sharett to Shiloah, 2 March 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, pp. 291-292.
[177] Shalev 1993, *The Israel-Syria Armistice Regime 1949-1955*, pp. 19-20.
[178] Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, p. 42.
[179] *Summary Record of the Second meeting of the Israeli-Lebanese armistice negotiations*, 7 March 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 295.
[180] Shalev 1993, *The Israel-Syria Armisitce Regime 1949-1955*, p. 21.

Palestine. David Ben-Gurion, Israel's Prime Minister, ordered the Israeli delegation to sign the armistice agreement with Lebanon. "Have them sign an armistice", he said.[181] After thinking through the situation more thoroughly, Ben-Gurion had concluded that it was undesirable for Israel to link one Arab country to another. He preferred to deal with each Arab country on a strictly bilateral basis. Bilateral talks were from Ben-Gurion's point of view seen as preferable for Israel. Israel would obtain more. No less importantly, Ben-Gurion also felt that an armistice agreement with Lebanon would improve Israel's international standing and place it in a stronger position to negotiate with Transjordan, the next country in line.[182] The armistice agreement between Israel and Lebanon was signed 23 March 1949.[183]

Shabtai Rosenne, the legal adviser to the Israel Ministry for Foreign Affairs, who represented Israel in all the armistice negotiations, described the armistice agreement with Lebanon as follows, "This was the simplest of all the agreements. It was not complicated, as was that with Egypt, by the necessity for complying with the two resolutions of the Security Council. Its draft was prepared by the Acting Mediator on the basis of the agreement with Egypt, with the exclusion of all those items which had their origin in the Resolution of 4 November."[184] Bunche's draft served as a model for the agreements with Transjordan and Syria.

The Israeli-Transjordanian Armistice: Old Friends Meet Again

The armistice negotiations between Israel and Transjordan were completely different from the previous negotiations with Egypt and Lebanon. Indeed, the Israeli-Transjordanian armistice talks were to be affected by the unique feature of the Transjordanian front. Iraq controlled the whole northern section of the front. The talks were further affected by the special political relationship between King Abdullah and the Jewish state.[185] When Transjordan was invited to take part in the armistice talks at Rhodes, King Abdullah made it clear that he only accepted the UN invitation because all the other Arab states had accepted theirs. The King did not mention that the Syrians had not yet accepted their invitation. Due to King Abdullah`s special

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[181] Shalev 1993, *The Israel-Syria Armistice Regime 1949-1955*, p. 21.
[182] Shlaim 1988, *Collusion Across the Jordan*, pp. 391-392.
[183] Rosenne 1951, *Israel`s Armistice Agreements with the Arab States*, p. 23.
[184] Rosenne 1951, *Israel`s Armistice Agreements with the Arab States*, p. 41.
[185] Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, pp. 42-43.

relationship with the Jews, established before the State of Israel was born, direct bilateral talks were what he would have preferred.[186]

Israel and Transjordan viewed the Rhodes negotiations very differently. Israel sent experienced senior officials who had taken part in previous armistice negotiations, while Transjordan, on the other hand, sent representatives who had no prior experience in negotiating with the Israelis. The reason why Abdullah chose to send a negotiation team of junior rank to Rhodes is unclear. Probably, he wanted to have light control over the delegation himself. The Israelis, with their high level expertise, were much better represented at Rhodes. This gave Israel a great advantage in the starting phase of the negotiations. The complete lack of seniority and political experience in the Transjordanian delegation delayed the negotiations continuously. In addition, King Abdullah had still not obtained the right to negotiate on behalf of the Iraqi forces.[187] This was not authorised until 20 March 1949.[188]

The official talks between Israel and Transjordan opened on Rhodes with the presence of the Acting Mediator Ralph Bunche 4 March 1949. Although Bunche played only a minor direct role in helping Transjordan and Israel reach an agreement on different issues, he constructed compromise proposals to the negotiations. Most importantly, the framework of the armistice agreements that he constructed provided a basis for the negotiations.

King Abdullah wanted to conduct the real armistice negotiations with the Israelis privately and secretly in his winter palace at Shuneh in Amman or in no-man's land in Jerusalem. This is also probably why he sent junior army officers to the talks at Rhodes.[189]

Two military matters complicated the armistice negotiations between Israel and Transjordan: The Negev and the Iraqi front. On 10 March 1949, the negotiations were halted by the Israeli military offensive, Operation Uvda. During two days, the Israeli forces took the remaining parts of the Negev and hence changed the premises for the negotiations. This military move was a clear violation of the truce.[190] Operation Uvda plunged the armistice negotiations into deep crisis. Despite the crisis, the Israelis and the Transjordanians managed to sign a ceasefire on Rhodes covering the Transjordanian lines on 11 March.[191]

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[186] Jensehaugen 2008, *Friendship Reanimated, The Israeli-Transjordanian Armistice Negotiations 1948-1949*, p. 79.
[187] Jensehaugen 2008, *Friendship Reanimated, The Israeli-Transjordanian Armistice Negotiations 1948-1949*, pp. 80-81.
[188] Rosenne 1951, *Israel´s Armistice Agreements with the Arab States*, p. 29.
[189] Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, p. 44.
[190] Jensehaugen 2008, *Friendship Reanimated, The Israeli-Transjordanian Armistice Negotiations 1948-1949*, pp. 81-82.
[191] Jensehaugen 2008, *Friendship Reanimated, The Israeli-Transjordanian Armistice Negotiations 1948-1949*, p. 82; Bar Joseph 1987, *The Best of Enemies*, p. 207.

In the middle of March, Iraq and Transjordan agreed that the Arab Legion would take over the positions held by the Iraqi army in the Wadi Ara area, the northern sector of the West Bank. Israel seized the opportunity to bring heavy pressure on King Abdullah to yield a sizeable strip of the territory in this area. Israel was thus prepared to use military force if its demands were not accepted. Once again King Abdullah was forced to cave in.[192]

Towards the end of March 1949 three secret bilateral meetings were held at Shuneh, where the final details of the Israeli-Transjordanian armistice were concluded.[193] The Israeli-Jordanian general armistice agreement was signed on Rhodes on 3 April 1949. The border in the south corresponded to the old international border from the mandatory period. The armistice lines on the Iraqi front reflected King Abdullah's concessions. The armistice line in Jerusalem was based on the "sincere and absolute cease-fire" of 30 November 1948. Being the most explosive subject along the entire eastern front, Jerusalem had been the starting point for the secret bilateral negotiations in November 1948, which ultimately led to the settlement of 30 November 1948. Article 8 in the Israeli-Jordanian armistice agreement, implemented a divided Jerusalem and empowered a special committee, composed of representatives Israel and Jordan to deal with all the outstanding problems, such as the movement of traffic on vital roads and access to the holy places in the Old City of Jerusalem.[194]

The armistice agreement with Jordan was a diplomatic victory for Israel. The combination of military threat, actual use of military force and hard-line diplomacy secured Israel strategic important areas in the Negev and in the Wadi Ara area on the West Bank. Israel threatened to invade the area the Iraqi forces were about to evacuate if King Abdullah did not hand over a sizeable section of the West Bank. To avert a military clash, King Abdullah simply had to cave in. The King appealed to Britain and the United States to help him counter the Israeli pressure, but their intervention was non-existing.[195]

By signing the agreement, Israel recognized King Abdullah's rule over a large portion of the territory that had been allocated to the Palestinian state by the UN partition plan. From a geopolitical standpoint, Transjordan was the most successful Arab participant in the first

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[192] Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, p. 44.

[193] Jensehaugen 2008, *Friendship Reanimated, The Israeli-Transjordanian Armistice Negotiations 1948-1949*, p. 83. The agreement was signed in the name of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the first time that this name was used officialy, Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, p. 45. All post-armistice references must be made to Jordan.

[194] Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, pp. 44-46.

[195] Jensehaugen 2008, *Friendship Reanimated, The Israeli-Transjordanian Armistice Negotiations 1948-1949,* p. 96.

LEBANON

SYRIA

Demilitarized
zone

Haifa

Tiberias

Sea of
Galilee

Mediterranean

Sea

Nablus

WEST
BANK

River Jordan

Tel Aviv
Jaffa

Ramle

Ramallah

Amman

Jerusalem

JORDAN

GAZA
STRIP

Gaza

Hebron

*Dead
Sea*

Beersheba

El Arish

El Auja

Demilitarized
zone

Negev

EGYPT

Sinai

Road
International border
Armistice line
Area under Egyptian
administration
Area under Jordanian
administration
Demilitarized zone

0   25   50 kilometers

0   10   20   30 miles

Aqaba

Map 4 Israel following the Arab-Israeli armistices, 1949
Source: Rogan, Eugene L. and Avi Shlaim (eds): *The War for Palestine*, Cambridge University Press 2001, p.
xv.

Arab-Israeli war. After all, Transjordan managed to acquire about 22 percent of mandatory Palestine including East Jerusalem.[196]

Conciliatory or Intransigent?

Next in line to negotiate an armistice with Israel was Syria. The negotiations were the most protracted, lasting nearly four months, and the most difficult. The Syrian Government had not accepted Bunche's invitation until 20 March 1949. The indefinite postponement of the Israeli-Syrian negotiations during the first half of 1949 almost jeopardized the whole UN mediation effort. However, the internal political situation in Syria was very unstable. Also on the foreign policy side, Syria had major challenges. King Abdullah still threatened to realize his Greater Syria ambitions, and, at the same time, the Syrian government had to keep the Syrian public pacified. These combined factors might explain why the Syrian government waited nearly two months before they answered the UN invitation to start the armistice negotiations with Israel.

There has been a tendency among the "old historians" to focus on the Syrians and their intransigent attitude towards the armistice negotiations in the beginning of 1949. According to this interpretation, the reason for the Syrian hesitation to enter the negotiations was their favourable military position after the first Arab-Israeli war. In addition, this old version claimed that the Syrians complicated the armistices because of Syria's declared policy of abstaining from any step that implied acquiescence with the existence of the State of Israel. Even though the latter might be true, it does not give a satisfactory explanation of the Syrian reluctance to accept the UN invitation during the first three months of 1949. As all Arab leaders, the Syrian leadership represented by President Shukri al-Quwwatli and Prime Minister Khalid al-`Azm found itself in an intricate and complicated political situation during the first half of 1949. Their attempt to satisfy their own government, the Syrian public as well as the international community, proved to be an almost unattainable task.

Questioning the UN mandate

On 10 January, three days after Egypt had accepted the UN cease-fire and agreed to open armistice talks with Israel, the newly elected Syrian Prime Minister Khalid al-`Azm, expressed his concern regarding Israeli disrespect of the UN. In a meeting with the American

[196] Jensehaugen 2008, *Friendship Reanimated, The Israeli-Transjordanian Armistice Negotiations 1948-1949*, p. 112; Mordechai Gazit, "The Israel-Jordan Peace Negotiations (1949-1951): King Abdallah`s Lonely Effort", *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 23. No. 3. (Jul., 1988), pp. 409-424, p. 422.

Ambassador in Syria, James Hugh Keeley, `Azm pointed to an incident along the Lebanese-Syrian border where Israeli soldiers had refused UN observers access to the area. He also claimed that Israeli officials had provoked Syrian minorities to revolt against the Syrian government in exchange for independence. The Israelis threatened the integrity of the Arab states.[197] Furthermore, `Azm emphasized that Syria had waited for the UN to take effective action to curb Israeli expansion. Despite Syrian complaints to the UN, the Israelis had systematically violated the truces and put UN authority at stake. The Syrians had learned that they could not trust the UN `Azm told Keeley.[198]

During Operation Horev, initiated on 22 December 1948, the Israelis had ignored the calls of the UN for a cease-fire. This action contributed to strengthen the Syrian argument. Operation Horev had led to the passing of UN Security Council Resolution of 29 December 1948, demanding that Israel withdrew from Egypt and called for the initiation of armistice calls.[199] Still, the Israelis had disregarded the resolution and continued with the operation. Only after strong pressure from Great Britain, and more importantly, from the US, Israel caved in. The following message from the US State Department was conveyed to the Israeli Government on 30 December 1948:

> The Provisional Government of Israel may not only jeopardize peace of Middle East,
> but will also cause reconsideration of its application for membership in UN and of
> necessity a reconsideration by this [US] Government of its relations with Israel.
> […] Immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces from Egyptian territory appears to be
> minimum requirements.[200]

On 7 January 1949, the Israelis accepted the Security Council's call for a cease-fire.[201] The UN authority had proven to be powerless. Friendly relations with the Western powers, not least with the USA, were as a consequence, high on the Syrian political agenda.

Desire for Alignment

At a secret session in the Syrian Parliament 30 December 1948, in the last phase of the first Arab-Israeli war, Prime Minister `Azm stated that Syria felt an obligation to aid the Egyptians

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[197] Keeley to Acheson, 10 January 1949, RG 84, 350.Syria, Box 20.
[198] Keeley to Acheson, 10 January 1949, RG 84, 350.Syria, Box 20.
[199] UNSC Resolution 66 of 29 December 1948 (S/1169).
[200] Jensehaugen 2008, *Friendship Reanimated, The Israeli-Transjordanian Armistice Negotiations 1948-1949*, (FO 30. December 1948), p. 60.
[201] Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, p. 41; Waage 1989, *The Establishment of the State of Israel: A Controversy in Norwegian Policy 1945-1949*, pp. 171-172.

in the Negev preventing the IDF from successfully completing Operation Horev. The Syrian army was too weak for effective offensive action against the Israelis alone. Thus, Syria was forced to remain defensive considering the threat from both Israel and King Abdullah's Greater Syria plan. The Prime Minister also stated that Syria would fight if all the Arab states agreed to renew hostilities.[202] However, the internal and secret Syrian attempt to gather the Arabs to help the Egyptians in the Negev was pointless. The result manifested the Arab disunity and left the Egyptian army alone in the Negev. Hence, with the Arab League almost in dissolution and the Syrian lack of trust in the UN, the Syrian government decided to approach the United States. Prime Minister `Azm told Keeley that he was of the opinion that the Syrian Government should continue to explore its good communication with the Americans. He also hoped that the US would moderate its former pro-Israeli policy.[203]

The negotiation of an armistice with Israel was of minor importance to the Syrians in the beginning of 1949. However, for internal purposes, President Quwwatli was rhetorically flying high, often announcing Syria's intention to eliminate Zionism and rescue Palestine.[204] These statements from the Syrian President and other veteran Syrian leaders, gave Syria a reputation as being intransigent and hostile toward the West. However, President Quwwatli apparently used the Palestinian-Zionist issue as an outlet for domestic pressures and as an instrument for strengthening his own political situation. The greatest threat to the Syrians, and most importantly to Quwwatli, was still King Abdullah's undying ambition to realize his Greater Syria plan.

The Impediment of Abdullah – Thwarting Greater Syria

President Quwwatli`s fear of Greater Syria dominated Syrian politics throughout his entire presidency. However, before and during the first Arab-Israeli war, Adil Arslan, the Syrian Minister of Defence, believed, like many other Syrians, that Quwwatli`s anti-Hashemite attitude was short-sighted and was imbued with the purpose of pursuing his self-interest.[205] Was Shukri al-Quwwatli`s fear of Abdullah exaggerated? And, had the conditions for Greater Syria changed as a result of the first Arab-Israeli war?

King Abdullah's readiness to come to terms with Israel and his refusal to break the truce by sending the Arab Legion to help the Egyptian army, raised wrath among the other

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[202] Keeley to Acheson, 7 January 1949, RG 84, 350.Syria, Box 20.
[203] Keeley to Acheson, 10 January 1949, RG 84, 350.Syria, Box 20.
[204] Ma`oz 1995, *Syria and Israel, From War to Peace-making*, p. 17.
[205] Landis 2001, "Syria and the Palestine War" in Rogan and Shlaim, *The War for Palestine*, p. 186.

Arab states. However, the Arab states were unable to confront King Abdullah.[206] The Arab Legion was by far the strongest Arab army. The Arab League was split. Even though King Abdullah's longstanding scheme to make himself the ruler of Greater Syria was common knowledge among the belligerents in the first Arab-Israeli war, the Syrians had to prepare themselves against King Abdullah, since they could not expect any help from the Arab League. The Israeli attack on Egypt was a clear example of how each Arab country in reality stood alone.[207]

But President Shukri al-Quwwatli`s fear of King Abdullah was still a dominant theme in Syrian politics after the 1948 war. Rumours of a Syrian-led assassination plot against King Abdullah in the beginning of January 1949 worsened the already strained relationship between Quwwatli and King Abdullah and their respective countries.[208] Consequently, Quwwatli's presidency became less popular in Syria, since the rumours claimed that he was directly involved in the assassination plot. The public felt that Quwwatli's fear of King Abdullah exceeded the real Syrian threat, namely the new-born Israeli state.[209]

However, Quwwatli had good reasons to believe that King Abdullah would carry out his plan. On many occasions, The King had openly discussed the necessity for Greater Syria, and he talked in similar ways to journalists as well. He did not make an effort to keep it secret. It would appear likely that as soon as the Palestinian situation was settled and the annexation of Arab Palestine to Transjordan was a fact, the King would turn his attention towards the realization of his Greater Syria scheme.[210] There was no doubt about King Abdullah's Greater Syria dream, but according to the US Ambassador in Syria, James Hugh Keeley, and Robert Lovett, the Under-Secretary of State, there was no immediate indication of the implementation of the plan.[211]

Ignoring the UN

In response to Ralph Bunche's invitation of 30 January, Prime Minister `Azm told Keeley, that in order to conduct armistice negotiations, the Arab Governments needed assurances from Israel that they would carry out UN Security Resolutions, particularly those of 4 and 16 November 1948. By appealing to the United States and not to the UN, `Azm deliberately

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[206] Shlaim 1988, *Collusion Across the Jordan*, p. 369.
[207] Shlaim 1988, *Collusion Across the Jordan*, p. 424.
[208] Keeley to Acheson, 12 January 1949, RG 84, 350.Syria, Box 20.
[209] Keeley to Acheson, 12 January 1949, RG 84, 350.Syria, Box 20.
[210] Memorandum by Lovett, 17 January 1949, RG 84, 350.Syria, Box 20.
[211] Keeley to Acheson, 18 January 1949, RG 84, 350.Syria, Box 20; Lovett to Acheson, 19 January 1949, RG 84, 350.Syria, Box 20.

pointed to the failure of the UN to enforce its own resolutions.[212] By ignoring the UN's call to start armistice talks, Syria continued giving the impression of intransigence. However, in a conversation between Keeley and Quwwatli, on 14 February 1949, the Syrian President stated that the "present Government of Syria has come to the conclusion that it would be decidedly in the best interest of the Syrians to collaborate with Western democracies, more particularly the United States".[213] Publicly, the presidential statement marked a change in Syrian politics towards the West. The defeat of the Arabs in the first Arab-Israeli war, and the threat from King Abdullah made the Syrian Government realize their own weakness and inability to maintain their independence without outside assistance. Thus, the Syrian Government could not continue their UN denial any longer.

Approaching the UN

In a two-hour exchange of views between Quwwatli and Keeley on 3 March, Quwwatli said that the Syrians would cooperate with the Palestine Conciliation Commission (PCC) for a solution to the Palestine conflict. On 5 March 1949, PCC sent an invitation for a meeting with the Arab states in Beirut scheduled to be held on 21 March. Prime Minister `Azm accepted the invitation on the behalf of the Syrian Government. However, in the Syrian answer, `Azm mentioned that the Syrian public was violently against any settlement with Israel. No Syrian politician had the courage to tell the Syrian public that in order to settle the conflict, the Syrians had to cooperate with the Israelis. Indeed, believing firmly that no country could any longer afford isolationism, `Azm endeavoured to educate the Syrian public of the need to pursuit a policy of collaboration.[214]

On 6 March 1949, Quwwatli and Keeley discussed the latest invitation from Bunche to join the armistice talks. Quwwatli earnestly opposed the talks. He thus asked Keeley to explain to the American government that Syria had no intention to be stubborn, and that they preferred the prospects of peace. Syria was prepared to work with the PCC for a permanent peace settlement, but the armistice talks, according to Quwwatli, were both "needlessly delaying and dangerous".[215] Both `Azm and Quwwatli indicated that if their reply was unsatisfactory to Bunche and the UN Security Council, Syria would again consider the

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[212] Keeley to Acheson, 9 February 1949, RG 84, 350.Syria, Box 20.
[213] Keeley to Acheson, 14 February 1949, RG 84, 350.Syria, Box 20.
[214] Keeley to Acheson, 5 March 1949, RG 84, 350.Syria, Box 20.
[215] Keeley to Acheson, 8 March 1949, RG 84, 350.Syria, Box 20.

situation, but for the moment they sincerely felt that armistice talks would be an error.[216] No less importantly, President Quwwatli and Prime Minister `Azm feared that if Syria entered into direct talks with Israel, Syria's press would hurt the government and inflame the public. This would in turn endanger the whole prospect of peace. However, according to the Syrian government, if the Acting Mediator could guarantee that Israel would accept status quo on the border issues, as basis for the armistice talks, they would consider cooperation after all.[217] In essence, the Syrian government could not afford the risk of negotiating directly with Israel. They feared that the public would react violently. Therefore, the Syrian government avoided the armistice negotiations, since the framework of armistice negotiations demanded some kind of direct contact between Israel and Syria. Consequently, Quwwatli and `Azm preferred to negotiate through the PCC, since the Arab states were expected to conduct the peace talks with Israel jointly.

This Syrian firmness, however, was about to change. Obviously, the talk with the American Ambassador had had some influence on Damascus. Quwwatli and `Azm decided to go along with the UN, despite hostile reactions among the public. At the same time, the Israelis were pushing for Syrian border concessions in the ongoing Israeli-Lebanese armistice negotiations. On 20 March 1949, the Government of Syria accepted the UN invitation to start the armistice negotiations at Rhodes.[218]

President Quwwatli did not have the power to control the public. His unsuccessful war policy had made him unpopular among the Syrians. More importantly, Quwwatli could still not control the Syrian army. Consequently, the unpopularity of the civilian government led to a greater involvement of the Syrian army on the political scene. A military coup was approaching.

