

Introduction

THE BOOK BEFORE US is a historical study whose primary purpose is to describe and analyze the transition from colonial/Mandatory rule to Israeli sovereignty. The research focuses on the policies of planning and implementation that comprised the establishment of the Israeli government system between 1947 and 1951.

Palestine was not the only territory to make the transition from colonial rule to independence after the Second World War. This process, which took place in myriad places around the world, began in the second half of the 1940s and continued into the 1960s. Apart from Aden and Macao, which each gained independence somewhat later, and Hong Kong, which was returned to China only in 1997, many territories in the Near East, the Middle East, and Africa (which had been under British and French colonial rule), underwent similar yet distinctive processes during this period. In the British colonial context, examples include countries and territories such as India, Burma (today Myanmar), Ceylon (today Sri Lanka), Singapore, Iraq, Jordan, Egypt, Sudan, Kenya, and Nigeria. There has been much scholarship on the impact of the colonial regimes on the societies that lived under them. Although there is no dispute as to the existence of such an influence, there is little agreement as to its scope or precise nature. Among the pioneers in this field are Emerson (1960),¹ Lewis (1965),² and Lijphart (1977).³ Dependency theory, originally proposed in the late 1970s, sought to explain the difficulties societies in developing countries face in adapting to a new economic reality, especially in light of the social and economic legacies of the colonial experience. The main question is how the colonial system of

administration and governance influenced a given territory or country after it attained independence.

One of the widely held assumptions among postcolonial scholars is that the colonial legacy is felt in the continuity of administrative and organizational patterns, consisting first and foremost in an awareness of the manner in which government functions and of how government services, such as courts, police, and tax collection, should be conducted. According to this understanding, the transition to independence focused on the urgent need to establish an administrative system at the expense of the development of political parties and a political system that could have served as a better guarantee of regime stability. The scholar Yaakov Reuveni emphasizes in his book⁴ that a small bureaucracy, one that is not institutionalized but remains fundamentally political in nature (alongside which political parties can develop), is preferable to a large bureaucracy that draws the potential political forces into its orbit and then suppresses the nonbureaucratic elements in the system, especially the parties. In this context, the main question with regard to Israel is what characterized the process of transition from colonial/Mandatory rule to Israeli government system concerning the relative weight of the needs of political and partisan elements on the one hand and the needs of administrative elements on the other.

As a historical case study, this book focuses on the transition of government from the Mandatory to the Israeli system, but in addition much can be learned by comparing the processes that took place in Israel with those that took place at the same time in other regions of the British Empire. This comparison serves to emphasize the former's unique characteristics.

A Bi-National Society

Both culturally and politically the population of Mandatory Palestine was bi-national and bi-ethnic. This was not the only place in the British Empire where a colonial regime ruled over a population split along religious, ethnic, national, tribal, cultural, or linguistic lines; time and again

the exit of the colonial power was followed by an outbreak of hostilities between competing ethnic, religious, and national groups and resulted in hostile conflict that ended in territorial division (India/Pakistan and Cyprus being cases in point). However in the above instances, the local populations were comprised of mainly indigenous peoples, whereas in Palestine the majority of the Jewish population was comprised of European immigrants, and the Arabs were the indigenous population. This is unique to Israel and distinguishes this case from others in the British Empire. The differences between the populations in Israel were expressed across all levels of society: political institutionalization, education, choice of profession, standard of living, and level of culture. It resulted in enormous gaps between Jewish and Arab societies, gaps that ultimately influenced the transition from Mandatory to Israeli systems and to a great extent also affected the outcome of the War of Independence and determined the borders of the new Israeli state.

Bureaucratic Mindset versus Political Party Experience

Because the Mandatory regime in Palestine encouraged an affinity between the Arab population and government bureaucracy (expressed, for example, in the fact that most of the leading Arab political figures, such as Hajj Amin al-Husseini and George Antonius, were employees of the Mandatory government), the party established afterward by this community was not one that represented the interests of, nor was it capable of resolving internal conflicts within, the Arab community. The development of the political party system in the Jewish Yishuv was different, as was its relationship to the bureaucracy of the British regime. The party was the central institution of the Jewish community in Palestine even before the British Mandate, including branches outside the country, and although many Jews did work for the Mandatory governmental system, the majority of them were sent there by the national institutions. In general, as opposed to Arab society, Jewish society emphasized a system of autonomous organizations characterized by particularistic

tendencies. They were run by political parties and their leadership, external and parallel to Mandate bureaucracy.

