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# Behind the Lines: The Partitions of British India and Mandatory Palestine, 1937-1948

Jessica Solodkin

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*Behind the Lines: The Partitions of British  
India and Mandatory Palestine, 1937-1948*

**By Jessica Solodkin**

Thesis Supervisor: Abigail McGowan

Honors College Thesis

Department of History

University of Vermont

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For my parents, Mily Lilienthal and Mario Solodkin.

For my brother, Jorge Solodkin.

For my grandparents.

## INTRODUCTION

On 15 August 1947, what had been the British Raj for nearly a century became the newly sovereign states of India and Pakistan. Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs celebrated their independence from the British and the fact that they were now sovereign peoples of two different states. Just three months prior, no one knew where the boundaries would fall, let alone anticipated the principle of partition. Indeed, it is difficult to believe that commissions formed, meetings were held, and boundaries were implemented, all in that short period of time. While August 15 brought freedom from the British, it also brought some of the worst terrors and violence that the region would see. Despite the violence, however, the Radcliffe Boundary—the border that divides present-day India and Pakistan—persisted ever since it was drawn.

On 14 May 1948, the British withdrew from the Palestine mandate, and David Ben-Gurion, who would become first prime minister of Israel, declared the independence of the new Jewish state. The Zionist dreams of a Jewish homeland were now proving to be a reality; Jews all around the world rejoiced that they could then call Israel their Jewish home. The Arabs, however, were outraged; they vehemently opposed the creation of the new state of Israel. After all, their requests for the creation of a single Arab state had been ignored, and they feared that the presence of a Jewish state would displace their populations. Not surprisingly, the day after Israel was declared an independent state, the Arab-Israeli War of 1948 or the War of Independence erupted. Arab nations attacked Israel, causing violence that would persist until the present day. Not only did the boundaries keep consistently changing thereafter, but they were never officially agreed upon despite the long phase of partition efforts.

If both cases were partitioned only ten months apart from each other, were both under British rule, and both had to do with religious conflict, then why did the partition of British India

in 1947 and the partition of British-mandated Palestine in 1948, both areas under British rule and with religious populations, produce different results? Why, by 1948, had the Radcliffe Boundary produced two independent, cartographically viable states in British India, while the proposed partition of British-mandated Palestine produced only one state with consistently changing boundaries?

My aim is to understand why the Radcliffe Boundary remained cartographically stable ever since it was drawn in 1947, as opposed to the boundaries of mandatory Palestine drawn in 1948. By taking a comparative approach, I was able to identify and analyze seven different factors that had key, influential roles in producing the different results. Those factors include the following: the presence (or lack) of an initial mutual agreement; the speed and secrecy of the processes; the size of the territories; the significance (cultural and religious) of the territories; the form of British rule (mandate v. colony); the types of immigration (static v. fluctuating); and the prioritization of different interests (domestic v. foreign) involved. Some of these factors played a larger role than others, but they all had an impact on the fates of both cases. The presence of these factors—or lack thereof—help explain why the partition of British India succeeded in creating two cartographically viable states and the partition of mandatory Palestine failed in doing likewise.

It is important to note that when I use the word “stability,” I am only referring to the *cartographic* stability of the Radcliffe Boundary that the partition of British India produced. While the partition produced high levels of violence, bloodshed, and detrimental results, the fact remains that the border separating present-day India and Pakistan has remained identifiable and stable ever since it were implemented. While I define the cartographic stability of this boundary as “successful,” I am not undermining or invalidating the violence that ensued on the ground.

Likewise, when I use the word “failed” I am not denying Israel’s existence as a failure, but rather referring to the fact that its boundaries were not as cartographically stable and have kept consistently changing. Furthermore, the Palestine case did not produce two viable states—as was the case in India—but only one state that has been the subject of considerable debate and controversy.

The focus of this project is on the Radcliffe Boundary and on the boundaries proposed to partition the state of Israel between 1937 and 1948. Due to the different nature of and the differing types of research materials available for each case, this project was unable to draw exact parallels between both cases. For example, my research at the British Library in London, England allowed me to find documents with the conversations between different leaders, outlining the desires of each side, the different terms and negotiations necessary to reach final agreements, and the conditions upon which the boundaries would be drawn. Furthermore, I was able to access the British Viceroy’s personal papers describing his challenges, frustrations, and intentions, in addition to correspondences between political leaders across India trying to come to terms with the need for partition. Access to the Viceroy’s personal papers revealed true British intentions—intentions that are not evident in public discourses between different parties. Having access to this broad range of papers, therefore, allowed me to examine a broad spectrum of political opinions, personal thoughts, and some levels of manipulation. However, the archival documents at the British Library did not reveal detailed accounts of particular physical locations or as to why particular geographic points were awarded to specific parties. I was unable to find a detailed account of the commission and Radcliffe’s decision-making process in drawing the boundary.

In contrast, the National Archives at Kew, England revealed detailed descriptions as to why particular sites needed to be awarded to specific parties in the Palestine case. The Colonial and Foreign Record Offices consisted of correspondences between the British and mainly Zionist leaders, outlining the Zionist or Jewish argument for Palestine in addition their specific desires within the land. The National Archives also provided me with memorandums and heavily detailed correspondences of the multiple partition efforts. However, I was unable to find materials that paralleled those of the British Library, describing the components of the boundaries. Moreover, the documents at the National Archives were more unevenly balanced; while I was able to examine a documents pertaining to British and Zionist leaders, I was unable to find a leading voice for the Palestinian Arabs, most likely due to their refusal to negotiate with the British throughout the partition processes. Nevertheless, I am certain that there are documents corresponding to Arab leaders that never made it to the Colonial and Foreign Office records in England.

These differences between archival documents are reflective of the differences between both geopolitical cases. The Palestine case and the India case are two fundamentally distinct cases with different processes, leaders, desires, and disagreements. As a result, it is only natural that the type of sources available is likely to differ. While these differences caused me to face obstacles in drawing crisp parallels between both cases, they also allowed me to identify the factors that make each case unique. Ultimately, juxtaposing both cases allowed me to better comprehend and highlight these differences in trajectories and outcomes of each case, and to have a better understanding of partition.

The high level of tension that the conflicts have created has produced ardent debates between scholars. The tensions and ardor in regard to the current situations has produced myriad



of works with countless opinions and perspectives that detract from the successes of partition—for example, the fact that two states survived in South Asia for the past sixty-seven years. While historians have examined the geopolitical situations in South Asia and the Middle East, most have done so in isolation and have not examined both regions comparatively, as my research aims to do. An exception, however, is Lucy Chester, a historian of South Asia who has juxtaposed the partitions of British India and mandatory Palestine in order to show how their boundary commissions were used for the purpose of contributing a “British façade of power.”<sup>1</sup> My research, however, aims to identify the factors that made the partition of British India prone to creating a cartographically stable boundary. Juxtaposing both cases will allow me to see connections and bigger parallels between the geographic conflict in the partition of mandatory Palestine and the partition of British India, allowing me to identify and isolate those variables.

Due to time constraints in examining the vast and highly complex histories of how the Radcliffe Boundary and the Israel/Palestine boundaries came to be, I was limited as to what I could focus on regarding each partition. While it is important to acknowledge that the partition of British India was not just limited to the creation of India and West Pakistan, this project does not focus on the Bengal commission or on the creation of East Pakistan because of the different trajectory that the East Pakistani state would take. In 1971, East Pakistan became the state of Bangladesh due to different factors including but not limited to differences in language, culture, traditions, treatment of Muslims living in the East, and to the fact that West and East Pakistan were separated by a vast amount of Indian territory. Unlike the partition of the Punjab—which preserved the Indian and Pakistani states—the partition of Bengal took its own path under its own unique circumstances and does not contribute to the understanding of why the Radcliffe

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<sup>1</sup> Chester, Lucy. “Boundary Commissions as Tools to Safeguard British Interests at the End of Empire.” *Journal of Historical Geography*, Feature: Politics and scale in boundary-making, 34, no. 3 (July 2008): 494–515.

Boundary remained cartographically stable. Furthermore, this project does not delve into specific cartographic and geographic details of the boundaries; instead, it examines the regions' histories and paths to partition, and focuses on the bigger themes, arguments, factors that affected the boundary-making processes.

The project explores the political thought processes and contextual background leading to the partitions of British India and British-mandated Palestine through the use of primary source documents from the British Library and the National Archives in England that portray personal accounts of the partition process, including private papers, memoirs, partition council minutes, proposals, correspondences between leaders, and conference papers, in addition to secondary sources from numerous specialists to support some of the arguments. The first chapter contextualizes the partition of British India while the second chapter contextualizes the partition of mandatory Palestine. Both chapters discuss the context leading to partition, the talks and agreements preceding partition, the structure of the boundary commissions, the drawing of the boundaries, and the aftermath of each case. The third chapter contains the comparative element of the project, outlining the variables that allowed for the India case to maintain its boundaries. Each variable contains a comparative component with mandatory Palestine, using the Palestine case to highlight India's successes in the partition processes. By doing this comparative study, I hope to gain a better understanding of partition and the circumstances under which it produces cartographic stability, in order to arrive at solutions in areas with ongoing geopolitical conflict.

Historians have researched and analyzed the causes of the partition of British India, focusing on the technicalities and the roles of politics and international factors behind the drawing of boundaries. Others have analyzed geopolitical influences and international implications, as well as the political decisions, implementations, and thought-processes that took place between different individuals and between political parties prior to the creation of the Radcliffe line—the boundary that split India and West Pakistan.<sup>2</sup> For the Palestine case, authors have analyzed the main political figures' perspectives, disagreements, and the politics behind partition of mandatory Palestine: who supported it and who opposed it, who talked publicly and who worked behind the scenes.<sup>3</sup> In addition, scholars have focused on analyzing the consequences and violence following the partitions—countless wars, bloodshed, deaths, and the displacement of refugees.<sup>4</sup>

### INDIA/PAKISTAN

The partition of British India remains a topic of controversy and heated debate. Wanting to understand its complex nature, authors have tried to identify and analyze the multiple factors, events, circumstances, and long-term reasons that led and contributed to the partition of British India. Among those who have identified and examined these factors are C.M Phillips, Mary Doreen Wainright, and Kaushik Roy and H.V Hodson. Furthermore, Narendra Singh Sarila has focused on international factors, including “...the geo-political implications of partition and the

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<sup>2</sup> Chester, Lucy P. *Borders and Conflict in South Asia: The Radcliffe Boundary Commission and the Partition of Punjab*. New York: Manchester University Press, 2009; Lucy Chester. ‘Factors impeding the effectiveness of partition in South Asia and the Palestine mandate.’ In *Order, Conflict, and Violence*, eds. Stathus N. Kalyvas, Ian Shapiro and Tarek Masoud, pp. 77-96. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008; Narendra Singh Sarila. *The Shadow of the Great Game: The Untold Story of India’s Partition*. New York: Carroll & Graf, 2006; Ian Talbot and Gurharpal Singh. *The Partition of India*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Itzhak Galnoor. *The Partition of Palestine: Decision Crossroads in the Zionist Movement*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995; Yehoyada Haim. “Zionist Attitudes toward Partition, 1937-1938.” *Jewish Social Studies* 40, no. ¾ (July 1, 1978): 303-20; Yossi Katz. *Partner to Partition: The Jewish Agency’s Partition Plan in the Mandate Era*. Portland, OR: Routledge, 1998.

<sup>4</sup> Joya Chatterji. “The Fashioning of a Frontier: The Radcliffe Line and Bengal’s Border Landscape, 1947-52.” *Modern Asian Studies* 33, no. 1 (February 1, 1999): 185–242.

fate of Kashmir, on Britain's primary concern for its future defense needs and American involvement..."<sup>5</sup>

A key area of discussion has been on the different roles of the British, the Indian National Congress, and the Muslim League. Ian Talbot and Gurharpal Singh bring a deeper analysis of the role of domestic politics in regard to partition and explain the role of the League, the Congress, and the British in the process, focusing on the challenges, successes, and relationships between them. They state that the "...the division of the subcontinent was contingent on a range of political choices made by both the British and India's political elites within the context of the impact of the Second World War on the subcontinent."<sup>6</sup> These two authors emphasize the importance of the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League, and argue that the role of the British was not as central as often thought to be. The two authors see Britain as a facilitator for a smooth transfer of power as opposed to an omnipotent decision-maker.<sup>7</sup> Partition was not "...a 'parting gift' of outgoing imperial masters: it was self-consciously willed by the All-India National Congress and Muslim League leaders and, above all, reflected their fears and mistrusts, as well as hopes, that 'a right-sized' state would deliver to them the power to construct a new political, economic and social order in a free subcontinent."<sup>8</sup> These desires, however, were not as easily established as the Congress and the League had hoped. Yasmin Khan also focuses on the politics between the Congress and the League, blaming the political elite and their selfish interests for the chaos that resulted.

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<sup>5</sup> Sarila, Narendra Singh. *The Shadow of the Great Game: The Untold Story of India's Partition*. 1st Carroll & Graf ed. New York: Carroll & Graf, 2006.

<sup>6</sup> Talbot, Ian, and Gurharpal Singh. *The Partition of India*. 1 edition. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 58.

<sup>7</sup> Chakravarty, Pallavi. "Review of The Partition of India by Ian Talbot; Gurharpal Singh." *Social Scientist* 39, no. 9/10 (September 1, 2011): 90–93.

<sup>8</sup> Talbot and Singh. *The Partition of India*: 41.

The Radcliffe line has been prone to high levels of criticism; indeed, a majority of authors have focused on the violence of partition, and has thus deemed the partition of the Indian subcontinent a failure. Joya Chatterji provides an anthropological and relativist perspective. She states that the violence involved in this process has been contained within an “acceptable, comprehensible, and even meaningful surgical metaphor,” arguing that “...partition was a necessary part of a process of healing: that it was a surgical solution to the communal disease.”<sup>9</sup> Her focus, however, is more closely centered on the Bengal border. In addition, Gyanendra Pandey, Sumit Sarkar, and Penderel Moon have also focused their work on the violent aftermath of partition. Pandey focuses on the moment of rupture and genocidal violence that marked the termination of one regime and the inauguration of two new ones and argues that a strong sense of nationalism was the key factor that influenced the drawing of the boundaries.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, Penderel Moon provides a vivid sense of the slaughter and massacres that took place as the cause of result of partition, in addition to focusing on the decade preceding the partition and on the Punjab’s complex politics. Similarly, Sumit Sarkar also focuses on the violence of partition and blames haste, selfish interests, and preservation of social order for the massacres that emerged.

Evidently, different authors have explained the violence that followed partition in very different ways. Perhaps the most relatable to this project is the work of Lucy Chester, which provides a holistic analysis of the cartographic processes of the partition of the Punjab. She explains the “...complexity of nationalist dealings with colonial power structures and of colonial strategies of control,” but further adds that “haste, a veneer of order, a concern for international reputation and a conscious presentation of the process as one for which South Asians bore

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<sup>9</sup> Chatterji, Joya. “The Fashioning of a Frontier: The Radcliffe Line and Bengal’s Border Landscape, 1947-52.” *Modern Asian Studies* 33, no. 1 (February 1, 1999): 185–242.

<sup>10</sup> Pandey, Gyanendra. *Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism, and History in India*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

primary responsibility”<sup>11</sup> were the four variables that influenced the partition of British India. Moreover, she explains how the boundary came to be drawn in only six weeks and analyses the complex power relationships at work in negotiations over the end of empire in South Asia,<sup>12</sup> especially the continuity of British colonial methods of control. As opposed to Talbot and Singh, Chester plays up the importance of British influence in cartographic decision-making. Furthermore, Chester argues that the flawed process of partition, rather than the location of the Radcliffe boundary, caused the terrible violence of 1947.<sup>13</sup>

Rather than focusing on the violence, as Khan, Chester, and these authors do, I focus on how the cartographic decision-making led to two states that have been functional since the partition despite their ongoing problems. While violence was and still is a legitimate concern, I concentrate my research on understanding why the boundaries remained intact and ultimately produced two viable states. While the cartographic evolution of India and Pakistan was by no means perfect, I argue that the cartographic decisions made between 1937 and 1947 were such that produced the base for the survival of two independent and functioning states despite ongoing flaws.

### ISRAEL/PALESTINE

Scholars have identified the events and factors that led to and ultimately caused the partition of British-mandated Palestine. While ongoing violence and development of politics is a reality to consider, historians have not devoted their time to closely examining the decade of cartographic evolution prior to the partition of 1948. With the aid of other historians’ analyses of events from 1937-1948, this project identifies factors and common themes that prevented the

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<sup>11</sup> Chester, Lucy P. *Borders and Conflict in South Asia: The Radcliffe Boundary Commission and the Partition of Punjab*. 2009: 3.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

successful creation of two independent states. Rather than focusing on how the conflict has evolved since 1948, I aspire to understand what determining factors kept Israel and Palestine from reaching feasible solutions and from moving forward up until the UN Resolution in 1947.

The political developments of 1937-1938 set the basis of what would come in the following years. Itzhak Galnoor, Yossi Katz, and T.G Fraser concentrate their research on those years, specifically on the significance of the Peel Commission Report. Galnoor examines the views of Zionist leaders and ideologues, and focuses on the Zionist movement's struggle over the question of how to respond to the Peel Commission's recommendation to partition Palestine into an Arab and a Jewish state.<sup>14</sup> Katz provides chapters on geographical amendments to the Peel recommendations sought by the Jewish Agency, the Agency's plan for partitioning Jerusalem, Jewish Agency Executive (JAE) discussions about transferring all or some of the Arab inhabitants of Palestine from the areas earmarked for Jewish sovereignty, future Jewish policy toward the state's Arab minority, and other aspects of the prospective state. Katz concludes that the 1937-8 JAE's partition plan acted as a predecessor for the 1947 partition plan and as a guideline and basis for the arrangement of 1948.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, T.G Fraser "...examines the ways in which the Peel Commission's proposals tested...powers of leadership and the reality of his long-standing belief that the aims of Zionism could be achieved through British patronage"<sup>16</sup> and sheds light on Weizmann's complicated stance in making certain political decisions. I aim to use these historians' analyzes on the Peel Commission in order to understand the cartographic starting point of the evolution toward a two-state solution.

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<sup>14</sup> Galnoor, Itzhak. *The Partition of Palestine: Decision Crossroads in the Zionist Movement*. SUNY Series in Israeli Studies. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995.

<sup>15</sup> Katz, Yossi. *Partner to Partition: The Jewish Agency's Partition Plan in the Mandate Era*. 1 edition. London ; Portland, Or: Routledge, 1998.

<sup>16</sup> Fraser, T. G. "A Crisis of Leadership: Weizmann and the Zionist Reactions to the Peel Commission's Proposals, 1937-8." *Journal of Contemporary History* 23, no. 4 (October 1, 1988): 657.

Politics played a key role in the decision-making process of partition not only between political parties but also within political parties themselves. Haim Yehoyada discusses the politics behind partition—who supported it and who opposed it, who talked publicly and who worked behind the scenes. Yehoyada gives large emphasis to the British and explains how “Zionists simultaneously tried to negotiate with the British to ensure the most favorable partition plan,” while “...the Arabs would not cope with what the Zionists saw as reality.”<sup>17</sup> Yehoyada argues that British interests in Palestine were strategic, and that they were not connected to national aspirations unlike those of Jews and Arabs. He argues that “[t]he acceptance of reality was one of the causes for the partition proposal in the same way that it was one of the reasons for its abandonment.”<sup>18</sup> Colin Shindler also focuses on political parties; he explores the evolution of the perception of partition of different political figures. He argues that the ravages of the Holocaust changed the perception of 1937, which had once included an equal split of supporters and non-supporters of partition. The perception had been that the Land of Israel was a single unit, historically and geographically; given the proposed dimensions of the state, it was argued that the state would not be economically viable, water sources would be lost, it would effectively ghettoize the Jews, and a large army would be required to defined its borders.<sup>19</sup> However, he argues that the Holocaust proved that partition was inevitable. As Yehoyada and Shindler concur, the main problem was the lack of agreement between political figures.