Intervening in Syrian Politics

The chief of staff of the Syrian army, Colonel Husni al-Zaim, overthrew the civilian government headed by President Shukri al-Quwwatli and Prime Minister Khalid al-`Azm in a bloodless coup 30 March 1949. Zaim's coup gave rise to extravagant hopes among Syrians, some Arab rulers and the great powers. In Syria Zaim was not only supported by the army. The opposition parties and the mass of the people supported him as well. All the Western

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[216] Keeley to Acheson, 8 March 1949, RG 84, 350.Syria, Box 20.
[217] Keeley to Acheson, 16 March 1949, RG 84, 350.Syria, Box 20.
[218] Keeley to Acheson, 20 March 1949, RG 84, 350.Syria, Box 20; Acheson to Keeley, 7 March 1949, RG 59, 501.BB Palestine, Box 2124.

powers, for different reasons, welcomed the new regime in Damascus. Zaim announced his desire for collaboration with America and the Western world.[219]

Apparently, Zaim represented a new wave in the Middle East, even though, by some, he was, regarded as an unreliable adventurer.[220] His critics saw him as a mercurial and mentally unstable individual, an opportunist who sought power for its own sake and for the material benefits it could bring him. Prior to 1949 there were a number of episodes in Zaim's career, which lend credence to this negative view of him. In 1941, a large sum of money was given to him by the Vichy administration to organise military operations against the Free French and British forces. Evidently, Zaim did not succeed. For this episode Zaim was convicted and served two years in prison in Syria. Later, he was exiled to Lebanon. Furthermore, when Zaim returned to Syria in 1946, he was appointed inspector general of the police by the new Syrian regime, and in 1948, he became the chief of the general staff of the army. Zaim was regarded as a man of courage and his war record was impressive, but after the war he became implicated once more in a corruption scandal. According to one theory he staged his coup not to save Syria from politicians, but to save his own skin.[221]

Once in power, however, Colonel Zaim seems to have been motivated by a genuine desire to develop and modernize the country. Most importantly, he opened the possibility of building a good relationship with Israel. Probably, the most important incentive for modifying Syria's hostile attitude toward Israel was Zaim's expectation of winning American goodwill and support.[222] A way towards cooperation with the US was therefore cooperation with the UN, resulting in Zaim's decision to follow the steps of his predecessors. On 30 March, Colonel Zaim stated that the army was ready to proceed with the armistice talks under the UN auspices.[223]

In retrospect, Quwwatli and `Azm had had an unattainable task. To cope with public opinion and members in their own parliament who were irreconcilable advocates of continuation of the war against Israel, led to military intervention in Syrian politics. The decision to ignore the UN call to start the armistice talks was both a combination of Syria's internal political situation and the lack of trust in the UN. Syria, among other Arab countries, had witnessed the lack of authority in the UN. Israel had on several occasions showed that the

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[219] Keeley to Acheson, 30 March 1949, RG 84, 350.Syria, Box 20.
[220] Shlaim 1986, *Husni Zaim and the Plan to Resettle Palestinian Refugees in Syria*, pp. 70-71; Keeley to Acheson, 31 March 1949, 350.Syria, Box 20,
[221] Shlaim 1986, *Husni Zaim and the Plan to Resettle Palestinian Refugees in Syria*, p. 69.
[222] Shlaim 1986, *Husni Zaim and the Plan to Resettle Palestinian Refugees in Syria*, pp. 71-72.
[223] Keeley to Acheson, 30 March 1949, RG 84, 350.Syria, Box 20.

UN was powerless, as they had repeatedly violated numerous UN truces. Indeed, the Syrians desperately needed help from an outside power. Thus, the Syrian leaders decided to explore their good relation with the USA. Consequently, their improving relationship with the US gave the Syrians a breathing space along the Israeli-Syrian border, giving Quwwatli time to prevent his worst fear, King Abdullah's Greater Syria plan. In the meantime, however, the cooperation with the United States led to a Syrian change of its policy towards the UN. The Syrian determination to cooperate with the PCC created the path toward acceptance of the UN invitation to start the armistice talks. On 5 April 1949, the armistice negotiations between Israel and Syria could begin, not on the Island of Rhodes, but on the Israeli-Syrian border.

4

Introduction to the Armistice Negotiations

Farouk is probably the man who represents Egypt,

but who the hell is Zaim?

- David Ben-Gurion, Jerusalem, 20 April 1949.[224]

On 5 April 1949, the US Secretary of State Dean Acheson, in a conversation with the Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett, expressed his hope that the negotiation of an armistice with Syria could rapidly be brought to a conclusion. Sharett replied that he was hopeful that an agreed solution with the Syrians could be reached as soon as possible. He did not see any insurmountable difficulty.[225] Still, the armistice negotiations between Israel and Syria stand out as an especially intriguing episode in the relationship between the belligerents. The opening positions of Israel and Syria were wide apart, and neither side was prepared to budge. The Israeli-Syrian negotiations were the most protracted of the armistice negotiations between Israel and its Arab neighbours, lasting from 5 April to 20 July.

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[224] Shlomo Ben-Ami, *Scars of War, Wounds of Peace*, *The Israeli-Arab Tragedy*, Oxford University Press 2006, p. 66. Shlomo Ben-Ami is refering to a conversation between Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion and the American Consul General in Jerusalem, William C. Burdett, Burdett to Acheson, 20 April 1949, 501.BB.Palestine, *FRUS* 1949, p. 927.
[225] Memorandum of Conversation by Acheson, 5 April 1949, 867N, *FRUS* Vol. IV, p. 890.

Off to "No Man`s Land"

The Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations began on 5 April 1949 near Kibbutz Mahanayim, in the area of Mishmar Hayarden, often referred to as "No Man`s Land". Thirteen plenary sessions were held, and a mixed military sub-commission met three times as the talks were winding down. In addition, a mixed formulations committee met three times.[226] Walter Eytan, the Director General of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, described the chosen location for the Israeli-Syrian negotiations as follows: "The meetings between the two delegations were held under stifling conditions, in the heat of the summer, in a tent pitched athwart the Tiberias-Damascus highway".[227]

The armistice talks were conducted under the chairmanship of Henri Vigier and General William E. Riley, the Chief of Staff of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO). Vigier had assisted Bunche during the previous armistice negotiations. Bunche, however, was physically and mentally exhausted after three months of uninterrupted negotiations. Bunche had personally led the negotiations between Israel and Egypt, and had partly participated and contributed to the conclusion of the armistice agreement between Israel and Jordan. Even though he was not present, he had also directed the Israeli-Lebanese negotiations through his deputy Vigier. Indeed, Bunche had had enough and decided not to take any direct part in the Israeli-Syrian negotiations.[228] On 21 March 1949, the UN mediator wrote to his wife:

> You can`t imagine what it takes to hold these monkeys together long enough to
> squeeze agreement out of them. And such trickery, deceit and downright dishonesty
> you have never seen. I swear by all that`s Holy, I will never come anywhere near the
> Palestine problem once I liberate myself from this trap.[229]

Although Vigier was given direct responsibility, Bunche followed the talks closely, even intervening and exercising his influence when it was deemed necessary.[230]

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[226] Shalev 1993, *The Israel-Syria Armistice Regime*, p. 15. The Israeli Delegation was represented by Lt. Colonel M. Makleff, Head of the Delegation, Y. Pelman, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Shabtai Rosenne, Legal Adviser, Major Schnurman and Major Gilad. The Syrian Delegation was represented by Lt. Colonel Selo Fawzi, Head of Delegation, Commandant Mohamad Nasser, Captain Bizri Afif and Salah Tarazi, Legal Adviser, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, pp. 514-515.
[227] Walter Eytan, *The First Ten Years, A Diplomatic History of Israel*, London 1958, p. 42.
[228] Urquhart 1993, *Ralph Bunche, An American Life*, pp. 218-219.
[229] Urquhart 1993, *Ralph Bunche, An American Life*, p. 217.
[230] Shalev 1993, *The Israel-Syria Armistice Regime*, p. 17.

In the course of the first meeting on 5 April, both delegations elected Vigier to preside over the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations. They then proceeded to a discussion of their respective credentials.[231] The Israeli delegations`s letter of credentials was signed by Walter Eytan, the Director General of the Foreign Ministry, and it authorized the delegation "to represent the Government of Israel at the armistice conference with Syria." In contrast, the Syrians stated that their delegation had been appointed by "the Commander in chief of the Syrian Armed Forces", Husni Zaim.[232] This discussion reflected the different approaches to the negotiations. The Syrians explicitly stated that the negotiations would be limited to questions of a military character, whereas the Israelis sought an agreement that would also be of political significance. They had good reasons for their different views concerning the armistice negotiations.

During the first Arab-Israeli war, Syrian forces had established a number of bridgeheads inside the borders of mandatory Palestine, north and south of the Sea of Galilee. Apparently, all IDF attempts to push the Syrians back across the old international border, established in 1923 by the British and the French ended in failure. Israel was thus in a weak military position at the start of the talks. Therefore, the Israelis tried to base the armistice negotiations on the international border, while the Syrians, on the other hand, wanted the existing truce line to become the demarcation line in the armistice agreement. This difference of approach was the exact opposite of what had been the case in the Israeli-Egyptian and the Israeli-Transjordanian negotiations. There, Israel demanded that the armistice negotiations should be based on the existing truce lines, whilst the Egyptians and Transjordanians demanded to use either the UN partition plan or the Bernadotte plan as basis for further discussion.

However, a compromise was worked out during the first meeting on 5 April. The Israeli delegation agreed that the negotiations would begin on the mutual understanding that before an agreement was signed, the Syrian delegation would affirm that it had full authority to sign in the name of its government.[233] The Syrian delegation, though, maintained through the entire armistice process, that the talks should be limited to military matters only. This was because they considered the existing truce lines as matters that needed to be discussed between the two armies, and not between the governments. The Israelis, on the other hand,

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[231] Bar-Yaacov 1967, *The Israel-Syrian Armistice*, p. 37.
[232] Summary Record of the first meeting of the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations 5 April 1949, *Documents of the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, pp. 515-516.
[233] Shalev 1993, *The Israel-Syria Armistice Regime*, pp. 18-19.

needed an international acceptance to use the old mandatory border between Palestine and Syria as basis for further discussions in the armistice negotiations with the Syrians.

Troubled Start: Israeli Truce Violations

On the first day of the armistice negotiation between Israel and Syria, the Israelis had taken up a new military position across the existing truce line. Israeli troops had entered several hundred meters inside the Syrian territory north of Lake Hula.[234] In the afternoon of 5 April, Vigier and Riley flew to Beirut to consult Bunche on the disturbing news. Bunche regarded the Israeli incursion as a violation of the Security Council`s truce order, and immediately telegraphed the Israeli Government to express his concern. Meanwhile, Vigier called Zaim, who agreed to postpone the Syrian counterattack until the morning of 6 April.[235] Later, the Syrians received a message from the Israeli Government who denied that it had any knowledge of the Israeli troop movements. Instead, they accused Syria of incursion into Israeli-held territory, pointing to the Syrian forces inside the borders of mandatory Palestine. However, when the invading Israeli troops, in absence of orders from the Israeli high command, did not follow Bunche`s request to withdraw, Bunche again asked Syria to delay their counteraction in order to arrange an Israeli withdrawal which he felt confident would be carried through.[236] He then sent the following message to Walter Eytan:

> I cannot accept [the] suggestion [that] [the] truce violation [on] [the] one side [is] pairable with [the] violation [on] [the] other side. If truce violations skeletons [were] dragged out of [the] closets, there will be much rattling in Tel Aviv as well as other places. This matter [is] [an] issue between Israel and [the] United Nations, [and] not between Israel and Syria. [When] Israeli forces [on] 5 April crossed [the] Syrian frontier, [it] [was] [a] violation [of] [the] truce, and I demand [the] forces to withdraw. I must know whether your note [is] interpretable as [a] refusal by [the] Israel[…] Government [to] withdraw [her] forces from [the] position not held before 6 April. […] If [the] Israeli forces refuse [to] withdraw, I must appeal urgently [to] [the] Security Council and report [that] [the] armistice negotiations [are] seriously jeopardized, with Israel assuming full responsibility if [the] negotiations collapse.[237]

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[234] Keeley to Acheson, 6 April 1949, RG 84, 35O.Syria, Box 20.
[235] Pinkerton to Acheson, 5 April 1949, RG 84, 350.Syria, Box 20.
[236] Keeley to Acheson, 6 April 1949, RG 84, 350.Syria, Box 20.
[237] Eytan to Eban, 7 April 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 523.

On 7 April 1949, Walter Eytan and the Israeli Foreign Ministry informed the UN "that orders had been issued for an immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces from Syrian territory".[238] However, Israel seized the opportunity to submit a complaint of its own, claiming that Syria had violated the truce by seizing the so-called Hill 223 (east of Kibbutz Mahanayim). They "insisted upon the Syrian Government to demonstrate good faith by withdrawing immediately unconditionally from that hill".[239] Since Hill 223 was captured during the war, it was not seen as a violation of the truce. Still, the Israelis demanded that the Syrians should withdraw. On 8 April, Israel`s Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, told the American Ambassador in Jerusalem, James G. McDonald, that he had not heard of the alleged Israeli truce violation on the Syrian border until morning on 7 April. Furthermore, Ben-Gurion said that the troops had already been ordered back. The withdrawal was however confirmed the same day.[240]

The second meeting in the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations was held on 13 April, after the Syrians had pledged in an informal meeting the previous day, to evacuate Hill 223 within ten days.[241] Indeed, on 27 April the Syrians complied and evacuated the hill. Israeli forces, however, took it immediately after the Syrians had left, since they regarded Hill 223 as part of their own territory.[242]

In the course of the second meeting both delegations gave Vigier identical declarations stating that their respective Governments accepted and confirmed the Security Council resolution of 15 July 1948, which forbade recourse to military action of any kind. These declarations had developed out of a Syrian proposal for a formal cease-fire agreement in connection with the Israeli truce violation on 5 April 1949.[243] The resolution granted the United Nations observers the task of ensuring complete and effective supervision of the cease-fire. The way was thus clear for discussions on the terms of the armistice.[244] Moreover, as the armistice negotiations between Israel and Syria began after the other armistices between Israel and the Arab states had been concluded, formulations already agreed upon could be invoked. Thus, the negotiators could concentrate on problems particular to Israel and Syria. Setting the agenda was not an obstacle.[245]

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[238] Eytan to Eban, 7 April 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 523.
[239] Eytan to Eban, 7 April 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, pp. 523-524.
[240] McDonald to Acheson, 8 April 1949, *FRUS* Vol. IV 1949, 501.BB.Palestine, p. 899.
[241] Shalev 1993, *The Israel-Syria Armistice Regime*, p. 18.
[242] Eban to Sharett, 28 April 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 539; Shalev 1993, *The Israel-Syria Armistice Regime*, p. 18.
[243] Message Released by the United Nations Security Council on 16 April 1949 (S/1308) *FRUS* Vol. IV 1949, p. 918.
[244] Bar-Yaacov 1967, *The Israel-Syrian Armistice*, p. 38.
[245] Shalev 1993, *The Israel-Syria Armistice Regime*, p. 18.

Creation of a Deadlock: Border Disputes

On 20 April 1949, Ralph Bunche told Warren Austin, the United States representative in the Security Council, that when the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations reopened after the religious holidays on 21 April, he thought they would make good progress.[246] Bunche was wrong. The first phase of the armistice negotiations between Israel and Syria ended in a complete deadlock, almost jeopardizing the whole prosperity of the UN mediation effort. The major stumbling bloc was Israel's insistence that Syria should withdraw to the international border, as part of the armistice agreement. Syria refused to accede to this demand, claiming that the Israelis had no legal right to this area, insisting that the existing truce line should be the sole basis for the armistice negotiations.

In retrospect, during the Israeli-Lebanese armistice negotiations, the Israelis tried to link their withdrawal from Lebanon with the withdrawal of Syrian forces to the east of the old international border between mandatory Palestine and Syria. However, the Israeli argument won no support in the UN. Still, in the talks with the Syrians, Israel continued to promote their linkage argument.[247] They argued that if Israel had withdrawn to their side of the international border in the Israeli-Lebanese armistice agreement, the Syrians should follow the same principle, and withdraw to their side of the international border. The Israelis thereby demanded that the Syrians accepted the same principle in order to conclude the Israeli-Syrian armistice agreement.[248]

Truce Lines or International Borders

Discussions about the final demarcation line began in the third meeting on 21 April 1949. Sharp differences on this question kept it on the agenda during the entire negotiating process. The interests of the two sides collided completely. The Syrians wanted the negotiations to be within the military sphere and without political implications. During the third meeting, the Syrian delegation thus submitted a proposal for the delineation of the armistice lines. Colonel Selo Fawzi, Head of the Syrian delegation, stated that the proposal was based on the consecration of the decision of the Security Council on 15 July 1948. This resolution stated that the truce line should remain in force until a peaceful agreement on the Palestine conflict

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[246] Austin to Acheson, 20 April 1949, RG 59, 501.BB Palestine, Box 2124.
[247] Shalev 1993, *Israel-Syria Armsitice Regime*, p. 21.
[248] McDonald to Acheson, 29 April 1949, RG 84, 350.Syria, Box 20.

was reached.[249] By implementing the resolution of 15 July 1948, the Syrians could preserve their military positions.

The Israelis objected strongly to the Syrian proposal. Shabtai Rosenne, the Legal adviser to the Israeli delegation, pointed out that the sole basis for the armistice negotiations was the resolution of 16 November 1948, and not that of 15 July 1948. Rosenne continued saying that if the resolution of 15 July 1948 was to be taken into account then other resolutions should be equally relevant. For instance, if the UN Partition resolution of 1947 should become relevant, the occupied Syrian area would belong to Israel.[250] In other words, Rosenne claimed that according to the UN Partition Plan of 1947, the Syrian troops were on Israel's territory. The proposed UN partition line between Israel and Syria was, after all, based on the old international border. On this point, Israel could have had a strong bargaining position if the only involved parties in the war were the Israelis and the Syrians.

As long as the Israelis most often did not wish to adapt the proposed UN partition lines elsewhere in the armistices with the other Arab states, they could not continue to press for the use of this particular resolution in the armistice negotiations with Syria. Therefore, the Israelis, in reality, abandoned the idea of pressing for the implementation of the UN Partition Plan. Instead, they tried to use the old international border as basis for further discussions with the Syrians. In the armistice negotiations with Egypt and Transjordan, the Israelis had a far better bargaining position. The outcome of the war with Egypt and Transjordan was in Israel's favour. Thus, in these negotiations, the Israelis strongly emphasized that the existing truce lines should become the final armistice lines. No less importantly, the Israelis received even more land during the previous armistice negotiations. As an example, during the armistice negotiations with Egypt, the Israelis originally pressed to base the talks on the existing truce line. However, when they claimed that the southern part of the Negev belonged to Israel, they referred to the UN partition plan. Evidently, changing argument to their advantage became an important tactical manoeuvre for the Israelis.

The truce lines at the end of the fighting diverged considerably from the UN partition lines. Considering that Rosenne even mentioned the UN Partition Plan in the armistice negotiations with Syria was questionable, since many parts of the areas, which had been assigned to the Arab state in the partition plan, now were under Israeli control. Indeed, in the

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[249] Summary Record of the third meeting of the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations 21 April 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 529.

[250] Summary Record of the third meeting of the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations 21 April 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, pp. 531-532.

negotiations with the Syrians the Israelis tried to abandon the idea of using the existing truce line as basis for further discussion, simply, because it did not fit them at that point.

Rosenne mentioned that the resolution of the Security Council of 16 November 1948 spoke of withdrawal, which according to their understanding meant going back to the old international border.[251] Since the resolution of 16 November spoke of withdrawal, it did not mention any withdrawal to the old international border established by the British and French in 1923. The resolution did not mention the word "international border" at all. The resolution of 16 November 1948 regarded the implementation of the resolution passed by the Security Council of 4 November 1948 as an important step towards peace in Palestine. According to the resolution of 4 November 1948, the Security Council:

> Decided on 15 July 1948 that, subject to further decision by the Security Council or
> the General Assembly, the truce shall remain in force in accordance with the
> resolution of that date and with that of 29 May 1948, until a peaceful adjustment
> of the future situation of Palestine is reached".[252]

The Syrian proposal to implement the resolution of 15 July 1948 as a premise for further discussions made the Israelis realize their need to hold on to the old international border. Israel was as acutely aware, as Syria, of the strategic importance of the water resources in this area, and thus Syria`s attempt to acquire new territories only stiffened Israel`s resolve to hold on to the old border.[253] In unofficial discussions, the Israeli delegation explained to the United Nations representatives that the problem of the delineation of the armistice demarcation line was not only a political or a military problem, but also a problem of the use of the waters in the area concerned.[254]

According to Rosenne, the international border was the only permanent line that had ever existed between Syria and Palestine so long as those two countries had existed. Furthermore, when the UN General Assembly passed its partition resolution on 29 November 1947, it based its proposal on the old international border between Syria and Palestine. Hence, the only demarcation line, which was to be inserted into an armistice agreement between

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[251] Summary Record of the third meeting of the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations 21 April 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, pp. 531-532. See also Bar-Yaacov 1967, *The Israel-Syrian Armistice*, pp. 39-40.
[252] UNSC Resolution 62 of 16 November 1948 (S/1080). See Appendix III; UNSC Resolution 61 of 4 November 1948 (S/1070). See Appendix II.
[253] Rabinovic 1991, *The Road Not Taken*, p. 68.
[254] The discussion concerning the water resources was, however, not mentioned until the end of the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations; Bar-Yaacov 1967, *The Israel-Syrian Armistice*, p. 41.

Israel and Syria, was therefore the old international border. In the end, Rosenne stated that the Israeli delegation had been given firm instructions from the Government of Israel not to deviate from that point at all.[255]

The Syrian answer to Rosenne`s argument concerning the international border was that it was understood that the armistice negotiations were strictly limited to military questions. Salah Tarazi, Syria`s legal adviser, stated that in military conversations, there was no room for questions of international law or international borders. The demarcation line was based on military considerations and could not depend upon political consideration. The Syrian delegates were surprised that the Israelis considered the partition resolution as a starting point in the armistice negotiations, because if the Israeli delegation considered itself bound by the partition plan, they did not see why the Israeli forces were stationed in several parts of Palestine, for instance in Western Galilee.[256]

In the armistice negotiations with the other Arab states, Israel had claimed that the partition plan was no longer relevant, because the situation had been changed. If the partition plan would be implemented in the armistice talks, Israel would have to make major territorial concessions. Though, in the talks with the Syrians, it was however obvious that they had a lot more to gain by implementing the partition plan. Nevertheless, the Israeli standpoint was clear, as told from Rosenne`s comment:

> If the Syrian delegation objects to the use of the phrase "international frontier",
> the difficulty can be overcome. I want to make it quite clear, and I am speaking
> with the full authority of the Government of Israel, that this delegation will not
> sign an armistice agreement which leaves Syrian troops on the Palestine side of
> the border which formally existed between Palestine and Syria.[257]

If the parties could not agree on the demarcation line, US Ambassador in Damascus, James H. Keeley, was of the opinion that both parties should simultaneously withdraw from areas that were not contemplated to them by the partition plan. The evacuated areas should then be left under the supervision of the UN pending a determination of the sovereignty by an ultimate peace conference.[258] If this approach were to go through the Israelis would have to withdraw

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[255] Summary Record of the third meeting of the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations 21 April 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 532.