Duration and Influence of the British Mandate in Palestine

Palestine was defined by the League of Nations as a type-A mandate, as were Jordan, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon. As opposed to B and C mandates, the duration of the colonial regime in a type A mandate up to the granting of independence was short—a mere 25 to 30 years. Unlike 300 years of British colonial rule in India, or 200 years of French and British colonial rule in sub-Saharan Africa, the political culture of the local populations in Palestine, whether the Ottoman legacy in the case of the Arabs, or the Eastern European political heritage for the Jews, was not replaced by British political culture.

Definition of Terms

Given the broad, general nature of the term “government system,” it should be emphasized that this book looks at establishment of the Israeli government ministries, focusing on two in particular (the Ministries of Interior and of Labor) as illustrative of the processes of planning and implementation that led to their establishment. To clarify the fields of definition, I distinguish between three basic concepts: *government system*, *government*, and *regime*.

Government system is defined as the formal patterns of a state’s governing system, the order of the primary state institutions and their powers, the mutual relationships and other institutional and formal aspects. The government system is the “system” and the model by which the government institutions operate. It is important to note, however, that in reality there is often overlap between the government system and the governing institutions.

The term *government* has two primary meanings: (1) the institution that determines national policy and that is comprised of members of the government and ministers (cabinet), and (2) the government ministries—central offices and local branches—that carry out the decisions of the government. The executive branch is comprised of the cabinet and its ministries. In the majority of parliamentary regimes, including Israel, government rules only after it is given a vote of confidence by the parliament. The government is generally comprised of the leaders of the parties, represented by ministers. It functions on an agreed-upon platform, supported by a majority of the members of its Assembly of Representatives. In every democratic regime, the government is the main locus of state power. It is not, however, the only locus; alongside the government are the parliament, political parties, economic conglomerates, professional associations, the media, and the academy. There is generally a mutually symbiotic relationship between these institutions and the government—especially the political parties and the parliament, and less so the other institutions. In democratic societies from World War I onward, modern government, as the institution that now controls the executive branch, the military, national census data, and legislation, has markedly expanded and broadened its activities.

The term *regime* refers to the political culture of the state. The regime oversees the power structure and institutions through a separation of powers and division of responsibilities among the various authorities, as well as the system by which the leadership is elected or appointed. Although the phrase “establishment of the state” is commonly used in the context of diplomatic or military history (on which much has already been written), this work centers on the historical process by which the government ministries were established. Diplomatic or military events and the like are touched on only insofar as they relate to the issue at hand. Furthermore, and in differentiation from other studies on the government system in Israel that take a strictly political science perspective, this work is based on in-depth historical research grounded in a comprehensive archival foundation, of the sort that has not been done previously.

Periodization

The book is divided into three periods.

January 1947 to April 1948

The first part of the book analyzes the initial planning and implementation stages in the establishment of the government system in Israel, from the moment the British decide to transfer the question of Palestine to the United Nations up to the submission of the final report of Va'adat HaMatzav, on the eve of the declaration of the state. In effect, this period must be divided into two subperiods: January 1947 to December 1947, and December 1947 to April 1948. The first is the initial stage in which the organized institutions of the Yishuv began to discuss possible plans of action for the transition of sovereignty, as well as defining problems in areas of diplomacy, security, economics, and organization; the crowning achievement of this period was of course the establishment of Va'adat HaMatzav. This committee constituted a political compromise between the various institutional bodies that wished to be a part of and influence the transition to sovereignty. From its establishment in October 1947 and up to the outbreak of hostilities in December of the same year, the committee focused on forming general plans. From December 1947, when the war began, and throughout its initial stages (December 1947–May 1948), the committee, out of necessity, shifted into managing essential services, an approach that, although imperative at the time, required that long-term planning be set aside. It was only in the course of submitting its final report in April 1948 that the committee formulated its final plans for the establishment of the different government ministries.

May 1948 to January 1949

The second part of the book focuses on the transition from a system of government based on voluntary agreements and lacking any real authority to

an official state with full sovereignty. Given that this transition took place while a war of survival was raging, it was not a shift to “business as usual.” The circumstances created by this situation affected the construction of patterns of government, the definition of powers, and the implementation of policies on the ground. Thus, for the purposes of this study, the war functions as a distinct period.

January 1949 to November 1951

As the war came to an end, the government system began to return to a routine suitable for peacetime, and prepared for the first elections to the Knesset. These elections (January 1949) are the starting point for the third part of the book, which focuses on the continued process of the establishment of the government system after the war.