The path to partition was far from simple; there were myriad actors involved, many proposals in question, secret negotiations, and changing ideas over time. Gideon Biger attempts to explain and understand the process of the delimitation of Palestine by presenting an historical

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<sup>17</sup> Haim, Yehoyada. “Zionist Attitudes toward Partition, 1937-1938.” *Jewish Social Studies* 40, no. 3/4 (July 1, 1978): 315.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Shindler, Colin. “Opposing Partition: The Zionist Predicaments after the Shoah.” *Israel Studies* 14, no. 2 (July 1, 2009): 90.



review and an analytical view concerning the actors involved in the process and an overview dealing with the three eras of boundary making of Israel.<sup>20</sup> David Newman focuses on the variables and factors that influenced partition and highlights “the tangible dimensions of boundary demarcation and strategic sites, the symbolic aspects of territory, the way in which such territories are part of the process through which national identities are constructed and maintained.”<sup>21</sup> However, he discusses the process of territorial change within the Israel/Palestine arena, focusing on the long-term rather than any specific event because he argues that the politics of identity are key in an era of globalization and boundary permeability. He also touches upon many of the deep-rooted symbolic dimensions of the conflict, rather than just the tangible dimensions of how and where a boundary is to be demarcated.<sup>22</sup> Keeping those variables in mind, Howard M. Sachar provides a highly detailed historical account of the path to Israel’s creation.<sup>23</sup>

The British played a key role in the process of partition—their unkept promises, greed, and imperial motives influenced the overall partition process. Aaron S. Kleiman explains Britain’s “divide and rule,” focusing on the motives of the imperial power as a means by which to advance partition. He explains the significance of different political documents and policies, like 1939 White Paper, and the agonies of divide and rule and their divisive effects.<sup>24</sup> Most importantly, he argues that “ what began as a real attempt at a complete and final solution of the Palestine problem became overshadowed by the need to produce first a bureaucratic

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<sup>20</sup> Biger, Gideon. “The Boundaries of Israel—Palestine Past, Present, and Future: A Critical Geographical View.” *Israel Studies* 13, no. 1 (2008): 68.

<sup>21</sup> Newman, D. “The Geopolitics of Peacemaking in Israel–Palestine.” *Political Geography*, Special Issue Dedicated to Saul B. Cohen, 21, no. 5 (June 2002).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 643.

<sup>23</sup> Sachar, Howard Morley. *A History of Israel: From the Rise of Zionism to Our Time*. 3rd ed., rev. and updated. New York: Knopf, 2007.

<sup>24</sup> Klieman, Aaron S. “The Divisiveness of Palestine: Foreign Office versus Colonial Office on the Issue of Partition, 1937.” *The Historical Journal* 22, no. 2 (June 1, 1979): 441.

consensus.”<sup>25</sup> Michael Cohen also analyzes the White Paper, British policy during the critical phase, Zionist leadership, and Palestine and Arab federation. His project is to trace out “‘the story... of the attempt made by each of the various parties now involved with the Palestine problem—Britain, the United States, the Jews, and the Arabs—to impose its own solution to the problem’ of how Palestine should be governed when the British mandate came to an end, with an eye to determining the extent to which each party was responsible for creating the fundamentally untenable situation that emerged from the 1948 war.”<sup>26</sup> The sources he provides and his analyzes are helpful for understanding the relationships and interactions between different political parties.

Penny Sinoglou provides British plans for the partition of Palestine and highlights the importance of “tracing the roots of the 1937 Peel Commission plan back to conversations taking place in the Colonial Office and government of Palestine as early as 1929.”<sup>27</sup> A close analysis of dialogues over territorial division and of preliminary partition plans leads to the conclusion that Britain’s focus on the ideal of representative government played a primary role in the development of partition proposals. This article argues that inter-ethnic violence played was not as significant, and that partition was proposed as a solution to the political implications of non-representative government in Palestine, a topic constantly in the spotlight thanks to the League of Nations.<sup>28</sup>

Personal narratives also help obtain a richer understanding of the difficult and complex path to partition. Ismar J. Peritz, and Carl E. Purinton’s *The Boundaries and the Disposition of*

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<sup>25</sup> Klieman, 424.

<sup>26</sup> Lawson, Fred H. “Review of Palestine and the Great Powers 1945-1948 by Michael J. Cohen.” *Arab Studies Quarterly* 12, no. 3/4 (July 1, 1990): 130–31.

<sup>27</sup> Sinoglou, Penny. “British Plans for the Partition of Palestine, 1929–1938.” *The Historical Journal* 52, no. 01 (March 2009): 131–52.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

*the Holy Land* and Emile Ghory's *An Arab View of the Situation in Palestine* provide biblical, religious, political, and personal views of the land. These perspectives, in turn, help to explain some of the reasoning behind certain decisions. As Peritz and Purinton's state, "The whole question hinges on whether 'national' is to be taken in a political or cultural sense."<sup>29</sup> For example, Emile Ghory provides an Arab perspective from when the boundaries were being decided, providing a first-hand account of the workings of the land. While these authors do not explore political or cartographic decisions, they provide strong perspectives that provide cultural context as to why political leaders made particular decisions in regard to partition.

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<sup>29</sup> Peritz, Ismar J., and Carl E. Purinton. "The Boundaries and the Disposition of the Holy Land." *Journal of the National Association of Biblical Instructors* 4, no. 2 (January 1, 1936): 98.

# CHAPTER 1: BRITISH INDIA

After almost seven decades since its implementation, the Radcliffe Boundary, which divides present-day India and Pakistan, has remained in place. While the region has been prone to regular border violence and its share of political instability, the fact remains that both India and Pakistan remained two sovereign states with their own governments, militaries, economies, and international recognition. Even with the ongoing tensions and hatred between both states, the Radcliffe Boundary has remained cartographically identifiable and has not undergone significant changes since 1947. Thus, I seek to understand what makes the partition of British India—in particular, the partition of the Punjab—so remarkably distinct from other world regions that the British attempted to partition. I also seek to determine why the Radcliffe Boundary was cartographically sustainable despite being planned and implemented in a hasty three-month period and the high levels of violence that it ensued.

As an attempt to have a better understanding of the factors that allowed for the partition of British India to produce two cartographically viable states, this chapter examines the events, processes, and commissions that led to the creation and implementation of the Radcliffe Boundary in the Punjab on 15 August 1947. The chapter does not go into cartographic detail of the boundary, nor does it focus on the boundary-making policies and processes that took place in the partition of Bengal. Instead, the chapter focuses on the historical events, talks and agreements that resulted in the partition of the Punjab, followed by an effort to understand the overarching factors that led to the boundary's cartographic stability.

## PATH TO PARTITION

The path to partition evolved as a result of tensions and hostilities between Muslims and Hindus throughout the duration of British rule. The inability to reconcile these religious differences led to geopolitical tensions and high levels of violence in the 1930s and 1940s. As Yasmin Khan states, “[i]n the three decades preceding Partition a self-conscious awareness of religious ethnicity—and conflict based on this—had undoubtedly escalated in intensity and was becoming more flagrant.”<sup>1</sup> Riots broke out on religious festivals, and reformist groups became richer, stronger, more dogmatic and persuasive; religion was becoming a “politicized manifestation of identity.”<sup>2</sup>

Part of the reason for these differences and politicization came about as a result of British rule and the growing sense of nationalism within India. The British stratified the different religions of India through the use of the census, highlighting the differences between them rather than preserving their sense of community and brotherhood. As Khan explains, “Reminders of religious difference were built into the brickwork of the colonial state,” such as labeling drinking taps on railway platforms as Hindu water or Muslim water, even though such strict separations had never existed.<sup>3</sup> The British strongly perceived Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs as fundamentally separate groups, and thus, in 1909, gave separate electorates to the different religious communities represented by their own politicians.<sup>4</sup> The presence of separate electorates, in addition to the measures that the British took to classify and distinguish between religious communities further stratified and accentuated the differences between India’s inhabitants rather than preserving the coexistence that had once existed.

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<sup>1</sup> Khan, Yasmin. *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan*. Yale University Press, 2007: 19.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 19

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 19

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 20

As differences deepened and violence grew, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the central leader of the Muslim League, proposed a grouping of provinces in united India in which Muslims could have their own form of governance in order to diminish social injustices and ensure equal rights and just treatment next to their non-Muslim counterparts.<sup>5</sup> Initially, Jinnah did not want a new state that would separate Muslims from India; instead, he sought Pakistan as a separate space and better position for Muslims within India, with separate electorates, reservation of seats, and Muslim majority provinces, all of which would secure parity with non-Muslims in India.<sup>6</sup> Jinnah already considered the Muslims a nation by definition due to their religious and cultural bonds,<sup>7</sup> which is why he initially thought that the creation of a Muslim state was unnecessary. As a community, Muslims did not need to live outside what had been their home for many years, Mother India. Opposing partition, Jinnah simply hoped for "...the freedom of all India, and not the freedom of one section or, worse still, of the Congress caucus, and slavery for Muslims and other minorities."<sup>8</sup> Ultimately, Jinnah and the Muslim League "adopted Pakistan as its goal for the political evolution for the community..." believing that India's Muslims "deserved some kind of autonomous political entity."<sup>9</sup>

Like Jinnah, Jawaharlal Nehru, the central leader for the Indian National Congress, did not initially support the idea of partition. As Nehru explained in a speech in 1937: "In India... no one, whatever his political views or religious persuasions, thinks in terms other than those of national unity."<sup>10</sup> Nehru argued that India had been home to a diverse range of peoples for hundreds of years—Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and other faiths—that could not imagine living

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<sup>5</sup> Cited in Hasan, Mushirul. *India's Partition: Process, Strategy and Mobilization*. Oxford University Press, 1993, 44-68: 46.

<sup>6</sup> Metcalf, *A Concise History of Modern India*, 209.

<sup>7</sup> Cited in Hasan, *India's Partition*, 52.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>9</sup> Metcalf, *A Concise History of Modern India*, 207.

<sup>10</sup> Nehru, Jawaharlal. "The Unity of India." *Foreign Affairs* 16, no. 2 (January 1, 1938): 231-43: 238.

separately, or in something other than a united India. As a result, Nehru's priority was the equality and unity of all of India's inhabitants, rather than the separation and isolation of specific groups of people. Nehru hoped for independence from the British, and he maintained that the new state of India would be a secular state in which everyone stood on equal footing.<sup>11</sup> In disagreement with Jinnah, Nehru "...repudiated the notion of compulsory grouping of provinces, the key to Jinnah's Pakistan,"<sup>12</sup> as that would further isolate the different religious groups and make it more difficult to rule all of India. The Congress wanted "...a central government that could direct and plan for an India, free of colonialism, that might eradicate its people's poverty and grow into an industrial power."<sup>13</sup> However, the desire of the Congress to have a powerful interventionist state made Jinnah nervous; he wanted to avoid being the subordinate group within India.

The British started to lose their grip over India during to the Second World War with growing disruptions in the colonies of their empire. Though victorious in the war, Britain suffered immensely during the conflict and did not possess the manpower or economic resources to coerce a restive India.<sup>14</sup> Rebuilding back at home and creating new jobs and housing promised by the new socialist government were prioritized over a costly reassertion of the Raj. As a result of this economic struggle, there was a decrease in British power, which caused Indian society to undergo readjustment and demobilization. To the British, India had become a political, symbolic, and economic liability, which is why "ridding itself of its Indian encumbrances became a priority."<sup>15</sup> This disintegration of British power led to heavy international pressure to decolonize.

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<sup>11</sup> Metcalf, *A Concise History of Modern India*, 225.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Metcalf, *A Concise History of Modern India*, 212.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

As a result, Britain began to plan for a transfer of power in 1946. How they would transfer power, however, remained significantly ambiguous. As Khan states, “Partition was closely entwined with this slow, protracted passage of decolonization, which has been masked by the pedantic language of the transfer of power.”<sup>16</sup> The general elections in 1945-1946, which elected members of the Central Legislative Assembly and the Council of State, “...reduced the political scene to the Congress and the Muslim League, now as never before pitted directly against each other.”<sup>17</sup> The Congress won the most number of seats because it was the largest party, but the League won all the Muslim votes, which meant that League had won the power to seek a separate Muslim homeland.

The League and the Congress began to further stratify each religious group, thus increasing the tensions between them. For example, Muslim League activists grew more extreme, fusing Islam with an assertion of Muslim community solidarity.<sup>18</sup> As a result, India was “rocked by rebellions and revolts on an unprecedented scale,”<sup>19</sup> including strikes, industrial disputes, serious police mutinies, and anti-British protest movements, such as the Great Calcutta Killing in 1946 during which over 4,000 Hindus and Muslims slaughtered each other in Calcutta. These violent outbursts and the desire for sovereignty led people from both parties—the League and the Congress—to propose different plans for compromise. Partition, however, was never truly an apparent, desired, or viable option until the summer of the partition itself. As Khan explains, “Nehru himself started to imagine Partition as a possible way out. As Jinnah

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<sup>16</sup> Khan, *The Great Partition*, 61.

<sup>17</sup> Metcalf, *A Concise History of Modern India*, 212.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.

<sup>19</sup> Khan, *The Great Partition*, 25.



continually vetoed the vision of one strong united India, it emerged that the price of a strong central government was the division of the country.”<sup>20</sup>

In order to avoid more deaths, the British determined that partition was a realistic solution. With the violence and chaos growing, Britain finally made the executive decision, through the 3rd June Plan, to transfer power on 15 August 1947. As Yasmin Khan explains, “Fervent public displays of anti-colonial sentiment in post-war India help to explain the frenzied British scramble to depart from the Indian subcontinent.”<sup>21</sup> Partition was shaped by decades of Indian nationalist pressure on the British Government and by the rise of civil unrest in the subcontinent.<sup>22</sup> Violence, tensions, and a need for a centralized government increased. As Talbot and Singh state, “The British transfer of power to the two dominions of India and Pakistan... was a response to imperial statecraft to intractable religious conflict.”<sup>23</sup> This “self-conscious awareness” was a result of British rule. As Britain loosened its grip on India, and Muslims and non-Muslims advocated for their sovereignty, the representatives of the Muslim League and Indian Congress, respectively, came to different ideas and perceptions as to what a united India would look like after the British Raj. As a result, “Mountbatten and his staff had to make a host of momentous decisions—above all, whether power was to be handed over to two, three, or more successor states; and where the boundary line between them was to be drawn.”<sup>24</sup> Three months before the actual partition of British India, it was evident that partition would occur. What no one knew, however, was how or where those boundaries would fall.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>21</sup> Khan, *The Great Partition*, 39.

<sup>22</sup> Chester, *Borders and Conflict in South Asia*, 13.

<sup>23</sup> Talbot, Ian, and Gurharpal Singh. *The Partition of India*. 1 edition. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009: 1.

<sup>24</sup> Metcalf, *A Concise History of Modern India*, 218.

## TALKS & AGREEMENTS

On a June 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting, political leaders formulated the 3 June Plan, which would serve as the basis of agreement between the Muslim League, the Indian Congress, and the Sikh community to partition British India into two independent states. According to the plan, the British government would accept the principle of partition of India, that successor governments would be given dominion status, and India had the implicit right to secede from the British Commonwealth. This meeting took place a month prior to the official agreement, which acted as a formal predecessor to the boundary drawings. The open dialogue and communication that took place between the parties allowed for a high level of negotiations and agreements that would prove crucial to the cartographic sustainability of the Radcliffe Boundary. As the British Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten argued in regard to the June 3 Plan: “The plan was evolved at every stage by a process of open diplomacy with the leaders. Its success is chiefly attributable to them. I believe that this system of open diplomacy was the only one suited to the situation in which the problems were so complex and the tension so high.”<sup>25</sup> Despite the level of confrontation, however, the partition process was, as Lucy Chester puts it, “changing almost daily.”<sup>26</sup>

In early July, all parties agreed to accept the states that would be formed in August 1947 regardless of their boundaries. As Mountbatten noted, “At a Meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> July, the Partition Council issued a statement in which they pledged themselves to accept the awards of the Boundary Commissions whatever these might be; and, as soon as the awards were announced, to enforce them impartially.”<sup>27</sup> By agreeing to those conditions, it was evident that the Congress and the League had a strong desire to have their own national space. That desire to be sovereign

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<sup>25</sup>“Viceroy’s Personal Reports” July- August 1947. India Office Records (IOR)/L/PO/6/123; Text of the Address to be Delivered by his Excellency Lord Mountbatten to the India Constituent Assembly on 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1947]; 267

<sup>26</sup> Chester, *Borders and Conflict in South Asia*, 26.

<sup>27</sup> “Viceroy’s Personal Reports” July- August 1947. IOR/L/PO/6/123; Viceroy’s Personal Report No. 17. Dated 16<sup>th</sup> August 1947; 247

made people work with what they had even if the outcome was not ideal. As was mentioned in the Partition Council Minutes, “Mr. Jinnah pointed out that although he was doing everything in his power to retain a hold over the Muslim sections of the population concerned to honour the undertaking given that the findings of the Boundary Commissions, whatever they were, would be accepted...”<sup>28</sup>

Although it was likely that all parties would not be fully pleased with the final boundaries, the strong desire to have independent states outweighed the possibility of backlash and disagreement prior to the awards. All parties would win and lose certain aspects of the territory, which was only natural in the negotiations. As Mountbatten described in one of his personal reports from August 1947:

Neither the Congress, the League, nor the Sikhs were in any way satisfied or grateful for any advantages they may have got out of the awards; they could only think of the disadvantages and complain bitterly. It was only after they had been complaining loudly for some time that they appeared to realize that there must be some advantages to them if the other parties were equally dissatisfied; and so after some two hours very delicate handling, we arrived at the conclusion that the awards must be announced and implemented loyally forthwith.<sup>29</sup>

It is important to note that the Sikh community was one of the most highly affected throughout the partition process due to the fact that their people were densely concentrated in the Punjab region and that their requests went unattended. Their religious and cultural attachment to the land vanished as politics and violence as the tearing of their land took over. Nevertheless, the Sikhs tried to resist; as was mentioned in the July 11-12 Partition Council minutes: “...the Sikh leaders

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<sup>28</sup> “Partition Council Minutes,” August 1947. Mss Eur IOR Neg 15564/6. [Title of page: “Meeting of the Cabinet held on Wednesday, the 30<sup>th</sup> April, 1947, at 6P.M. – His Excellency’s tour of the N.W.F.P. and the Punjab; p. 67-68] Title: India Partition Council Minutes: 12 June – 11 July 1947; 219-220, 5.

<sup>29</sup> “Viceroy’s Personal Reports” July- August 1947. IOR/L/PO/6/123; Viceroy’s Personal Report No. 17. Dated 16<sup>th</sup> August 1947; 262

were still reported to be inciting their followers to offer active resistance to decisions which they might regard as unfavourable.”<sup>30</sup> As Mountbatten explained,

The Sikhs in their endeavours to obtain a real ‘Sikhistan’ are most anxious to take in a large part of the area where the Muslim population predominates. To this I am absolutely opposed. The Sikhs also want their holy places preserved for them, including Lahore itself, the capital-designate of Pakistan. It is significant, however, that when the Sikh delegation saw me they particularly asked that I should not decide whether the Sikhs would join Pakistan or Hindustan, since they had not made up their minds to which side they wanted to go.<sup>31</sup>

The Sikhs were deprived of their own state and independence and were forced to choose between one of the two dominions. The idea of attaining a Sikhistan was ignored due to the fact that the Congress and League were the central players in the partition processes. This uneven distribution of power is also evident in the way the commissions were divided—there were two judges both from the Congress and the League and only one Sikh representative, Sardar Swaran Singh, who was part of the Congress as well. Clearly, the Sikhs did not have a strong voice in this process; however, it was not until a long period of resistance that they ultimately agreed to the boundary commission’s plans.

Toward the end of July, the agreement to create these two states was solidified. As a prominent Sikh representative argued, “It is understood that in a statement issued on 24<sup>th</sup> July the members of the Partition Council at New Delhi, including Sardar Baldev Singh on behalf of the Sikh community, pledges the Governments of the two future Dominions of India and Pakistan to accept the awards...”<sup>32</sup> Rather than working backward—proposing a plan and then agreeing to it—all parties agreed in advance to whatever the plan would be. This form of agreement is key to the plan’s implementation because it is precisely what allowed for the partition to be reinforced

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<sup>30</sup> Partition Council Minutes,” August 1947. Mss Eur IOR Neg 15564/6; Title: India Partition Council Minutes: 12 June – 11 July 1947; 219-220/

<sup>31</sup> Viceroy’s Personal Reports” July- August 1947. IOR (India Office Records)/L/PO/6/123 Viceroy’s Personal Report No. 5 Dated 1<sup>st</sup> May 1947; 76.