[256] Summary Record of the third meeting of the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations 21 April 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, pp. 532-533.

[257] Summary Record of the third meeting of the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations 21 April 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 534.

[258] Memorandum by Keeley, 1 May 1949, RG 84, 321.9.Israel.Syria, Box 1.

from many parts all around Palestine. However, it was never seen as an alternative option during the armistice negotiations between Israel and the Arab states.

In the end of the third meeting of the Israeli-Syrian armistice talks, Vigier encouraged the delegates not to adopt rigid positions. Furthermore, he stated the necessity to bear in mind that the armistice agreement needed to be negotiated. In future discussions, therefore, it was important to avoid referring to political questions, which would be discussed under the auspices of the Palestine Conciliation Commission (PCC) at the Lausanne conference.[259]

At the opening of the fourth meeting, held on 26 April 1949, Vigier made it clear to the delegations that if the question of the demarcation lines were studied alone, no results would be obtained. Vigier also suggested that the military members of the delegations should meet informally in order to figure out whether an agreement was possible. Furthermore, the question on "the establishment, wherever necessary, of a no-man`s-land or zones where forces would be reduced", was another subject the delegations needed to agree upon. Hence, a meeting of the military members of the two delegations was conducted the next day on 27 April.[260] The parties, however, were not prepared to change their basic views on the delineation of the demarcation line. Indeed, even private talks held between Vigier and each of the delegation did not bring the opposing views any nearer to an agreement.[261]

After the meeting, the Syrians told Vigier that the Israelis had used a threatening language during the military talks.[262] On the same day in the Knesset`s Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee, Israel`s Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion and the IDF discussed military actions against Syria.[263] The Syrians had good reasons to feel threatened. On 22 April 1949, Ben-Gurion wrote in his diary: "Israel refuses to meet with Syria and to accept its participation in Lausanne, if an armistice agreement is not signed. Therefore preparations for expelling the Syrians from the state`s territory is within reach".[264] When the talks broke down, the Israelis informed Vigier that they would not meet the Syrians at Lausanne if no armistice agreement was reached within the next few days. However, Vigier refused to give in to the Israeli request.[265]

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[259] Summary Record of the third meeting of the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations 21 April 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 535.
[260] Summary Record of the third meeting of the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations 21 April 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, pp. 534-535.
[261] Bar-Yaacov 1967, *The Israel-Syrian Armistice*, p. 40.
[262] Austin to Acheson, 29 April 1949, RG 59, 501.BB Palestine, Box 2124.
[263] Shalev 1993, *The Israel-Syria Armistice Regime*, p. 25.
[264] Rabinovich 1991, *The Road Not Taken*, p. 69.
[265] Austin to Acheson, 29 April 1949, RG 59, 501.BB Palestine, Box 2124.

Lausanne at Stake

The task of converting the armistice agreements into peace treaties was entrusted by the United Nations to the Palestine Conciliation Commission (PCC). The Commission had therefore invited Israel and its Arab neighbours to a peace conference at Lausanne in Switzerland.[266] The conference opened on 27 April 1949. The Israeli-Syrian border dispute almost jeopardized the whole UN mediation effort. As Ralph Bunche saw it:

> My personal opinion is [that] [the] armistice agreement between Syria and Israel should
> if possible be concluded prior [to] Lausanne. Israel[s] argument [is] without validity
> [because] [of] [the] understanding [that] [the] Syrian line in Israel [was] established
> before truce, whereas Israel`s line in Lebanon [was] established after [the] truce.
> Furthermore, [the] past armistice agreement[s] were concluded without [the] prejudice
> [of] political settlement.[267]

On 27 April 1949, the Foreign Minister of Israel, Moshe Sharett, told Bunche and the American representative of the Palestine Conciliation Commission (PCC), Mark Ethridge, that the negotiations with Syria could make no progress unless the Syrian Government accepted the principal of withdrawal to the old international border. Furthermore, Sharett stated that the Government of Israel was disturbed by press reports concerning the Syrian Government`s declared intention of immediately mobilising 20.000 additional men to serve in the Syrian armed forces. Syria, however, had justified the mobilisation due to the tense situation that existed on the border between Syria and Jordan.[268] Furthermore, Sharett stated that the Israeli Government saw this as a cover for a new aggressive action contemplated against Israel.[269] Under these circumstances, the Israelis saw little profit in discussing any final settlement with the Syrian delegation at the PCC Conference at Lausanne. The Israeli delegation at Lausanne was therefore instructed not to enter into formal or informal conversations with the Syrian representatives.[270] Hence, when the fifth plenary session in the Israeli-Syrian armistice talks was held 29 April 1949, all the participants agreed that the best course was to adjourn and instead proceed informally with their efforts to reach an

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[266] Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, p. 57.

[267] Acheson to Ethridge, 28 April 1949, *FRUS* 1949 Vol. IV, 501.BB Palestine, p. 957.

[268] King Abdullah had still not given up his dream about Greater Syria. In late April 1949, Abdullah repeatedly mentioned his Greater Syria scheme in public. Thus, Syria, felt the need to prepare themselves in case Abdullah`s plan became a reality, Shlaim 1988, *Collusion Across the Jordan*, pp. 441-442.

[269] Eytan to Mohn, 27 April 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, pp. 536-537.

[270] Acheson to Ethridge, 28 April 1949, RG 84, 350.Syria, Box 20.

agreement.[271] By the end of April, the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations had reached a virtual deadlock.

There were many unofficial meetings between Israel and Syria during the armistice negotiations. Common for these meetings, however, is that there are no records of them. Apparently, on Vigier`s suggestion, secret unofficial meetings were held on 15, 16 and 18 April, but without any progress. The Acting Mediator concluded that the sides were not ready for negotiations on crucial issues and that they were still unable to arrive at a compromise without the initiative of a third party, in this case, the UN.[272]

"Can the Hill Not Wait Empty?"

Ralph Bunche and the UN grew worried about the development in the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations. On 28 April 1949, Bunche completed a compromise arrangement, and in a telegram to Vigier, directed that it should be presented to both sides in the meeting on 29 April. The proposed arrangement was not presented officially to the delegations until the sixth meeting, on 10 May 1949. Apparently, Vigier thought that the delegation would be more flexible then.[273] Bunche`s proposal to the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations was that the armistice line should be based on the general principle of the existing truce line with mutually agreeable modifications. First, neither side should maintain forces along the armistice line. Second, on each side of the armistice line there should be a demilitarized zone. Third, the demilitarized zone on the Syrian side should be extended to the international border, and thus the main body of Syrian forces should withdraw to that border. Fourth, the Israeli forces should advance nowhere. Fifth, Mishmar Hayarden would be a part of the demilitarized zone. Furthermore, Israeli civilians with a minor police force only, and no military force, would be entitled to return to the settlement there. Sixth, the agreement should prevent further settlement in the area. Seventh, the Israelis should grant fishing and navigation rights in the Sea of Galilee to the Syrians on a temporary basis during the armistice negotiations.[274]

In a conversation between Israel`s UN representative, Abba Eban, and Ralph Bunche at the UN Headquarters in New York on 28 April, the Acting Mediator told Eban that he had instructed Vigier to present the compromise arrangement to the delegations. Bunche also told

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[271] Bar-Yaacov 1967, *The Israel-Syrian Armistice*, p. 40.
[272] Shalev 1993, *The Israel-Syria Armistice Regime*, pp. 25-26.
[273] Shalev 1993, *The Israel-Syria Armistice Regime*, p. 26.
[274] Austin to Acheson, 29 April 1949, RG 59, 501.BB Palestine, Box 2124.

Eban that he disliked the Israeli reoccupation of Hill 223 immediately after the Syrians had evacuated it, and made the following comment: "Can the Hill not wait empty?"[275]

The Israelis, for their part, were worried about the proposed demilitarization of Mishmar Hayarden. Mishmar Hayarden was, according to the Moshe Sharett "not merely a military position, but also a spot drenched with Jewish sweat, consecrated by malaria victims generations".[276] Evidently, during this period the Israelis used every power they had to influence the leaders in the UN and the State Department. Sharett directed Eban in New York to urge the UN Secretary General, Trygve Lie, to "put the strongest possible pressure on the Syrian Government" to withdraw to their side of the old international border. Moreover, Eliahu Elath, Israel`s Ambassador in Washington D.C. was directed by the Israeli Foreign Minister, to urge the US State Department to put pressure on the Syrians to resolve the deadlock.[277] Ambassador Keeley, however, had a different opinion and decided not to pressure the Syrians. On the contrary, he was outraged by the Israeli demand. In a letter to Ethridge (PCC) on 29 April 1949, Keeley wrote:

> How can the Israelis in conscience insist upon the Syrians`withdrawal from Mishmar Hayarden,
> because it is an area within the Partition boundaries without themselves withdrawing from
> Western Galilee, which is outside the Partition boundaries and occupied by them in violation
> of the truce? To ask him [Zaim] to evacuate Mishmar Hayarden while letting the Israelis remain
> in Western Galilee just doesn`t make any sense.[278]

Zaim`s Controversial Proposal

By the end of April, the Syrians had withdrawn from Hill 223 and from the sector north of Lake Hula. The Israelis immediately reoccupied Hill 223 on 29 April, while the northern sector was demilitarized.[279] Nevertheless, Colonel Husni Zaim was ready to take another step to reach an agreement with Israel. But, in order to compromise, Zaim needed a sign of good faith from the Israelis as well. In a confidential conversation with Keeley on 28 April, Zaim said:

> I am a man of action; I've got more important work to do than to talk; I want to finish with
> this bickering; although we had possessed it eleven months and took it before the truce, I ordered
> my troops out of Hill 223 when General Riley asked it as a gesture of compromise, but I've seen

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[275] Eban to Sharett, 28 April 1949, *Documents of the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 539.
[276] Sharett to Eban, 27 April 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, pp. 538-539.
[277] Kohn to Sharett, 28 April 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, pp. 542-543.
[278] Keeley to Ethridge, 29 April 1949, RG 84, 350.Syria, Box 20.
[279] Sharett to Eban, 27 April 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, pp. 538-539.

no similar gesture on the Israeli side; I would like to settle the whole Palestine problem in one package, -- boundaries, refugees, everything.[280]

In this same meeting between Husni Zaim and Keeley, Zaim had confidentially expressed his willingness personally to meet Israel`s Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion on the border "to hasten realistic settlement, which might comprise all outstanding matters including Western Galilee and refugees".[281] As part of a general settlement, including realistic border adjustments, Zaim stated his "willingness to accept a quarter of a million Palestinian refugees, if given substantial development aid in addition to compensation for refugee losses".[282] Keeley was afraid that if the US continued their support of Israel, despite their intransigence on the Israeli-Syrian border conflict, it would weaken the influence that the US still had with the Syrians. If the US supported the Israeli demands with respect to Mishmar Hayarden, they should also demand Israeli withdrawal from Western Galilee. According to Keeley, to break the deadlock in the end of April, the Israelis had to make some concessions to the Syrians. Consequently, the US needed to put some pressure on Israel.[283]

In the beginning of May the Israelis continued to demand complete Syrian withdrawal, still reminding them of the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon.[284] Israel's Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, however, was unwilling to meet Husni Zaim. He was actively examining Israel`s military options against Syria. This negative response was characteristic of Ben-Gurion`s general preference for force over diplomacy as a means of resolving disputes between Israel and the Arabs.[285] In the end though, the idea of a strike was dropped "owing to military and political considerations," and the focus was again reverted to the armistice negotiations.[286]

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[280] Keeley to Acheson, 28 April 1949, RG 84, 350.Syria, Box 20.
[281] Keeley to Acheson, 28 April 1949, RG 84, 350.Syria, Box 20; Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*, Myths and Realities, Croom Helm, London and Sydney 1987, p. 211.
[282] Keeley to Acheson, 28 April 1949, RG 84, 350.Syria, Box 20.
[283] Keeley to Ethridge, 29 April 1949, RG 84, 350.Syria, Box 20.
[284] Elath to Sharett, 3 May 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 546.
[285] Shlaim 1986, *Husni Zaim and the Plan to Resettle Palestinian Refugees in Syria*, p. 73.
[286] Shalev 1993, *The Israel-Syria Armistice Regime*, p. 26.

5

Negotiation Stalemate

It will be advisable for [the] Syrians to make

the best of a bad situation.[287]

      - Acting Mediator Ralph Bunche to his deputy Henri Vigier.

On 2 May 1949, Syrian Prime Minister Husni Zaim, in a conversation with the American Ambassador James H. Keeley, reminded him that he, several days previously, had expressed his desire to find a quick solution to the Palestine problem. Zaim stated his willingness to accept, as part of a comprehensive settlement of the Palestine conflict, 250.000 or more Palestinian refugees for resettlement in Syria. This offer was dependent on the provision that the Palestinians would be compensated for their losses, and that Syria was given adequate financial aid in order to resettle them. Furthermore, Zaim wanted to proceed directly to peace negotiations at Lausanne instead of finishing the armistice negotiations. Syria, Transjordan and Egypt were Arab states directly involved in the Palestine conflict. Therefore, he pointed out, he should meet with King Abdullah of Jordan and King Farouk of Egypt, in an effort to reach a common basis for a realistic approach towards Israel.[288] Israel, on the other hand, had taken a clear decision not to deviate from their demand concerning Syrian withdrawal to the old international border. The stalemate was thus unavoidable.

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[287] Urquhart 1993, *Ralph Bunche, An American Life*, p. 228.
[288] Keeley to Acheson, 2 May 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2124; See also Avi Shlaim 1986, *Husni Zaim and the Plan to Resettle Palestinian Refugees in Syria*.

Waiting for an Israeli Concession

In the conversation with Keeley on 2 May, Zaim stressed that the Syrian concessions offered to the Israelis were earnest proof of his sincerity. Hence, he emphasized that if the Israelis were not ready to join the spirit of making compromises, the stalemate would continue, since the Arab states could not be expected to make all the concessions.[289] "If Israel`s professions of desire for peace were genuine she should have been willing to make some concessions during the armistice negotiations with Syria, as Syria had already done", the American Ambassador commented dryly.[290]

For the other involved parties in the armistice negotiations, Zaim`s offer was simply too good to be true. The offer made a strong impression on the Israelis as well. In the beginning of May, both the Secretary of State Dean Acheson and UN Mediator Ralph Bunche thought that Zaim`s offer to Israel could not have been brought to Prime Minister Ben-Gurion`s attention, since no Israeli reaction to Zaim`s offer was forthcoming.[291] Ben-Gurion, however, had received the offer, but chose to remain silent. Already in early April 1949, Ben-Gurion had known about the Syrian suggestion.[292] In his diary he wrote that in informal meetings between Syrian and Israeli representatives at the Lausanne Conference, "the Syrians proposed a separate peace with Israel, cooperation and a joint army, but they wanted the border changed; [they wanted] half of Lake Tiberias [Sea of Galilee)]."[293] Ben-Gurion agreed to meet Zaim, but only if Syria prior to the meeting committed herself to withdraw all of her forces from what Ben-Gurion claimed was Israeli territory, and to return to the old international border. If Zaim did not agree to this condition, the whole point of a proposed high-level meeting would be worthless.[294]

Laying down his maximum demands and insisting that the other side accepted the terms in full as a precondition for negotiations, was the essence of Ben-Gurion`s bargaining style.[295] An important reason for Israel`s unwillingness to consider Zaim`s peace offer, was that if the Israelis made peace with the Syrians, they had to pay a price. The prevailing conception among many Israeli leaders was that peace with the Arab states was not an immediate goal. If they made peace, they would have to make concessions in order to make the agreement work.

[289] Keeley to Acheson, 2 May 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2124.
[290] Keeley to Acheson, 1 May 1949, RG 84, 350.Syria, Box 20.
[291] Acheson to McDonald, 9 May 1949, RG 84, 350.Syria, Box 20; Austin to Acheson, 8 May 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2124.
[292] McDonald to Acheson, 12 May 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2124.
[293] Shalev 1993, *The Israel-Syria Armistice Regime*, p. 28.
[294] McDonald to Acheson, 9 May 1949, RG 84, 350.Syria, Box 20.
[295] Shlaim 1986, *Husni Zaim and the Plan to Resettle Palestinian Refugees in Syria*, p. 74.

Whether this meant absorption of Palestinian refugees or border concessions.[296] There where, however, different opinions regarding Zaim`s offer among Israeli state officials. The more moderate Israeli Foreign Minister, Moshe Sharett, did not share the views of his Prime Minister:

> We have been informed by General Riley, whom there is no reason not to trust, that Zaim is ready to talk about absorbing 300,000 refugees in Syria[….] For us that is something tremendous, it means he is willing to absorb three times the number of refugees presently in Syria and Lebanon [….] I think it is worth meeting with Zaim, particularly to clarify the matter of absorbing the refugees.[297]

Zaim`s proposal could reduce Israeli fears about the price to be paid for peace. If Syria was willing to absorb almost half of the Palestinian refugees, it had to be worth examining. Hence, Zaim asked General William E. Riley (UNTSO) to find out what the Israeli response to his proposal regarding the refugees was. Despite Zaim's offer Ben-Gurion still refused to compromise on border issues. If he accepted the offer, he would have to give something in return. Therefore, both the border question and the interlinked refugee question remained unsolved, and Zaim never received any response to his proposal.

On 5 May 1949, Zaim informed Keeley and General Riley about his "continued willingness personally [to] meet Israeli rep[resentative`s] of equal rank […] for direct discussions [on] all outstanding issues."[298] As a counter-proposal to Zaim, Israel suggested that General Yigal Yadin, Head of the Israel Defence Force, and the Foreign Ministry`s Reuvan Shiloah, should meet in secret "with the highest Syrian level."[299] But Zaim turned down the Israeli idea and was backed by Bunche: "In my view Zaim`s position is correct in refusing to deal with Shiloah and Yadin".[300] Ben-Gurion was the only one with "equal rank" to Zaim. Bunche understood that if Zaim accepted the Israeli counter-proposal, he could loose face in the negotiations with the Israelis by meeting officials of lower rank. Still, Zaim wanted the armistice negotiations to proceed. On 5 May, therefore, the two Israelis met with representatives from the Syrian delegation to the armistice negotiations, Salah Tarazi from the Syrian Foreign Office and Colonel Nasser from the Syrian army.[301]

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[296] Shalev 1993, *The Israel-Syria Armistice Regime*, p. 29.
[297] Memirandum by Sharett, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 4, p. 69.
[298] Keeley to Acheson, 5 May 1949, RG 84, 350.Syria, Box 20.
[299] Austin to Acheson, 8 May 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2124.
[300] Shalev 1993, *The Israel-Syria Armistice Regime*, p. 29.
[301] Shalev 1993, *The Israel-Syria Armistice Regime*, p. 29.

The parties were instructed to meet with Vigier on 6 May "to report on [the] outcome of the talks and to give their views on Bunche`s compromise proposal".[302] Bunche advised Vigier to continue promoting to the delegations the idea of a meeting between Ben-Gurion and Zaim. Despite this insistence, Bunche was rather pessimistic regarding the probable outcome of the informal meeting. If the negotiations did not come to a successful conclusion at the meeting on 6 May with Vigier, he would take the matter to the UN Security Council.[303] No successful conclusion was reached.

On 8 May 1949, Bunche informed the Security Council that the Israeli-Syrian armistice talks were deadlocked. Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion`s preoccupation with the territorial issues, and his insistence that the Syrians signed the armistice agreement based on the old international border, completely overshadowed the refugee aspect of the problem.[304]

Bunche Intervening

The stalemate in the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations caused Bunche to take further action.[305] In his continuing effort to break the deadlock, Bunche appealed directly to the involved parties, suggesting a meeting between Ben-Gurion and Zaim. On 9 May 1949, he sent the following message to Ben-Gurion:

> There is a distressing lack of progress towards [an] agreement in the Israeli-Syrian armistice
> negotiations, which have been underway since 5 April […] I appeal to you therefore to
> consent to consult with Colonel Zaim of Syria on the Israeli-Syrian frontier […] to discuss
> the armistice lines and any other matters relating to peace between your two countries that you
> may mutually agree to discuss.[306]

Bunche informed Zaim on the same day of his appeal to Ben-Gurion. He also asked Zaim "to consent to a private meeting with Ben-Gurion in an effort to find a basis for [an] agreement, which will make possible an armistice between the armed forces of Syria and Israel".[307]

The stalemate in the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations affected the Palestine Conciliation Commission`s Conference at Lausanne. The Israeli delegation at Lausanne refused to talk to the Syrians. On 9 May, Acheson urged Ambassador McDonald in Tel Aviv,

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[302] Austin to Acheson, 4 May 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2124.
[303] Austin to Acheson, 4 May 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2124.
[304] Shlaim 1986, *Husni Zaim and the Plan to Resettle Palestinian Refugees in Syria*, p. 74.
[305] Austin to Acheson, 8 May 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2124.
[306] Mohn to Ben-Gurion, 10 May 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 550.
[307] Austin to Acheson, 9 May 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2124.

to remind Ben-Gurion of Zaim`s proposal. Once more, he suspected that the proposal had not reached Ben-Gurion. According to Acheson the conclusion of the armistice agreements were important in order to reach a successful outcome at Lausanne.[308] In response, McDonald told Acheson that he had met Ben-Gurion on 8 May. Ben-Gurion had argued that, "peace was within sight if [the] US would exert pressure on Zaim to withdraw from [the] Israeli territory, comparable with the exerted US [pressure] on Israel to withdraw from Lebanon in the Israeli-Lebanese armistice negotiations in March."[309] Furthermore, Ben-Gurion told McDonald that he saw no value in a personal meeting with Zaim. The Syrian had to meet his sole condition: withdrawal to the old international border.[310]

On 10 May 1949, at the opening of the sixth meeting in the armistice negotiations, Vigier reminded the two delegations of the serious lack of development. No progress was made. Furthermore, he urged them to make a greater effort, and reminded the adversaries that the Acting Mediator had submitted a report on the failure of the armistice negotiations to the Security Council.[311] The Syrian delegation responded by presenting a new proposal for an armistice demarcation line, which included withdrawal of Israeli and Syrian forces from specific areas, following the establishment of a large "No Man`s Land". The Syrian proposal regarded that the existing truce line from the Banias Front in the north, down to Derbashaya at Lake Hula (see map) should become the final demarcation line. The military positions had not been changed since the UN-decreed truce in July 1948.[312] Furthermore, the two Syrian bridgeheads would be abandoned, one at Mishmar Hayarden and the other where the Jordan River flowed into the Sea of Galilee. In the end, the Syrians also proposed a demilitarization of Western Galilee under the United Nations supervision.[313]

The Israelis, however, rejected the main items in the Syrian proposal. The only point they accepted was the reduction of armed forces along the demarcation line. Nevertheless, Colonel Makleff of the Israeli delegation, asked the Syrian delegation to withdraw its proposal altogether, and declared that "the Israeli delegation did not change its mind and it is the Israeli Government`s opinion that the demarcation line between Israel and Syria should

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[308] Acheson to McDonald, 9 May 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2124.
[309] McDonald to Acheson, 9 May 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2124.
[310] McDonald to Acheson, 9 May 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2124.
[311] Summary Record of the sixth meeting of the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations, 10 May 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 551.
[312] Summary Record of the sixth meeting of the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations, 10 May 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 552.
[313] Summary Record of the sixth meeting of the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations, 10 May 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, pp. 552-552.