Main Questions

An analysis of the establishment of the government system in Israel through the perspective of the three historical stages mentioned above provides a comprehensive picture of the main factors influencing the process of transition and establishment. Following are a number of essential questions that the book attempts to answer:

1. How was the Israeli government system established?
2. To what extent was the process of establishing the Israeli government system influenced by the structure and experience acquired within the Mandate government and by the structure of the Yishuv institutions? How was this influence expressed? And how was the new system created?
3. How did the war influence the establishment of the system, in terms of both the definition of the powers of the executive branch and the process of establishing the government ministries in actuality?

4. How did the various players—politicians, party functionaries, experts, and professionals—fit in and what was unique about each one?
5. What can be learned from the two case studies presented in this book—the Interior Ministry and the Labor Ministry—about the system as a whole?

Between Planning and Implementation: Fundamental Issues

Planning

Does the concept of “planning” in actuality reflect the conception of an “ideal government system,” as they hoped it would be or as they were forced to plan it given the constraints of the period and the place? The initial stage, characterized by only partial sovereignty, was virtually the only realm in which the members of the Yishuv establishment could work unhindered. In the second phase, the element of planning combines with a sovereign government system with full powers of enforcement, a fact that enables the transition from planning to implementation. However, even before full sovereignty it is possible to identify a partial implementation policy, mainly the result of the accelerated disintegration of the Mandate government. Several important questions arise with regard to the connection between the planning policy and the three main chronological stages of the research.

Planning Concept. Was an overall planning concept at work in each stage of planning and implementation, or was it in reality a series of reactive responses to changing situations and ongoing needs, whether the constraints of war or the pressures of the political parties?

Between Theory and Practice. What happened when gaps formed between theoretical plans and the situation on the ground? What were the big

problems the planners had to deal with? For example: continuity vs. change vis-à-vis the two previous governmental systems (Mandatory and Yishuv) or the question of amalgamating, assimilating, or voiding one or the other. How much previous infrastructure existed? With which fields did they have experience and with which not? How did they prepare in the face of two enormous demographic challenges: mass Jewish immigration on the one hand, and on the other, unexpectedly large numbers of Arabs (the result of the annexation of territories captured during the war; these territories were not included in the original boundaries of the Jewish state according to the Partition agreement and had significant Arab populations)? How much practical impact did the war have on the establishment of the government system, both in the short term, primarily in necessary changes to the plans of Va'adat HaMatzav, and in the long term, especially with regard to the executive branch's exploitation of the emergency situation to embed enforcement patterns, such as the Emergency Laws.

Professionalism. How prepared was the government to carry out its mission on the administrative, systemic, and personal levels? Who was appointed to the various planning bodies? What were the working relationships between the policymaking politicians and professional experts, and who had greater influence on the planning stage? How did the educational or institutional background of the players influence their work methods—for example, was there a difference between bureaucrats from the Yishuv establishment and those who had served the Mandate government and absorbed the British administrative tradition? And if so, how were these differences manifested?

Implementation

Policy implementation as used in the present study refers to the implementation of policy relating to the establishment of the government ministries. On the one hand it is possible to say that implementation was already an integral part of the planning stages, since between 1947 and 1951 it was the executive branch that ordered and supervised the planning. On the other

hand, we should distinguish between theoretical planning and the implementation of policy as influenced by external factors, such as the stages of the war, or internal factors such as party pressures and the level of professionalism of the implementers. In terms of policy implementation, we must ask the following questions:

- Who was in charge of implementing the planning policy? This group can be broken down into subcategories: the prime minister, ministers, ministry heads, and field workers; how did each of these influence the implementation?
- Can we identify a coherent executive worldview at work?
- How did the party system influence policy implementation, and how was this reflected? For example, the prioritization of partisan considerations over professional considerations, appointments to key positions in government ministries, or setting implementation guidelines for a given government ministry based on an ideological worldview. A case in point is the bitter dispute between the Labor Ministry under Mapam (the United Workers' Party), and Mapai (the Land of Israel Workers' Party) during the period of the provisional government, over the question of "initiated" national planning, i.e., the drafting of a national master plan.

The Ministries of Interior and Labor as Case Studies

To illustrate the planning and implementation policy with regard to the establishment of the government system in Israel, I chose to focus on two government ministries that have not yet been studied—the Labor Ministry and the Interior Ministry. Both of these were large, active ministries during the period covered by this study, and thus a resource of plentiful data useful for reaching bigger-picture and more general conclusions about the processes that characterized the establishment of the government system during the period. In addition, the two ministries dealt with such different areas that