<sup>32</sup> Draft Letter. The President, Khalsa Jatha (British Isles), 79 Sinclair Road, London, W. 14.

as opposed to having ongoing debates. As the Viceroy declared on 25 July, 29 1947: “I am glad to be able to report that all the members of the Punjab Partition Committee [...] declared that their parties would accept and abide by the decision of the Boundary Commission, in spite of threats in the press by both Muslims and Sikhs that they would fight rather than accept an ‘unfair’ award.”<sup>33</sup> After all, in Amritsar and Lahore there had already been a campaign of assassination and arson by individuals.<sup>34</sup> However, the two parties were committed to having two states by this point—they were only awaiting the boundary awards.

### **BOUNDARY COMMISSIONS**

Once the British, the Indian National Congress, and the Muslim League agreed to the creation of two sovereign states, the conversations between them became more detailed and holistic. Two boundary commissions—one for the Punjab and one for Bengal—began to form. As was mentioned in an interview in 1947 between Mountbatten and other political leaders:

It was suggested that the number of assessors should be five in the Punjab Boundary Commission and four in the Bengal Boundary Commission. In details these would be—in Punjab, one Muslim representative from Western Punjab; one Hindu representative from Eastern Punjab; one Sikh representative; one representative from Pakistan as a whole and one representative from Hindustan as a whole. In Bengal the composition would be the same mutatis mutandis and without of course the Sikh representative.<sup>35</sup>

On 13 June, Nehru, Jinnah, and Mountbatten agreed that “...each commission would consist of two Congress nominees and two League nominees, with an independent chairman, that all of these men would be of ‘high judicial standing’ and that Congress would include a Sikh among its nominees for the Punjab commission.”<sup>36</sup> Of the four judges on the Punjab Boundary commission, the following were included: Muhammad Munir, Din Muhammad, Mehr Chand

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<sup>33</sup> “Viceroy’s Personal Reports” July- August 1947. IOR/L/PO/6/123; Viceroy’s Personal Report No. 14. Dated 25<sup>th</sup> July, 1947: 197

<sup>34</sup> “Papers of Sir Evan Jenkins, Governor of the Punjab,” 1947. IOR/R/3/1/176; 52

<sup>35</sup> “File 1446/17/GG/43 - Coll I Boundary Commission,” 1947. IOR/R/3/1/157. Extract from notes of an interview between HE the Viceroy and Pandit Nehru, Sardar Patel and Mr. Kripalani on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> June 1947]; 10

<sup>36</sup> Chester, *Borders and Conflict in South Asia*, 33.

Mahajan, Teja Singh,<sup>37</sup> and Sardar Swaran Singh. Interestingly, “All of the judges came from backgrounds in criminal law and lacked any expertise in boundary-making.”<sup>38</sup> Ironically, the only professional geographer known to have participated in the process was Okar Spate, a respected Australian geographer who “felt the risks inherent in [the] northern Punjabi location.”<sup>39</sup>

By including a representative of each religious group involved in the geopolitical conflict, the commissions ensured a balance from all sides. Due to predictable disagreement and tensions between the different political representatives, it was necessary to appoint a common link to both commissions in order to mediate and establish a greater sense of order and control. Jinnah proposed someone British as chairman or link of the boundary commissions. In a June 1947 telegram to the governors of the Punjab, Bengal, and Assam, Mountbatten stated that “Jinnah has cast doubt on probability of Chairmen being agreed either between nominated members of Commissions or party leaders. He had suggested instead a British judge for chairman.”<sup>40</sup> It was not until the 27 of June that Radcliffe was put forward as candidate for the Arbitral Tribunal, a panel of adjudicators that made decisions to which the parties in dispute had to agree. However, this proposal of Radcliffe took place very late; on 30 June the Government of India announced the formation of the Punjab and Bengal boundary commissions,<sup>41</sup> and partition followed about six weeks later. Ultimately, Lord Cyril Radcliffe, “...a loyal servant of the British Government who had previously demonstrated his dedication to the interests of the British state,”<sup>42</sup> served as the chair for both boundary commissions. Radcliffe, however, was not

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<sup>37</sup> Chester, *Borders and Conflict in South Asia*, 57-58.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>39</sup> Chester, *Borders and Conflict in South Asia*, 62.

<sup>40</sup> “File 1446/17/GG/43 - Coll I Boundary Commission,” 1947; IOR/R/3/1/157. Telegram Grade C from Viceroy to Governors of Punjab, Bengal and Assam. No. 1580-S; dated 25<sup>th</sup> June 1947’ picture; 60

<sup>41</sup> Chester, *Borders and Conflict in South Asia*, 39.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

“an independent expert with boundary-making experience,”<sup>43</sup> and he “lacked the personal knowledge necessary to evaluate the conflicting claims...”<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, the British perceived him as one of the most intelligent Englishmen of the time and thus deemed him the ideal figure to execute difficult decisions.

### **DRAWING THE BOUNDARIES**

The Commissions had representatives from all parties and were responsible for demarcating the boundaries of the two parts of the Punjab on the basis of contiguous majority areas of Muslims and non-Muslims. In doing so, it was to also take into account other factors.<sup>45</sup> The problem, however, is that those other factors—including notional boundaries, religious contiguity, natural markers, and irrigation systems—were not only numerous, but also quite ambiguous, which resulted in disputes. This level of ambiguity kept both sides from knowing what the final boundaries would be until the British announced and implemented them on 15 August 1947. As Lucy Chester explains,

This ambiguity was intended to allow the commissioners flexibility to accommodate concerns that might emerge during their deliberations and to ensure that excessively restrictive terms did not slow down the boundary-creation process. The obvious factors included administrative needs, geographical features, and communication and irrigation infrastructure...<sup>46</sup>

In addition, the high levels of secrecy played a key role—they prevented everyone outside the commissions from having a say, which diminished the amount of debate and outside interference. Overall, the partition process was a phenomenon of differing beliefs and a

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Chester, *Borders and Conflict in South Asia*, 63.

<sup>45</sup> 9920; Boundary Commissions of Punjab and Bengal: Petitions, Memoranda and Telegrams and Protests against Awards,” August 1947. IOR/L/PJ/7/12465.; *The Sikh Memorandum to the Punjab Boundary Commission*: 3.

<sup>46</sup> Chester, *Borders and Conflict in South Asia*, 39.

geographical reality that, as Lucy Chester explains, “remained as murky as the political circumstances behind it.”<sup>47</sup>

Because there had been no similar earlier cartographic conflicts in India, the partition plans were partially based on the idea of notional boundaries; that is, boundaries by which populations had already lived for many years (see map 1A). As a result, the notional boundary was a concept on which the boundary commissions could rely. As was stated in the Partition Council Minutes of 10-13 July: “...if the boundary has not been so determined by 15<sup>th</sup> August, the two new Provinces shall be established on the basis of what is commonly described at the ‘notional’ boundary.”<sup>48</sup> Villages were already grouped together according to their respective religion, and thus the concept of having a notional boundary was one of the several factors that contributed to the boundary-making process. As a result, the commissions took the religiously contiguous Muslim and Hindu areas into serious consideration.

The borderline was also based upon physical or natural markers and pre-existing administrative borders, including *thanas* (stations), *tehils* (sub-divisions), rivers, and natural frontiers. The purpose of this basis, as the Partition Council Minutes of 11-12 July indicate, was “[to provide] defensible boundaries and markings for general administrative convenience”<sup>49</sup> in order to avoid large population transfers and measures that would deeply alter people’s lives. Up to independence, India’s population was relatively static, which meant that people were not moving around in large numbers and thus remained in the same general areas. In order to avoid excessive change, the commissions wanted to base their boundary drawings on what was already present on the ground. As was discussed within the Boundary Commission:

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>48</sup> “Partition Council Minutes,” August 1947. Mss Eur IOR Neg 15564/6. Title: India, Partition Council Papers: 10 July – 13 July, 1947: 223

<sup>49</sup> “Partition Council Minutes,” August 1947. Mss Eur IOR Neg 15564/6. Title: India Partition Council Minutes: 12 June – 11 July 1947; 219-220.



Where there is no natural boundary line, a demarcation will run through numerous interlocked villages, zig-zag the countryside and lead to constant irritation to both dominions. To avoid this it is necessary to have a natural boundary line as far as possible. The proposition is of great importance and must be looked into with great care.<sup>50</sup>

Thus, the purpose of having natural landmarks was similar to that of having a notional boundary—the less change, the better and easier it would be for the boundary commission and India’s inhabitants. The goal was to avoid creating more tensions than necessary.

However, natural markers were sometimes more likely to cause more trouble. For example, Radcliffe’s description was based on rivers—as opposed to exact latitudinal and longitudinal points—which resulted in a lack of geographic specificity and precision. Sometimes, rivers overflowed or dried which would consequently blur where the boundaries were, making certain sections of the border invisible for part of the year and causing disastrous effects on border security and administration.<sup>51</sup>

Radcliffe also focused on irrigation systems, given that the irrigation systems had been built to function under a single administration.<sup>52</sup> As Radcliffe describes in his award: “The fixing of a boundary... was further complicated by the existence of canal systems, so vital to the life of the Punjab but developed only under the conception of a single administration, and of systems of road and rail communication, which have been planned in the same way.”<sup>53</sup> It was necessary for Radcliffe to pay attention to irrigation systems and infrastructure because otherwise, the viability of India and Pakistan would have been threatened. As Chester notes, “Radcliffe’s line was based

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<sup>50</sup> File 1446/17/GG/43 - Coll I Boundary Commission,” 1947. IOR/R/3/1/157; Secret. Immediate; 17 Tuglak Road, New Delhi. July 22, 1947; letter from Baldev Singh to Mountbatten; 197

<sup>51</sup> Chatterji, Joya. “The Fashioning of a Frontier: The Radcliffe Line and Bengal’s Border Landscape, 1947-52.” *Modern Asian Studies* 33, no. 1 (February 1, 1999): 221.

<sup>52</sup> Chester, *Borders and Conflict in South Asia*, 81.

<sup>53</sup> Cited in *Pakistan Horizon*, Vol. 56: 215.

primarily on the need to balance the division of religious majorities with the preservation of Punjab's life-giving irrigation systems."<sup>54</sup>

The need to balance religious majorities played a key role because that principle influenced and set a basis as to how and why boundaries needed to be drawn. After all, if there had not been Muslim majorities in the North-East and North-West of India, "...neither Jinnah nor anyone else would have been in a position to put forward a plea for the division of the country."<sup>55</sup> However, the idea of basing the boundaries on the principle of religious identity alone was a dangerous one that had the potential of creating further discrepancies. As a result, the principle of religion and religious contiguity played a role, but it was not the only factor, as is explained above. As Nehru once stated,

At present this question of a boundary is thought far too much in terms of Sikh, Hindu or Muslim interests. I suppose every party will produce arguments for the inclusion of a little bit of territory here and there. The result might well be a very curious frontier line with numerous curves and enclaves.<sup>56</sup>

Religious communities and villages were intermixed and not always crisply divided, which further complicated the notion of dividing the territory on the principle of religious contiguity. The boundary negotiations were not simple or perfect by any means. Indeed, there were discrepancies because it was impossible to find ways in which to divide the clusters of religious populations perfectly. For example, "...three key tehsils of the Gurdaspur district had gone over to India despite the fact that two of them... had Muslim majorities."<sup>57</sup> The boundaries did not guarantee the complete separation of Hindus and Muslims in some districts, as was explained in the papers of Sir Evan Jenkins, governor of the Punjab, in 1947:

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<sup>54</sup> Chester, *Borders and Conflict in South Asia*, 74.

<sup>55</sup> Rajurkar, N. G. "THE PARTITION OF INDIA IN PERSPECTIVE." *The Indian Journal of Political Science* 43, no. 2 (April 1, 1982): 34–53: 35.

<sup>56</sup> Cited in Chester, *Borders and Conflict in South Asia*.

<sup>57</sup> Ahmad, Qazi Shakil. "Pakistan-India Relations: Some Geostrategic Considerations." *Pakistan Horizon* 57, no. 3 (July 1, 2004): 13–19: 15.

The Inspector General also drew attention to the fact that although the proportion of Muslims in the ranks of the police was between 60 and 70 per cent for the whole province, there were very few non-Muslims in the western districts and so the figures for places like Lahore and Amritsar were about 60% Muslims and 40% non-Muslims.<sup>58</sup>

Although it was impossible to divide the territory entirely according to religious identity alone, the failure to solve these discrepancies led both sides to "...eliminate minorities which existed on the wrong side of the line."<sup>59</sup> Consequently, these elimination efforts resulted in more conflict and violence after partition.

Another problem that affected the end result was that the census data for religious demographics was not entirely accurate. As Lucy Chester explains,

...the data themselves were highly problematic, as the census had become increasingly politicized... The 1921 and 1931 censuses...had been disrupted by Gandhi's non-cooperation campaigns, resulting in Hindu and Sikh totals lower than they should have been. The 1941 census, by contrast, had been conducted at a time when more populous communal groups received more representation and thus more political power...<sup>60</sup>

Furthermore, "[s]urvey of India maps were not the scientific, rationally constructed documents they seemed neither was the boundary commission the judicial, rationally constructed entity it appeared to be. These maps, like the large process of partition, were not adequately connected to the reality of what was happening on the ground."<sup>61</sup> This lack of accuracy in regard to religious contiguity was consequential; when the boundaries were implemented, there were huge migrations of people on both sides of the border due to their religious identity. Rather than preventing violence, the miscalculations created it. In addition, the short period of time allotted to the commissions to draw the boundaries gave them no time to explore and familiarize themselves with the territory.

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<sup>58</sup> "Papers of Sir Evan Jenkins, Governor of the Punjab," 1947. IOR/R/3/1/176; Confidential; 25<sup>th</sup> June 1947; from Inspector General of Police, Punjab; 217/73.

<sup>59</sup> Brush, John E. "The Distribution of Religious Communities in India." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 39, no. 2 (June 1, 1949): 96.

<sup>60</sup> Chester, *Borders and Conflict in South Asia*, 65.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

In fact, Radcliffe only allotted a few paragraphs to describe where the boundary fell. As Lucy Chester explains, “Privileging textual descriptions over visual representations is... a basic tenet of boundary-making practice”<sup>62</sup> that, interestingly, Radcliffe chose to take. Because Radcliffe based his description of the boundary on text rather than on precise visual depictions, he produced ambiguity that affected the ways in which the boundary was actually implemented. In the award, he only allots a few paragraphs to the description of the boundary. As he describes,

The boundary between the East and West Punjab shall commence on the north at the point where the west branch of the Ujh River enters the Punjab Province from the State of Kashmir. The boundary shall follow the line of that river down the western boundary of the Pathankot Tahsil to the point where the Pathankot, Shakargarh and Gurdaspur tahsols meet. The tehsil boundary and not the actual course of the Ujh River shall constitute boundary between the East and West Punjab.<sup>63</sup>

Boundaries fell on names of villages, rivers, and natural landmarks rather than on precise longitudinal and latitudinal points. Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs moved around the boundary until the borders solidified and became officially guarded and protected. Radcliffe was able to implement the boundaries in such a broad way and people were able to move around because of the large space available. As mentioned earlier, the high level of ambiguity was double sided; it created confusion, but it also allowed for some flexibility.

### **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

Ultimately, the Radcliffe Boundary left minorities of each group on both sides of the boundary, which would result in high levels of tension and violence (see map 2A). As Lucy Chester explains, “The Radcliffe award gave Pakistan 63,800 square miles of Punjabi territory, while India received 35,300 square miles. [...] This left Pakistani Punjab with a minority population of 26.8 per cent. Indian Punjab had an even larger minority population of about 25

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<sup>62</sup> Chester, *Borders and Conflict in South Asia*, 87.

<sup>63</sup> Cited in *Pakistan Horizon*, Vol. 56: 217.

percent, but neither side would retain these minorities for long.”<sup>64</sup> Foreseeing these demographic issues, both the Indian Congress and the Muslim League made arrangements to guarantee some form of stability before independence was granted. Both sides negotiated matters like refugee issues, resources, governments, and other responsibilities and had to make compromises and sacrifices in order to reach conclusions in regard to each state.

The fact that this type of conversation occurred shows that both entities were serious and determined to be independent. After all, some state qualities include having an army, provisions, government, and relations with other states. For example, both states acknowledged and addressed refugee problems:

...it was the duty of the Pakistan Government to take over the responsibility for the refugees who had no means and no homes to which to return. The India Government had already assumed the responsibility for refugees in its territory and had appointed a special officer, in accordance with the decision of the Interim Government, to see to the provision of food, clothing and shelter etc. for them.<sup>65</sup>

The concept of refugees accentuates the idea of citizenship, which in turn accentuates the idea of independence. The fact that both states discussed refugee issues prior to the partition itself shows the commitment to divide the land, but it is also telling of the new national sentiments that had not previously existed. For example, acknowledging the existence of refugees showed that those who had once belonged to one area no longer felt welcome or accepted in the other. By labeling people as refugees, both states started to acknowledge each other's existence and abided by the assigned boundaries despite the mounting tensions and disagreements. The boundaries legitimized each people's nationality and essence, but they also pitted people against each other in ways that had never occurred.

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<sup>64</sup> Chester, *Borders and Conflict in South Asia*, 109.

<sup>65</sup> “Partition Council Minutes,” August 1947. Mss Eur IOR Neg 15564/6. Title: India, Partition Council Minutes: 12/7/47 – 12/8/47; 220 cont.]; 29

Having an army is another definitive element of an independent state; it is what protects a state's borders against invaders. The British gave the two dominions true responsibilities, such as creating armies of their own. In doing so, the British recognized the states' existence and guaranteed their sovereignty. As was discussed in the August Partition Minutes: "...Field Marshall Montgomery had discussed with Pandit Nehru and Mr. Jinnah the question of the rate of withdrawal of the British Army from India after the 15<sup>th</sup> of August... the withdrawal of British Units should commence on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August, proceed gradually, and be completed by the end of February, 1948, at the latest,"<sup>66</sup> signifying that the two future states would be responsible for their own militaries. In addition, both states began to create their respective governments recognized by Belgium, Canada, China, Columbia, the UK and the USA in Resolution 47 of 1948 on the India-Pakistan Questions.

This type of conversation revolving around refugee issues, governments, and state responsibilities prior to the declaration of the separate states shows that the commissioners were aware that partition would bring consequences, and thus wanted to be prepared. The fact that both states were able to distinguish where one state ended and where another began as well as acknowledge each other's trade regulations showed their viability as two independent entities. Both states created a relationship with each other despite the violence and chaos. As Mountbatten described in one of his personal reports from August 1947:

One further interesting point is that the respective Governments are so anxious to assume complete responsibility for their own areas that they are contemplating tomorrow working out a scheme to take over military responsibility for their own areas once the Boundary awards have been implemented. The two Prime Ministers have also invited each other to visit Lahore and Amritsar respectively together. Altogether the situation, bad it is, is being grappled with in a realistic manner by the new Governments.<sup>67</sup>

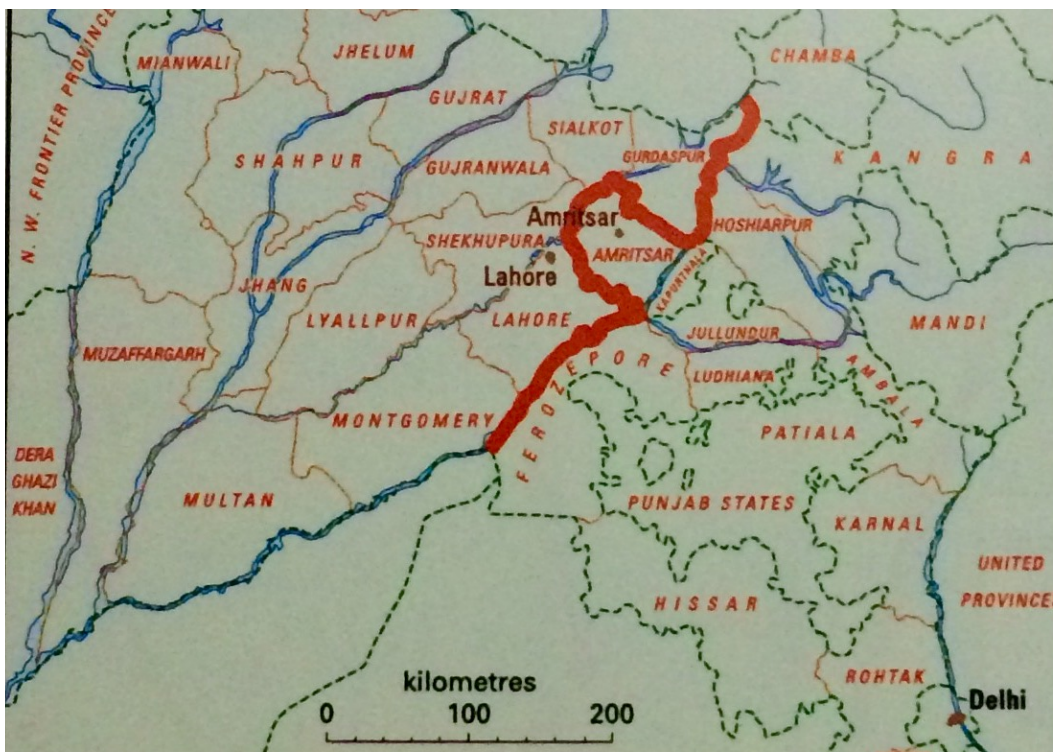
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<sup>66</sup> "Partition Council Minutes," August 1947. Mss Eur IOR Neg 15564/6: 48.