[only] run along the old international border between Palestine and Syria".[314] A deviation from that principle was unacceptable from an Israeli point of view. For the Israelis, it was unrealistic to withdraw their forces from Western Galilee. No less importantly, as long as the Israelis demanded that the Syrians should withdraw to the old international border, it was not however unrealistic to expect that Israel withdraw to the old international border in Western Galilee.

At the end of the sixth meeting, Vigier officially submitted Bunche`s compromise proposal to the delegations and asked them not to discuss it, but to transmit it directly to their respective Governments.[315] Bunche`s proposal, presented by Vigier, was actually, without saying so, an attempt to create a demilitarized zone.[316] Bunche`s proposal suggested that the demilitarized zone would be extended from the existing truce lines to the old international border between Syria and Palestine. Furthermore, neither side was allowed to maintain forces along the permanent armistice demarcation lines, "with possibly a few exceptions where defensive needs may make it imperative".[317]

Bunche`s new proposal met serious resistance from Israel. The same day, Eban told Bunche in New York that, "instead of the Syrians going back to the frontier […], they would, under this plan, remain in defensive strength inside the proposed demilitarized area".[318]

On 12 May, Bunche sent Vigier a revised compromise proposal for the settlement of the Israeli-Syrian armistice discussions. The revised proposal stated that the demilitarized zone should be established "on [the] Auja model in [the] Egypt[ian] agreement". The village of El Auja had been a major stumbling block in the armistice negotiations between Israel and Egypt. Making El Auja into a demilitarized zone had been the compromise solution. Hence, the Syrians had to withdraw to their side of the old international border. The proposal also instructed the Israelis to withdraw. If the Israelis refused to withdraw, Bunche told Vigier that, "a radical reduction of [the] forces to [a] effective strength could be established." Furthermore, the demilitarized zone should be under UN supervision, "again on [the] Egypt[ian] armistice model".[319] In the end, the Israelis would be allowed one or two outposts

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[314] Summary Record of the sixth meeting in the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations, 10 May 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 559.

[315] Bar-Yaacov 1967, *The Israel-Syrian Armistice*, p. 44.

[316] Shalev 1993, *The Israel-Syrian Armistice Regime*, p. 27.

[317] Summary Record of the sixth meeting in the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations, 10 May 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 560.

[318] Eban to Bunche, 10 May 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 561.

[319] Austin to Acheson, 12 May 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2124.

in the demilitarized zone, and in Bunche`s own words: "This would be [the] last resort, however".[320]

Bunche`s revised compromise proposal thus gave the Israelis their most important goal: to get the Syrians out of the old mandatory Palestine, now Israel. Bunche believed that the Syrians would agree to his plan and warned them that they could not hope for a more favourable settlement. Bunche told Vigier to advice the Syrians to do the best out of a bad situation. The next meeting was scheduled to take place on 13 May.[321]

On 11 May 1949, Keeley asked Zaim if he was still willing to meet Ben-Gurion for direct talks. According to Keeley:

> Zaim replied affirmative but less ardently then [before], I felt. He added that if
> Ben-Gurion were to take [the] same rigid attitude [as] [the] other Israeli representatives
> [had] [done] to [this] date, little could be expected of such [armistice] conferences.[322]

But the stalemate continued. Ben-Gurion was still not interested in meeting Zaim if the Syrians did not withdraw. In his reply to Bunche on 12 May, regarding the proposed meeting between the two leaders, the Israeli Prime Minister again summed up the situation as he saw it, and declared that:

> I am quite prepared to meet Colonel Zaim in order to promote peace between the
> two countries, but I see no purpose in any such meeting as long as the representatives
> of Syria in the armistice negotiations do not declare in an unequivocal manner that
> their forces to withdraw to their pre-war territory […][323]

Ben-Gurion did not believe that there was anything to be gained from a meeting with Zaim. To the contrary, he feared that it would force Israel into making concessions. Therefore, he did everything in his power to force the Syrians to withdraw to the old international border, and rejected any proposal that could jeopardize Israel`s existing territories, even if it excluded signing a separate peace agreement with Syria. Indeed, Ben-Gurion wanted the armistice talks with Syria to go on. As the Prime Minister put it when he summed up Israel`s UN and US Ambassador Abba Eban`s reasoning: there was "no need to run after peace: An armistice is

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[320] Austin to Acheson, 12 May 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2124.
[321] Austin to Acheson, 12 May 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2124.
[322] Keeley to McDonald, 11 May 1949, RG 84, 321.9.Israel-Syria, Box 1.
[323] Shiloah to Bunche, 12 May 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, pp. 562-563.

sufficient for us, if we run after peace – the Arabs will demand of us a price – borders or refugees or both. We will wait a few years".[324]

Colliding Views

Israel had openly ignored several UN resolutions passed by the General Assembly and the Security Council during her short time of existence. On 11 May 1949, Israel was admitted to the United Nations.[325] Many states had recognized Israel, and its international position had been bolstered by the three armistice agreements the country already had concluded under the auspices of the UN. Moreover, this in turn made it easier for many states to accept an Israeli membership in the world organization. Even though the US officially was a strong supporter of Israel`s acceptance to the UN, there were many state officials who opposed an Israeli admission. On 20 April 1949, William Burdett, the American Consul General at Jerusalem suggested to Acheson in the State Department that: "a postponement [of an Israeli membership to the UN] would enable US to continue tactics through UN on [the] Palestine question and would demonstrate to Israel that she cannot continue to ignore with impunity [the] world community".[326] On the same day, Warren Austin, the American Ambassador to the UN, told the Secretary of State Dean Acheson that Bunche had refused a suggestion from the UN Secretary General Trygve Lie that he should lobby for an early admission of Israel into UN. Bunche had responded by arguing that this suggestion was inappropriate for an Acting Mediator, and that before Israel was admitted she should "come clean" on the following points: First, regarding the report on Bernadotte`s assassination; Second, her attitude towards the refugees; Third, her attitude towards the internationalization of Jerusalem and; Fourth, her boundary demands.[327]

The question of Israel`s acceptance to the United Nations affected the armistice negotiations between Israel and Syria. There were different opinions among representatives from the UN and the US whether or not Israel had observed the decisions of the UN. Bunche was of the opinion that Israel had not showed any interest in the UN Charter, and that Israel

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[324] Morris 2004, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, p. 577.
[325] *Editorial Note*: The General Assembly, on 11 May, considered the proposal to admit Israel to membership in the United Nations. The Assembly voted 37 to 12 in favor of the draft resolution. There were 9 abstentions, including the United Kingdom and Turkey. The United States, the Soviet Union, and France were among those voting affirmatively. The President of the Assembly thereupon declared that Israel had been admitted to the United Nations, *FRUS*, Vol. IV 1949, pp. 995-996.
[326] Burdett to Acheson, 20 April 1949, *FRUS* Vol. IV, p. 930.
[327] Austin to Acheson, 20 April 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2124.

had defied UN resolutions on many occasions during the armistice negotiations between Israel and the neighbouring Arab states.

Secretary of State Dean Acheson, on the other hand, had a different opinion regarding Israel`s behaviour towards the UN. He emphasized that Israel had legal rights to areas that were assigned to them by the partition plan. Furthermore, Acheson claimed that the Israelis had not violated the truce. According to Acheson, the Syrians needed to withdraw back to the old international border. Acheson disregarded that the Israelis had troops in many parts of Palestine that was not assigned to them. The disagreement between Bunche and Acheson ultimately led to differences on how the US should approach the belligerents in the armistice negotiations between Israel and Syria.

The disagreement between Bunche and Acheson was, basically, on whether the demarcation line in the armistice agreement between Israel and Syria should be based on the old international border or on the existing truce line. In a memorandum on the armistice talks between Israel and Syria dated 12 May, Acheson parted with Israel. Acheson disagreed with the UN Mediator. He pointed to the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanese soil in the Israeli-Lebanese armistice agreement and stated that the Syrians should do the same. Furthermore, Acheson claimed that the UN representatives had insisted upon the preservation of the old international border in earlier armistice negotiations between Israel and the Arab states, even though this was clearly not the case in the armistice agreement between Israel and Egypt, and Israel and Jordan. "The armistice lines", he said, "have usually been based on the old international borders, and not upon the existing truce positions".[328] Furthermore, Acheson claimed that the Syrian position on the Israeli territory at Mishmar Hayarden was held in violation of the truce. "Israel maintains its right to carry out the principle advocated in the Lebanese negotiations, namely, the withdrawal of Syrian troops to the frontier [international border] with Israel taking control on its own territory," Acheson noted.[329] He also maintained that Israel, in an effort to compromise, had been willing to consider the proposal not to replace the withdrawing Syrian force. In the end, he said that the United States, Great Britain, and France, who recently had recognized the new Syrian regime, should therefore influence the Syrian government to comply with the principles established before, namely that Syria should withdraw its forces to the old international border between Syria and Palestine.[330]

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[328] Acheson to Austin, 12 May 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2124.
[329] Acheson to Austin, 12 May 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2124.
[330] Acheson to Austin, 12 May 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2124.

On 12 May, Acheson`s memorandum was brought to Bunche`s attention. According to Austin, who brought the memorandum to Bunche:

> Bunche had a very unfavourable reaction to the memo re[garding] [the] Syrian-Israeli armistice talks, because of [the] memo`s inaccuracies, half truths […] rather [than] [to] approach the Syrians, the Department [should] urge Israel, who are the recalcitrant, to accept his compromise.[331]

There were numerous points in Acheson`s memorandum where Bunche strongly disagreed. First, according to Bunche, it was not fair to compare the Israeli-Lebanese agreement with the Israeli-Syrian negotiations, because the Israelis were definitely outside the borders of old mandatory Palestine when they invaded Lebanon. It was therefore natural that Israel had to withdraw from Lebanese soil. The Israelis could not insist upon Syrian withdrawal from Palestine, as long as the Palestinian area did not belong to Israel. Furthermore, it was not accurate to state that he, during the previous armistice agreements between Israel and the Arab states, had insisted upon the principle of withdrawal to the old international borders. "Basis for all armistice negotiations has always been truce lines", Bunche said.[332] Second, Bunche said he had never heard of the alleged principle that "whenever a truce line was in vicinity of the international border, the armistice line was based on the international border and not upon the existing truce positions".[333] Third, it was absolutely not true that Mishmar Hayarden was held in violation of the truce. "[The] only Syrian violation was taking Hill 223, from which they have withdrawn", Bunche said.[334] However, the Western Galillee, on the other hand, occupied by Israeli forces, was a real violation of the truce. Bunche told Austin that if the Israeli-Syrian talks collapsed, he would report the matter to the Security Council, putting the blame on the Israelis.[335]

The seventh meeting in the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations, held on 13 May 1949, was adjourned after Chairman General Riley stated that, at a private meeting with the Israeli delegation, he had given them some clarifications concerning Bunche`s latest proposal. Thus, the Israeli delegation needed to seek instructions from Tel Aviv before discussing the proposal. The next meeting was scheduled for 17 May, where the modified proposal would be discussed in a joint session. Hence, Keeley told Acheson that, "for US to remind Syria that

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[331] Austin to Acheson, 13 May 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2124.
[332] Austin to Acheson, 13 May 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2124.
[333] Austin to Acheson, 13 May 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2124.
[334] Austin to Acheson, 13 May 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2124.
[335] Austin to Acheson, 13 May 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2124.

this situation [is] likely to continue, if she fails [to] accept Israeli armistice terms, will not, I feel sure, be persuasive, particularly in light of [the] favour currently being shown Israel by [the] US".[336]

Far from the Scene

On 15 May, Riley told Bunche that after considering the revised compromise proposal, the Israelis still insisted on Syrian withdrawal to the international border. In addition, they wanted only Israeli civilians to be allowed into the demilitarized zones. No Arabs were allowed to return to the zones.[337] According to General Riley, it was important for Zaim to secure some Israeli concessions at this critical moment, considering his own criticism of the former Syrian regime for yielding without securing concessions. Riley`s view was that a limited number of Israeli and Arab civilians should be allowed to return to the demilitarized zone, each to locations that was formerly inhabited by them. Furthermore, he pointed out that the return of Arabs to the demilitarized zone would help to relieve the refugee pressure on Syria.[338]

The eighth meeting in the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations was held on 17 May 1949. The discussion was based on Bunche`s proposal, submitted to the delegations on 10 May by Vigier. In the course of the meeting, both delegations accepted the proposal as a basis for further discussions. Still, the question of the demarcation line remained unsolved. The question of the demilitarized zones, however, was discussed for the first time. According to the Israelis, "the proposal carried with it a complete withdrawal of all the Syrian forces from the non-Syrian territory [Palestine], which they occupied".[339] Colonel Makleff of the Israeli delegation said that as far as the demilitarized zone is concerned, the Israelis understood that the proposal guaranteed a complete restoration of normal civilian life under Israeli civil authority. According to them, the proposed demilitarized zone originally belonged to Israel. The Israelis, therefore, could under no circumstances accept Syrian defensive military outposts in the demilitarized zone. Furthermore, since most of the demilitarized zone would be on the territory the Israelis claimed to be theirs, the Israelis demanded that part of the zone should also be on the Syrian side of the old international border between Syria and Palestine. The point was that the Israelis thought that the whole area, which was supposed to be demilitarized, belonged to them. It was therefore almost impossible to clarify the issues

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[336] Keeley to Acheson, 13 May 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2124.
[337] Austin to Acheson, 15 May 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2124.
[338] Austin to Acheson, 15 May 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2124.
[339] Summary Record of the eight meeting in the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations, 17 May 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 573.

related to demilitarization as long as the demarcation line between the Israeli and Syrian forces was not yet determined.

Colonel Selo of the Syrian delegation emphasized that the Syrians could not accept the complete withdrawal of Syrian forces from Palestine, as long as the question of the demarcation line was unsolved. Considering that the proposed area was to be called a demilitarized zone, the only forces stationed there would be reduced forces of a defensive nature. Furthermore, as to the return of civilians to the demilitarized zone, the Syrian delegation could accept a discussion on the question.[340]

Based on the outcome of the meeting on 17 May, a solution to the negotiation stalemate seemed far away. The discussion concerning the principle of the permanent demarcation line continued, and both sides stood far from each other regarding the question of the military and practical execution of the demilitarized zone. In the end of the meeting, Shabtai Rosenne, Israel`s legal advisor, claimed that the "Israeli Government would not sign an armistice agreement that admitted Syrian outposts west of the [old] international border".[341] Salah Tarazi, Rosenne`s counterpart in the Syrian delegation, gave the following answer:

> I want to clarify a few points. As far as the international border is concerned, there is no
> such border between Israel and Syria. There was a political border between Syria and
> Palestine. We have to sign an armistice not on the basis of any political border, but on
> the basis of an [armistice] line.[342]

It became clear that the Syrian delegation suggested that military outposts for defensive purposes should be included in the armistice agreement. The Israeli delegation, however, was not prepared for such an inclusion. Hence, Vigier saw no useful purpose in proceeding with the discussion. Instead, he suggested that the negotiations should be postponed until Bunche came up with new ideas.[343] Thus, once more, the scene shifted to New York, where diplomatic efforts were made to surmount the stalemate. On 23 May General Riley flew to New York to meet with Bunche. Together they started to draft a new set of proposals for the

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[340] Summary Record of the eight meeting in the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations, 17 May 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, pp. 573-574.
[341] Summary Record of the eight meeting in the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations, 17 May 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3, 1949, p. 579.
[342] Summary Record of the eight meeting in the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations, 17 May 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3, 1949, p. 579.
[343] Yaacov 1967, *The Israel-Syrian Armistice*, p. 47.

Israeli-Syrian armistice agreement. The new proposal was to be commented by the US Government and the UN, before it was dispatched to Vigier.[344]

Indeed, Bunche, the UN Mediator, being in New York and not on the spot, was in the beginning of the negotiations not seen as an obstacle to the development of the Israeli-Syrian talks. However, in the end of May 1949, when the stalemate seemed to be permanent, Bunche`s presence seemed to become more important than earlier. Bunche was seen as the man who was able to force concessions out of the belligerents in the armistice negotiations.[345] General Riley suggested that the State Department inform him and Ambassador Keeley of the Department`s decisions first, since they were actually present during the armistice negotiations between Israel and Syria. It was not their intention to by-pass Bunche. According to Keeley, experience had shown that Bunche, being far from the negotiations, was often as much as 48 hours behind the developments. This made his recommendations and diplomatic support indisposed to the situation by the time they reached the actors in the Middle East. Keeley therefore proposed to the State Department that, "Bunche should either return to the scene of negotiations or relinquish initiative to those on [the] spot".[346]

Bunche replied that he saw little use in continuing the discussions, under his auspices, between the Israeli and Syrian representatives to the armistice negotiations. The outstanding questions between the parties needed to be taken to Ben-Gurion and Zaim. Furthermore, the proposal ought to be followed by a warning that if they did not accept this proposal, he would turn the matter to the Security Council. Bunche would point out to the Israelis that if that were to happen they would be in a very weak position, because, as he told Sharett, they could not continue to expect a Syrian withdrawal unless they were willing to make some concessions.[347] According to Keeley, "unless Israel can be brought to understand that it cannot have all of its cake and gravy as well […] it may find that it has won [the] Palestine war but lost peace".[348]

By the end of May Zaim was under strong pressure from the Syrian public because of his approach to the Israelis. Bunche realized that Zaim was running out of time.[349] Seeking friendly relations with the Israelis were considered a risky enterprise in Syrian politics. From the beginning of the armistice negotiations between Israel and the Arab states, the Arabs had officially stated that they refused to meet the Israelis face to face. Such an event would mean

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[344] Austin to Acheson, 23 May 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125.
[345] Næser 2005, *Right Versus Might*, p. 45.
[346] Keeley to Acheson, 19 May 1949, *FRUS* Vol. IV 1949, p. 1031.
[347] Austin to Acheson, 23 May 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125.
[348] Keeley to Acheson, 19 May 1949, *FRUS*, Vol. IV 1949, p. 1032.
[349] Austin to Acheson, 23 May 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125.

recognition of the State of Israel, which they denied. A high-level meeting between Zaim and Ben-Gurion to discuss peaceful relations between Israel and Syria would be seen as an official Syrian recognition of Israel. Many state officials in the Syrian cabinet were also against such a meeting.[350] The Syrian delegation in the armistice negotiations stood firm on its principal only to discuss military matters with Israel. By clearing military issues, and not discussing friendly relations, the Syrian Government, satisfied the hostile Syrian public opinion. Therefore, when Zaim stated his willingness to discuss peace with the Israelis, his popularity sank drastically among the public and inside his own government. Nevertheless, the largest political party in Syria, the Populist Party, decided to continue its former role as the opposition party, thus developing strength, by serving as a rallying point for other outside anti-Zaim elements in Syria.[351] This was certainly a clear indication to Zaim that time was not on his side. He desperately needed an Israeli concession in order to conclude the armistice negotiations, so that he could give his full attention to the Syrian domestic situation.

Sharett`s Move: Short-lived Optimism

Riley told Israel`s legal advisor, Shabtai Rosenne, that "Zaim want[ed] to resolve the Syrian-Israeli problem in a honourable and peaceful matter so that he could devote himself fully to his goals – the renewal and rebuilding of Syria".[352] The next day, Abba Eban, Israel`s representative to the UN, emphasized that "the Syrian readiness [to] accept [a] large-scale resettlement seems to me of great importance. [I] Would welcome further clarification [on] why we [remain] unimpressed [by the] prospect [that] Syria [is willing to] absorb 300,000 [refugees]."[353] Hence, Rosenne informed Sharett that Israel had to show some sign of goodwill, because Israel could risk political repercussions internationally, it be at Lausanne (PCC–UN), Lake Success (UN), Washington, Paris or elsewhere.[354]

Indeed, Sharett had already expressed the importance of exploring Zaim`s offer. The Israeli Foreign Minister had emphasized that Zaim was bolder and more far-sighted than the other Arab leaders. Zaim`s suggestion, according to Sharett, had enormous significance because it meant that he was prepared to absorb three times the number of refugees living in Syria and Lebanon.[355]

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[350] Rabinovich 1991, *The Road Not Taken*, pp. 77-78.
[351] Keeley to Acheson, 25 May 1949, RG 84, 350 Syria, Box 20.
[352] Shalev 1993, *The Israel-Syria Armistice Regime*, p. 31.
[353] Eban to Rosenne, 18 May 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 584.
[354] Eban to Rosenne, 18 May 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 584.
[355] Shlaim 1986, *Husni Zaim and the Plan to Resettle Palestinian Refugees in Syria*, p. 75.