this enables us to compare two distinct systems, each one requiring particular processes of planning and implementation. For example, matters that fall under the responsibility of an Interior Ministry had been entirely the domain of the Mandatory government, and the Yishuv had little experience with or dealings in this realm. This meant that the new government had to quickly learn an entirely new field of governance. And, in fact, the fledgling Israeli Interior Ministry did set itself the task of studying the entire Mandatory governmental system, including an emphasis on the economic and strategic systems that had not been under its control, such as the refineries and oil tanks, the train system, airports, and the port of Haifa. With regard to the Labor Ministry, on the other hand, the Yishuv had rich experience with labor-related matters, mainly due to the many Yishuv institutions that dealt with this issue, such as the Histadrut Labor Federation (hereafter the Histadrut) and the various workers' parties. These differences between the two ministries provided an opportunity to compare two very different planning and implementation situations and examine how these were dealt with by the staff of each ministry. This point is significant, as the split between those areas of government in which the Yishuv had some degree of prior experience, and those in which they had none, influenced the process of establishment throughout and is apparent in the final results.

Bureaucrats and Politicians

Although this is an historical study, it is worthwhile to reflect on several theoretical subjects that have preoccupied political scientists and scholars of public administration regarding the influence of the political on the administrative echelons and vice versa; this adds an important measure by which to understand the events as they unfolded in Israel.

When Max Weber was asked, at the end of World War I, what political options were applicable for Germany, he specified two important factors that had affected the behavior of the modern state in the twentieth century: the

emergence of modern bureaucracy characterized by professional administrators, and the rise of a new class, comprised of professional politicians whose influence was no longer based on inherited social standing but on mass parties representing millions.⁵ From an historical perspective, it is possible to say that Weber was right; the world saw many changes between 1870 and 1970, but in terms of policymaking, two phenomenon stood out in the regimes of the West: professional politicians and civil servants (bureaucrats). To this we must add the massive growth in the size of bureaucracy in the modern state, and the significant expansion of the number of civil servants. For example, between 1911 and 1970 the number of documents dealing with regulations and administrative law on a yearly basis grew tenfold in Denmark, while in the United States the federal register, which deals with the publication of administrative law, grew four times larger between 1966 and 1975.⁶

In 1981, Joel Aberbach, Robert Putnam, and Bert Rockman published *Bureaucrats and Politicians in Western Democracies*.⁷ The book poses eight questions on the issue of politicians and bureaucrats as policymakers: (1) What is the difference between politicians and bureaucrats? (2) Do they come to their positions from different backgrounds? (3) Do they have different priorities? (4) Do they take different criteria into consideration in their decision-making? (5) Do they relate to public issues and policy-making in practice differently? (6) Do they have different worldviews? (7) How do these differences influence the working relationships between the two groups as well as policymaking in practice? (8) Would the situation be different if bureaucrats rather than politicians determined government policy?⁸

The authors attempt to answer these questions using four models (or, as they termed it, images), based on empirical studies conducted in seven democratic, Western, industrialized countries: the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Sweden, Denmark, Italy, and the United States. Following is a short explanation of each of these models.

Model 1: Policy and Administration

This model assumes that politicians determine policy and bureaucrats carry out and administrate it. Frank Goodnow argued that a transition took place

between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in which the administration of state roles was split in two: the general will expressed politically, and the implementation of this will via the administration. The accepted norm, according to this understanding, is that the civil servant serves the politician. Bureaucrats' advantage over politicians was in their ability to engage in politics without bearing any political responsibility for the consequences of their actions. Max Weber saw in this model the ideal reflection of the bureaucrat-politician relationship, while also recognizing the impossibility of completely separating the administrative from the political act. Even in situations where bureaucrats wanted to fulfill the wish of their political masters, this was not practical, as politicians lacked the professional expertise, the knowledge, and the time to deal with all the aspects of running a modern state. In effect, Weber is saying, the politician is in a position of "dilettante" vis-à-vis the expert administrator.⁹

Model 2: Facts and Interests

This model assumes that both politicians and bureaucrats participate in policymaking. How, then, do their contributions differ? The bureaucrat provides facts and knowledge, while the politician emphasizes interests and values; the bureaucrat asks "Will this work?" while the politician asks, "Will it fly?" Thus, while bureaucrats emphasize the technical side of policy, politicians, in their response, focus on the public.¹⁰ Herbert Simon sought to separate the factual aspect from the ethical aspect of decision-making, and reached the conclusion that the bureaucrat provides expertise, while the politician provides value judgments.¹¹ According to this model, there is a difference between administrative rationale and political rationale. While the politician does not want to deal overmuch in details, the political system needs a greater degree of maturity to make use of the administrative rationale. Karl Mannheim argues that the natural inclination of the bureaucrat is to transform every political problem into an administrative one.¹² In democratic regimes, the second model views the role of the politician as mediating, listening, and clarifying conflicting demands and interests to resolve social conflicts. This model has also proven problematic, as in

recent years reservations have arisen about the differences between politicians and bureaucrats. For example, politicians' improved levels of education and training have cast a heavy shadow on the heretofore monopoly of the bureaucrat on expertise.