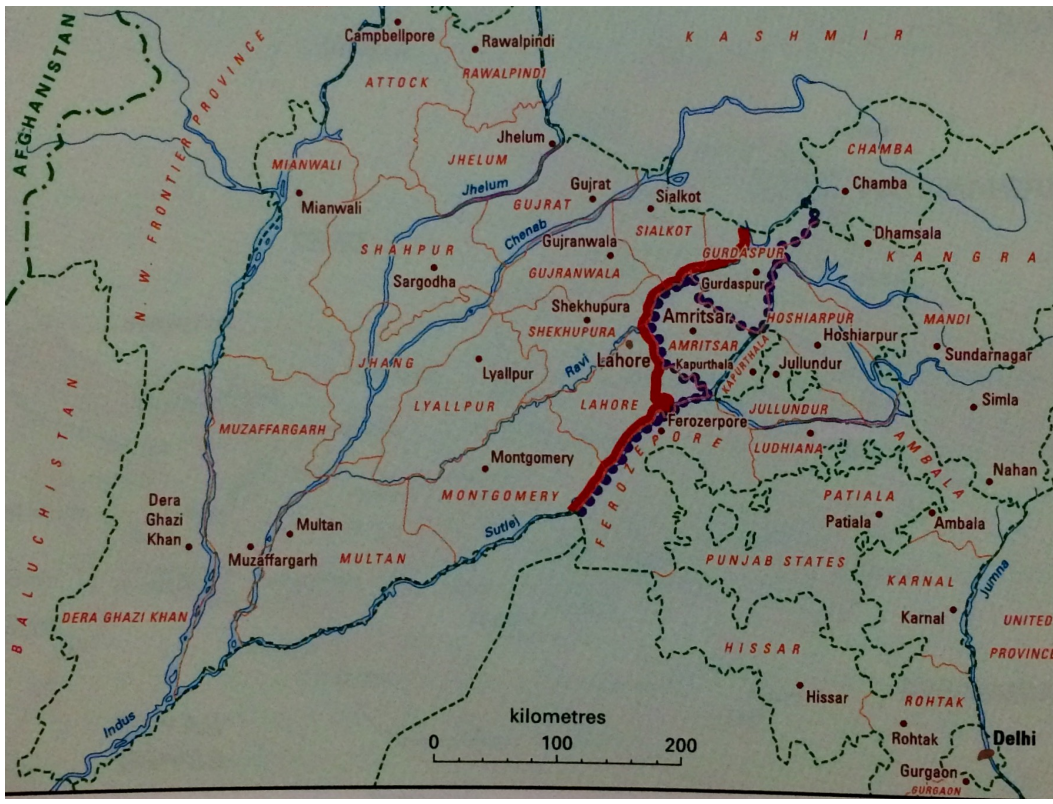
<sup>67</sup> "Viceroy's Personal Reports" July- August 1947. IOR/L/PO/6/123; Viceroy's Personal Report No. 17. Dated 16<sup>th</sup> August 1947; 263

This level of recognition further legitimized the states' existence once independence was declared. There was violence after the partition because people now had a true sense of what territory was theirs and had to leave the respective places in which they were no longer accepted. This possession of territory made people more and attached to their land that was now theirs, but it made others bitter, for many had lost what had been their homes for generations.

Although the boundaries of India and Pakistan brought unfathomable violence, casualties, and conflict, the fact remains that India and Pakistan became two separate, independent entities that have survived up to the present day with distinguishable borders, armies, central forms of government, and a sense of nationalism. Both states gained international recognition right after they received independence, which reinforced the legitimacy of the new states, and thus allowed them to remain in place.



Map 1A – Notional Boundary  
Chester, *Borders and Conflict in South Asia.*



Map 1B – Radcliffe Boundary  
Chester, *Borders and Conflict in South Asia.*



## **CHAPTER 2: MANDATORY PALESTINE**

The partition of mandatory Palestine has a long history of struggles from multiple sides and dimensions: the Jews, the Arabs, and the foreign powers trying to cope with their strife for independence, interests, and nationhood. There were myriad discussions, private negotiations, and broken promises—all of which created tensions that would expand and cause more conflict in the Middle East. Rather than creating a holistic conversation in which all parties were involved, boundary negotiations contained a certain level of disorganization and chaos that prevented each side from obtaining what it wanted. This chapter examines the circumstances, variables, and arguments that led to the principle of partition, followed by an analysis of the partition commissions and of the factors that influenced each partition proposal.

### **PATH TO PARTITION**

During their control of Palestine, the British made promises to Arabs and to Jews that proved to be contradictory and difficult to keep. Among these contradictory promises were Arab sovereignty and the establishment of a Jewish national home. The British did not make these promises with the main purpose of satisfying the Arabs or the Jews, but rather out of their own self-interest. The selfishness, hypocrisy, and the inability to keep these promises created a series of tensions that eventually escalated into conflict. These contradictory promises and agreements were the result of private meetings between many political leaders and the lack of an inclusive conversation in which the Arabs and Jews could share their desires with all of the other great powers.

The presence of the Great powers in the Middle East caused great unrest among the Arabs, which consequently led to their movement for sovereignty. There were a number of correspondences between the Arabs and the British, mainly the Hussein-McMahon

correspondence in July-October 1915, in which the British promised the Arabs in return for entering World War I, the British would support and negotiate for Arab independence. While the Arabs thought their plans were on track to become a sovereign people, the reality proved otherwise; the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement between Britain and France in 1916 defined the great powers' proposed spheres of influence and direct control over the Arab Middle East and, once again, ignored and thus delayed Arab independence. Britain and France prioritized their own interests over those of the Arabs and claimed more control of the territories. The Sykes-Picot treaty allocated what would become the Jordan River, Jordan, Southern Iraq, and a small area including the ports of Haifa and Acre to Britain, south-eastern Turkey, northern Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon to France, and Istanbul, the Turkish straits, and the Ottoman Armenian vilayets to Russia. Ultimately, the Sykes-Picot Agreement gave more power to the great powers, once again ignoring Arabs demands to be independent.

As the Arabs strove for their sovereignty, the Jewish scene in Europe grew progressively worse. Anti-Semitism was on the rise in Europe and was proving to be detrimental. An example of such anti-Semitism is the Dreyfus Affair in the 1890s, a case in which a Jewish French officer was court-martialled on a framed charge of high treason and espionage for Germany<sup>1</sup> simply because of his Jewish identity. It was this type of attack that made Theodore Herzl, the founder of modern political Zionism, advocate for the Jewish people and the creation of their own homeland. He believed Jews needed to defend themselves and put a stop to the perpetual hatred. Thus, at the First Zionist Congress in 1897 in Basle, Theodore Herzl and other Zionist leaders discussed and defined the aim of Zionism: to gather the Jews and establish a home for them in

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<sup>1</sup> Bregman, Ahron. *A History of Israel*. Palgrave Essential Histories. Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003: 2.

the land of Palestine.<sup>2</sup> Herzl's book, *The Jewish State*, described what his ideal Jewish state would look like. While other Zionists offered different ideas of a utopic Jewish homeland, they all shared a strong urge for "...the establishment of a Jewish centre as a solution to Jewish suffering and discrimination."<sup>3</sup> The search for the Jewish National home included talks and negotiations with the British who, after much debate in 1917, promised the establishment of a Jewish National Home through the Balfour Declaration. However, the notion of a Jewish National Home remained ambiguous; there was no reference to a state or a particular piece of territory and, as a result, no one knew what, exactly, a Jewish National Home meant. As a result, the Zionists drafted a constitution under which Palestine would be reconstituted as a Jewish Commonwealth, hoping this more aggressive stance would dispel some of the Balfour Declaration's ambiguity.<sup>4</sup>

At the San Remo Peace Conference in 1920, the great powers divided and distributed the former Ottoman territories in the Middle East, in which the British were awarded Palestine as its mandate. In addition, the Balfour Declaration was linked to the mandatory award, which marked the first time that a great power of the first rank pledged its full support to the idea of helping the Jews to have their national home in the land of Palestine, whose population was about 87 percent Arab.<sup>5</sup> Britain's obligation under the mandate was to provide a fair and just administration, honest bureaucracy, physical and economic well-being of Palestine's inhabitants, and conciliation of the ethnic and religious sensibilities of both the Arab and the Jewish

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<sup>2</sup> Bregman, *A History of Israel*: 5.

<sup>3</sup> Bregman, Ahron. *A History of Israel*: 3.

<sup>4</sup> Sachar, Howard Morley. *A History of Israel: From the Rise of Zionism to Our Time*. 3rd ed. rev. and updated. New York: Knopf, 2007.

<sup>5</sup> Bregman, Ahron. *A History of Israel*: 17-18.

communities; however, reconciling the Zionist goals and the national aspirations of Palestine's Arab's majority turned out to be more difficult than the British had expected.<sup>6</sup>

Britain had numerous tasks and duties to fulfill in Palestine upon the start of the mandate. As Howard Sachar explains, "When Britain assumed responsibility for the Holy Land, it took over an economic cripple, a nation that was impoverished well beyond the ravages of the war itself. Under-populated, boasting little industry or trade and few known natural resources, Palestine was debilitated, too, by administrative chaos no less than by famine."<sup>7</sup> The British brought economic law and order, implemented a government system with British, Muslim, Jewish, and Christian representation, and replaced the entire Ottoman criminal and commercial codes with modern legislation and the English Common Law and Equity.<sup>8</sup> The British continued the practice of religious autonomy, carried out educational reforms, and developed departments of agriculture and public health that mostly concentrated on the Arabs. While the Jews also benefitted from these British concessions, they provided and sustained their own social services. This Jewish growth and progress resulted in the development of thriving Jewish cities through the urban Jewish sector, and the development of the Hebrew language and of Jewish institutions, such as the Technion and Hebrew University.<sup>9</sup>

These developments and the notion of finally having a Jewish National Home was gradually becoming a reality for the Jews. As Howard Sachar explains, "If the British accomplished much in Palestine, however, the Jews matched and ultimately surpassed this progress by their own exertions."<sup>10</sup> While the British were the overarching power in mandatory Palestine, Jews were able to create their own prosperous community through innovations in

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<sup>6</sup> Sachar, Howard Morley. *A History of Israel*: 137.

<sup>7</sup> Sachar. *A History of Israel*: 132.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>9</sup> Bregman, Ahron. *A History of Israel*: 12-13.

<sup>10</sup> Sachar. *A History of Israel*: 134.

agriculture and technology. There were different departments organized for political affairs, immigration, labor, colonization, education, and health; the political department, for example, remained in touch with the high commissioner in Jerusalem on major issues affecting the Balfour Declaration, while the immigration department undertook the placement of Jewish newcomers and advised the mandatory on work opportunities.<sup>11</sup> While these developments took place, Zionist leaders continued to advocate for the creation of an independent Jewish homeland, strengthening the relationship between the mandatory administration and Jewish governments. Some Zionist leaders argued that “...Britain was obliged now to follow the Zionist Executive’s recommendation and open the doors of Palestine for an immediate and massive resettlement of hundreds of thousands of Jews” while others “...regarded any such maximal interpretation as a fantasy.”<sup>12</sup>

As a result of the growing prosperity and success, Jewish immigration increased—26,000 new Jewish immigrants arrived in Palestine between 1919 and 1923, 63,000 between 1924 and 1926, and 175,000 immigrants between 1932 and 1939.<sup>13</sup> The increases in Jewish immigration, however, began to alarm the Arabs because the increased presence of Jews in the land lowered their hopes of obtaining sovereignty and independence. Arabs had advocated for their sovereignty and had attempted to negotiate some form of deal with the British for the past few years, but their requests went unattended. Consequently, Arabs led communal disturbances in which both Jews and Arabs were killed.<sup>14</sup> For example, the Arab Revolts of 1936-1939 were “sparked, on 19 April, by rumours in Jaffa that two Arab Palestinians had been killed by Jews in adjoining Jewish Tel Aviv. Arab mobs then turned on Jews and riots continued for three more

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<sup>11</sup> Sachar. *A History of Israel*: 134.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 139.

<sup>13</sup> Bregman. *A History of Israel*: 20, 23, 26.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 22, 26.

days...”<sup>15</sup> By mid-October, the 1936 uprisings came to a temporary end, resulting in a total of some 1,300 casualties.<sup>16</sup>

One of the reasons why the revolt occurred was because the nonstop Jewish immigration to Palestine which, in turn, was decreasing the chances of Arab sovereignty. As was drafted in a statement for the House of Commons in 1947:

For the Arabs, the fundamental point is that Palestine should no longer be denied the independence which has now been attained by every other Arab state; and that, in accordance with the accepted principles of democracy, the elected majority should be free to determine the future destiny of the country. They regard the further expansion of the Jewish National Home as jeopardizing the attainment of national independence by the Arabs of Palestine, which all Arab states desire; and they are therefore unwilling to contemplate further Jewish immigration into Palestine. They are equally opposed to the creation of a Jewish State in any part of Palestine.<sup>17</sup>

The Arab revolt in 1936 and disturbances of this sort led to the Peel Commission in 1937, a commission that attempted to resolve the tensions that were at play between the Arabs and the Jews. Following the Peel Commission was the Woodhead Commission in 1938, and the implementation of the White Paper of 1939, which limited Jewish immigration to a total of 75,000 more Jews until 1944, during which no more Jews would be allowed to enter Palestine.

## **BOUNDARY COMMISSIONS**

### **(I) PEEL COMMISSION, 1937**

As a response to the escalating tensions between the Jews and the Arabs and, more specifically, the Arab revolt of 1936, the British formed the Peel Commission in late 1936, which aimed to create nominally independent Jewish and Arab states in order to alleviate rising tensions between both peoples. The Commission was chaired by Lord Robert Peel, a seventy-year-old man who had been a previous secretary of state for India. Other members included, Sir

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>16</sup> Sachar. *A History of Israel*: 201.

<sup>17</sup>Main File: Parts I, II, III, IV, V, VI: Policy in Palestine. Appointment of Anglo...,” 1947 1945. PREM 8/627; Part VI; *PALESTINE – Draft for Statement in House of Commons*; 3

Horace Rumbold, a previous British high commissioner in Constantinople and ambassador to Berlin who was the vice-chairman of the Commission, Dr. Reginald Coupland, professor of colonial history at Oxford and “tenacious advocate of unorthodox ideas,” and other professional diplomats and experienced jurists.<sup>18</sup> The Commissioners stayed in Palestine for two months and held thirty public and forty private hearings.<sup>19</sup> From the onset, the commissioners knew that the path to a solution would not be easy—they had arrived in Palestine in the middle of escalating tensions. As Lord Peel once explained, “...the Jewish claim to Palestine on grounds of historical and religious connections and the Arab claim on grounds of 13 centuries of continuous occupation had validity and thus the conflict between Arabs and Jews in Palestine was not one of right against wrong but that of right against right.”<sup>20</sup>

The Peel Commission did not introduce the topic of partition until its fifty-first meeting, during which Chaim Weizmann, a president of the World Zionist Organization, gave testimony.<sup>21</sup> Initially, the Peel Commission viewed partition as a last measure; eventually, however, Weizmann’s proposals to partition convinced the Commission (see map 2A). Thus, in July 1937, the Royal Commission Report was issued—a document consisting of 404 pages full of maps and statistics of the territory summarizing the views of both Jews and Arabs, detailing the accomplishments of the Jewish National Home, and containing a suggestion of curtailment of Jewish immigration to a limit of 12,000 annually for the next five years.<sup>22</sup> As Sachar explains,

...the report’s proposal was for Palestine and Transjordan to be divided into three regions: a Jewish state comprising, essentially, the coastal plain and Galilee; a much larger Arab state embracing the rest of Palestine and Transjordan; and a permanently

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<sup>18</sup> Sachar. *A History of Israel*: 201-202.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 202.

<sup>20</sup> Bregman. *A History of Israel*: 29.

<sup>21</sup> Sachar, Howard Morley. *A History of Israel*: 203.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 204.

mandated British enclave including the Jerusalem-Bethlehem promontory, with a corridor to the sea and British bases on Lake Galilee and the Guld of Aqaba.<sup>23</sup>

Upon its release, the report was rejected by both the Arabs and the Jews. The difference between the rejections, however, was that the Jews accepted the idea of partition, just not this particular plan's principles. The main reason why Zionists rejected this plan was that it did not give the Jewish state enough of the land. As a result, Jews regarded the Peel proposal as a temporary arrangement that could lead to a better solution in the future and, eventually, their own Jewish state. In the eyes of some, having a bit of the land—even if it was not enough or the best part of the land—was better than having nothing. As Bregman argues, the plan was "...a stepping-off ground for further advance, and that after the formation of a large Jewish army, in the wake of the establishment of a Jewish state on the land allotted by the Peel proposal, the Jews could abolish partition and expand to the whole of Palestine."<sup>24</sup>

The Arabs, however, rejected the proposal and the notion of partition entirely, "...declaring that Palestine was an integral part of the Arabian homeland and that no part of it should be alienated."<sup>25</sup> The Arabs were very reluctant to accept anything but their own state and opposed the establishment of the royal commission from the outset.<sup>26</sup> The Arabs did not want a Jewish state because they perceived the existence of it as an obstacle to their independence and control of the entire territory, and they argued that the Arabs were still the majority. The Arabs began to view "Zionism as a British instrument" and considered all activity part of the imperialist plan.<sup>27</sup> As a result, the refusal to compromise was the Arab way of showing that they wanted no more manipulation and that they still hoped for the British promises of sovereignty

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 204-205.

<sup>24</sup> Bregman. *A History of Israel*: 30.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>26</sup> Galnoor, Itzhak. *The Partition of Palestine: Decision Crossroads in the Zionist Movement*. SUNY Series in Israeli Studies. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995: 69.

<sup>27</sup> Sachar. *A History of Israel*: 210.



and independence. As a result, there were high levels of opposition and rebellion to partition, which was renewed thereafter.



Map 2A – Peel Plan for Partition of Palestine, 1937  
Sachar. *A History of Israel*.

## **(II) THE INTERIM YEARS (1937-1947)**

By October 1937, violence erupted once again—the Arabs were furious and did not hesitate to show their rage. From July to November 1938, the uprising was at its high point, producing high numbers of casualties from all sides, including the British. As a result, the British sent more troops into Palestine, and the *Haganah*—the Jewish underground defense force—continued to grow and develop.

That year, the Woodhead Commission sought to “...determine the methods by which partition might be carried out and to recommend boundaries for the proposed Arab and Jewish states”<sup>28</sup> that had been discussed in the Peel Commission. The chairman of the commission was Sir John Woodhead, a “civilian official who had served in the Anglo-Indian administration,” and two of his three colleagues were members of the Indian Civil Service.<sup>29</sup> Since the Arabs opposed and had already dismissed the idea of partition, it is no surprise that they also opposed the Woodhead Commission and refused to make an effort to consult the commissioners. If the Arabs did not agree to the principle of partition, it was clear that they were not going to agree to any plan that included partition. Instead, it was only the British and the Jews who had conversations related to the partition of Palestine. While most of the Zionist leadership had rejected the Peel Plan, many Zionist groups agreed to the idea of partition, which is why they made an effort to negotiate with the British. On November 9, 1938, the Woodhead Report—a 310 page document containing maps and alternative partition suggestions, and stating that the Peel plan was unfeasible—was submitted to Parliament.<sup>30</sup> The Jews, however, also rejected this partition scheme, as the territories allotted to them were too small.