On 25 May Sharett informed Vigier that he was ready to meet Zaim, and suggested a two-point agenda consisting of armistice and peace. He stated that he "was greatly impressed by it [Zaim`s proposal] when first learned of it [in] Geneva [...] [I] believe our position inside UN can only be strengthened by this initiative".[356] Sharett suggested that they should meet the following day. Bunche reported that he had been told by Arthur Lourie, Israel`s acting representative to the UN, that the proposal was made because Sharett was believed to be a better negotiator than Ben-Gurion. According to Lourie: "Ben-Gurion, who is very blunt and often emotional, would not be very useful in [the] role [as an] negotiator. On the other hand, if Zaim and Sharett could reach an agreement, Ben-Gurion would accept it".[357] Bunche was positive to Sharett meeting Zaim, and he cabled Vigier to urge Zaim to accept the invitation.[358]

Zaim, however, turned down the idea of a meeting between him and Sharett. He preferred to await Bunche`s next proposal. In addition Zaim had to consider the anti-Israeli Syrian public. If the planned meeting leaked out, it could cause serious repercussions in the Arab opinion. On the other hand, Bunche wanted to await the results of the proposed meeting between Zaim and Sharett, before formulating his final proposal. Evidently, Bunche was clearly disappointed with Zaim`s rejection.[359] On 30 May, Vigier told Sharett that the Syrian delegation headed by the Foreign Under-Secretary Ibrahim Istouan, were ready to meet them on 2 June. Furthermore, Vigier expressed his hope that Sharett himself would head the Israeli delegation. In his answer to Vigier, Sharett repeated that he had offered to meet Zaim personally in order to reach an agreement and turned down the Syrian proposal of a meeting with the Syrian Foreign Under-Secretary. But when Vigier proposed a meeting between Sharett and Adil Arslan, the Syrian Foreign Minister, Sharett accepted it.[360]

The Syrians rejected the idea and the meeting never took place.[361] The official Syrian reply on 7 June was that the armistice conference was the proper place to discuss the first item, the armistice, on the Israeli proposed agenda, whereas peace relations could only be discussed together with other Arab states.[362] Sharett was so offended by the refusal that he

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[356] Sharett to Eban, 25 May 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 589.
[357] Shalev 1993, *The Israel-Syria Armistice Regime*, p. 31.
[358] Lourie to Sharett, 26 May 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 590.
[359] Sharett to Eban, 27 May 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, pp. 590-591; Shalev 1993, *The Israel-Syria Armistice Regime*, p. 31.
[360] Sharett to Eban, 30 May 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 591.
[361] Sharett to Eban, 8 June 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 597.
[362] Shlaim 1986, *Husni Zaim and the Plan to Resettle Palestinian Refugees in Syria*, p. 76; Sharett to Eban, 8 June 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 597.

asked Eban "to put an end to the inglorious chapter, which had only been a new effrontery and an attempt at prevarication and deceit."[363] Initially, Syria`s reply was a clear indication that Zaim`s patience with the Israelis was beginning to fade. Apparently, his idea of a "separate peace with Israel" was slipping away. The attempt to arrange a meeting between the leaders of Israel and Syria ended. The focus was again concentrated on concluding the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations.

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[363] Flapan 1987, *The Birth of Israel*, p. 211; Sharett to Eban, 8 June 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 597.

6

The Outcome of the Israeli-Syrian Armistice Talks

This vague proposal, which laid the foundation for
numerous future conflicts, provided the basis for an
agreement.[364]

    - Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion with regard to the
     establishment of the demilitarized zones.

On 31 May 1949, the Syrian Prime Minster, Husni Zaim told Ambassador Keeley that the
Israelis finally had indicated willingness to meet with the Syrians on a higher level in an effort
to try to find a solution to the stalled Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations. "Presumably,"
Zaim said, "this Israeli demarche is in belated response to [my] expressed willingness to meet
with Israel`s Prime Minister Ben-Gurion in an effort to settle the Palestine conflict on [a] fair
basis of give and take". "Unfortunately," Zaim continued, "the situation had changed for the
worse in the meantime".[365] Zaim had waited almost two months on an Israeli response to his
proposed high-level meeting. His advisers felt that no useful purpose would be served by the
meeting suggested by the Israeli Foreign Minister, Moshe Sharett, since Israel had failed to
show any will to compromise.[366] In addition, Zaim had to consider the public opinion in

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[364] David Ben-Gurion, *A Personal History*, New York/Tel Aviv, Tel Aviv 1971, p. 328.
[365] Keeley to Acheson, 4 June 1949, RG 84, 350.Syria, Box 20.
[366] Keeley to Acheson, 4 June 1949, RG 84, 350.Syria, Box 20.

Syria, which closely followed every move the Prime Minister made. Thus, according to Keeley "Zaim`s will to action [had] passed".[367]

The Government House Affair

On 6 June 1949, in an effort to enforce the division of the Government House compound in Jerusalem, Israeli armed forces marched into a neutral area that was under the supervision of the UN. They erected a barbed-wire fence, installed machine-gun posts, and laid a minefield.[368] The Israeli occupied area in Jerusalem was as part of the Israeli-Jordanian armistice agreement supposed to be under the supervision of the United Nations. Moreover, the Government House compound in Jerusalem was the headquarters of UNTSO during and after the first Arab-Israeli war. It was also seen as a strategically important position to the Jordanians and the Israelis. However, in the Israeli-Transjordanian armistice negotiations the belligerents could not decide upon the division of the Government House compound. The Government House therefore remained under supervision of the UN.[369]

The Government House affair brought Israel into an open conflict with the United Nations. General Riley, who served as the Chairman of the Israeli-Jordanian Mixed Armistice Commission (MAC), referred the matter to Bunche as a clear violation of the Israeli-Jordanian armistice agreement. Furthermore, on the same day, the American Consul at Jerusalem William Burdett, expressed that he was "convinced [that] strongest measures should be taken to force [the] withdrawal [of] Israeli troops from [the] Govt House area", in an effort to avoid complete stalemate on all matters related to the Palestine conflict.[370]

On 12 June Riley and Vigier met with Moshe Dayan, the Israeli General Commander in Jerusalem, and a member of the Israeli armistice delegation to Rhodes. Dayan emphasized that the armistice agreement did not provide for the UN to remain at the Government House. Riley strongly disagreed. He referred to the Israeli-Jordanian armistice agreement and

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[367] Keeley to Acheson, 4 June 1949, RG 84, 350.Syria, Box 20.
[368] Vincent to Acheson, 10 June 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125; Shlaim 1988, *Collusion Across the Jordan*, p. 455.
[369] Shlaim 1988, *Collusion Across the Jordan*, p. 446. Initially, in the beginning of the negotiations, the Transjordanian representatives agreed in principal to the division of the Government House. But fierce international protest and the arguments of the Abdullah al-Tel, one of King Abdullah`s most entrusted men, King Abdullah was persuaded to retract his agreement, Shlaim 1988, *Collusion Across the Jordan*, p. 446. Israel`s treatment of Baqa el Gharbiya, an Arab village at the northern end of the Little Triangle - border area ceded to Transjordan – was another telling example of how Israel followed the rules of the armistice agreements. Israeli soldiers expelled all the inhabitants living in the village, 1,500, across the armistice line into Transjordan; the same happened to villagers of Wadi Fukin, on the border between Israel and Transjordan near Hebron. The villagers were not allowed to go back despite the ruling of the MAC, Shlaim 1988, *Collusion Across the Jordan*, pp. 456-457.
[370] Stabler to Acheson, 8 June 1949, *FRUS* Vol. IV 1949, p. 1098.

reminded Dayan that Israel and Jordan had not reached an agreement on the division of the Government House compound in Jerusalem. Therefore, the area had remained under the supervision of the UN. Riley and Vigier ended the discussion by reminding Dayan that the status of the UN in Jerusalem had not been changed. Dayan answered that he needed to bring the question of the UN position to the Israeli Government.[371]

Meanwhile, the American Ambassador in Jordan, Wells Stabler, feared that the UN attempt to settle the situation, would give the Israelis more time to prepare further actions. The Israelis had to withdraw from the Government House area in Jerusalem as quickly as possible. On 12 June, in a note to the Secretary of State, Stabler encouraged that "[the] US should […] make it quite clear to Israel at this time that troops must be withdrawn and that any further aggressive acts will not be tolerated".[372] According to Adil Arslan, the Syrian Foreign Minister:

> This latest aggression took place even while Bunche in [a] personal message to Zaim,
> earnestly appealed for [a] most serious and sympathetic consideration [regarding] his
> draft proposals […] assuring him that UN responsibility over territory in [the] proposed
> demilitarized zone […] gives convincing proof that such arrangements work well
> and give full protection to [the] rights and claims of [the] interested parties. Bunche must
> today be [a] sadly disillusioned man.[373]

Bunche`s compromise proposal regarded the establishment of a demilitarized zone as an important step towards a conclusion of an armistice agreement between Israel and Syria. The Government House affair unfortunately contributed to weaken the idea of a neutral demilitarized zone, and the Syrians feared that the Israelis would violate the proposed demilitarized zone agreement between Israel and Syria, since no UN guarantee seemed to be respected by the Israelis. "It would be helpful to have its reasons why Syria should not let [the] Government House incident influence its acceptance of [a] similar UN guarantee of [the] proposed demilitarized areas on [the] Israeli-Syrian frontier", Keeley noted.[374]

Hence, on 13 June, Riley reported to the Secretary of State that the Jerusalem situation seriously interfered with the Israeli-Syrian negotiations, since the Syrians refused to resume

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[371] Burdett to Acheson, 13 June 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125.
[372] Stabler to Acheson, 12 June 1949, *FRUS* Vol. IV, p. 1121.
[373] Keeley to Acheson, 11 June 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125.
[374] Keeley to Acheson, 11 June 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125.

the talks until Israel had withdrawn from the Government House zone.[375] Bunche told the Israelis the same day that the incident at the Government House harmed the on-going armistice talks between Israel and Syria, since the negotiations were at a critical stage. Furthermore, he termed the Government House affair "a deplorable incident" and urged the Israelis, "that every step [had] [to] be taken to rectify [the] situation so that the armistice negotiations [could] proceed".[376]

Abba Eban, Israel`s UN representative, claimed that the UN had no business in being in Jerusalem`s demilitarized zone. In effect, he said, it was UN itself that had violated the armistice agreement. The Jerusalem issue had according to Eban been decided by Israel and Jordan, without the UN present, during bilateral talks on 30 November 1948.[377] Nevertheless, he emphasized that there had been no Jordanian protest on the division of the Government House compound until it had been stirred up by the other Arab states.[378]

No less importantly, Eban seemed to have forgotten that Jerusalem was implemented in the Israeli-Jordanian armistice agreement, which was an agreement that was concluded under the auspices of the UN Security Council. According to Bunche, unilateral change was a violation of the Security Council truce and, while he had no responsibility of the supervision of the armistice, as Acting Mediator, he still had responsibility for the Security Council truce.[379]

Later in the evening on 13 June, Bunche informed the Secretary of State that at a MAC meeting, Riley and the Jordanian representatives voted for a proposal that both sides should withdraw from the demilitarized zone in Jerusalem. However, the Israelis voted against and the proposal failed. Bunche then termed the Israeli policy as "criminally crooked" and threatened to state publicly that there was no point in attempting to negotiate an Israeli-Syrian armistice agreement if the Israelis were not ready to observe such an agreement. Furthermore, he would resign as Acting Mediator if the Israelis did not withdraw.[380] The next day, Bunche requested for US support to urge the Israelis to withdraw. Meanwhile the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations were postponed until 16 June.[381] In a formal message to the Israelis, the Acting Secretary of State, James E. Webb stated that, "peace and stability [in] [the] Near East

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[375] Burdett to Acheson, 13 June 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125.
[376] Ross to Acheson, 13 June 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125.
[377] See chapter 3, *The UN Mediation Effort*, p. 39.
[378] Burdett to Acheson, 13 June 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125.
[379] Ross to Acheson, 13 June 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125; UNSC Resolution 62 of 16 November 1948 (S/1080). See Appendix III.
[380] Ross to Acheson, 13 June 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125.
[381] Ross to Acheson, 14 June 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125.

[is] extremely important to [the] US and [the] Department [is] perturbed by above reports […] from Israel".[382] At a meeting on 14 June, MAC passed a resolution that provided for a simultaneous withdrawal of troops from both sides, and on 15 June Israeli forces withdrew from the Government House area in Jerusalem.[383] Israel would obviously not jeopardize its relationship with the US on an issue such as the Government House.

Bunche`s Final Contribution: The 8 June Proposal

In the meantime, Bunche put forward a compromise proposal for the Armistice Demarcation Lines between the Israeli and Syrian forces, which was transmitted to the two Governments on 8 June 1949.[384] "I am confident that this draft article is consistent with the basic purpose of the Security Councils resolutions on Palestine, and particularly the resolution of 16 November 1948", Bunche noted.[385] The proposal was intended to satisfy the Israeli claim for a complete Syrian withdrawal to the east of the old international border between Palestine and Syria, while at the same time compensating Syria by establishing a demilitarized zone on the west side of the international border, including the areas of Dardara and Ein Gev on the eastern bank of the Sea of Galilee and Lake Hula.[386] These were areas held by the Syrians as a consequence of the 1948 War. In addition to the draft proposal for the armistice lines, there was an accompanying note that encouraged the recipients "to give this draft your most serious and sympathetic consideration".[387]

Bunche`s compromise proposal was both complicated and ambiguous, not least on the status of the demilitarized zones. At the beginning of the ninth meeting of the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations, held on 16 June 1949, both delegations accepted Bunche`s draft article on the armistice demarcation lines as a basis for further discussion.[388]

Determining the Armistice Demarcation Line

At the beginning of the armistice negotiations, the Israeli and Syrian positions on where the demarcation lines should be drawn had been wide apart. For the Israelis, the object of the negotiations was to secure the withdrawal of Syrian forces from the former area of Palestine,

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[382] Webb to the US Embassy in Tel Aviv, 14 June 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125.
[383] Webb to Keeley, 16 June 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125.
[384] Ross to Acheson, 7 June 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125.
[385] Mohn to Sharett, 8 June 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 598.
[386] Mohn to Sharett, 8 June 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, pp. 599-600.
[387] Mohn to Sharett, 8 June 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 599.
[388] Bar-Yaacov 1967, *The Israeli-Syrian Armistice*, p. 52; Summary Record of the ninth meeting in the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiation, 16 June 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 607.

which they regarded as theirs. During the entire negotiations, the Israelis had insisted that the Syrians should withdraw to the old international border between Palestine and Syria. The Syrians, on the other hand, emphasized that the existing truce lines should be the basis for defining the final demarcation lines.

In essence, major parts of the existing truce lines ran along the old international border between Syria and Palestine established by the mandate powers (Great Britain and France) in 1923. There were three Syrian bridgeheads within Palestine after the first Arab-Israeli war – in the northeast between Banias and Dan, on the west bank of the Jordan River near Lake Hula, and the south-eastern shores of the Sea of Galilee extending out to al-Hamma. All together the area consisted of 66,5 square kilometres of land lying between the existing truce line and the old international border. These were the three sectors – north, central and south of the demilitarized zone.[389] According to the UN partition plan, the contested area had been stipulated as belonging to Israel. As long as the previous armistice agreements had not based the demarcation lines on the UN partition borders, the Israelis could not press for the implementation of these borders in the Israeli-Syrian armistice talks. Instead, the Israelis used the term "old international border". Simultaneously, the Syrians had no legal right to these areas. However, in order to keep these areas under Syrian control, it was important for them to base the demarcation line on the existing truce line. Indeed, both Israel and Syria used the terms that suited them best.

Bunche`s proposal suggested that, where the existing truce lines run along the old international border between Syria and Palestine, the armistice demarcation line ought to follow the old international border. Elsewhere, the armistice demarcation line should follow a line midway between the existing truce lines for the Israeli and Syrian forces. Furthermore, where the armistice demarcation line did not correspond with the old international border, the area between the existing truce line and the old international border should be totally demilitarized, including the sectors of Dardara (near Lake Hula) and Ein Gev (at the Sea of Galilee).[390]

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[389] Donald Neff, *Israel-Syria:* "Conflict at the Jordan River, 1949-1967", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 4, University of California 1994, pp. 26-27. See also Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, p. 45; Shalev 1993, *The Israel-Syria Armistice Regime* and Bar Yaacov 1967, *The Israel-Syrian Armistice*, See map.
[390] Mohn to Sharett, 8 June 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, pp. 599-600. The Demarcation Line is a line that separates two armies.

Colonel Makleff, Head of the Israeli delegation, wanted to know why Dardara and Ein Gev came to be in the demilitarized zone: "They have always been in our hands", he said.[391] Vigier replied that the aim of the negotiations was to draft an armistice agreement and that questions regarding the territorial settlements were to be put aside. Furthermore, he reminded Makleff of Bunche`s first proposal, which emphasized that "the armistice demarcation line was to run across a demilitarized zone, part of which was to be on the Syrian side and, the other part on the Israeli side".[392] According to Bunche`s first compromise proposal, the only withdrawal from the contested areas was to be done by the Syrians. However, his latest proposal of 8 June regarded the withdrawal of both forces as an important step in the demilitarization of the area. Therefore, according to Vigier, "Bunche thought it more advisable that Israeli military forces would have to withdraw from the Ein Gev and Dardara sectors", leaving these areas inside the demilitarized zone.[393] Indeed, as long as both parts had territories that came to be in the demilitarized zones, both parts had to make concessions, which in this case meant withdrawal of forces.

This was a crucial step, since it became clear at this stage in the armistice negotiations that an agreement on the most controversial issue, the demarcation line, had been reached at a high level. Syria agreed to withdraw her troops from those areas of the proposed demilitarized zones, while Israel agreed not to maintain troops in those areas nor in the two additional areas, Dardara and Ein Gev, along the old international border.[394] According to Vigier and Riley: "No serious objections developed" when reading through paragraph 5(A) in the proposal concerning the demarcation line.[395] The way was thus cleared for the creation of the demilitarized zone.

The Establishment of the Demilitarized Zone

The idea of creating a demilitarized zone between Israel and Syria was, however, not new. In early May, Bunche had referred to the "El Auja" model when discussing demilitarization in

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[391] Summary Record of the ninth meeting in the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiation, 16 June 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 610.
[392] Summary Record of the ninth meeting in the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations, 16 June 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 610
[393] Summary Record of the ninth meeting in the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations, 16 June 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 610.
[394] Bar-Yacoov, *The Israel-Syrian Armistice*, p. 52.
[395] Austin to Acheson, 17 June 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125.

the Israeli-Syrian armistice.[396] According to the Israeli-Egyptian armistice agreement, "the area comprising the village of El Auja and vicinity [...] shall be demilitarized, and both Egyptian and Israeli armed forces shall be totally excluded therefrom".[397] The difference, though, was that the armistice negotiations between Israel and Syria, in contrast to the armistice negotiations between Israel and Egypt, not only dealt with military issues related to the demilitarization, but also with civilian life in the demilitarized zone.[398] It was therefore necessary to make some provisions regarding civil administration. In addition, part of the proposed demilitarized area was economically important, because it contained one of the main water sources for Israel, Syria and Jordan, namely the Sea of Galilee.[399]

During the meeting on 16 June Colonel Selo, the Head of the Syrian delegation, asked Vigier "to define what a demilitarized zone consists of from a military point of view".[400] Referring to the Bunche`s draft article, Vigier answered that the demilitarization of the zone meant the withdrawal of forces in accordance with a schedule. It also provided for other measures, such as the demining of roads and lands. General Riley added that, "the area must be completely demilitarized. It means that fortification, mines, obstacles and other military impedimenta used in defence of the zone should be removed".[401] The Syrians agreed to the withdrawal of forces and the removal of arms. However, Salah Tarazi, the Syrian Legal Adviser, emphasized that the Syrian delegation needed an Israeli guarantee assuring that "the separation of the armed forces should be effective and efficient".[402]

In reality, the Syrians had in mind the latest Israeli violation of the Israeli-Jordanian armistice agreement, the Government House Affair. The episode contributed to Syrian hesitation regarding Israeli respect for UN guarantees. In his reply to Tarazi`s question, Vigier emphasized that Bunche`s main goal, when he proposed the creation of the demilitarized zone, was to separate "widely" the armed forces so that they would be sufficiently far apart to dispel any fear of incidents. "Any advance of armed forces into the demilitarized zone [...],

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[396] The village of El Auja had been a major stumbling bloc in the armistice negotiations between Israel and Egypt. As a compromise solution, El Auja was made into a demilitarized zone. See chapter 5, *Negotiation Stalemate*, p 69.

[397] Rosenne 1951, *Israel`s Armistice Agreements with the Arab States*, pp. 51-52; The Israeli-Egyptian Armistice Agreement, 24 February 1949, Article VIII, Paragraph 1.

[398] Shalev 1993, *The Israel-Syria Armistice Regime*, p. 40.

[399] Rosenne 1951, *Israel`s Armistice Agreements with the Arab States*, p. 54.

[400] Summary Record of the ninth meeting in the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations, 16 June 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 611.

[401] Summary Record of the ninth meeting in the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations, 16 June 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 611.

[402] Summary Record of the ninth meeting in the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations, 16 June 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 612.

would have most serious consequences, since it would constitute a flagrant violation of the Armistice Agreement".[403] Without any guarantees given by the Israelis, the meeting was scheduled to 21 June.[404]

The Syrians were calmed down as a consequence of a message from Ambassador Keeley on 20 June. In earlier conversations between Keeley and Adil Arslan, the Syrian Foreign Minister, on 11 and 15 June, Arslan had expressed Syrian anxiety regarding demilitarization in two areas. First, the recent Israeli incursion into the neutral Government House Zone in Jerusalem, which again raised the question of Israel`s respect for the authority of the UN. Secondly, as foreseen in Bunche`s 8 June proposal, the withdrawal of Syria`s forces behind its own border could expose Damascus, the Syrian capital, if Israel should violate the armistice agreement.[405] Hence, Keeley had reported the Syrian anxiety to the Secretary of State Acheson, on 11 June. In addition, on 17 June, Bunche had requested the Department to instruct Keeley to assure the Syrians that the US would take a firm line in the Security Council if the armistice agreement should be violated.[406]

As a result, Ambassador Keeley informed Arslan that, "my Government is prepared to exercise its influence in the Security Council to the end that the Security Council should take whatever measures […] to deal with any threat to or violation […] of the agreement". In the same note, Keeley told Arslan that the Israeli Government received the same message with assurances of its impartial application. With regards to the withdrawal of Syrian forces, Keeley informed Arslan that according to Bunche`s own interpretation of his proposal, Syria may station its forces right up to the old international border. "There would therefore seem to be no possibility of the Israeli forces being able to outflank the Syrian forces even in the event of a violation of the proposed demilitarization zone", Keeley concluded.[407]

The Question of Sovereignty Unsolved

During the meeting on 16 June, both delegations had accepted the proposal as basis for further discussion with regards to the demarcation line and the establishment of a demilitarized zone.