Model 3: Energy and Equilibrium

In this model, both politicians and bureaucrats make policy, with one essential difference: the politician tries to clarify and reconcile a broad and diffuse range of interests of unorganized individuals, while the bureaucrat mediates between the narrow, focused interests of an organized clientele; politicians are passionate and idealistic, while bureaucrats are careful, centralist, and pragmatic; the politician seeks fame, while the bureaucrat prefers the back room, dealing with change in a gradual manner and striving to implement a policy balanced between opposing sides; the ministers dictate policy to the bureaucrats, and the latter provide the ministers with the means of carrying it out.¹³ In reality, both politicians and bureaucrats question their own administrative policy.

The interests of bureaucrats are focused and centered according to the professional department they represent. Before and after the legislation process, the bureaucrat checks the potential pressure groups likely to be affected by the change to come as a result of the new legislation. The role of the bureaucrat in the third model is to sketch the balance of power of organized political forces. But there are three limitations to the bureaucrat's ability to influence interest groups through the administrative process: (1) Bureaucrats tend to ignore nonorganized interests, whereas politicians tend to intervene with regard to nonorganized interests to increase their popularity and their potential support. (2) Bureaucrats tend not to bridge between functional sectors. For example, ministers in the Danish government maintain close ties with organized interest groups, such as farmers, workers, and pensioners. Bureaucrats tend to listen to lower frequencies of interest groups than politicians do. (3) Bureaucrats treat the balance of political power as a given, while politicians tend to look beyond it. The more

educated and skilled politicians are, the greater their access to systems of political power. Moreover, political principles accompanied by ideological thinking can give the politician a marked advantage over the bureaucrat.¹⁴

The third model also assumes a difference between the disposition of the politician and that of the bureaucrat, namely that the politician is more passionate and idealistic, while the bureaucrat is cautious and restrained and dedicated to avoiding risk. Both sides have political skills, but the politician prefers the podium and the bureaucrat the boardroom. The model also tries to understand how these differences influence the implementation of policy in practice. First, each group tends to present different issues on the public agenda. In Germany, for example, initiatives from the bureaucracy follow the observation of developments on the ground, contacts with the clientele of the department or ministry dealing with a particular issue, or feedback about programs that have already been implemented. The German political system, on the other hand, has evinced much greater sensitivity to public opinion and a tendency to take up issues of a philosophical and ideological nature that are of interest to the voting public.

The model assumes that no group of bureaucrats would have been capable of initiating and advancing the socioeconomic worldview of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, nor the radical worldview of Labor MP Anthony Wedgwood Benn.¹⁵ The third model posits that in both the German and British cases, policymaking on the part of the bureaucratic establishment tends to preserve the status quo rather than initiate new policy. According to Mattei Dogan, all of the great reforms carried out in post-WWII Europe were initiated by political parties.¹⁶

Model 4: The Pure Hybrid

Understanding the fourth model requires a few advance notions: the first model emerged in Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century and was based on the premises of Max Weber. The second model, which proposed a certain degree of bureaucrat-driven policymaking, was suited to the first half of the twentieth century. The third model, which attributes

a degree of political initiative to the bureaucratic echelon, emerged in the second half of the twentieth century. In the fourth model, on the other hand, the “Weberian dichotomy” disappears and is replaced by a mixed model, or “pure hybrid,” as it is referred to in academia.¹⁷ This model talks about an amalgamation of the two roles, but notes that the organizational structure varies from country to country. In Japan and France, for example, there is growing mobility between the career scales of bureaucracy and that of politics, and vice versa. In the UK and Germany there is an influx of “outsiders” into the system, that is, experts who come from outside the civil service. This phenomenon is also widespread in the United States. Researchers have termed this phenomenon the “bureaucratization of politics and the politicization of bureaucracy.”¹⁸ Some attribute this phenomenon of “super bureaucrats” to the expansion of governmental centers of power, such as the staff of the White House in the United States, the British Cabinet, and the office of the German Chancellor. A similar division exists between centers of power in the Swedish governmental system. Thus, a central question that arises from Aberbach et al. is to what extent are politicians and bureaucrats similar policymakers?

In the conclusion of this book, I make use of Aberbach et al.’s findings regarding the proposed four models, first by summarizing them and then by examining their relevance to our understanding of the working relationships that developed between policymaking politicians and bureaucrats in Israel from the initial Va’adat HaMatzav until the end of the term of office of the First Knesset.