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<sup>28</sup> Sachar. *A History of Israel*: 217.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 218.

By August 1939, Palestine had experienced high amounts of bloodshed—as Sachar puts it: “The Arabs plainly had mastered a crucial lesson, that violence on behalf of their rights in the Holy Land was effective diplomacy.”<sup>31</sup> Arabs resorted to violence to show their opposition to partition and the “imperialist agenda.” By the end of the revolts in August 1939, the toll in Palestine was 6,768 casualties—2394 Jews, 3,764 Arabs, and 610 British.<sup>32</sup> The violence, however, did not dissuade Jews from migrating to Palestine; Nazi anti-Semitic persecution in Europe, and geopolitical and survival reasons dictated their future. In fact, “...the boundaries of any future Jewish state would be determined by the practical evidence of Jewish habitation,”<sup>33</sup> which meant that Jews needed to keep moving to Palestine. Most importantly, the worsening situation in Europe left no other choice for the Jews but to move to Palestine and escape the Nazi terrors.

Wanting to appease Arab requests, yet failing to see the unfathomable consequences that the Holocaust would bring, the British enacted the White Paper in May 1939—a policy which limited Jewish immigration to Palestine with the purpose of maintaining a balance of the population demographics and improving the British bargaining position with the Arabs. In addition to limiting Jewish immigration to Palestine, the White Paper placed restrictions on the existing Jewish population in Palestine. As the Board of Deputies of British Jews later on expressed,

These restrictions meant that the Jewish population of Palestine was to be crystallized as a permanent minority, and seemed to put an end to Jewish efforts and hopes for the effective development of the Jewish National Home. Future policy in regard to Palestine must clearly begin with the abrogation of the White Paper.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Sachar. *A History of Israel*: 219.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

<sup>34</sup> CO733/461/41 Palestine Policy – Board of Deputies of British Jews, Statement of Policy on Palestine]; *Packet: Statement of Policy on Palestine; picture; 5*

The White Paper was a way to please the Arabs and guarantee them that there would not be a Jewish majority in Palestine due to its limiting effects, yet it prevented Jews from accessing the land, and thus facilitated their extermination since they had nowhere to go. Even after the Holocaust, one of the biggest problems was "...the absorption of the 1,250,000 European [Jewish] survivors, the overwhelmingly majority of whom were desperately pressing against the gates of Palestine. Only the immediate establishment of a Jewish state offered the prospect of doing that."<sup>35</sup> Immigration reforms limiting Jewish immigration to Palestine remained in effect until the end of the British mandate.

The Holocaust made clear that it was necessary for the Jewish people to have their own homeland in order to ensure their survival. The Holocaust sped up the urgency of many Jews to want to migrate to Palestine. Those who survived remained aliens in European territory, with nothing but their painful memories. Their only hope was to migrate to the land that had once belonged to the Jewish people. As one memorandum from the Colonial Office submitted to the British in 1945 put it: "...tens of thousands of survivors of Nazi concentration and labour camps, who, in spite of all their past sufferings and present distress, refuse to return to their former countries of residence, which are now but mass grave-yards of their fellow-Jews, and are determined to work out their own salvation in Palestine."<sup>36</sup> The ultimate result of Holocaust atrocities gave the final push to revoke the White Paper and to allow Jewish immigration to Palestine once again. As the Jewish Agency advocated in a 1945 memorandum: "Now that the war is over, the Jewish people can no longer tolerate the continuance of the White Paper, which closes the door of the Jewish National Home against the survivors of the Nazi extermination

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<sup>35</sup> "Zionist Congress in Basle," 1946, CO733/478/7. Newspaper; Titled: Plea for Jewish National Home in Palestine

<sup>36</sup> CO733/461/38: Palestine Policy – Memorandum Submitted by the Jewish Agency to H.M. Government; Political Resolutions Adopted by the World Zionist Conference held in London, August 1<sup>st</sup> to August 13<sup>th</sup>, 1945; picture; 2

camp.”<sup>37</sup> Thus, the Jewish argument to create the state of Israel was grounded in the idea of creating a safe haven in which Jews could feel at home and not be persecuted, further exacerbated by the aftermath of the Holocaust.

As the Anglo-Jewish Association stated in a memorandum from 1945: “We firmly believe that the only settlement which will ensure a lasting solution of the problem of the homelessness of the Jewish people and remove the mistrust [...] is the establishment of Palestine as a Jewish State.”<sup>38</sup> The Zionist movement was dedicated to the establishment of a safe haven for the Jewish people. As the Jewish Agency explained in 1945: “...the country [Palestine] in its present state was their creation and it was the only place where Jews have a home created by themselves to which they had belonged through centuries in their hearts.”<sup>39</sup> Moreover, “It is only in Palestine, where the Jewish Community offers them a warm welcome and has plans ready for their absorption and rehabilitation, that the Jewish survivors can rebuild their lives and join with their fellow Jews in making their contribution as Jews to the reconstruction and progress envisaged in the new world order.”<sup>40</sup>

### Jewish Argument

Claim to the land in the Zionist argument was founded on the idea of finding a safe haven and home for the Jews; it was not a Zionist aim to colonize and rule over the Arabs, but rather to create a Jewish homeland in which Jews could be safe from discrimination and feel a sense of belonging. As David Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister of Israel, stated in 1945: “In returning

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<sup>37</sup>CO733/461/38: Palestine Policy – Memorandum Submitted by the Jewish Agency to H.M. Government; Sheets titled: MEMORANDUM; 22.5.45: 2

<sup>38</sup>CO733/461/40: Palestine Annex: Palestine Policy – Memorandum from Anglo-Jewish Association, 1945; Policy in Palestine: Memorandum Submitted to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: 1.

<sup>39</sup>CO733/461/38: Palestine Policy – Memorandum Submitted by the Jewish Agency to H.M. Government; Sheets titled: The Secretary of State gave an interview to a deputation from the Jewish Agency on Friday, 7<sup>th</sup> September, 1945; picture

<sup>40</sup>CO733/461/41: Palestine Policy – Board of Deputies of British Jews, Statement of Policy on Palestine; The Board of Deputies of British Jews; picture; 1

to our historic homeland we cannot, nor do we wish to take away anything which [the Arabs] have; we want merely to build; to rebuild the desolate lands. We want to create new opportunities in agriculture, in industry, in sea trade and, by creating them, to increase the population by Jews who want to return to their homeland.”<sup>41</sup> The desire of the Jewish people to have a Jewish state was so strong that even some Zionists made known that “Jewish Palestine will be happy to cooperate with the Arabs of Palestine and the neighbouring Arab peoples in a common effort to bring greater prosperity to the whole Middle East.”<sup>42</sup>

While the Jews would do anything to obtain their own state, the fact remained that they were also full of contradictions. For example, Ben-Gurion’s argument in regard to population states,

This is really the crux of the problem: Are the Jews to remain a minority in Palestine as they are throughout the world? We firmly believe that history has decreed that we should cooperate with Great Britain, but the British people must realize that the Jews of Palestine, and the millions outside who have set their hearts on Palestine, will never agree that the return of Jews to their historic homeland should be dependent on anyone else’s consent; that Jews in Palestine should remain a minority; and that they should be deprived of statehood.<sup>43</sup>

There was a question of creating a Jewish homeland while simultaneously living with a non-Jewish population. On the one hand, Jews were willing to live side by side with their Arab cousins, but on the other hand, Jews wanted a place that they could call their own. After all, Jews needed a safe refuge in which they could avoid the high level of anti-Semitism that was plaguing Europe. Moreover, the Arabs wanted nothing but their own state as well, arguing that “Any other

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<sup>41</sup> CO733/461/38: Palestine Policy – Memorandum Submitted by the Jewish Agency to H.M. Government]; Papers, minutes? Starts with Mr. Ben-Gurion; 2

<sup>42</sup> CO733/461/38: Palestine Policy – Memorandum Submitted by the Jewish Agency to H.M. Government]; Political Resolutions Adopted by the World Zionist Conference held in London, August 1<sup>st</sup> to August 13<sup>th</sup>, 1945; picture; 7-8

<sup>43</sup> CO733/461/32: Palestine Policy – Establishment of Joint Boards: Railways, Ports and Telegraphs, and Currency; Press Conference at the Offices of the Jewish Agency for Palestine – Ben Gurion; London, 14<sup>th</sup> November, 1945; picture

solution [would] threaten peace throughout Palestine and Middle East.”<sup>44</sup> As a result, the chaos in mandatory Palestine did not emerge from a vacuum, but rather from many years of repressed tensions that exploded as more and more schemes were proposed.

The War in Europe had proven to be enormously costly, and the British were coming to terms with the fact that their empire was losing power. The British found themselves unable to keep up with their expenses and thus needed to make changes. As a result, efficiency and benefit for the British themselves were more important than attending to the needs for peace in the Middle East. After all, as Lucy Chester argues, “[b]ecause the power of the British empire after World War II was declining, it was all the more important for the empire to convey a façade of control.”<sup>45</sup> As is stated in a 1948 report for the partition of Palestine from the Foreign Office Records: “The imperialist circles of Britain regard national strife as the best means of achieving their own specific aims.”<sup>46</sup> The complexity and mess of the conflict, and the inability of Britain to satisfy both powers, and Britain’s poor economic conditions led it to transfer its responsibility of reaching some form of solution somewhere else—to the United Nations.

In one last effort, the British made a final offer to the Jews and the Arabs through the Morrison-Grady scheme in 1946, which called for federalization under total British trusteeship. Once again, however, the scheme appeared to benefit only the British and left the Arabs and the Jews as a second priority. Consequently, both the Jews and the Arabs rejected the plan and, consequently, the British turned to other means. In that year, the Anglo-American Commission of Inquiry was created with the purpose of arriving at a solution by examining political and

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<sup>44</sup> “Policy: Arab Reactions to UNSCOP,” 1947/1948, CO733/482/7; [Cabinet Distribution: From Beirut to Foreign Office; secret; picture; 39

<sup>45</sup> Chester, Lucy. “Boundary Commissions as Tools to Safeguard British Interests at the End of Empire.” *Journal of Historical Geography*, Feature: Politics and scale in boundary-making, 34, no. 3 (July 2008): 494–515: 495.

<sup>46</sup> “Partition of Palestine,” 1948. UK FO 816/115. Goldberg; USSR (for abroad) Moscow in Yiddish for North America; 22.45; 6/12/47; 44 A

social conditions, Jewish immigration, and by consulting Jewish and Arab representatives. After years of repression under British rule and not being granted their wishes, however, it was only natural for the Arabs to reject all but a state of their own in which they could be truly free of any form of foreign rule. As the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs stated in a Memorandum in 1945: "...the certainty of Arab hostility to partition is so clear, and the consequences of permanently alienating the Arabs would be so serious, that partition must on this ground alone be regarded as a desperate remedy."<sup>47</sup>

### **(III) UN COMMISSION, 1947**

The Middle East had reached a dead end; there was no more room for negotiation between Jews and Arabs and, consequently, the future of Palestine rested with the members of the UN and the Great Powers. On 15 February 1947, Great Britain turned the Palestine issue over to the United Nations, during which the British abandoned the issues affecting Palestine.<sup>48</sup> In order to obtain a more neutral body of nations that would have a say in the future of Palestine, the United Nations created UNSCOP (the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine), a special UN body that consisted of eleven nations including Australia, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Guatemala, India, Iran, and the Netherlands, Peru, Sweden, Uruguay, and Yugoslavia. UNSCOP had full authority to investigate all questions and issues relevant to the problem of Palestine. With the authority to do so, UNSCOP decided the fate of Palestine and determined that:

the mandate must be ended and independence granted at the earliest practicable date; the political structure of the new state or states should be 'basically democratic;' the economic unity of Palestine must be maintained; the security of the holy places and access to them assured; the General Assembly should carry out immediately an arrangement for solving the urgent problem of a quarter-million Jewish DPs in Europe.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> "Main File: Parts I, II, III, IV, V, VI: Policy in Palestine. Appointment of Anglo...," 1947 1945. PREM 8/627; Part VI; *Cabinet C.P. (47) 30 Palestine: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs*; 6

<sup>48</sup> Reich, Bernard. *A Brief History of Israel*. New York: Facts On File/Checkmark Books, 2005: 40.

<sup>49</sup> Sachar. *A History of Israel*: 283.



On 14 June 1947, six diplomats, four jurists and a professor arrived in Jerusalem and stayed for five weeks and met Jewish representatives.<sup>50</sup> Interestingly, Britain abstained from participating in the commission discussions, for fear of further provoking the Arabs and losing oil deals and for bitterness against the Jews for shaming Britain through Zionist propaganda.<sup>51</sup>

On 29 November 1947, the General Assembly resolution to partition Palestine was proposed and approved by a vote of thirty-three to thirteen, giving it the necessary two-thirds majority to pass<sup>52</sup> (see map 2B). Under the final plan and the majority recommendation, the Arab state would consist of 4,500 square miles, 804,000 Arabs, and 10,000 Jews, while the Jewish state would consist of 5,500 miles, 538,000 Jews, and 397,000 Arabs. In addition, both would be linked in an economic union and to share a joint currency, joint railroads, and highways, as well as postal, telephone, and telegraphic services.<sup>53</sup> Moreover,

The Jewish state was located in the coastal plain along the Mediterranean Sea from about Ashkelon to Acre, the eastern part of the area of the Galilee, and much of the Negev Desert. The Arab state included the remainder of the territory of the mandate west of the Jordan River, except for Jerusalem and the immediate area around it, which were included in the international area [controlled by the UN].<sup>54</sup>

The implementation of this plan, however, was not as swift as many had hoped.

Because of this religious attachment to Jerusalem from both the Jews and the Arabs, the UN commission agreed on having a Jerusalem state—which would be an international zone controlled by the UN. Jerusalem’s neutrality, the British thought, would reduce the tensions between both sides. After all, as the Arabs argued in a report regarding repercussions in Palestine and in neighbouring Arab countries: “...no Moslem Holy Place of any real importance will be included in the Jewish State. The true religious issue centres round Jerusalem, the third most

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<sup>50</sup> Bregman. *A History of Israel*: 39.

<sup>51</sup> Sachar. *A History of Israel*: 296.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 294.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 292.

<sup>54</sup> Reich. *A Brief History of Israel*: 42.

holy city of Islam, and the fear of this city passing into Jewish control will be finally removed by the creation of the Jerusalem state.”<sup>55</sup> On the other hand, however, as Englishman Sir G. Gater explained, “Jewish Palestine without Jerusalem would be a body without a soul. Jerusalem has throughout the ages been the spiritual centre of the Jews, dispersed as they were over the face of the earth...”<sup>56</sup> Clearly, Jerusalem was key to both peoples and thus an area of endless debate.<sup>57</sup>

Most states that voted against the resolution were Muslim and thus supported the Arab cause. As Sachar explains, “During the entire mandatory period, Arab leaders had refused to cooperate with the British in any scheme of national autonomy as long as the Jews were similarly included.”<sup>58</sup> Not handling this partition plan any differently as they did with the British, the Arabs continued to be reluctant to all partition schemes. As was summarized in a telegram from the Foreign Office reporting a conversation on Palestine between Mr. Bevin, the British ambassador, and the United States Ambassador in London on the 22<sup>nd</sup> May: “Palestine was a question of deep concern to the countries of the Middle East, to Pakistan and to other countries with Moslem inhabitants.”<sup>59</sup> Months before the UN Partition plan was released or even created, Arabs opposed the proceedings. As a note on Proceedings of the Meeting of the Arab Premiers in Cairo from December 8 to 17, 1947 reads, “The general impression gained by conversations with all the delegations to the conference of Arab premiers... is that there is complete unanimity of view that resistance to Partition must be offered and that fighting and bloodshed is inevitable.”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> CO733/461/29: Palestine Policy – Repercussions in Palestine and in Neighbouring Arab Countries; 2/2

<sup>56</sup> CO733/461/13: Palestine Policy: The Nature of Constitution of the Succession States; Blue square sheets, 1944, Sir G. Gater; 5

<sup>57</sup> CO733/461/17: Palestine (Annex): Jerusalem State – Probable Financial Position, 1944]

*Extract from Report of Ministerial Committee on Palestine – P.(M)(43) 29 of 20<sup>TH</sup> December, 1943; 1*

<sup>58</sup> Sachar. *A History of Israel*: 309.

<sup>59</sup> “Palestine: UN Assembly,” 1948. UK FO 115/4376

<sup>60</sup> Partition of Palestine,” 1948. UK FO 816/115

However, the Zionists thought otherwise. Contrary to what Arabs believed, Zionists argued that partition would not bring forth more bloodshed and pain but rather economic prosperity for all. As David Ben-Gurion stated in a set of minutes dated around 1944 or 1945:

We have no quarrel with the Arabs. In returning to our historic homeland we cannot, nor do we wish to take away anything which they have; we want merely to build; to rebuild the desolate lands. We want to create new opportunities in agriculture, in industry, in sea trade and, by creating them, to increase the population by Jews who want to return to their homeland.<sup>61</sup>

Contrary to popular belief, "...the numbers of Arabs who benefitted from Jewish immigration more than compensated for rare injustices. Indeed, in the Middle East, it was Palestine alone that resulted in Arab immigration exceeding emigration."<sup>62</sup> Between 1922 and 1945, approximately 100,000 Arabs entered the country from neighboring lands. The influx, Sachar argues, "could be traced in some measure to the orderly government provided by the British; but far more, certainly, to the economic opportunities made possible by Jewish settlement."<sup>63</sup>

As Ben-Gurion indicated, the priority of many Jews was not to colonize Palestine and the Arabs living there—despite the fact that it must have felt as such to the Arabs—but to create a Jewish homeland and to encourage a growing influx of Jewish immigrants. Nevertheless, the Arabs were more hostile toward the Jews and the British after seventeen years of the mandate. As a result, "the UN commission concluded that this was a political conflict between irreconcilable aspirations and that territorial surgery was the only solution."<sup>64</sup> Jews did not only oppose the partition scheme, on the contrary, they accepted it quite openly. To the Jews, the UN plan was the most percentage of territory that they had ever been offered.

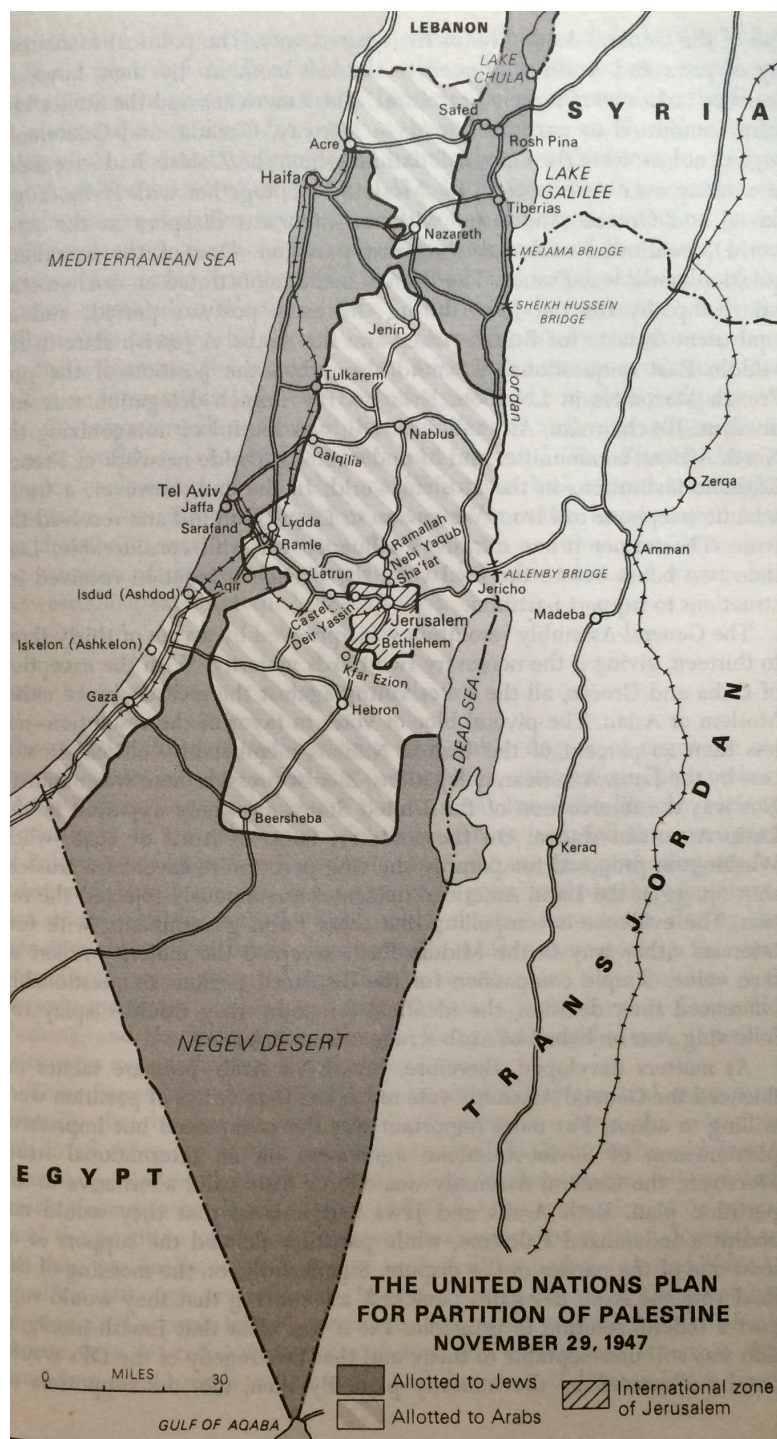
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<sup>61</sup> CO733/461/38: Palestine Policy – Memorandum Submitted by the Jewish Agency to H.M. Government

<sup>62</sup> Sachar, Howard Morley. *A History of Israel*: 134.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>64</sup> Galnoor. *The Partition of Palestine*: 70.