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[403] Summary Record of the ninth meeting in the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations, 16 June 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, pp. 612-613.
[404] Summary Record of the ninth meeting in the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations, 16 June 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 613.
[405] Enclosure of a letter from Ambassador Keeley to the Syrian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Adil Arslan, 20 June 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125.
[406] Austin to Acheson, 17 June 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125.
[407] Enclosure of a letter from Ambassador Keeley to the Syrian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Adil Arslan, 20 June 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125. See also; Webb to US Embassy in Tel Aviv, 18 June 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125.

Even though several clauses were addressed during the meeting, neither side raised the issue of the sovereignty in the demilitarized zone. Indeed, Bunche deliberately avoided any reference to the question of sovereignty in his proposal of 8 June. Apparently, Bunche feared that Israel and Syria would never agree on this sensitive issue. It could jeopardize the entire armistice process. However, he hinted that the sovereignty question should remain unsolved. In the 8 June proposal, Bunche noted that, "[The compromise proposal] is purely a temporary arrangement, for the duration of the armistice and pending territorial settlement".[408] Furthermore, "territorial claims and other final arrangements," he explained, "must properly await the peace settlement".[409] In reality, neither Israel nor Syria could claim sovereignty as long as the armistice accord was not superseded by peace talks.

The Syrians did not believe that they could claim sovereignty in the demilitarized zone. Moreover, it was important for them to ensure that the agreement would not result in Israeli sovereignty in the area. However, the Syrian view was that the demilitarized zone would not belong to either Israel or Syria. The area should be under the supervision of the United Nations. This was, as the Syrians saw it, achieved in Bunche`s proposal.[410] The Israelis, on the other hand, claimed that the area to be demilitarized was, and would remain, Israeli territory. Israel maintained that demilitarization did not retract from her sovereignty and relied on the clause in the agreement, which approved "the gradual restoration of normal civilian life in the area of the Demilitarized zone" as a basic aim of the armistice.[411] The Israelis, however, did not demand further clarification concerning the status of the zone. More immediately, and with the sovereignty question left open, Israel attached greater importance to the civil administration in the demilitarized zone.

The Question of Civil Administration

The discussions held at the tenth meeting, on 21 June 1949, revealed how far the delegations stood from each other regarding the question of restoration of normal civilian life in the demilitarized zone. There had been only a handful of Jewish settlements in the contested area. The majority of the population in the demilitarized sectors had been Arab farmers. According to the Syrians, civilians would return only to villages and settlements that existed before 15 July 1948. Furthermore, Jewish inhabitants should have economic ties with Israel, and Arab

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[409] Mohn to Sharett, 8 June 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 598.
[410] Mohn to Sharett, 8 June 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, pp. 598-599.
[410] Mohn to Sharett, 8 June 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, pp. 598-603; Shalev 1993, *The Israel-Syria Armistice Regime*, p. 41,
[411] Eytan 1958, *The First Ten Years*, p. 43.

inhabitants with Syria. "We prefer that Jews should sell to Jews and Arabs to Arabs", the Syrians insisted.[412] Moreover, all movements in and out of the demilitarized zone should be checked by the United Nations, since neither Israel nor Syria had sovereignty in the area. The Syrians emphasized that final authority should rest with the UN chairman.[413] "The chairman of the MAC [Mixed Armistice Commission] is responsible for the security in that area", Terazi stated.[414] In other words, the Syrians implicated that the chairman was empowered to administer civilian life in the demilitarized zone. Their consent, as the Syrians had mentioned earlier, was dependent upon "UN responsibility over territory in [the] proposed demilitarized zone and […] upon Israeli respect for UN guarantees".[415]

The Mixed Armistice Commissions were assigned to ensure the proper execution of the armistice agreements. The Mixed Armistice Commission was an organisation combined by the UN and the parties themselves. Each of the commissions was composed of an equal number of representations appointed by each party and a chairman who was either the United Nations Chief of Staff of the Truce Supervision Organisation or a senior officer from the observer personnel of that organisation. Furthermore, the functions of the Mixed Armistice Commissions, of course, were limited by the terms of the various agreements. In particular, they were to supervise the execution of the relevant agreements. That is to say, the commissions were essentially administrative bodies. Claims or complaints presented by any of the parties were to be referred immediately to the appropriate Mixed Armistice Commission through its chairman. Apart from their functions under the Armistice Agreements, these four Mixed Armistice Commissions were the only meeting places for Jews and Arabs, where they could discuss day-to-day matters. General Riley was elected to be the chairman of the Israeli-Syrian Mixed Armistice Commission.[416]

The Israelis, in contrast to the Syrians, demanded control of civil administration in the demilitarized zone. By minimizing UN authority, they wanted to gain broad powers in the area. According to the Israelis, as long as the area belonged to Israel, Israeli law would be applied, and the Arab civilians returning to the zone would be Israeli citizens and would have the same rights as other Israeli citizens. Since Israel continued to insist upon the UN partition plan as a basis for further discussions, no agreement seemed forthcoming. However, it was

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[412] Shalev 1993, *The Israel-Syria Armistice Regime*, p. 43.
[413] Bar-Yaacov 1967, *The Israel-Syrian Armistice*, p. 53; Shalev 1993, *The Israel-Syria Armistice Regime*, p. 43.
[414] Shalev 1993, *The Israel-Syria Armistice Regime*, p. 43.
[415] Keeley to Acheson, 11 June 1949, *FRUS*, Vol. IV 1949, pp. 1119-1120.
[416] Rosenne 1951, *Israel`s Armistice Agreements with the Arab States*, pp. 65-69; Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, p. 71.

questionable that Vigier did not press for a debate on this issue. This, perhaps, could have lead to making a conclusion of the talks more realistic at an earlier point. As for the UN authority in the area, the Israeli delegation held that the chairman of the proposed Mixed Armistice Commission would only be responsible for ensuring that neither Israel nor Syria would move its troops into the demilitarized zone. Furthermore, according to the Israelis, the chairman would have no power of administration over the civil population.[417]

Thus, Israel and Syria stood far apart from each other when they discussed matters related to the civil administration in the demilitarized zone. Apparently, Bunche refrained from going too deeply into the detailed clarifications when he formulated his 8 June proposal. He feared that if he did, the armistice talks would break down. According to Bunche`s 8 June proposal, however, there was to be a Syrian part in the demilitarized zone, as well as an Israeli part: "Where Israeli civilians would return to a village or settlement in the zone, such as Mishmar Hayarden, the civil administration and policing of that village or settlement would be by Israelis", Bunche noted, "it is not [the] intention of [the] proposal that the Chairman of the Mixed Armistice Commission should assume responsibility for direct administration of civilian villages and settlements in the zone".[418] The difficulty related to the issue of authority in the demilitarized zone may be illustrated by the question raised by Colonel Makleff, Head of the Israeli delegation, during the meeting on 21 June: "If a citizen in Samra [a village in the Syrian demilitarized sector] murdered somebody in Ein Gev [a village in the Israeli demilitarized sector], who would try the murderer"?[419] Colonel Nasser of the Syrian delegation replied that this would be the task of the United Nations police, since it was the chairman of the Israeli-Syrian MAC that was empowered to ensure the internal security in the demilitarized zone.[420]

Vigier reminded the delegations that the draft agreement did not make the chairman responsible for the direct administration and policing of villages and settlements. However, he was responsible for the internal security inside the demilitarized zone. The Syrians proposed, in reply, that more power should be given to the UN. This would in turn solve administrative problems and prevent further friction.[421] But according to Vigier, the proposal did not say that the chairman should administer directly the villages and settlements of the zone.[422] In the end

[417] Bar-Yaacov 1967, *The Israel-Syrian Armistice*, pp. 53-54.
[418] Bunche to Eban, 16 June, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 614.
[419] Bar-Yaacov 1967, *The Israel-Syrian Armistice*, p. 54.
[420] Bar-Yaccov 1967, *The Israel-Syrian Armistice*, p. 54.
[421] Shalev 1993, *The Israel-Syria Armistice Regime*, p. 43.
[422] Bar-Yaacov 1967, *The Israel-Syrian Armistice*, pp. 54-55.

of the meeting on 21 June, when it became clear that the delegation could not agree on issues related to civil administration, Vigier decided to refer the matter once more back to Bunche.[423]

The further course of the armistice negotiations depended on Bunche`s ability to satisfy both sides on questions related to civilian life in the demilitarized zones. After a conversation between Bunche and Eban on 24 June in New York, Eban informed Sharett that Bunche had claimed that Israel should have full civil authority in the demilitarized zone. According to Eban: "When Syrians withdraw, Syria is not present in the zone either militarily or civilly, we are effectively there civilly".[424] The Israelis tried to secure from Bunche an interpretation implying that Israel should be have full civil authority in the demilitarized zone. However, this was not what Bunche had in mind. He called the Israeli argument "unwarranted" and sent Vigier a reaffirmation that his "compromise proposal should be accepted by both parties as it stands".[425] Furthermore, Bunche emphasized that the proposal provided for a gradual restoration of civilian life in the demilitarized zone under the supervision of the chairman of MAC.[426] The Israelis continued to pressure Bunche. When General Riley met Sharett on the same day, Sharett said that, "he [Bunche] must insist that civil authority in [the] demilitarized zone to be established by Israeli-Syrian armistice agreement must be in Israeli hands".[427] But Bunche stood firm.

On 26 June, Bunche sent a brief explanatory note with an accompanying letter concerning the civil administration, to the governments of Israel and Syria. The note pointed out that, "where Israeli civilians return or remain in an Israeli village or settlement, the civil administration and policing will be by Israelis. Similarly, where Arab civilians return to or remain in an Arab village, a local Arab administration and police unit will be authorized".[428] The note sent by Bunche, referred to the Arabs and not to the Syrians. An explanation for this could be that Bunche thought of the Palestinians, and therefore, decided to use the word "Arabs", instead of the word "Syrians". The Arabs living in the demilitarized zone were Palestinians, but neither Israel nor Syria regarded the rights of the Palestinians as an important factor in the establishment of the demilitarized zone. Indeed, this was Bunche`s most important issue - the gradual restoration of normal civilian life under the supervision of the

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[423] Shalev 1993, *The Israel-Syria Armistice Regime*, p. 45.
[424] Eban to Sharett, 24 June 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, pp. 616-617.
[425] Austin to Acheson, 24 June 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125.
[426] Austin to Acheson, 24 June 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125.
[427] Winslow to Acheson, 25 June 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125.
[428] Mohn to Sharett, 26 June 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, pp. 619-620.

chairman of the Mixed Armistice Commission. "I consider the meeting of the delegations on 28 June to be a most crucial one", Bunche said, "an agreement can be readily reached [...] if each delegation will come to this meeting determined to give every reasonable assistance to the United Nations".[429]

The Acting Mediator`s primary concern was how to get the Israelis to accept the civil administration, as they had raised the queries and doubts regarding his 8 June proposal. Therefore, the accompanying letter to the Israelis raised an issue, which did not appear in the parallel letter to the Syrians.[430] The issue, which was not mentioned in the Syrian letter, was related to the question of sovereignty in the demilitarized zone. Indeed, Bunche thought that the questions concerning the sovereignty and the civil administration were impossible to separate. To the Israelis Bunche wrote the following:

> I call attention to the fact that in the Israeli-Transjordan Armistice Agreement, [...] the
> armistice demarcation lines agreed upon involved changes in the then existing truce lines,
> and that this was done [...] without any questions raised as to sovereignty over final disposition
> of the territory involved. It was taken for granted by all concerned that this was a matter for final
> peace settlement.[431]

In his identical letter to the governments, Bunche made it clear that the outcome of the armistice negotiations depended on the acceptance of the principles expressed in his explanatory note. "In this regard", Bunche noted, "in view of the relatively small area involved [...] the administration and policing problem is not at all severe [...] and can be readily solved".[432] However, the meeting held on 28 June made no progress. According to the Syrians the newly elected Syrian government had to study Bunche`s latest proposal.[433] The next meeting was scheduled to 3 July.

The Final Phase: Room for Manoeuvre?

On 26 June 1949, Prime Minister Husni Zaim had himself elected in a referendum as Syrian President. Shortly thereafter Zaim made some changes in his government. Muhsin Barazi became both prime minister and foreign minister. These changes were hardly a surprise.

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[429] Bunche to Sharett, 26 June 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 617.
[430] Shalev 1993, *The Israel-Syria Armistice Regime*, p. 45.
[431] Bunche to Sharett, 26 June 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 618; Winslow to Acheson, 27 June 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125.
[432] Bunche to Sharett, 26 June 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 618.
[433] Ross to Acheson, 28 June 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125.

When Zaim had staged his coup, he had needed well-known civilian politicians in order to give his regime more legitimacy. At the time, Muhsin Barazi was closely identified with the ousted civilian regime of Shukri al-Quwwatli. The outgoing foreign minister Adil Arslan probably proved to be too difficult for Zaim.[434] According to US Ambassador Keeley, who on many occasions met with Arslan, Arslan was well known as being "irreconcilable" towards the Palestine conflict. He was an obstacle on the road to achieve an armistice agreement with Israel. "Muhsin Barazi, although by no means willing to accede to the extremes of Israeli voraciousness, has heretofore indicated his willingness […] to speed up the armistice negotiations", Keeley noted.[435]

Barazi immediately studied Bunche`s latest proposal and met the Syrian delegation. After some further discussions of possible ways and means of administering the proposed demilitarized areas, Barazi told Keeley that Syria would be prepared to accept administration of the areas by the UN chairman of the Mixed Armistice Commission. According to Keeley, "[he] assured me that in any event he would work for [an] agreement on the basis of Bunche`s proposal".[436]

Hence, at the beginning of the eleventh meeting, held on 3 July 1949, both delegations accepted Bunche`s explanatory note to be used as an authoritative commentary for the interpretation of Bunche`s proposed article.[437] However, Israel`s legal advisor, Shabtai Rosenne, wanted to include a passage from Bunche`s letter to Sharett. He explained that he wanted, in particular, the passage concerning the Israeli-Jordanian Armistice Agreement. In the letter, Bunche reminded the Israelis that during the armistice negotiations between Israel and Transjordan, the sovereignty question had not been raised. In other words, the Israelis wanted to continue the discussion of civil administration in the demilitarized zone with the Syrians, without having to worry about the sovereignty question. As they saw it, this was a matter for the final peace talks.[438]

The Syrians were surprised to hear of such a paragraph, since it did not appear in the letter sent to the Syrian Minister of Foreign Affairs. According to Vigier, this would not be seen as a problem for the Syrians. Leaving out the question of sovereignty was just what Bunche had in mind when he proposed a demilitarized zone with local administration and a

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[434] Rabinovich 1991, *The Road Not Taken*, p. 78.
[435] Keeley to Acheson, 30 June 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125.
[436] Keeley to Acheson, 30 June 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125.
[437] Summary Record of the eleventh meeting in the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations, 3 July 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 624.
[438] Summary Record of the eleventh meeting in the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations, 3 July 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, pp. 626-627.

local police in the villages and settlements. The Syrians agreed. With the sovereignty question left open, the delegations proceeded with the negotiations more effectively. Both delegations agreed to refer this paragraph to the military sub-committee in order to clarify the details concerning the implementation of this article.[439] Vigier explained to the delegates that the military sub-committee would be presided over by General Riley. If any difficulties would arise, they would "be ironed out by the Military Sub-Committee", Vigier said assuredly.[440]

But Israel had not left the sovereignty question dead after all. At the end of the meeting on 3 July, the Israelis again tried to settle the question of sovereignty in the sectors of Ein Gev and Dardara, despite having agreed not to discuss matters related to the sovereignty question. Colonol Makleff emphasized that "the sectors of Ein Gev and Dardara will never be disputed in a peace conference. There is no dispute [because] it is Israeli territory. [However] they will be included in the demilitarized zone".[441] Captain Bizri of the Syrian delegation said that the armistice delegation had no authority or power to settle the work of a peace conference. Moreover, according to the Syrians, the sectors of Ein Gev and Dardara, together with the rest of the demilitarized zone, formed a whole. "We would like to know whether the Israeli delegation agrees with us", Bizri asked.[442] Makleff answered that according to the proposal "the purpose of the demilitarized zone should be to safeguard the territorial claims, positions and interests of both parties pending final territorial settlement".[443] "However" he continued, "for the Israeli delegation, the sectors of Ein Gev and Dardara are not included in the demilitarized zone for this purpose. They are only included with a view to separating widely the armed forces of both parties".[444]

Vigier agreed with the Syrians and reminded the Israelis that they were conducting armistice negotiations and not peace talks. Vigier pointed out that the demilitarized zone "refers to the claims, positions and interests of both parties". "I want to emphasize the words,

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[439] Summary Record of the eleventh meeting in the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations, 3 July 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 627.
[440] Summary Record of the eleventh meeting in the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations, 3 July 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 631.
[441] Summary Record of the eleventh meeting in the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations, 3 July 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 633.
[442] Summary Record of the eleventh meeting in the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations, 3 July 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 633.
[443] Summary Record of the eleventh meeting in the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations, 3 July 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 633.
[444] Summary Record of the eleventh meeting in the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations, 3 July 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, pp. 633-634.

both parties", Vigier stated.[445] Indeed, he wanted the Israeli delegation to understand that all the same rules should apply to all the sectors inside the demilitarized zone, including the sectors of Ein Gev and Dardara, even if these sectors were not controlled by the Syrian army. Vigier told the Israeli delegation that they could decide whether they would maintain their reservation regarding Ein Gev and Dardara or not. However, the decision would be made when they saw the final text of the agreement.[446] On 3 July, Vigier reported that the negotiations had made excellent progress, even though one or two reservations remained. There was a good chance of concluding the agreement within ten days, Vigier predicted.[447]

During the final phase of the negotiations Bunche spared no effort and used all the influence he had to extract concessions from both parties in order to conclude an agreement.[448] On 5 July, Bunche was quoted in the New York Times, saying that Israel and Syria had reached an armistice agreement. However, according to the UN Secretary General`s office in New York, Bunche`s statement was clearly premature. Apparently, Bunche`s statement was part of a deliberate tactical manoeuvre to speed up the armistice proceedings.[449]

Israel and Syria had agreed on the most difficult issue: A withdrawal of Syrian troops from the bridgeheads inside the former area of Palestine. The condition for the withdrawal was that the area would be established as a demilitarized zone. In the final phase of the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations, most of the details concerning the administration of the demilitarized zone were settled by the work of the drafting committee.

The Work of the Sub-Committees: Issues on the Agenda

Further exchanges of views took place within the framework of the drafting committee, which considered Bunche`s Draft Agreement submitted by Vigier on 4 July. In the course of its three meetings, held 5, 10 and 12 July, several issues were discussed. Simultaneously, a military sub-committee chaired by General Riley worked intensively with military details. Unfortunately, there are limited sources from these discussions. However, the first issue on the agenda of the drafting committee was to decide which text should be referred to in the preamble of the armistice agreement. According to Vigier it was necessary to mention the

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[445] Summary Record of the eleventh meeting in the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations, 3 July 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 634.
[446] Summary Record of the eleventh meeting in the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations, 3 July 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 634.
[447] Austin to Acheson, 5 July 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125.
[448] Flaphan 1987, *The Birth of Israel*, p. 212.
[449] Austin to Acheson, 6 July 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125.

resolution of the UN Security Council of 16 November 1948, and to say that Israel and Syria had acted in response to that particular resolution. Both delegations agreed.[450]

The Demilitarized Zone: Towards a Permanent Non-Solution

The most difficult issue was still the establishment of the demilitarized zone. On 5 July, it was decided that the armistice agreement could not be dependent on the outcome of an ultimate territorial arrangement. In other words, if the Peace Conference in Lausanne failed, the civilian life in the demilitarized zone would proceed without prejudice to the outcome of an ultimate territorial settlement. No further discussions were held about Bunche`s 26 June clarifications, except from minor details which were settled in the drafting sub-committees. Evidently, each side believed that they could do no better. Neither Syria nor Israel requested more precise wording with regard to the civil administration in the demilitarized zone. With the end of the armistice negotiations approaching, neither Israel nor Syria wanted the talks to break down. They were willing to compromise on vague formulations, which did not exactly meet their needs, but which included formulations they could live with. On 8 July, Vigier reported that the drafting subcommittee had agreed on Bunche`s draft article. However, one obstacle remained – the Samakh area south of the Sea of Galilee – which according to Riley "involved some slight concession by Israel".[451] Through the pressure of the UN Acting Mediator, the belligerents were finally ready to arrive at a compromise. In his last message to Sharett, Bunche said:

> I am excerting every effort to clear these final obstacles to the Israeli-Syrian armistice agreement
> and towards this end, Vigier and Riley will visit Tel Aviv on my behalf in order to confer with you
> […] I apologize for once again making a personal appeal to you, but I do so now as in the past
> only because of the crucial nature of the situation and the obviously imperative necessity of
> concluding this final armistice agreement at the earliest possible moment in order that the military
> phase of the Palestine conflict may be finally and fully liquidated.[452]

Towards an Interim Solution: Solving the Final Obstacle

On 8 July, at the end of the second meeting of the military sub-committee, General Riley told Bunche that the committee had achieved agreement on most of the armistice demarcation line

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[450] Summary Record of the first meeting of the drafting committee, 5 July 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 638.
[451] Ross to Acheson, 8 July 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125.
[452] Mohn to Sharett, 14 July 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, pp. 665-667; Austin to Acheson, 13 July 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125.

from the northern end at the Banias front down to the southern end at the Sea of Galilee. However, it was still a few kilometres south of the Sea of Galilee, concerning the Samakh area, where the delegations could not agree. The next meeting of the military sub-committee, on 10 July, was also inconclusive. Riley reported to Bunche that the Syrians wanted the truce line to be extended to include the Samakh area. In reply to the Syrians Bunche explained that the existing truce line could not be changed, and that the Samakh area was on the Israeli side of the line. This line was officially drawn after the second truce of 18 July 1948. Bunche therefore urged the Syrian delegation to accept the existing truce line. Moreover, Ambassador Keeley was instructed by the US Government to take this matter to the Syrian Prime Minister, Muhsin Barazi, and if necessary to President Zaim.[453] In the meantime, however, Riley had asked the Israelis to allow Arab civilians to the Samakh area south of the Sea of Galilee, even if it was outside the demilitarized zone.[454]

During the meeting of the military sub-committee on 12 July, Zaim was telephoned by his delegation. It was agreed that the armistice demarcation line should go east of the Samakh area. However, Zaim added following reservations: First, Israeli troops should be stationed west of the armistice demarcation line; Second, Israeli troops in other sectors should not advance beyond the truce line; and third, he needed an assurance that the Arabs could remain in or return to areas outside the demilitarized zone. The Israelis accepted the first reservation relating to the Israelis advancing beyond the present truce line, but they objected to the other two.[455]

On 14 July, Vigier and Riley met with Israel`s Foreign Minister, Moshe Sharett, in an effort to persuade the Israelis to make some last concessions. Prior to this meeting, Bunche had requested that Sharett should "hear carefully the explanations of the Syrian reservations […] in order that this final agreement may be speedily concluded".[456] The next day, US Ambassador in Tel Aviv, James McDonald, visited Sharett in his office. McDonald emphasized the necessity of an Israeli concession. Sharett replied that Israel had accepted the first two of the Syrian reservations and approximately fifty percent of the third, the one dealing with the rights of civilians. "Zaim", he continued, "should be more than satisfied".[457]

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[453] Austin to Acheson, 11 July 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125.
[454] Austin to Acheson, 11 July 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125; Rafael to Sharett, 11 July 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, p. 657.
[455] Austin to Acheson, 13 July 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125.
[456] Austin to Acheson, 13 July 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125; Mohn to Sharett, 14 July 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, pp. 665-667.
[457] McDonald to Acheson, 15 July 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125.

The Israelis were now willing to meet the Syrians on the following points: First, instructions had been given to the Israeli delegation to accept the proposal that Israeli troops in the Samakh area should be stationed in the Samakh, Massada and Shar Hagolan police stations only; Secondly, instructions had been given in other sectors as well. Israeli forces would not advance beyond the present existing truce line; and thirdly, Israel was prepared to agree that persons owing land within the demilitarized zone and living in Syria were entitled to receive passes allowing them to enter the demilitarized zone in order to cultivate their land. Passes would also be delivered to persons who had fishing rights.[458]

In a message to Bunche, Vigier and Riley pointed out that the Israeli response to the Syrian reservations was positive. According to the UN Chairmen, Israel had gone very far to meet the latest Syrian views. Vigier and Riley stated that the Syrians should agree to an armistice on the terms set in the Israeli response. Moreover, the Syrians should not make new proposals. Vigier and Riley met the Syrian Prime Minister, Muhsin Barazi, on 15 July, were they presented their views. Furthermore, Ambassador Keeley was instructed by the State Department to support the position taken by Vigier and Riley.[459] Indeed, Keeley had good relations with the Syrian Government, and in an effort to persuade the Syrians, he met with Barazi the same day. In the meeting with Keeley, Barazi concluded that the Syrian Government would as "of its appreciation of friendly advice from its friends" accept Israel`s compromise offer. Barazi instructed the Syrian delegation to accept the terms without further discussion. "I have given you my word; it is final", Barazi told Keeley.[460]

The Signing

On 18 July, during the twelfth meeting in the armistice negotiations, the last details in the armistice agreement were concluded. The basic condition that was discussed involved an obligation that no element of the land, sea or air, military or para-military forces of either party should commit any warlike or hostile act against the other. Furthermore, military forces should not advance beyond, or pass over the armistice demarcation line, for any purpose whatsoever. It was also decided that the exchange of prisoners of war should take place immediately after the signing of the armistice agreement.

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[458] Rosenne to Mohn, 14 July 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, pp. 667-668: Ross to Acheson, 15 July 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125.
[459] Ross to Acheson, 15 July 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125.
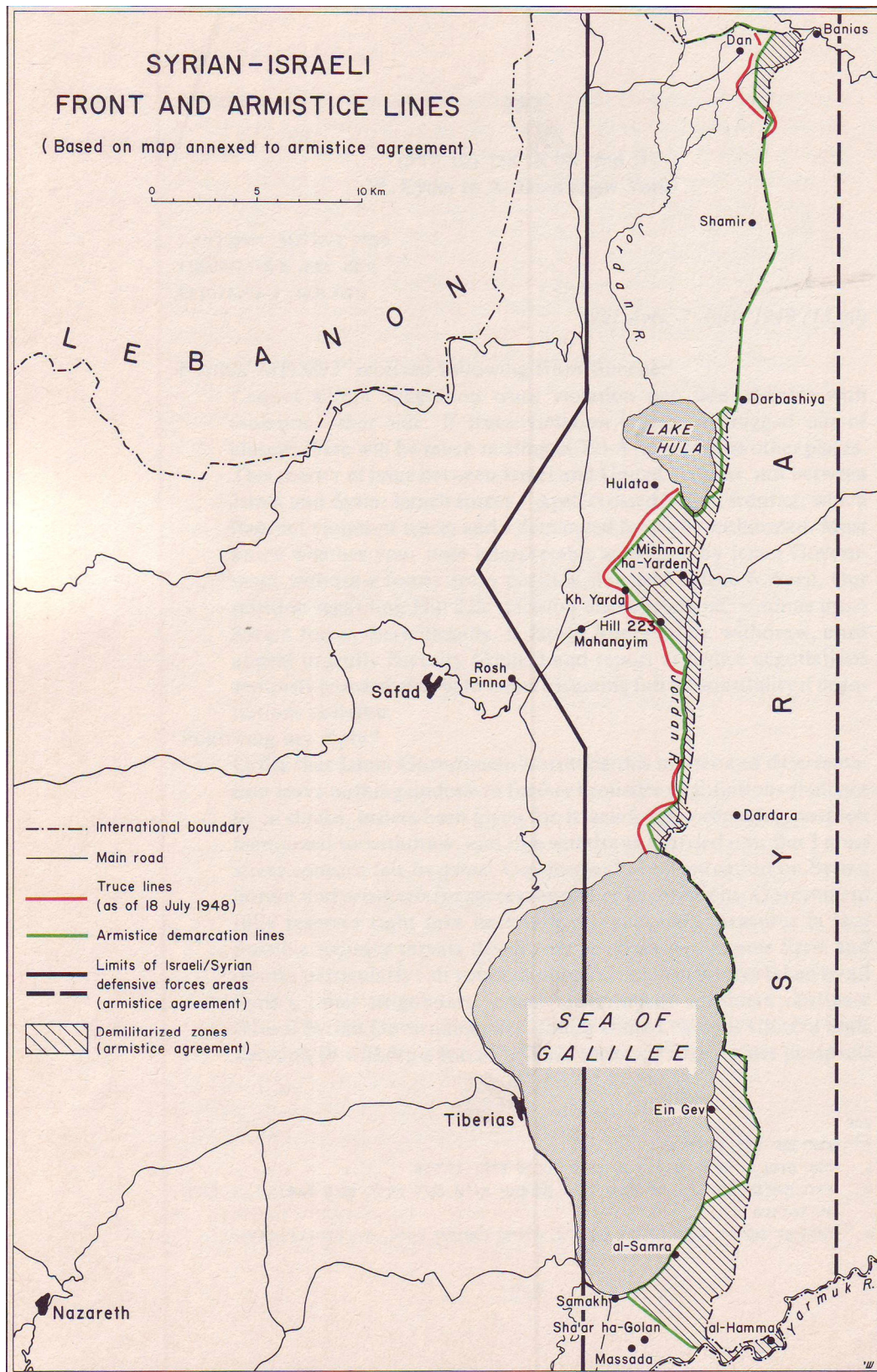[460] Keeley to Acheson, 17 July 1949, RG 59, 501.BB.Palestine, Box 2125.

The implementation of the Agreement was to be supervised by a Mixed Armistice Commission composed of five members, of whom each party designated two, and a Chairman, who belonged to the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO).[461]

These protracted and difficult negotiations ended with the signing of the Israeli-Syrian Armistice Agreement during the thirteenth meeting on 20 July 1949. When Israel and Syria signed the agreement, both parties affirmed that the armistice negotiations had been pursued in order to facilitate the transition from truce to permanent peace in the area. The first Arab-Israeli war was finally officially over, on the Syrian front as well.[462]

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[461] Summary Record of the twelfth meeting in the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations, 18 July 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, pp. 669-673.
[462] Summary Record of the thirteenth meeting in the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations, 20 July 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, Vol. 3 1949, pp. 674-678.

SYRIAN–ISRAELI
FRONT AND ARMISTICE LINES
(Based on map annexed to armistice agreement)

0   5   10 Km

L E B A N O N

S Y R I A

Dan
Banias
Shamir
Darbashiya
LAKE HULA
Hulata
Mishmar ha-Yarden
Kh. Yarda
Hill 223
Mahanayim
Rosh Pinna
Safad
Dardara
SEA OF GALILEE
Ein Gev
Tiberias
al-Samra
Samakh
Sha'ar ha-Golan
al-Hammaa
Massada
Nazareth
Jordan R.
Yarmuk R.

International boundary
Main road
Truce lines
(as of 18 July 1948)
Armistice demarcation lines
Limits of Israeli/Syrian
defensive forces areas
(armistice agreement)
Demilitarized zones
(armistice agreement)

Map 5 Israeli-Syrian front and armistice lines 1948, 1949

Source: Rosenthal, Yemima (ed.): *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel, Vol. 3, December1948- July 1949*. Jerusalem: Israel State Archives 1983, p. 521.

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The Israeli-Syrian Armistice:
A Bridge to Peace that became
The Road to War

Territorial claims advanced by the Israelis and the

Arab states are so conflicting that it is difficult to

see how they can be reconciled.[463]

- US Ambassodor in Syria, James Hugh Keeley, 15 November 1949.

The signing of the Israeli-Syrian armistice agreement on 20 July 1949 renewed the hope that the on-going peace conference at Lausanne in Switzerland would find its way towards a peaceful settlement between Israel and its Arab neighbours. In order to settle the military phase of the Palestine conflict, four armistice agreements between Israel and its Arab neighbours had been signed under the auspices of the United Nations. These armistice agreements were basically meant to be temporary until a final peace agreement was concluded.

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[463] Keeley to Acheson, 15 November 1949, RG 84, 350.Syria, Box 20.

The task of translating the armistice agreements into peace was assigned by the United Nations to the Palestine Conciliation Commission (PCC). However, the PCC was unable to solve the outstanding questions between the belligerents. The Commission failed to bridge the gap between the Arabs and the Israelis and major issues thus remained unsolved. Indeed, the failure of the Lausanne conference came as no surprise to the involved parts. In the last phase of the armistice negotiations between Israel and Syria, the delegations changed a paragraph that referred to the Lausanne conference. The word "Lausanne" was deleted in case of an eventual failure of the conference. Although the PCC was not disbanded, the collapse of Lausanne signalled that the UN had failed to reach a solution to the Palestine conflict.[464]

In retrospect, the armistice agreements, which were supposed to lead to peace negotiations, only achieved their most basic aim: Interim cessations of armed confrontations. Issues that were too sensitive for the armistice negotiations were temporarily postponed in order to settle the armistices. And, as long as no peace agreements followed, these difficult issues became more intricate and complex. Officially, the Israel´s armistice agreement with Egypt remained in effect until late 1956, following the Sinai Campaign, while the other armistices remained in effect until mid-June 1967, following the 1967 war. In reality, though, the armistice agreements had lost all their value years earlier. Indeed, to base relations between countries on fragile armistice agreements, obviously, became impossible. Although the Israeli-Syrian armistice was not seen as a viable solution, the two countries accepted it for the time being because both societies were war torn and both had new regimes that needed to consolidate their power.

Laying the Path for Continued Conflict

The armistice negotiations between Israel and Syria left important issues without clarifying crucial details. In the last phase of the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations, the two sides were finally ready to accept a compromise. Under the terms of an armistice, Syrian forces were to withdraw east of the old international border between Palestine and Syria. Israeli forces were to refrain from entering the evacuated areas, which would become a demilitarized zone. According to the agreement, the armed forces of both parties would be totally excluded, and no activities by military or para-military forces would be permitted in the demilitarized zone. In addition, there were separate defensive areas, which surrounded each of the three demilitarized zones. The defensive areas were designed in order to keep Israel and Syria from

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[464] Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall,* p. 62.

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introducing any forces other than those needed for defence.[465] Moreover, the civilians were authorized to return to their villages or settlements, and the implementation of the agreement was empowered to the Mixed Armistice Commission.

The most crucial territorial issue between the two countries was left undecided, namely the question of the sovereignty inside the demilitarized zone. When the last deadlock in the Israeli-Syrian negotiations was resolved in mid-June, none of the parties wanted to cause the breakdown of the talks. As a result, both parties accepted a compromise on a vaguely worded formulation, which did not meet their needs. Indeed, the UN Acting Mediator, Ralph Bunche, deliberately avoided references to the question of sovereignty in his proposal of 8 June. Bunche probably knew that neither Israel nor Syria would agree on this sensitive issue. If the sovereignty question was to have been raised, it could probably have jeopardized the entire armistice process.

The sovereignty question, after all, was supposed to be discussed during final peace negotiations. Therefore, under these circumstances, the delegations did not raise questions of jurisdiction, citizenship or sovereignty regarding the demilitarized zone. As a consequence, the Israeli-Syrian Armistice Agreement proved to be of a short-lasting nature. The Acting Mediator, Ralph Bunche, formulated solutions that created a state of belligerency between Israel and Syria. Even though Bunche and his assistants succeeded in negotiating interim territorial arrangements, their mediation effort contributed little to the political solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

In the end of the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations, the UN mediators were in a hurry to reach an agreement between Israel and Syria. As a result, an agreement was signed without clarifying crucial issues in the agreement. In the aftermath, it seems clear that avoiding a further clarification, just in order to reach a deal, actually led to renewed conflict and, in the end, war. Israel and Syria had never sorted out or agreed upon the crucial sovereignty issue. Many years later, the mistake was repeated in another crucial round of negotiations, the Oslo process in the 1990s. The agreement, though no peace treaty, but another interim solution contained many vaguely formulated intensions. The Israelis and the Palestinians never actually clarified what was meant by all the vague clauses. If so had been done, there would never have been any deal. The peace negotiators, as well as the Israelis and Palestinians,

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[465] Neff 1994, *Israel and Syria: Conflict at the Jordan River, 1949-1967*, p. 27.

preferred reaching any agreement. It was better with an "imperfect peace than a perfect war".[466]

However, the whole Oslo enterprise led to renewed conflict and war. Lessons learned from 1949 as well as 1993 that vaguely formulated agreements, just in order to reach a deal, might actually create new conflict and not any sustainable peace.

Bunche`s compromise proposal resulted in the establishment of the demilitarized zone. Furthermore, this contested area became a buffer zone. However, rather than having the positive effects it was intended to have, the very "neutral" nature of the buffer zone made it into a disputed territory. This zone was therefore an endless source of friction between Israel and Syria. Israel and Syria did enjoy a year and a half of non-violent relations. The first military clash, in the spring of 1951, was a Syrian response to an Israeli attempt to change the status quo inside the demilitarized zone.[467] The Israelis did not accept the 1949 armistice lines with Syria as final and hoped to change them. If not by war, the Israelis were intent on finding other ways to mark their dissatisfaction with the Israeli-Syrian armistice agreement. Moshe Dayan, who served as Israeli Defence Minister during 1967, defined Israel`s behaviour in the demilitarized zone between 1949 and 1967 as follows: "Snatching bits of territory and holding on to it until the enemy despairs and gives it to us" were important measures in order to achieve Israel`s basic aims.[468]

The Consequences of an Interim Solution: The Road to the 1967 War

The Israeli-Syrian armistice line was conducive to the conflict, above all, because it contained three demilitarized zones whose status had not been clearly defined in the Israeli-Syrian armistice agreement. The root cause of the dispute between Israel and Syria, and of their armed clashes, was the question of sovereignty. Syria maintained that the demilitarized zones needed to remain under the supervision of the UN, until a final peace agreement settled the status of the sovereignty question. Israel, on the other hand, claimed that the demilitarized zones were on Israeli territory, and that Israel had the sovereign status in the area. The armistice agreement, however, merely called for the restoration of normal civilian life in these zones, pending the conclusion of a final peace agreement. The armistice said nothing about

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[466] Waage 2004, *Peacemaking is a Risky Business*, p. 139. See also Hilde Henriksen Waage, "Norway´s Role in the Middle East Peace talks: Between a Strong State and a Weak Belligerent", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 4, University of California 2005.
[467] Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, p. 68-69; See also Shalev 1993, *The Israel-Syria Armistice Regime*, pp. 51-80; Bar-Yaacov 1967, *The Israel-Syrian Armistice*, pp. 66-280.
[468] Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, p. 236.

which of the two that should have sovereignty over them. The Acting Mediator, Ralph Bunche, and his assistants, Henri Vigier and General William E. Riley, claimed that the UN had sovereign authority in the demilitarized zone.[469]

The majority of the population inside the area were Palestinian farmers. Israel feared that Syria would manipulate this population to extend its influence. Almost immediately after the signing of the armistice agreement, Israel embarked upon a policy of creating facts on the ground inside the demilitarized zone. Indeed, Israel`s Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion saw full control over the demilitarized zone as a vital need for Israel`s security. Thus, the Israelis wanted to squeeze the Syrians out of the demilitarized zone even if this was not according to the spirit of the Israeli-Syrian armistice agreement. Ben-Gurion`s policy was not to preserve the status quo in the demilitarized zone, but to change it. This policy had three principal aims: First, to establish physical control over the demilitarized zone; Secondly, to contain Syrian influence; and thirdly, to dismiss UN authority.[470] To achieve these aims, Israel purchased land from Arab villagers, developed Jewish settlements and refused to recognize the jurisdiction of the UN. The Israeli attitude disturbed Syrians as well as UN observers.

In early 1951, Israel embarked on a major development project: Draining Lake Hula. The project was important to Israel for two reasons: Economically, it would increase Israel`s water supply and the amount of land available for farming. Politically, Israel`s position in the demilitarized zone would be strengthened.[471] Evidently, as long as the work was carried out on Israeli territory, even inside the demilitarized zone, around Jewish settlements, Syria raised no objections. However, when the Israelis disregarded the rules of the demilitarized zone and started to work in Syrian controlled villages, Syria complained to the Israeli-Syrian Mixed Armistice Commission (MAC). General William Riley, the chairman of the MAC, ordered the project to be suspended until further clarification. Nevertheless, Israel continued the drainage work and even took steps to assert Israeli sovereignty. One of these steps was forcible evacuation of eight hundred inhabitants of two Arab villages from the demilitarized zone. The UN observers condemned the action.[472] This was the beginning of the dispute that led to the first military confrontation between Israel and Syria since the first Arab-Israeli war.

On 4 April 1951, the Israel Defence Force decided to provoke the Syrian army by sending in a patrol of soldiers dressed up as policemen into the Syrian dominated part of the

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[469] Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, p. 69.
[470] Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, pp. 69-71.
[471] Shalev 1993, *The Israel-Syria Armistice Regime*, pp. 51-52; Morris 1993, *Israel`s Border Wars*, pp. 66-67; Neff 1994, *Israel-Syria: Conflict at the Jordan River, 1949-1967*, pp. 29-35.
[472] Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, p. 71; Shalev 1993, *The Israel-Syria Armistice Regime*, p. 71.

demilitarized zone. Their intention was to wave the Israeli flag in front of the Syrians. The Syrian army responded violently and killed seven members of the patrol. The next day, Ben-Gurion and the Israeli Cabinet decided to destroy three Arab villages inside the demilitarized zone.[473] Even though the military confrontations ended a month later, the parties could not decide on the key issue, namely the sovereignty over the demilitarized zone. The armistice regime between Israel and Syria did not collapse suddenly: The process was gradual. With the sovereignty issue unsolved, armed conflict, logically, was unavoidable. The armistice, originally intended to be a bridge to peace turned out to be a road to war. As always, the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

Throughout the period leading up to the 1967 war, the Israelis resumed cultivation of land in the demilitarized zone in a manner that provoked the Syrians. Gradually, Israel imposed its sovereignty over the demilitarized zones.[474] The general Israeli trend was to retaliate forcefully against low-level Syrian aggression and to escalate the military contest in order to force the Syrian regime to desist from hostile activities.[475] According to Moshe Dayan:

> It would go like this. We would send a tractor to plow the earth in some plot you couldn´t do
> anything with, in a demilitarized zone, knowing in advance that the Syrians would start shooting.
> If they didn´t shoot, we tell the tractor to go farther, until finally the Syrians would lose their temper
> and shoot. And then we´d fire back, and later send in the air force.[476]

The overwhelming Israeli victory in the 1967 war led to the achievement of their essential aims within the 1949 borders. Even though the armistice lines were reconfirmed in the aftermath of the Sinai Campaign in 1956, the Israelis occupied the remaining demilitarized zones when they captured the whole Golan Heights during the 1967 war.[477] Furthermore, when UN Resolution 242 was concluded in 1967, it became clear that Israel had become the sovereign authority in the demilitarized zone.[478] The armistice agreement between Israel and Syria signed in 1949 had proven to be most valuable to Israel.

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[473] Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, pp. 71-73.
[474] Neff 1994, *Israel-Syria: Conflict at the Jordan River, 1949-1967*, p. 35.
[475] Shlaim 2001, *The Iron Wall*, p. 234. For more information about this period, see Morris 1993, *Israel`s Border Wars 1949-1956*.
[476] Tom Segev, *1967, Israel, the War, and the Year That Transformed the Middle East*, Metropolitan Books, New York 2005, p. 193.
[477] Michael B. Oren, *Six Days of War, June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East*, Ballantine Books, New York 2003, pp. 300-304. See also Segev 2005, *1967, Israel, the War, and the Year That Transformed the Middle East*, pp. 385-416.
[478] Oren 2005, *Six Days of War, June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East*, pp. 323-327.

The state of belligerency between Israel and Syria is still a dominant force in the non-existing relationship between the two parties. Israel maintains that its 1949 armistice agreement with Syria ceased to exist as a consequence of the 1967 war, while Syria, on the other hand, maintains that the armistice agreement is still valid. In practice, as long as no peace agreement has replaced the armistice, the armistice must still be said to remain in force.

The Game of Contradictory Arguments

Throughout the armistice negotiations in the first half of 1949, Israel thoroughly knew how to exploit and play the game of tactics, in stark comparison with its Arab enemies. In order to achieve its territorial aims, without actually keeping it a secret, Israel introduced a method of changing arguments to their advantage according to what the situation demanded. Indeed, the Israelis succeeded. In comparison to the UN partition plan, the armistice lines had enlarged Israel´s territory from 56 percent to 77 percent on the whole. During all the armistice negotiations in 1949, the Israelis used different borders in order to obtain more territory, and they were always one step ahead of their Arab opponents.