Map 2B – The UN Partition Plan, 1947  
 Sachar. A History of Israel.

Factors at Play (1940-1946)

The Peel partition plan did not work in 1937, but it did lead to discussion within the next ten years. Factors that influenced the Peel partition proposal were accentuated and further discussed. Religious contiguity played a role even with the fluctuation of population demographics. For example, as an Extract from the Report of Ministerial Committee on Palestine from 20 December 1943 reads,

The inclusion of Jaffa in the Jewish State is dictated by considerations of practicability rather than of desirability. Jaffa-Tel Aviv is, in fact, one town, and it is really more correct to speak of Jaffa-Tel Aviv as a town of 235,030 inhabitants—167,580 Jews and 67,450 Arabs—than it is to speak of Jaffa as a separate town on 91,870 inhabitants—66,700 Arabs and 25,170 Jews.<sup>65</sup>

Moreover, the Galilee, Central Judaea, South Gaza, and North-West Beersheva were to be awarded to Arabs because there was a larger Arab population.<sup>66</sup> A problem with these requests was the fact that dividing along religious lines would make a pockmarked state due to the fact that populations were not entirely allocated by religion. Furthermore, a pockmarked state would have forced each religious population to have to travel across each other's territory to reach another area of religious contiguity.

In addition to religious identity, a large part of the discussion for splitting up the territory was associated with economic prosperity by area. With the rise of Jewish immigration, there was also an increase of economic prosperity. As the Colonial Office Records dealing with the Arab areas from 1943 reads,

On the experience acquired in Palestine during the last 65 years, Jews claim to be able to cultivate a great part of the lands which both Arabs and Government consider

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<sup>65</sup> CO 733/461/22 – Palestine Policy: The Arab Areas; Thin tracing paper titled: Extract from Report of Ministerial Committee on Palestine; Inclusion of Jaffa in the Jewish State; Dec. 20<sup>th</sup> 1943; picture; 12

<sup>66</sup> CO 733/461/22 – Palestine Policy: The Arab Areas; Extent to Which the Scheme of Partition Recommended Fulfills the Conditions Prescribed; 20<sup>th</sup> December, 1943; 8

uncultivable, whether in the mountains of Judea or Galilee, on the sandy wastes of the sea-shores, on the steppes of the Negev, or in the valley of the Jordan.<sup>67</sup>

This cultivation action led to territorial and economic affluence for the Jews. This affluence, in turn, strongly influenced the train of thought of the boundary commissions. As was recorded in a report from the Ministerial Committee on Palestine from the Colonial Office Records regarding the inclusion of Haifa in the Jewish State, dated December 20<sup>th</sup> 1943:

Haifa is an important centre of Jewish industry; Arab industrial development in the city and its vicinity cannot compare with that achieved and in process of being achieved by the Jews. Any division of territory which placed the industries of the two large Jewish industrial centres, Tel Aviv and Haifa, in different States, and possibly under different tariffs, would lead to incongruous results and be most difficult to defend. For this reason, we consider the inclusion of Haifa in the Jewish State to be the only practical solution.<sup>68</sup>

The report discussed the prosperity that Jewish influence brought upon cities, but it also discussed what occurred in Arab areas. Because the Arab areas were so small, the report mentioned that “The Arab areas will certainly show a deficit” and that they should be “joined direct to a Greater Syria...with the whole that the excess cost of their maintenance should not prove too great a burden for the larger state.”<sup>69</sup> While these points were important to consider, the Arab desire for the whole of Palestine persisted and was not being addressed. Furthermore, dividing along economic lines would cut off religious communities and create two states that would be very difficult to navigate and preserve because of how populations were dispersed.

## AFTERMATH

On 14 May 1948 Israel declared its independence and the British withdrew as a mandatory authority. The lack of an overarching authority allowed for the Jews to adopt the 1947

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<sup>67</sup> CO733/461/38: Palestine Policy – Memorandum Submitted by the Jewish Agency to H.M. Government; *Sheets titled: MEMORANDUM*; 22.5.45; 4

<sup>68</sup> CO 733/461/22 – Palestine Policy: The Arab Areas; *Thin tracing paper titled: Extract from Report of Ministerial Committee on Palestine; Inclusion of Haifa in the Jewish State; Dec. 20<sup>th</sup> 1943; picture*; 11

<sup>69</sup> CO 733/461/22 – Palestine Policy: The Arab Areas; *Extent to Which the Scheme of Partition Recommended Fulfills the Conditions Prescribed; 20<sup>th</sup> December, 1943 – Practicability of the Scheme*; 6

UN Resolution despite the fact that the Arabs had not agreed to it. Nevertheless, the Jewish state produced a declaration of independence, which, interestingly, did not mention the boundaries, adding to the overall ambiguity of the partition process. As Bregman adds, “Ben-Gurion failed to mention the boundaries of the Jewish state, presumably because he did not wish to rule out the possibility that Israeli forces would expand these boundaries beyond what the UN had allotted to the Jews in November 1947.”<sup>70</sup> To the Jews, the declaration of their state was a victory; at last, they obtained the Jewish safe haven for which they had fought for so long. Just a few minutes after Ben-Gurion declared independence, the United States recognized the new state of Israel.

To the Arabs, however, the declaration of the Jewish state made them furious. Indeed, the following day, all Arab nations surrounding the newly founded state attacked Israel, inciting the War of Independence. The greater problem, however, was the issue of Jerusalem; the UN Partition plan had granted the Jerusalem state neither to the Jews or the Arabs. As a result, both sides desired to have control of the city and engaged in a continuous, bloody war for years to come. As a consequence of war, Israel won more territory thereafter; in fact, “three weeks after the establishment of the state of Israel... Israel was in control of much more territory than she could have hoped for.”<sup>71</sup> The lack of a formal agreement, the lack of an overarching authority, the lack of dialogue, and the strong intervention of foreign powers produced a chaotic, messy outcome.

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<sup>70</sup> Bregman, Ahron. *A History of Israel*: 30.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

## CHAPTER 3: COMPARISON

Historians have closely examined the partitions of British India and mandatory Palestine; however, they have done so in isolation. Very few historians have analyzed both cases side by side even though the partitions of both regions share common factors. For example, both geopolitical conflicts are centered on religious differences, both regions were under British rule, and the newly founded states in both regions achieved independence only ten months apart from each other. Despite the similarities, only the partition of British India was able to produce two states that, despite the violence, remained cartographically stable, as opposed to the Middle East where the boundaries kept consistently changing.

This chapter analyzes possible factors that contributed to the cartographic success of British India's partition. Each section in this chapter juxtaposes both India and Palestine in order to In order to further understand the partitions and to accentuate the importance of these key components that influenced India's cartographic stability. The factors examined in this section include: the presence (or lack) of an initial mutual agreement between all parties; speed and secrecy; size of territory; significance (cultural and religious) of territory; the form of British rule, which compares Britain's colonial rule in India to the British mandate in Palestine; immigration, which compares the impact of static versus fluctuating populations; and domestic versus international interests, which describes the relative influence of outside players. By juxtaposing India and Palestine, as opposed to studying them in isolation, this chapter seeks to offer a deeper understanding of the factors and circumstances under which partition failed and succeeded.



## **FACTOR 1: INITIAL MUTUAL AGREEMENT (OR LACK THEREOF)**

The initial mutual agreement to partition, or lack thereof, was one of the most important factors that contributed to each region's cartographic fate. In India, this initial agreement set the base for the rest of the partition processes that took place; that is, the League and the Congress progressed their partition processes by adhering to the common goal to which they had agreed on 3 June 1947. Without this initial mutual understanding, there would have been no foundation for the numerous meetings and processes that would follow, making all sides unlikely to reach a final and mutual agreement, as was the case in mandatory Palestine. Indeed, the inability to establish a common base that determined what both sides demanded—as opposed to never clarifying those fundamental needs—made the numerous commissions and proposals throughout the partition process quite pointless. In this section, I explain the impact of having (and not having) an initial mutual agreement and how that agreement established the tone and direction of what would come.

The Congress and the League agreed to have two sovereign states no matter what the boundaries were to become in British India. There was an element of agreement prior to partition planning that significantly impacted the outcome of the geopolitical situation. That is, the strong desire to have two independent states encouraged both sides to commit to designing, defining, and adhering to the final state boundaries even during times of high tension. The presence of a legitimate contract—which both sides accepted and signed on 3 June, 1947—held both sides accountable for creating an independent India and Pakistan and, consequently, committed both sides to cooperating with and completing the overall process until independence was declared. Additionally, the agreement established the foundation for all the commissions, negotiations, and talks that occurred from its inception to Independence Day on 15 August 1947.

Even during times of disagreement, the League, the Congress, and the British remained focused on the core mission: the creation of two separate states. As was stated in the Central Partition Council on July 24, 1947:

Both Governments have pledged themselves to accept the awards of the Boundary Commissions, whatever these may be. The Boundary Commissions are already in session; if they are to discharge their duties satisfactorily, it is essential that they should not be hampered by public speeches or writings threatening boycott by direct action, or otherwise interfering with their work. Both Governments will take appropriate steps to secure this end; and, as soon as the awards are announced, both Governments will enforce them impartially and at once.<sup>1</sup>

Even with popular violence, the overall levels of cooperation remained quite high. Indeed, one of the things the commissions cooperated on and discussed was how to deal with possible future violence. As Viceroy Mountbatten stated in one of his August personal reports: “There are continued rumours that the Sikhs will make trouble after the Boundary Commission’s award has been announced, but there is evidence that both the new Dominions intend to be very firm in dealing with disturbances in the future...”<sup>2</sup> The high level of cooperation between the Congress, the League, and the British throughout the partition process, and the ability to deal with the violence of the time did not decrease the violence that came after partition, but it did allow for a greater threshold for conversation, dialogue, and cooperation.

Unlike the League and Congress, Jews, Muslims, and Christian Palestinians negotiating for Palestine did not have a preliminary contract that committed them to the partitioning of the territory. Rather, partition commissions and negotiation attempts occurred before all sides had reached an initial mutual agreement to partition. Initially, each side wanted all of Palestine to be a state of its own. However, the Peel report in 1937 changed the scene; while both Jews and

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<sup>1</sup> “9920; Boundary Commissions of Punjab and Bengal: Petitions, Memoranda and Telegrams and Protests against Awards,” August 1947. IOR/L/PJ/7/12465. *Extract from Statement By Central Partition Council Dated 24<sup>th</sup> July*

<sup>2</sup> “9920; Boundary Commissions of Punjab and Bengal: Petitions, Memoranda and Telegrams and Protests against Awards,” August 1947. IOR/L/PJ/7/12465. *Extract from Viceroy’s Personal Report No. 15 Dated 1<sup>st</sup> August*

Arabs rejected the Peel report, the Jews had accepted *the principle of partition* while the Arabs completely rejected it because of their initial desire to be a sovereign and independent people ruling over what they perceived as rightfully theirs. Thereafter, Jews were willing to meet and negotiate with the British commissioners. The problem, however, was that these negotiations were taking place without the Arabs due to the fact that partition was not an option they wanted.

As a result, the more commissions that were created, the more complicated and unlikely the path to partition became. The lack of a preliminary agreement, as was present in the India case, prevented the Jews and Arabs from reaching a viable solution in which both parties would benefit. Rather, the Palestine question remained unanswered and boundary commissions consistently redrew possible boundary options that could never be fully satisfactory to one side or the other. The level of reluctance to confront one another got so high that, as Sachar explains, “When the Arabs refused to sit in the same room with the Jews, arrangements were made for the two delegations to enter the palace by separate entrances.”<sup>3</sup> The lack of an initial agreement and establishment of common goals affected the outcome of Palestine’s partition.

The reason as to why this initial agreement was crucial in India’s partition process is because it committed all parties and guaranteed stability between them until the final boundaries were determined and implemented. As a result, the high level of cooperation and the productive conversations that were present in the partition process of India were certainly not the same in the partition processes of Palestine. Although there were more attempts to partition Palestine after 1937, the fact remains that those attempts were futile because a foundational agreement to partition was never established, resulting in heightened tensions between Jews and Arabs.

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<sup>3</sup> Sachar, Howard Morley. *A History of Israel*: 220.

## **FACTOR 2: SPEED AND SECRECY**

Speed and secrecy also played an essential role in the partition efforts because they determined the available debate time, proposal time, and the threshold for outside influences, which had an overall effect on the end results. The levels of speed and secrecy were high in India but low in Palestine. The opposite levels of speed and secrecy led to different results in each case. In this section, I explain how the differing levels of speed and secrecy in each region contributed to the different outcomes of each case.

As late as three months prior to independence, partition of the subcontinent remained an idea rather than a reality; Mountbatten still believed that British India was going to remain united. As Mountbatten wrote in April 1947 in one of his personal reports: “I regard Jinnah as a psychopathic case; in fact until I had met him I would not have thought it possible that a man with such a complete lack of administrative knowledge or sense of responsibility could achieve or hold down so powerful a position.”<sup>4</sup> Originally, Mountbatten did not deem the partition of British India viable because the idea was very new and because India had remained united for so long. The drive to partition the territory was not a movement that had been present for decades; rather, all conversation pertaining to partition and the implementation of new boundaries rose very quickly in mid-1947 in the context of intensifying the territorial tensions.

It was not until Tuesday, the 12<sup>th</sup> of August, that Radcliffe informed Mountbatten that his awards would be ready by noon the following day<sup>5</sup>—only three days before the partition itself. Moreover, award decisions were not publicized until 15 August 1947, the day of the partition, because “The boundary commission’s deliberations were supposed to be secret, impartial and

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<sup>4</sup> “Viceroy’s Personal Reports” July- August 1947. IOR/L/PO/6/123; Viceroy’s Personal Report No. 3 Dated 17<sup>th</sup> April, 1947; 45

<sup>5</sup> Viceroy’s Personal Reports” July- August 1947. IOR/L/PO/6/123; Viceroy’s Personal Report No. 17. Dated 16<sup>th</sup> August 1947

isolated from political pressure.”<sup>6</sup> Holding these commission meetings secret prevented people outside the commissions from having a personal opinion for the duration of the process. This level of secrecy, therefore, prevented disputes and interference from both domestic and international players, which allowed for the process to run more hastily in order to create the boundaries. Even before there was an official Chairman, whose main function was to decide points of disagreement, members of the Commissions had started to work independently in order to accelerate the process.<sup>7</sup> In fact, “It was not until the summer of 1947 that British and South Asian decision-makers began serious discussions about the format and procedure of a boundary commission.”<sup>8</sup>

A large part of the ambiguity that occurred had to do with the high speed of the overall process. Decisions in regard to where the boundaries would fall were made hastily. However, the high speed of the overall process left little time for prolonged debate and hesitation. As Mountbatten once stated, “This [was] no time for bickering, much less for the continuation in any shape or form of the disorders and lawlessness of the past few months...”<sup>9</sup> As Nehru further agreed, “there are all manner of factors which have to be considered. It is better, therefore, to leave the matter to the Boundary commission itself. They will, no doubt, take into consideration all factors they consider relevant.”<sup>10</sup> Because the boundaries were drawn in under three months, there was not enough time for debate and alterations extensive enough to delay the process.

The fast pace of the process also allowed for snap decisions. On 12 June, Nehru replied to Mountbatten’s request for working principles for the boundary commission, “...making it clear

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<sup>6</sup> Beaumont, Herbert Christopher. “Herbert Christopher Beaumont Papers,” 1947. Mss Eur Photo Eur 358; Newspaper Article: How Mountbatten bent the rules and the Indian border

<sup>7</sup> “File 1446/17/GG/43 - Coll I Boundary Commission,” 1947. IOR/R/3/1/157; 86.

<sup>8</sup> Chester, *Borders and Conflict in South Asia*, 25

<sup>9</sup> Cited in *Pakistan Horizon*, Vol. 56: 212.

<sup>10</sup> Cited in Chester, *Borders and Conflict in South Asia*, 32.

that Congress had intentionally proposed vague terms of reference in hopes that this leeway would allow the commission to work more quickly, with relatively few limitations to consider and a relatively simple mandate to follow.”<sup>11</sup> Fast decisions did not necessarily mean bad decisions; in fact, the rashness of it all allowed for less tensions and debate between political parties. Indeed, if all parties had a say, decisions would not have been made as quickly because there would have been lingering debate on particular details that would never have pleased both sides, as proved to be the case in Palestine.

As Viceroy Mountbatten explained in his July-August personal reports: “Friction is more intense and much time has to be devoted to oiling the bearings and pulling spanners out of the works. I am more than ever convinced that if the date of transfer had been 1<sup>st</sup> October there would have been serious risk of a complete breakdown before that date.”<sup>12</sup> However, extreme violence came right after partition occurred. The difference, however, was that the British were no longer in power and could no longer be directly blamed. As a result, Mountbatten’s argument was more of a pretext; he argued that speed would decrease violence, but that argument was just a means to protect the British image as an authoritative and imperial power, and to avoid problems.

Unlike the India case, the partition of Palestine was not a three-month planning event. Rather, the partition of this territory emerged as a result of years of effort from the Zionist movement to create a Jewish state, Arab pleas for independence, and from years of negotiations between international players like France, the British, and the United States. Unlike the partition of India, the partition of Palestine was the focus of several commissions, such as the Peel Commission in 1937, the Whitehead Commission in 1938, in addition to planning schemes such

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<sup>11</sup> Chester, *Borders and Conflict in South Asia*, 32.

<sup>12</sup> “Viceroy’s Personal Reports” July- August 1947. IOR/L/PO/6/123; Viceroy’s Personal Report No. 15. Dated 1<sup>st</sup> August, 1947: 208.

as the Morrison-Grady scheme in 1946, and the Anglo-American Committee of 1946 prior to the final UN partition plan in 1947. Ironically, the heavy emphasis on the creation of boundary commissions and partition plans, the lengthy amount of dialogue, and the transparency of it all to the leaders of all sides, made the solution-finding process lengthier, messier, and less likely to succeed.

With the Peel Commission in 1937, the idea of partition was present in people's minds for at least a decade before it actually occurred. The Peel report planted seeds in people's minds in regard as to what the partitioned territory could look like, which gave people the time to think about partition in more detail. The problem, however, was that the more people thought about partition, the less likely it was for the Arabs and the Jews to reach a solution. In fact, the Peel Report alienated the Arabs, as it hinted that they never would get the complete sovereignty the British had once promised, once again contradicting British promises. As Sachar explains, "...attacks on the Peel Report increased in frequency and vehemence throughout the Arab World... In Egypt the Moslem Brotherhood initiated fund-raising campaigns on behalf of the Palestine Arabs. There were mass demonstrations in Baghdad, a one-day strike in Mecca and Medina, a protest to the British...."<sup>13</sup> Simultaneously, the Report made the Jews more hopeful of finally creating an official Jewish state, which made the Zionist movement even stronger.