The Arab states signed the armistice agreements believing that an ultimate peace settlement would solve the final border issues. Otherwise they would not have signed the armistice agreements. For the Arabs, the armistices were merely interim solutions. Indeed, in case of an eventual peace conference, the Israelis would have to give back large areas of land and hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees would be allowed to return. According to Israel`s undisputed leader, Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, the armistice agreements met Israel`s essential needs regarding security and stability. According to the Israelis, the price for peace was too high. A clear example of how the Israelis did not pursue the road of peace was Ben-Gurion´s rejection to meet the Syrian President, Husni Zaim. Zaim proposed to skip the armistice talks and go directly to bilateral peace talks between Israel and Syria. Zaim even offered to resettle 250.000 or more Palestinian refugees in Syria. However, from Ben-Gurion`s point of view, as long as the Syrians did not withdraw its forces to the pre-war lines, Ben-Gurion maintained that there was no point in such talks.

In general, Ben-Gurion knew that for formal peace agreements Israel would have to pay by yielding territory to its neighbours, but most importantly, Israel had to agree to the return of a substantial number of Palestinians. It is therefore questionable why Ben-Gurion refused to explore Zaim´s offer considering that Syria was ready to absorb part of the refugee problem. Were a couple of square kilometres on the Israeli-Syrian border not worth paying in

exchange for peace? Was Ben-Gurion in reality so sure of Israel´s position that he gambled with peace offers? Did he know that in the long-term, Israel would have it its way no matter what? Was he really that calculated?

Simultaneously, the Syrians had no legal right to the contested area. It was under no circumstance stipulated as belonging to Syria. However, in order to keep the territory under Syrian control, they played the game of contradictory arguments as well. By using the UN resolution of 15 July 1948, they managed to exclude the Israelis from the area. Indeed, the Israelis tasted their own medicine since the Syrians were almost as argumentative as they had been in the previous armistices with the other Arab states. Walter Eytan, the Director General of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, had the following comment about the Syrian delegation: "The delegates of Syria were fiercely argumentative, evidently regarding diplomacy as a form of aggression, and well able to stand up for the rights of their country".[479] Apparently, the Syrians took the Israelis by surprise.

In the end, the competition of territory overshadowed the Palestinian refugee problem. "Another deal, and as usual the Palestine Arabs lose", Bunche commented.[480] Even though the Syrians claimed to speak on the behalf of the Palestinians, they were forgotten during the conclusion of the Israeli-Syrian armistice agreement.

The Palestinian refugee question was to become the main bone of contention in the Arab-Israeli conflict. But, since Israel preferred to negotiate bilaterally, they managed to isolate each of the Arab countries. Under these circumstances, Israel did not have to confront the major issues that needed to be solved in cooperation with the Arab world as a whole. A state of belligerency thus became the new order in the Middle East, and between Israel and Syria, this position is still a dominant force.

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[479] Eytan 1958, *The First Ten Years*, p. 38.
[480] Urquhart 1993, *Ralph Bunche, An American Life*, p. 217.

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Appendix I: Israeli-Syrian General Armistice Agreement, July 20, 1949

Preamble

The Parties to the present Agreement, responding to the Security Council resolution of 16 November 1948, (2) calling upon them, as a further provisional measure under Article 40 of the Charter of the United Nations and in order to facilitate the transition from the present truce to permanent peace in Palestine, to negotiate an armistice; having decided to enter into negotiations under United Nations (chairmanship concerning the implementation of the Security Council resolution of 16 November 1948; and having appointed representatives empowered to negotiate and conclude an Armistice Agreement;

The undersigned representatives, having exchanged their full powers found to be in good and proper form, have agreed upon the following provisions:

Article I

With a view to promoting the return of permanent peace in Palestine and in recognition of the importance in this regard of mutual assurances concerning the future military operations of the Parties, the following principles, which shall be fully observed by both Parties during the armistice, are hereby affirmed:

1. The injunction of the Security Council against resort to military force in the settlement of the Palestine question shall henceforth be scrupulously respected by both Parties. The establishment of an armistice between their armed forces is accepted as an indispensable step toward the liquidation of armed conflict and the restoration of peace in Palestine.

2. No aggressive action by the armed forces-land, sea or air-of either Party shall be undertaken, planned, or threatened against the people or the armed forces of the other; it being understood that the use of the term planned in this context has no bearing on normal staff planning as generally practiced in military organizations.

3. The right of each Party to its security and freedom from fear of attack by the armed forces of the other shall be fully respected.

Article II

With a specific view to the implementation of the resolution of the Security Council of 16 November 1948, the following principles and purposes are affirmed:

1. The principle that no military or political advantage should be gained under the truce ordered by the Security Council is recognized.

2. It is also recognized that no provision of this Agreement shall in any way prejudice the rights, claims and positions of either Party hereto in the ultimate peaceful settlement of the Palestine question, the provisions of this Agreement being dictated exclusively by military, and not by political, considerations.

Article III

1. In pursuance of the foregoing principles and of the resolution of the Security Council of 16 November 1948, a general armistice between the armed forces of the two Parties-land, sea and air-is hereby established.

2. No element of the land, sea or air, military or pare-military, forces of either Party, including non-regular forces, shall commit any warlike or hostile act against the military or pare-military forces of the other Party, or against civilians in territory under the control of that Party; or shall advance beyond or pass over for any purpose whatsoever the Armistice Demarcation Line set forth in article V of this Agreement; or enter into or pass through the air space of the other Party or through the waters within three miles of the coastline of the other Party.

3. No warlike act or act of hostility shall be conducted from territory controlled by one of the Parties to this Agreement against the other Party or against civilians in territory under control of that Party.

Article IV

1. The line described in article V of this Agreement shall be designated as the Armistice Demarcation Line and is delineated in pursuance of the purpose and intent of the resolution of the Security Council of 16 November 1948.

2. The basic purpose of the Armistice Demarcation Line is to delineate the line beyond which the armed forces of the respective Parties shall not move.

3. Rules and regulations of the armed forces of the Parties, which prohibit civilians from crossing the fighting lines or entering the area between the lines, shall remain in effect after the signing of this Agreement, with application to the Armistice Demarcation Line defined in Article V, subject to the provisions of paragraph 5 of that article.

Article V

1. It is emphasized that the following arrangements for the Armistice Demarcation Line between the Israeli and Syrian armed forces and for the Demilitarized Zone are not to be interpreted as having any relation whatsoever to ultimate territorial arrangements affecting the two Parties to this Agreement.

2. In pursuance of the spirit of the Security Council resolution of 16 November 1948, the Armistice Demarcation Line and the Demilitarized Zone have been defined with a view toward separating the armed forces of the two Parties in such manner as to minimize the possibility of friction and incident, while providing for the gradual restoraton [restoration] of normal civilian life in the area of the Demilitarized Zone, without prejudice to the ultimate settlement.

3. The Armistice Demarcation Line shall be as delineated on the map attached to this

Agreement as annex I.(3) The Armistice Demarcation Line shall follow a line midway between the existing truce lines, as certified by the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization for the Israeli and Syrian forces. Where the existing truce lines run along the international boundary between Syria and Palestine, the Armistice Demarcation Line shall follow the boundary line

4. The armed forces of the two Parties shall nowhere advance beyond the Armistice Demarcation Line.

5. (a) Where the Armistice Demarcation Line does not correspond to the international boundary between Syria and Palestine, the area between the Armistice Demarcation Line and the boundary, pending final territorial settlement between the Parties, shall be established as a Demilitarized Zone from which the armed forces of both Parties shall be totally excluded, and in which no activities by military or pare-military forces shall be permitted. This provision applies to the Ein Gev and Dardara sectors which shall form part of the Demilitarized Zone.

(b) Any advance by the armed forces, military or pare-military, of either Party into any part of the Demilitarized Zone, when confirmed by the United Nations representatives referred to in the following sub-paragraph, shall constitute a flagrant violation of this Agreement.

(c) The Chairman of the Mixed Armistice Commission established in article VII of this Agreement and United Nations observers attached to the Commission shall be responsible for ensuring the full implementation of this article.

(d) The withdrawal of such armed forces as are now found in the Demilitarized Zone shall be in accordance with the schedule of withdrawal annexed to this Agreement (annex II). (4)

(e) The Chairman of the Mixed Armistice Commission shall be empowered to authorize the return of civilians to villages and settlements in the Demilitarized Zone and the employment of limited numbers of locally recruited civilian police in the zone for internal security purposes, and shall be guided in this regard by the schedule of withdrawal referred to in sub-paragraph (d) of this article.

6. On each side of the Demilitarized Zone there shall be areas, as defined in annex III to this Agreement, in which defensive forces only shall be maintained, in accordance with the definition of defensive forces set forth in annex IV (5) to this Agreement.

Article VI
All prisoners of war detained by either Party to this Agreement and belonging to the armed forces, regular or irregular, of the other Party, shall be exchanged as follows:

1. The exchange of prisoners of war shall be under United Nations supervision and control throughout. The exchange shall take place at the site of the Armistice Conference within twenty-four hours of the signing of this Agreement.

2. Prisoners of war against whom a penal prosecution may be pending, as well as those sentenced for crime or other offence, shall be included in this exchange of prisoners.

3. All articles of personal use, valuables, letters, documents, identification marks, and other personal erects of whatever nature, belonging to prisoners of war who are being exchanged, shall be returned to them, or, if they have escaped or died, to the Party to whose armed forces they belonged.

4. All matters not specifically regulated in this Agreement shall be decided in accordance with the principles laid down in the International Convention relating to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, signed at Geneva on 27 July 1929.(6)

5. The Mixed Armistice Commission established in article VII of this Agreement shall assume responsibility for locating missing persons, whether military or civilian, within the areas controlled by each Party, to facilitate their expeditious exchange. Each Party undertakes to extend to the Commission full co-operation and assistance in the discharge of this function.

Article VII
1. The execution of the provisions of this Agreement shall be supervised by a Mixed Armistice Commission composed of five members, of whom each Party to this Agreement shall designate two, and whose Chairman shall be the United Nations Chief of Staff of the Truce Supervision Organization or a senior officer from the observer personnel of that organization designated by him following consultation with both Parties to this Agreement.

2. The Mixed Armistice Commission, shall maintain its headquarters at the Customs House near Jisr Banat Ya'qub and at Mahanayim, and shall hold its meetings at such places and at such times as it may deem necessary for the effective conduct of its work.

3. The Mixed Armistice Commission shall be convened in its first meeting by the United Nations Chief of Staff of the Truce Supervision Organization not later than one week following the signing of this Agreement.

4. Decisions of the Mixed Armistice Commission, to the extent possible, shall be based on the principle of unanimity. In the absence of unanimity, decisions shall be taken by majority vote of the members of the Commission present and voting.

5. The Mixed Armistice Commission shall formulate its own rules of procedure. Meetings shall be held only after due notice to the members by the Chairman. The quorum for its meetings shall be a majority of its members.

6. The Commission shall be empowered to employ observers, who may be from among the military organizations of the Parties or from the military personnel of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization, or from both, in such numbers as may be considered essential to the performance of its functions. In the event United Nations observers should be

so employed, they shall remain under the command of the United Nations Chief of Staff of the Truce Supervision Organization. Assignments of a general or special nature given to United Nations observers attached to the Mixed Armistice Commission shall be subject to approval by the United Nations Chief of Staff or his designated representative on the Commission, whichever is serving as Chairman.

7. Claims or complaints presented by either Party relating to the application of this Agreement shall be referred immediately to the Mixed Armistice Commission through its Chairman. The Commission shall take such action on all such claims or complaints by means of its observation and investigation machinery as it may deem appropriate, with a view to equitable and mutually satisfactory settlement.

8. Where interpretation of the meaning of a particular provision of this Agreement, other than the preamble and articles I and II, is at issue, the Commission's interpretation shall prevail. The Commission, in its discretion and as the need arises, may from time to time recommend to the Parties modifications in the provisions of this Agreement.

9. The Mixed Armistice Commission shall submit to both Parties reports on its activities as frequently as it may consider necessary. A copy of each such report shall be presented to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for transmission to the appropriate organ or agency of the United Nations.

10. Members of the Commission and its observers shall be accorded such freedom of movement and access in the area covered by this Agreement as the Commission may determine to be necessary, provided that when such decisions of the Commission are reached by a majority vote United Nations observers only shall be employed.
11. The expenses of the Commission, other than those relating to United Nations observers, shall be apportioned in equal shares between the two Parties to this Agreement.

Article VIII
1. The present Agreement is not subject to ratification and shall come into force immediately upon being signed

2 This Agreement, having been negotiated and concluded in pursuance of the resolution of the Security Council of 16 November 1948, calling for the establishment of an armistice in order to eliminate the threat to the peace in Palestine and to facilitate the transition from the present truce to permanent peace in Palestine, shall remain in force until a peaceful settlement between the Parties is achieved, except as provided in paragraph 3 of this article.

3. The Parties to this Agreement may, by mutual consent, revise this Agreement or any of its provisions, or may suspend its application, other than articles I and III, at any time. In the absence of mutual agreement and after this Agreement has been in effect for one year from the date of its signing, either of the Parties may call upon the Secretary-General of the United Nations to convoke a conference of representatives of the two Parties for the purpose of

reviewing, revising, or suspending any of the provisions of this Agreement other than articles I and III. Participation in such conferences shall be obligatory upon the Parties.

4. If the conference provided for in paragraph 3 of this article does not result in an agreed solution of a point in dispute, either Party may bring the matter before the Security Council of the United Nations for the relief sought, on the grounds that this Agreement has been concluded in pursuance of Security Council action toward the end of achieving peace in Palestine.

5. This Agreement, of which the English and French texts are equally authentic, is signed in quintuplicate. One copy shall be retained by each Party, two copies communicated to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for transmission to the Security Council and the United Nations Conciliation Commission on Palestine, and one copy to the Acting Mediator on Palestine.

DONE at Hill 232 near Mahanayim on the twentieth of July nineteen forty-nine, in the presence of the personal deputy of the United Nations Acting Mediator on Palestine and the United Nations Chief of Staff of the Truce Supervision Organization.

Appendix II: United Nations Security Council Resolution 61; November 4, 1948

[S/1070]

The Security Council,

Having decided on 15 July 1948 that, subject to further decision by the Security Council or the General Assembly, the truce shall remain in force is accordance with resolution 54 (1948) of that date and with resolution 50 (1948) of 29 May 1948 to a peaceful adjustment of the future situation of Palestine is reached,

Having decided on 19 August that no party is permitted to violate the truce on the ground that it is undertaking reprisals or retaliations against the other party, and that no party is entitled to gain military or political advantage through violation of the truce,

Having decided on 29 May that, if the truce was subsequently repudiated or violated by either party or by both, the Situation in Palestine could be reconsidered with a view to action under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations,

Takes, note of the request communicated to the Government of Egypt and the Provisional Government of Israel by the Acting Mediator on 26 October 48 following upon the decisions adopted by the Security Council on 19 October 1948;

Calls upon the interested Governments, without prejudice to their rights, claims or positions with regard to a peaceful adjustment of the future situation of Palestine or to the position, which the Members of the United Nations may wish to hike in the General Assembly on such peaceful adjustment:

(1) To withdraw those of their forces, which have advanced beyond the positions held on 14 October the Acting Mediator being authorized to establish provisional lines beyond which no movement of troops shall take place;

(2) To establish, through negotiations conducted directly between the parties, or, failing that, through the intermediaries in the service of the United Nations permanent truce Ones and such neutral or demilitarized zones as may appear advantageous, in order to ensure henceforth the full observance of the truce in that area. Failing an agreement, the permanent lines and neutral zones shall be established by decision of the Acting Mediator;

Appoints a committee of the Council, consisting of the five permanent members together with Belgium and Colombia, to give such advice as the Acting Mediator may require with regard to his responsibilities under this resolution and, in the event that either party or both should

fail to comply with sub-paragraphs (1) and (2) of the preceding paragraph of this resolution within whatever time limits the Acting Mediator may think it desirable to fix, to study as a matter of urgency and to report to the Council on further measures it would be appropriate to take under Chapter VII of the Charter.

Appendix III: United Nations Security Council Resolution 62, November 16, 1948

[S/1080]

The Security Council,

Reaffirming its previous resolutions concerning the establishment and implementation of the truce in Palestine, and recalling particularly its resolution 54 (1948) of 15 July 1948 which determined that the situation in Palestine constitutes a threat to the peace within the meaning of Article 39 of the Charter of the United Nations,

Taking note that the General Assembly is continuing its consideration of the future government of Palestine in response to the request of the Security Council in its resolution 44 (1948) of 1 April 1948,

Without prejudice to the actions of the Acting Mediator regarding the implementation of Security Council resolution 61 (1948) of 4 November 1948,

1. Decide that, in order to eliminate the threat to the peace in Palestine and to facilitate the transition from the present truce to permanent peace in Palestine, an armistice shall be established in an sectors of Palestine;

2. Calls upon the parties directly involved in the conflict in Palestine, as a further provisional measure under Article 40 of the Charter, to seek agreement forthwith, by negotiations conducted either directly or through the Acting Mediator, with a view to the immediate establishment of the armistice, including:

(a) The delineation of permanent armistice demarcation lines beyond which the armed forces of the respective parties shad not move;

(b) Such withdrawal and reduction of their armed forces 4 win ensure the maintenance of the armistice during the transition to permanent peace in Palestine.

Appendix IV: United Nations Security Council Resolution 54; July 15, 1948

[S/902]

The Security Council,

Taking into consideration that the Provisional Government of Israel has indicated its acceptance in principle of a prolongation of the truce in Palestine that the States members of the Arab League have rejected successive appeals of the United Nations Mediator, and of the Security Council in its resolution 53 (1948) of 7 July 1948, for the prolongation of the truce in Palestine; and that there has consequently developed a renewal of hostilities in Palestine,

1. Determines that the situation in Palestine constitutes a threat to the peace within the meaning of Article 39 of the Charter of the United Nations;

2. Orders the Governments and authorities concerned, pursuant to Article 40 of the Charter, to desist from further military action and to this end to issue cease-fire orders to their military and paramilitary forces, to hike effect at a time to be determined by the Mediator, but in any event not later than three days from the date of the adoption of this resolution

3. Declares that failure by any of the Governments or authorities concerned to comply with the preceding paragraph of this resolution would demonstrate the existence of a breach of the peace within the meaning of Article 39 of the Charter requiting immediate consideration by the Security Council with a view to such further action under Chapter VII of the Charter as may be decided upon by the Council;

4. Calls upon all Governments and authorities concerned to continue to co-operate with the Mediator with a view to the maintenance of peace in Palestine in conformity with resolution 50 (1948) adopted by the Security Council on 29 May 1948;

5. Orders as a matter of special and urgent necessity an immediate and unconditional cease-fire in the City of Jerusalem to take effect twenty-four hours from the tine of the adoption of this resolution, and instructs the Truce Commission to take any necessary steps to make this cease-fire effective;

6. Instructs the Mediator to continue his efforts to bring about the demilitarization of the City of Jerusalem, without prejudice to the future political status of Jerusalem, and to assure the protection of and access to the Holy Places, religious buildings and sites in Palestine;

7. Instructs the Mediator to supervise the observance of the truce and to establish procedures for examining alleged breaches of the truce since 11 June 1948, authorizes him to deal with

breaches so far as it is within his capacity to do so by appropriate local action, and requests him to keep the Security Council currently informed concerning the operation of the truce and when necessary to take appropriate action;

8. Decides that, subject to further decision by the Security Council or the General Assembly, the truce shale remain in force, in accordance with the present resolution and with resolution 50 (1948) of 29 May 1948, until a peaceful adjustment of the future situation of Palestine is reached;

9. Reiterates the appeal to the parties contained in the last paragraph of its resolution 49 (1948) of 22 May 1948 and urges upon the parties that they continue conversations with the Mediator in a spirit of conciliation and mutual concession in order that all points under dispute may h settled peacefully;

10. Requests the Secretary-General to provide the Mediator with the necessary skiff and facilities to assist in carrying out the functions assigned to him under General Assembly resolution 186 (S-2) of 14 May 1948 and under this resolution;

11. Requests that the Secretary-General make appropriate arrangements to provide necessary funds to meet the obligations arising from this resolution.

Appendix V: United Nations Security Council Resolution 50; May 29, 1948

50 (1948). Resolution of 29 May 1948   [S/801]

The Security Council,

Desiring to bring about a cessation of hostilities in Palestine without prejudice to the rights, claims and position of either Arabs or Jews,

1. Calls upon all Governments and authorities concerned to order a cessation of all acts of ammed force for a period of four weeks;

2. Calls upon all Governments and authorities concerned to undertake that they will not introduce fighting personnel into Palestine, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon Saudi Arabia, Syria, Transjordan and Yemen during the cease-fire;

3. Calls upon all Governments and authorities concerned, should men of military age be introduced into countries or territories under their control, to undertake not to mobilize or submit them to military training during the cease-fire;

4. Calls upon all Governments and authorities concerned to refrain from importing or exporting war material. into or to Palestine, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Transjordan or Yemen during the cease-fire;

5. Urges all Governments and authorities concerned to take every possible precaution for the protection of the Holy Places and of the City of Jerusalem, including access to all shrines and sanctuaries for the purpose of worship by those who have an established tight to visit and worship at them;

6. Instructs the United Nations Mediator in Palestine, in concert with the Truce Commission, to supervise the observance of the above provisions, and decides that they shall be provided with a sufficient number of military observers;

7. Instructs the United Nations Mediator to make contact with all parties as soon as the cease-fire is in force with a view to carding out his functions as determined by the General Assembly;

8. Calls upon all concerned to give the greatest possible assistance to the United Nations Mediator;

9. Instructs the United Nations Mediator to make a weekly report to the Security Council

during the cease-fire;

10. Invites the States members of the Arab League and the Jewish and Arab authorities in Palestine to communicate their acceptance of the resolution to the Security Council not later than 6 p.m. New York standard time on 1 June 1948;

11. Decides that it the prevent resolution is rejected by either party or by both, or If, having been accepted, it is subsequently repudiated or violated, the situation in Palestine will be reconsidered with a view to action under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations;

12. Calls upon all Governments to take all possible steps to assist in the implementation of this resolution.