The final, implemented plan, the UN partition plan from 29 November 1947, took only about six months to create; however, that six-month period of planning did not come without precedent. Conversations that took place after the Peel Commission became more complicated over time, examining religious sites and formulated ever-more detailed arguments. Indeed, there are a number of Palestine Ministerial Committee Reports and Colonial Office records from 1943 and 1944 that deal with further alterations proposed for the boundaries of succession states. One

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<sup>13</sup> Sachar. *A History of Israel*: 209-210

of these documents, for example, deals with specific religious sites—which the Peel Report and the Whitehead Commission did not discuss much—and brings in the Catholic population, which did not play a large role in the process. As was recorded in a Palestine Policy report from the Colonial Office Records in 1943-1944: “The main reason for transferring Mount Tabor from the Jewish State is that, as the traditional site of the Transfiguration [of Jesus], its inclusion in Jewish territory would give offence to Roman Catholics (there is a large Franciscan church on the summit), and Protestants alike, whereas there would be no objection to its inclusion in an Arab state, where it had remained for a millennium.”<sup>14</sup>

As consequence for the amount of time available for discussions, what started as failed British promises became a heated, large-scale geopolitical conflict. World players began to get involved, further polarizing both sides. For example, a World-Inter-Parliamentary Congress of Arab and Moslem Countries met for the Defense of Palestine in Cairo in October 1938, which significantly prefigured later rivalries on the Palestine problem.<sup>15</sup> It can be argued, therefore, that the lack of speed and secrecy caused more tensions to develop and made the conversation open to far too many outside players.

The high speed of the India case prevented high levels of disagreement because there was no time for debate. The tight deadline to create and implement a partition plan left no choice for the boundary commission in India but to work speedily. In order to ensure high levels of speed, the commissions also worked in high levels of secrecy in order to prevent outsiders from sharing their opinion and slowing down the process. In contrast, the concept of partition lingered in Palestine for a little too long; from the moment it was first introduced in the Peel Commission in

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<sup>14</sup> “Palestine Policy: Further Alterations in Proposed Boundaries of the Succession states,” 1943-1944. CO733/461/35: 2.

<sup>15</sup> Sachar. *A History of Israel*: 210



1937 to the UN Resolution plan in 1947, the idea of partition into a Jewish and an Arab state had been around for ten years. As a result, Jews, Arabs, and the British had the opportunity to think of details and of ideas that made partition more complicated to reach. In addition, the transparency of the British in presenting their partition proposals to the Arabs and the Jews—as opposed to not asking for their opinions at all, as the British did in India—contributed to Palestine’s failed partition efforts.

### **FACTOR 3: SIZE OF TERRITORY**

One of the most obvious differences between British India and mandatory Palestine is the size of the territory. The differences in size determined how much leeway and flexibility each commission had to draw the boundaries without threatening the viability of each state. While India’s vast size gave the boundary commission flexibility in drawing the boundaries and in determining how people would move around, Palestine’s size did the exact opposite. In this section, I explain how each region’s size affected the different partition processes and outcomes.

India’s vast territory allowed the boundary commission greater opportunity to maneuver the boundaries. The level of leeway was high, which meant that any discrepancies that the commission made would not have threatened the viability of India or Pakistan. There were certainly consequences for which Hindus and Muslim suffered, but the fact remains that the boundary stayed in place and both India and Pakistan became sovereign states. Although they were on a timeline, Radcliffe and his commission were able to determine boundaries even if they were not perfect. After all, all sides had already pledged to partition and accept the territory regardless of the results. Radcliffe and the commission could afford to be ambiguous, as proved to be the case in the description of the boundary report. The report only allots few paragraphs to

describe the entire boundary, using the names of villages and other natural landmarks as reference.

Palestine's small size, however, complicated the partition process. Because there was not much land, any errors that the commissions made drawing the boundary proposals would likely affect the other side in some way. Palestine's tiny size did not allow for as much flexibility and compromise. As the High Commissioner for Trans-Jordan once expressed,

Weizmann... realizes that this [Jewish] State cannot include the whole of Palestine and therefore he suggests that we should satisfy ourselves with a part of it; that is to say, he agrees with Partition, provided we get an adequate share. That is the main part of his activities now—to ensure that the future Jewish state is of maximum size.<sup>16</sup>

The territory was so small, that it was difficult for the British to create a plan to which both sides agreed. Moreover, the Arabs had already rejected the notion of partition, so it was pointless that they continued to do so.

Palestine was so small that there was not a whole lot of room to move people around. As an extract from the Report of the Ministerial Committee on Palestine from the Colonial Office Records from reads, "If the two towns were placed in different States, the boundary between the States would have to be drawn down the centre of a road. The Partition Commission found itself forced to envisage such a road with a high iron railing, forming the actual boundary, along the middle of it..."<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, the way in which the religious populations were dispersed was not contiguous, as was the case in India. Palestine's small size made it difficult for Jews and Arabs to live faraway from each other. As a result, there were several intermixed communities that were harder to isolate.

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<sup>16</sup> "Policy: Jewish Agency," n.d. CO 733/443/24. "High commissioner for Trans-Jordan," 1.

<sup>17</sup> CO 733/461/22 – Palestine Policy: The Arab Areas; Extract from Report of Ministerial Committee on Palestine; Inclusion of Jaffa in the Jewish State; Dec. 20<sup>th</sup> 1943; picture; 12

In addition, the influx of Jews had created such positive economic changes that it was, in fact, proving to be possible for them to establish their own state. As was recorded in a Palestine Policy document from the Colonial Office Records from 1943: “The Arab portions of Palestine, both Galilee and the area lying to the east and south of the Jewish State, will be much too weak, both economically and politically, to stand alone [...] and, as things stand at present, will have to be fused, respectively, with the Lebanon and Trans-Jordan.”<sup>18</sup> Because of this economic success in such a small piece of territory, the British believed that it was more convenient for the Arabs to remain where they were or to not be annexed to Greater Syria or Trans-Jordan—which is what the British had hoped for before the Peel Commission came into question in 1937. Even in 1947, there were doubts as to whether an Arab state would survive with the small bits of land it would receive from an already small territory. In addition a majority of Palestine was desert, which would be another challenge in regard to cultivating the land. Because of the limited amount of territory and the failed efforts of Arabs to be economically independent, the British believed that the Palestinian Arabs needed to be part of another Arab entity in order to progress. As was stated in concluding minutes in 1947: “There should be no great difficulty in making the Jewish share reasonably viable, while the Arab share might become viable if it were linked with Trans-Jordan. It had also been argued that Partition would alienate the Arab world.”<sup>19</sup>

#### **FACTOR 4: SIGNIFICANCE OF TERRITORY**

Religious sites and cultural and religious attachment to the land played different roles in each case. The strong religious and cultural connection to the territory in Palestine played a dominant role in the partition. Arab and Jewish claims to the physical territory was prioritized

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<sup>18</sup> CO 733/461/22 – Palestine Policy: The Arab Areas; Extent to Which the Scheme of Partition Recommended *Fulfills the Conditions Prescribed; 20<sup>th</sup> December, 1943 – Scheme of Partition Recommended – Arab State; 3*

<sup>19</sup> Main File: Parts I, II, III, IV, V, VI: Policy in Palestine. Appointment of Anglo...,” 1947 1945. PREM 8/627; Part VI; C.M. (47) 11<sup>TH</sup> CONCLUSIONS, MINUTE 2, Confidential Annex (22<sup>nd</sup> January, 1947 – Noon): 2.

over the idea of creating two separate states with their respective communities, as was the case in India. In this section, I argue that the emphasis on religious sites and cultural and religious attachment to the territory interfered in reaching an agreement that both sides could accept.

In India, religious sites did not determine the way the boundaries would be drawn. The priority of Muslims and Hindus was to reach an agreement in which both sides could have an independent state and live in their respective religious communities. In the partition minutes and correspondences between political leaders, there are no references made to specific mosques or temples; instead, the discussions are based on religious contiguity and natural landmarks that would minimally alter the ways populations were dispersed.

It is important to note, however, that there were some exceptions. For example, Sikhs claimed specific strips of territory based on the fact that there were religious monuments in those areas. As a Mr. Henderson expressed in a Sikh memorandum: "...whatever division is made, it is essential to safeguard the shrines of the Sikhs and in particular the principal Sikh shrine at Amritsar, which corresponds for Sikhs to Mecca for Islam."<sup>20</sup> This religious attachment to the land played a role in Sikh desires, and helped determine that Amritsar be included in India. However, the Sikhs did not play a large role in the way the territory was divided; the British, the League, and the Congress generally ignored their other requests and movement for sovereignty. Unlike the Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus did not argue for specific religious sites.

In contrast to the partition of British India, the partition discussions and proposals of mandatory Palestine were based on the analysis of the importance of and access to religious sites in addition to spiritual and cultural connections to specific territories. Because of the claims to religious sites from all sides and inability to distribute them in ways that would satisfy all, British

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<sup>20</sup> "9920; Boundary Commissions of Punjab and Bengal: Petitions, Memoranda and Telegrams and Protests against Awards," August 1947. IOR/L/PJ/7/12465.

had proposed a neutral Jerusalem state. The purpose of this state was to avoid further conflict by allotting the most meaningful religious sites to one religion or the other. As was discussed by the Ministerial Committee on Palestine on December 1943, the Jerusalem state would remain in control of the British in order to avoid disputes and "...to ensure free access to the Holy Places by the adherents of all religions [and] to settle disputes arising out of the rights and claims of the different religious communities in respect of the Holy Places."<sup>21</sup> As was further discussed in British Colonial Office documents: "The true religious issue centres round Jerusalem, the third most holy city of Islam, and the fear of this city passing into Jewish control will be finally removed by the creation of the Jerusalem state."<sup>22</sup> This idea remained when the United Nations proposed its plan on November 1947. The Jerusalem State would remain neutral and be under U.N control.

In addition to religious attachment to territory, there was a sense of cultural attachment to the land—on both the Arab and the Jewish side—which made partition negotiations more complicated. For example, Zionism claimed that Jews had a right to their homeland and that meant the entire land of Israel. As a memorandum submitted by the Jewish Agency to the H.M. Government from 7 September 1945 reads, "...the country [Palestine] in its present state was their creation and it was the only place where Jews have a home created by themselves to which they had belonged through centuries in their hearts."<sup>23</sup> Even with the backlash that the movement received, Zionists refused to surrender their claims. As Chaim Weizmann stated in 1946 at the Zionist Congress in Basle,

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<sup>21</sup> CO733/461/17: Palestine (Annex): Jerusalem State – Probable Financial Position, 1944; *Extract from Report of Ministerial Committee on Palestine – P.(M)(43) 29 of 20<sup>TH</sup> December, 1943*

<sup>22</sup> CO733/461/29: Palestine Policy – Repercussions in Palestine and in Neighbouring Arab Countries

<sup>23</sup> CO733/461/38: Palestine Policy – Memorandum Submitted by the Jewish Agency to H.M. Government; *The Secretary of State gave an interview to a deputation from the Jewish Agency on Friday, 7<sup>th</sup> September, 1945.*

Our claim for a state is sometimes represented as an act of extremism. What is natural for Bulgarians, Armenians, Transjordanians, and many other national groups which have no greater claim than ourselves on the conscience of the world, is somehow regarded as an unreasonable benefaction for the Jews. We refuse to accept this inequality. These things which all other nations possess we claim in the name of equality and our sufferings for ourselves.<sup>24</sup>

In agreement with Zionist appeals and pleased to see that Jews were closer to the realization of their dream, M. Shertok, member of the Executive of the Jewish Agency, wrote to the Chief Secretary: "It has long been the desire of the Zionist movement to see its Congresses meet in Palestine. After the wholesale destruction of Jewish life in Europe, Palestine is the obvious venue."<sup>25</sup> As David Ben-Gurion added in November 1945:

We firmly believe that history has decreed that we should cooperate with Great Britain, but the British people must realize that the Jews of Palestine, and the millions outside who have set their hearts on Palestine, will never agree that the return of Jews to their historic homeland should be dependent on anyone else's consent; that Jews in Palestine should remain a minority; and that they should be deprived of statehood.<sup>26</sup>

At last, the idea of a Jewish state was no longer abstract and far-fetched but rather tangible and quite possible. The problem, however, was that Jews were not the only ones with cultural attachments and historic connections to the land.

This element of cultural attachment to the territory also applied to Arab populations. Many had lived in the territory for centuries and had developed connections to the land through generations. As was discussed in the British Colonial Office documents discussing the Arab areas:

...Arabs refused to move, even though the land offered was often greatly superior to their previous holdings and situated within 30 or 40 miles of them. They preferred to remain in

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<sup>24</sup> "Zionist Congress in Basle," 1946, CO733/478/7

<sup>25</sup> "Zionist Congress in Basle," 1946, CO733/478/7; Letter from M. Shertok, Executive of the Jewish Agency, to the Chief Secretary; Ref. No. Pol/10/46

<sup>26</sup> CO733/461/38: Palestine Policy – Memorandum Submitted by the Jewish Agency to H.M. Government; *Press Conference at the Offices of the Jewish Agency for Palestine – Ben Gurion; London, 14<sup>th</sup> November, 1945*

situ, either cultivating the small areas which were left to them or camping on neighbouring land and taking casual work as labourers.<sup>27</sup>

The persistence of Arabs to stay put shows the depth of their connection the territory. In addition, there was a greater pan-Arabism of the general Middle Eastern territory that influenced the Palestinian Arabs. As a document on the proceedings of a meeting of the Arab Premiers in Cairo from December 1947 from Foreign Office Records reads, “The general impression gained from many conversations was that the Arab States feel there is nothing for it but to resist the decision of U.N.O. with force although it is probably that some if not all of them would be glad to find a way out, provided it did not involve the setting up of a Jewish Sovereign State.”<sup>28</sup> The Arabs in Palestine had support from their neighbors, whereas the Jews did not.

The desire for partition in India came from the fact that Indians and Muslims had come to dislike each other and that Muslims felt repressed by the Indian elites. In the Palestine case, it was the desire to be in Palestine, the long-lost Jewish homeland, that inspired partition.

### **FACTOR 5: FORM OF BRITISH RULE**

One of the biggest differences between British India and mandatory Palestine was the form of British rule. Because each region had a different form of British rule—a colony as opposed to a mandate—it is not surprising that the cases had different fates. In this section, I contrast the forms of British rule and how the nature of British imperialism affected the end result of each case.

Because of Britain’s long presence in India, Britain did not want to appear weak or incapable of following through with their departure of the subcontinent. As George Maconachie Brander, the private secretary to the Governor of the Punjab, stated in a letter: “Successive

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<sup>27</sup> CO 733/461/22 – Palestine Policy: The Arab Areas

<sup>28</sup> “Partition of Palestine,” 1948. UK FO 816/115. *Note on Proceedings of the Meeting of the Arab Premiers in Cairo; Dec 8<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> 1947; pic; 3*

British governments had promised the Indians self government and there is no doubt that self government was eagerly desired by the majority of Indians, Hindus and Muslims alike. The British were committed to granting home rule to India. The only matters in this dispute were when and how.”<sup>29</sup>

The high level of British authority in India that lasted for almost a century heightened Britain’s sense of responsibility when it came to decolonization in India. After all, British dominance in India—both economically and socially—had made India the Jewel in the Crown of the British Empire. For example, many English people lived in and considered British India their home and profited from its crops and resources—India became a major export market for British goods, including textiles, iron and steel goods, machinery, and other products reflecting Britain’s industrial strength. In return, India supplied Britain with critically needed raw materials, including cotton, indigo, jute, rice, oil seeds, and tea.<sup>30</sup> This strong attachment to and dependence on India created a heightened sense of responsibility for the British who were living in India, which led the British to be very involved in and committed to the partition process and to strive for some viable solution.

Boundary negotiations occurred between the Muslim League, the Indian National Congress, and the British; however, just because there was communication does not mean that there was an even distribution of power. While it seems as if the League and the Congress played a large role in the drawing of boundaries, it was truly the British that remained in control as the ultimate authority mediating disagreements—given that Cyril Radcliffe acted as the head

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<sup>29</sup> Brander, George Maconachie. “Draft (undated) for Talk on Partition of India by George Maconachie Brander (1906-77), Indian Civil Service, Punjab 1930-47, Private Secretary to Governor of Punjab 1943-45, District Magistrate, Amritsar and Additional Commissioner, Lahore Division 1947; Also Letter, Dated Government House, Lahore, 4 Dec 1947, from ‘Rashid’, Evidently a Former Colleague of Brander’s, on the Atrocities Committed in East Punjab, the Legacy of Bitterness Which They Have Left, and the Culpability of the British in Rushing through the Transfer of Power.,” 1947. MSS EUR F409; Transcript of a draft for a talk given by George Maconachie Brander, CIE, ICS; 1

<sup>30</sup> Metcalf, *A Concise History of Modern India*, 125.



of the boundary commissions and had the final word on decisions. Radcliffe observed at one point that "...the divergence of opinion between my colleagues was so wide that an agreed solution of the boundary problem was not to be obtained."<sup>31</sup> Although a telegram dated 5 July 1947 from the Governor's Secretary in the Punjab to DPSV in New Delhi read, "...it [was] important that the chairman should not only be, but appear to be, free from official influence."<sup>32</sup> Radcliffe had clear authority to make final decisions. In addition, letters circulated between Radcliffe, Mountbatten, and Beaumont—Radcliffe's secretary—negotiating what cities and regions would be awarded, underlining how decisions were made at a high level of authority. As Radcliffe stated in the Partition Council Minutes from 12 June – 11 July: "...the members of the Commissions were akin to assessors and the Chairman would act in the role of Umpire and give his awards."<sup>33</sup> The ability to make key decisions secured Britain's upper hand in the matter.

The Peace Conference at San Remo in 1920 determined that Palestine, which according to the Sykes-Picot Agreement was supposed to become an area of international administration, was now a zone of outright British interest.<sup>34</sup> The League of Nations, however, was supposed to be theoretically in charge. Nevertheless, the British and the French had come together at this Conference to carve up the Levant amongst themselves. Because Palestine was a mandate acquired only in 1920, as opposed to a colony, Britain's sense of responsibility for the people of Palestine was not as high as it was in other parts of its empire, especially India. Rather, the British used the mandate as a tool to increase their income and get access to resources.

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<sup>31</sup> Cited in *Pakistan Horizon*, Vol. 56214.

<sup>32</sup> "File 1446/17/GG/43 - Coll I Boundary Commission," 1947. IOR/R/3/1/157.; 124

<sup>33</sup> "Partition Council Minutes," August 1947. Mss Eur IOR Neg 15564/6. Title: India Partition Council Minutes: 12 June – 11 July 1947; 219-220

<sup>34</sup> Cohen, Michael J. *Palestine and the Great Powers, 1945-1948*. Place of publication not identified: Princeton University Press, 2014: 3.

By the end of World War II, Britain wanted to be free of all responsibility pertaining to the territory and did not feel obligated to reach a definite solution because it resigned from being a mandatory power. When it was time for the British to leave Palestine, there was no official contract or plan by which the different parties would abide. The British only worried about the expiration of the mandate, and did not dictate ideas as to what would happen once they left. As the British stated in the United Nations in February 1948:

For the past 25 years we have tried to discharge the obligations of our mandate—that is, to respect and preserve the rights of the Arab Community at the same time to fulfill the internationally proclaimed object of establishing a National Home for the Jews. We have certainly made mistakes, but we can be proud of our vast contribution to the development of Palestine and the Middle East. The Mandate, however, was inherently contradictory, and neither Jews nor Arabs felt that their interests and aspirations were adequately satisfied.<sup>35</sup>

There came a point in which the British did not want any more responsibility for the Palestine question. As a result, Britain argued, “The only alternative to a firm decision by His Majesty’s Government, and its resolute enforcement, is an attempt to divest ourselves of all further responsibility for Palestine by surrendering the mandate either to the United States or to the United Nations.”<sup>36</sup> The numerous failed partition efforts, Britain’s worsening economic situation, and the inability of different parties to agree with each other led the British to hand over the partition of Palestine to the United Nations. The British did not remain the mediator of power throughout the boundary-making process nor want to be associated with the issue of partition any longer. As was discussed in a set of British Colonial Office records from 1947:

Further discussion showed that it was the general view of the Cabinet that the right course was now to submit the whole problem to the United Nations... This submission would not involve an immediate surrender of the Mandate; but His Majesty’s Government would not be under an obligation themselves to enforce whatever solution

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<sup>35</sup> “Policy: Implementation of U.N.O. Decision,” 1948 1947. CO 733/486/1. *The United Kingdom Delegation to the United Nations; Sunday, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1948; pic; 1*

<sup>36</sup> “Main File: Parts I, II, III, IV, V, VI: Policy in Palestine. Appointment of Anglo...,” 1947 1945. PREM 8/627; Part VI; *Cabinet C.P. (47) 30 Palestine: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs; 3*

the United Nations might approve. If the settlement suggested by the United Nations were not acceptable to us, we should be at liberty then to surrender the Mandate and leave the United Nations to make other arrangements for the future administration of Palestine.<sup>37</sup>

When the mandate expired—which is when the British said they would leave—there was a vacuum of power; there was no overarching authority that could legitimize the next step for Palestine’s inhabitants. The British left Palestine and “...took no responsibility for restoring order in Palestine where conditions deteriorated into anarchy with Jews and Arabs fighting out their differences.”<sup>38</sup> Even though there continued to be clashes and protests between Jews and Arabs, the Jews went forward with the UN partition plan of 1947 and accepted those boundaries as the borders to their new Jewish state. Fundamentally, the problem was that the Arabs had not agreed to adopt the UN boundaries, but because of the lack of an overarching authority, there was nothing that the Arabs could do except for going to war against the Jews the very next day. Thus, Britain abandoned the situation, creating more problems, rather than serving as a powerful mediator of power between both parties.

The difference of British power in each case created different results. Both cases remain examples of British imperialism, but the relationship of the British to each territory and their differing histories in each place played a role in the ways in which they handled each situation. In the India case, the British cared about their reputation, and they had also been there much longer. As Lucy Chester adds, “...in British India, which was so large that many British officials considered it an empire in its own right, Britain was accountable to no one.”<sup>39</sup> However, the British had obtained the Palestine mandate as a prize for winning the First World War and had

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<sup>37</sup> Main File: Parts I, II, III, IV, V, VI: Policy in Palestine. Appointment of Anglo...,” 1947 1945. PREM 8/627; Part VI; *C.M. (47) 22<sup>ND</sup> CONCLUSIONS, MINUTE 2, Confidential Annex; 14<sup>th</sup> February, 1947 – 11 a.m; 4*

<sup>38</sup> Bregman, *A History of Israel*: 41.

<sup>39</sup> Chester, Lucy. “Boundary Commissions as Tools to Safeguard British Interests at the End of Empire.” *Journal of Historical Geography*, Feature: Politics and scale in boundary-making, 34, no. 3 (July 2008): 494–515: 495.

not been in the territory for as long as it had been in India. Britain's type of rule shaped its priorities, which in turn created different effects in each region.

### **FACTOR 6: IMMIGRATION – STATIC V. FLUCTUATING**

Immigration influenced the partitions internally and externally. In other words, people moving (or not moving) into territories played just as important of a role as people moving (or not moving) within the territories themselves. In this section, I explain the importance of migration on an international and domestic level. Furthermore, I argue that the lack of internal migration and external migration in India helped its success, while the strong presence of internal and external migration contributed to Palestine's failure.

In the India case, fluctuating population dynamics did not factor into the way the boundaries were drawn; most of India's inhabitants had coexisted and lived on that land for generations. Even in his 1936 Unity of India speech, Nehru stated that "In India... no one, whatever his political views or religious persuasions, thinks in terms other than those of national unity."<sup>40</sup> Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs were all part of Mother India despite religious differences; most had lived peacefully and side by side in India for generations. For centuries, differences in religious identity did not overshadow nationalist sentiment and attachment to Mother India. As a result of this long-lasting coexistence, even Viceroy Mountbatten expressed the views that partition was a measure of last resort: "...I am opposed to the partition of Provinces as I am to the partition of India herself and for the same basic reasons."<sup>41</sup> As a result, dividing the land according to who was already there allowed for an easier division of territory.

India's inhabitants saw India as their home regardless of their religious identities. It was religion that caused tensions and separation among the religious communities, but there was

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<sup>40</sup> Nehru, Jawaharlal. "The Unity of India." *Foreign Affairs* 16, no. 2 (January 1, 1938): 231–43: 238.

<sup>41</sup> Cited in *Pakistan Horizon*, Vol. 56, No. 2, KASHMIR (April 2003), pp. 203-255: 210.

never an influx of incoming newcomers to further exacerbate the tensions. The lack of immigration to India provided the boundary commissioners some form of stability with which to work; they did not have to take into consideration changing population demographics, which is why they were able to base their boundaries on religious contiguity. Rather, the existing population had lived in India for many years, developing a sentimental attachment to their territory that became apparent after the partition occurred. Many people who had to cross the Indo-Pakistani border suffered physically and emotionally; they were forced to leave what had been their homes for generations.

Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, modern anti-Semitism was on the rise as nationalist sentiment spread across Europe. Despite the fact that there were Jews who felt very patriotic and nationalistic about their countries, the fact remained that Jews' efforts to integrate themselves into their respective countries were never completely successful. Citizens perceived Jews as aliens, regardless of how patriotic and committed they were to their respective nationalist causes. It did not matter if they were in the army or in government; their Jewish identity prevented them from fully integrating in society and from gaining equitable status compared to other inhabitants. This discrimination was due to the rise of modern anti-Semitism—discrimination against Jews based on their racial and ethnic identity more so than their religious practices. The combination of nationalism and modern anti-Semitism resulted in dire consequences, with the worst one of all being the Holocaust.

Jewish immigrants into Palestine settled in cities, which led to an expansion of urban centres, thriving Jewish life, and an overall change in population demographics. Tel Aviv and its suburbs absorbed no less than half the new immigrants, the number of Jews in Jerusalem shot up,

and Haifa's Jewish population nearly tripled between 1931 and 1935.<sup>42</sup> This increase in Jewish immigration to Palestine, however, changed the demographics on the ground. Because the demographics were changing, it was becoming more and more difficult to identify what the Jewish and Arab states might become in the event of partition. Partition aimed to reflect religious demographics, but these demographics were consistently changing as new proposals were created. As was discussed in a report printed for the War Cabinet on October 1944: "...the most must be made of the potentialities of Palestine for immediate large-scale immigration. Palestine is already a twice-partitioned country, as compared with what it was at the time of the Balfour Declaration."<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry recommended in 1946 that 100,000 Jewish survivors be admitted to Palestine. Even with restrictions of immigration, illegal immigration continued to occur, changing the demographics all the time. Jews were still establishing settlements all across the mandate of Palestine.<sup>44</sup>

Furthermore, Arabs feared the political consequences of Jewish immigration—the Arab leaders were alarmed by the influx of Jewish newcomers, and feared that they would engulf all of Palestine,<sup>45</sup> which resulted in an intensification of an already existing Arab political awakening. As a communiqué issued by the Heads of the Arab States in Cairo from 17 December, 1947 read, "When the sins of Imperialism and the greed of the Zionists met over the setting up of a National Home for the Jews in Palestine, the Arabs of that country were plunged into calamity, since they had forcefully imposed on them groups of foreigners coming from the East and West with their own languages, customs, and social systems."<sup>46</sup> The Arabs perceived

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<sup>42</sup> Bregman, *A History of Israel*: 27.

<sup>43</sup> CO733/461/38: Palestine Policy; *Printed for the War Cabinet, October 1944*; picture

<sup>44</sup> "Policy: Jewish Agency," n.d. CO 733/443/24.

<sup>45</sup> Sachar, Howard Morley. *A History of Israel*: 169-170.

<sup>46</sup> "Policy: Arab Reactions to UNSCOP," 1948 1947. CO733/482/7.

the immigration of Jews as Western imperialists and completely imposing, which did not confrontation efforts between both peoples. This political awakening, in turn, resulted in a heightened sense of Palestinian nationalism that would lead to more heated tensions and a lower chance of accepting any partition proposals put forth.

Immigration played a central role in determining the future of British India and the Palestine Mandate. The ongoing, changing demographics of Palestine's population changed what the region looked like, making it more difficult to draw boundaries in viable ways. The fluctuating immigration levels contributed to a very different situation in 1947 than in 1937. While partition remained an option, the demographics changed so much from year to year that it became difficult to create a plan that would create religiously contiguous areas with no faults; however, that proved to be impossible. Contrastingly, the populations in India remained in place for most of the time. While there may have been movements from time to time, people remained in the same general areas, which made it easier for Radcliffe to draw borders according to religious contiguity and natural landmarks to which people were accustomed. While the boundaries were not perfect, the stable populations inside of India, and the lack of external immigration to India, allowed for Radcliffe to create a cartographically stable boundary.

### **FACTOR 7: WHOSE INTERESTS?**

While there may have been international interests in India, the partition of British India remained a matter of the Congress, the League, and the British. The exchanges between were all part of one giant conversation, in which each party expressed its goals and desires. The discussions remained a domestic matter pertaining to its native inhabitants and the British. Mandatory Palestine, on the other hand, remained a matter of international concern. The international participation, which the British tended to prioritize over the needs of the Jews and

the Arabs because of the mandate's theoretical international ownership, resulted in a prolonged, excruciatingly complicated partition process that failed in producing two viable states. In this section, I discuss how foreign interference and the prioritization of their needs further complicated the partition of Palestine, while contrastingly, the seemingly apparent prioritization of India's inhabitants allowed for the viability of the Radcliffe line.

The negotiations in British India occurred as part of a giant conversation between the British, the League and the Congress—even if the British actually had most of the decision-making power. Nevertheless, leaders from both the Congress and the League were able to express their thoughts and opinions. The focus of the partition efforts remained on creating an India and a Pakistan, even though there may have been international interests in the region.

In addition, Britain wanted to preserve its image of power, which is why is a possible reason as to why Britain wanted to partition India on its own. As Lucy Chester explains,

With their global empire in the balance, the British were determined to demonstrate that they could handle the decolonization of India without any foreign assistance. Reliance on the UN [...] could damage Britain's image in the rest of its colonial holdings, domestically and in the eyes of its allies, particularly in the Middle East.<sup>47</sup>

The British had been so powerful that they wanted to maintain their image of superiority and maintain and uphold their powerful reputation. As a result, the British needed to evacuate India as efficiently as they could in order to "...avoid projecting the image that they were handing over power under duress. British leaders worked hard to create the impression that the handover was proceeding in an orderly and rational manner."<sup>48</sup>

There was no interference from outside players—such as the United Nations or other states—which allowed for conversations to remain regional and to focus on the sovereignty of its inhabitants and to prioritize the desires of the people living in that territory. Many different

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<sup>47</sup> Chester, *Borders and Conflict in South Asia*, 35.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 2



nations were not trying to advance their own interests through the partition of the subcontinent, which is why they did not interfere. The exclusiveness of the Boundary Commissions, therefore, allowed for the quick creation of the boundary. As a result, the British mediated all matters, ascertaining that the Indian Congress and the Muslim League listened to and negotiated with each other.

Palestine, however, was quite different; as David Ben-Gurion stated in a Press Conference in London on 14 November, 1945: “[t]he Palestine problem is not a local one. It is not a question between the Jews and Arabs in Palestine. It is a world problem. It is a problem between the Jewish people and whole civilized world.”<sup>49</sup> Indeed, several international players such as France, the Soviet Union, and the United States were part of its partition—foreign interests were at play, even if the British managed to give the impression that the independence of the Arabs and the Jews was their priority. For example, the United States became an overarching and influential player, as is recorded in the British Colonial Office: “[t]he Government of the United States will, of course, have to be consulted before effect can be given to the scheme, and we fully realize the immense advantages which will accrue if American support can be enlisted in its favour.”<sup>50</sup>

Like the British, the United States had interests with both the Jews and the Arabs. In 1942-1943, Roosevelt expressed an interest in the Zionist cause, but the president’s assurances of friendship were “cautiously deprecated by American ambassadors in Arab nations, even as Roosevelt himself privately minimized their importance to Zionist leaders.”<sup>51</sup> By the time Harry Truman became president, it was clear that the United States had flip-flopped between the Jews

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<sup>49</sup> CO733/461/38: *Press Conference at the Offices of the Jewish Agency for Palestine – Ben Gurion; London, 14<sup>th</sup> November, 1945.*

<sup>50</sup> CO733/461/25: *Palestine Policy – Arrangements for administration during period between announcement and setting up of the Succession States; Transitional Period; picture (starts at 81); 2.*

<sup>51</sup> Sachar, *A History of Israel*: 254.

and Arabs according to where its best interests were. For example, Truman's support of Jewish immigration into Palestine was determined by domestic politics and by his "long history of sympathy for the underdog, in politics, economics, and religion..."<sup>52</sup>

The United States had more interests in the Middle East after World War II, which resulted in more interference in the partition efforts. As Sachar explains, "Ultimately, to Arabs and Jews alike, everything hinged on the attitude of the United States, by common recognition the most powerful force in the world body."<sup>53</sup> The political agenda of the international players detracted from the main and most important aspect of partition: to give both the Jews and the Arabs a place to call home. Indeed, international players prioritized their own interests, resulting in a more complicated process. The great powers, especially, did not seem to care. As the high commissioner for Trans-Jordan once expressed,

We can see that all promises given to the Arabs regarding their independence need not be treated seriously. It is obvious that no state, France not Great Britain, intends to surrender its interests in the Middle East, which are organically connected with their Mandates in this part of the world. If the French stand strongly upon their intentions—and I hope they do—they will offer an example to the British of how not to fear the Arabs. The promises given to the Arabs in the White Paper, on which they rely so much, need not be treated so seriously either.<sup>54</sup>

Rather than truly focusing on the needs of the Jews and the Arabs, the British prioritized their imperial interests and thus negotiated with whomever would give them the most advantage. Essentially, the British did not truly care neither of the populations living in Palestine. For example, as a memorandum from the Anglo-Jewish Association stated, "In the War the Jewish National Home has made a worthy contribution to the Allied cause in manpower and production.

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 255.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 287.

<sup>54</sup> CO 733/443/24: Policy: Jewish Agency; most secret, High commissioner for Trans-Jordan; 2-3

In the coming peace it can, if given full facilities for immigration and the use of natural resources, make a major contribution to the welfare of the Middle East.”<sup>55</sup>

In addition to the United States, the USSR supported partition because of their interests in the Middle East. According to a confidential telegram from 2 January 1948, the “Soviet Union had supported partition because they expected to profit from Jewish-Arab disturbances.”<sup>56</sup> This Soviet support was not received well by Arabs, who continued to oppose any form of partition. Instead, the Arabs wanted their own state in which there would be an Arab majority and sovereignty, barring the Jews from obtaining positions of power and outnumbering them. The United Nations, however, ignored those Arab claims and proposed a partition plan, in their eyes another proposal for compromise between both sides.

The ways in which the land was partitioned were based on benefitting the great powers. Foreign interests influenced the partition efforts, which in turn exacerbated the chaos and high level of disagreement. Nevertheless, the foreign powers continued to prioritize themselves. For example, the British claimed that

...the port of Haifa is of such strategic importance that there might be advantage from the point of view of the Protecting Powers in an arrangement under which the city and the land immediately surrounding it would be formed into an Enclave and administered by the authority responsible for the administration of the Jerusalem territory. The fact that the population of the city is mixed, consisting of 88,398 Jews and 64,220 Arabs, would afford further justification for such an arrangement. On the other hand, it would have serious repercussions on the economy of the Jewish state.<sup>57</sup>

Clearly, this division focused on the benefits that Britain could get rather than practicability. In this statement, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs even points out that the Jewish state

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<sup>55</sup> CO733/461/40: Palestine Annex: Palestine Policy – Memorandum from Anglo-Jewish Association, 1945; Policy in Palestine: Memorandum Submitted to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: 6.

<sup>56</sup> “Partition of Palestine,” 1948. UK FO 816/115.; En Chair – by confidential bag; telegram of particular secrecy; No. 2 Intel; 2<sup>nd</sup> January, 1948; 82/1

<sup>57</sup> CO 733/461/22 – Palestine Policy: The Arab Areas]; Thin tracing paper titled: Extract from Report of Ministerial Committee on Palestine; Inclusion of Haifa in the Jewish State; Dec. 20<sup>th</sup> 1943; 11

would be at a disadvantage if this were to be implemented; nevertheless, the fact remained that the great powers would benefit. As was admitted by the British themselves: “The fate of Palestine is so undeniably a matter of international concern that we shall in any case be required to account for our policy there.”<sup>58</sup>

Evidently, there were many more outside players involved in the partition of the mandate. As a result of their requests, clashes, and manipulation, the partition process slowed down and became more complex. Rather than prioritizing the Jews and Arabs who were living in Palestine, the British and the imperial powers prioritized their own needs. After all, “prestige has been defined as the ‘shadow cast by power.’”<sup>59</sup> In contrast, the British prioritized their preservation of their perceived power in India, but they remained the ones in control the entire time. Their presence and dedication—even if it was for their own good as opposed to the people of India—allowed for better planning and agreement. Furthermore, the absence of international players allowed for the Congress and the League to prioritize their needs, even if their requests were not always met.

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<sup>58</sup> “Main File: Parts I, II, III, IV, V, VI: Policy in Palestine. Appointment of Anglo...,” 1947 1945. PREM 8/627; Part VI; Cabinet C.P. (47) 30 Palestine: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs; 4

<sup>59</sup> Chester, “Boundary Commissions as Tools to Safeguard British Interests at the End of Empire:” 495.

## CONCLUSION

The ambitious nature of this project was not evident to me until I was in the midst of doing the research. The comparative aspect of this project, in addition to choosing two of the most contested world regions, made it challenging to arrive at conclusions. In fact, I could have focused on just one region—as opposed to two—and still produced the same volume of information. In addition to the incredibly complex histories of both regions, the limited amount of time available made it more difficult to dig into each case in detail. Nevertheless, the comparative aspect of this project revealed interesting insights and results.

First, some of the factors that I found and analyzed cannot be examined in isolation. In other words, some factors overlapped and affected each other throughout the partition processes and, in some cases, even led to the creation of another. For example, the presence of an initial mutual agreement in India—which proved to be one of the most important factors—established common goals and set deadlines to create two individual states. This establishment of tight deadlines, in turn, contributed to the necessity for speed. The necessity for speed, in turn, prevented outside players from intervening in the commissions, as there was no time to waste in debate. Contrastingly, the lack of an agreement in mandatory Palestine caused the opposite effect; because neither Jews nor Arabs reached an agreement that could serve as a base, there was no foundation for what should have come next. In other words, the commissions that developed for the partition of Palestine were pointless right from their point of inception because the Arabs had never accepted the principle itself. As a result, the commissions and processes that followed the Peel Report in 1937 were automatically futile. In addition, the ten years from the moment the Peel Report was introduced in 1937 to the moment the UN plan was proposed in 1947 left a lot of time for the population demographics to change and for outside players to

intervene. As a result, the desires and circumstances of 1947 differed from those of 1937. And yet, commissions kept making proposals without truly noticing what was happening on the ground and understanding what the populations at stake truly wanted.

Second, the research revealed that these two cases are fundamentally different. While they do have some similarities, the fact remains that invariable factors, like size and significance of territory, played a key role in each case. For example, the small size of Palestine left little room to maneuver the territory and made it difficult for populations to disperse all over the territory in ways that completely separated each people from one another. Contrastingly, the vast size of India allowed for the commissions to have more flexibility and freedom in drawing the lines. Furthermore, the type of sources that I analyzed at the British Library and the National Archives in England were different. The sources pertaining to British India focus more on the nature of the commissions and the principles on which the boundaries were drawn, as opposed to the sources for mandatory Palestine, which reveal tensions from all sides in trying to reach an agreement. Once again, the principle of establishing a mutual agreement is present even in the type of documents examined.

Thirdly, most of the documentation to which I had access was from the British, as they were the ruling authority in both regions. As a result, I did not get to examine personal narratives from the people being affected by all of these partition efforts. Had there been more dialogue between the people being affected and less interference by the British and the imperial powers, perhaps there would have been a more viable solution.

If given more time, I would have delved deeper into the complex histories of each world region. Now that I have identified variables, it would be interesting to return to the archives and explore the effect that those factors had on the partition efforts in more detail. Furthermore, I

would keep the comparative nature of this project because it proved to be extremely useful in identifying what worked and did not work despite the different availability of materials for each case. The juxtaposition of both cases was useful because it accentuated the successes and failures of each case, and the factors that allowed for my claims. My hope is that these findings serve as a base for further comparative research in regard to partition and geopolitics across the globe. By examining different geopolitical processes and comparing them to each other, I hope to reveal insights that will lead to the path for peace.

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