

ideas" (p. 113). Metulla, located north of Dan, was the only Jewish settlement that can be said to have contributed in a significant way to defining the boundary's final location. In the end, it and more than a dozen Arab villages were strewn along the superimposed boundary, with those lands divided between the two newly created states of Palestine and Lebanon.

The last of Palestine's boundaries to be defined during this period was the eastern one, along the Jordan River line. As in the south, the key decisions were all made by British politicians and military leaders. In this case, the significance of General Allenby's wartime administrative divisions was not only reinforced locally by prevailing Ottoman practices but also was supported in London by the earlier political decision to establish east of the Jordan River a separate Arab state under British patronage. Although a few Zionist leaders, such as Ze'ev Jabotinsky, viewed as treasonous the failure of the Zionist Organization to expand Palestine's territory to the other bank of the Jordan River, Biger observes that once the British demarcation was made, "no official Zionist demands concerning the location of the eastern borderline were ever raised" (p. 179).

A final chapter highlighting the various partition plans that achieved prominence between 1937 and 1947 reminds the reader that British faith in the boundaries of the territorial unit they had created did not last very long. However, as Biger notes, the eventual location of new boundaries was determined mainly by military positions achieved after 1947. Biger's argument that such a discussion could not be encompassed within this book is well taken, but it raises questions about why a discussion of the partition plans was considered within its scope in the first place.

Other weaknesses range from the sentence to the conceptual level. An annoying number of mistakes are made in the spelling of names (prominent among them being that of Archer Cust, well known for his ideas of cantonization on the Swiss model). The book's illustrations mostly disappoint: the large photographs of political leaders are not especially relevant, and the maps are neither as helpful nor as clear as one might expect for the subject matter. Originally published in Hebrew, the book targets an audience interested mainly in the history of Zionism. The Arabs of Palestine do not register. Biger's explanation for this omission is that Arabs "were not involved with the delimitation process of Palestine" (p. 229), yet the fact that the Zionist Organization's own "real influence was rather minor" (p. 226) does not prevent him from elaborating throughout the book on its positions. It certainly would have been worthwhile for Biger to have elaborated upon his observation of the local inhabitants that "political delimitation with the aid of borderlines was an alien concept to them" (p. 229).

GIORA GOLDBERG, *Ben-Gurion against the Knesset* (London: Routledge, 2003). Pp 338. \$150.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY COLIN SHINDLER, Department of Near and Middle East Studies, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, London; e-mail: cs52@soas.ac.uk  
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Ben-Gurion, of course, helped to construct and shape the state of Israel, but his actions in the arena of the Knesset, according to Giora Goldberg, led to unforeseen consequences in later years. In the early years of the state, Ben-Gurion wielded tremendous power in party and government as the architect of Labor Zionism and the decisive founder of Israel. Idiosyncrasies were viewed instead within the realm of enigmatic wisdom. As the author comments, "Not only was Ben-Gurion totally identified with the state he had established, he felt he owned it, and passionately loved it" (p. 312). This paralleled the approach of leaders of other newly

emergent nations. The emphasis on statism meant that any expression of independence and individuality on the part of the Knesset members was viewed by Ben-Gurion as divisive and counterproductive in the creation of a cohesive and united society. Israel was different from the developing world, however, as Zionist politics had constructed a model that suggested all wisdom did not reside within the executive arm. The Zionist congresses since 1897 and the Asefat Hanivharim, the assembly of the Jewish settlers in Palestine, provided the background experience for parliamentary opposition.

Ben-Gurion viewed the Knesset, the legislative arm, as a talking shop that should support the government and refrain from criticizing it. Moreover, he preferred to blur the differences between the executive and the legislative. However, when he understood that the Knesset was not content to become a rubber stamp, he began to marginalize its position in political life and to regard it almost as a rival. There was no attempt to achieve a balance of forces between government and the executive, no checks and balances, only an apparent zero sum game approach. Ben-Gurion's campaign against the Knesset initially rendered it somewhat docile and on the defensive such that not a single private member's bill was proposed in the first Knesset and only two enacted in the second.

In the early years, the continued existence of Israel was in the balance. Israel was "a mobilized democracy" (p. 317). Its exposition of democratic behavior therefore projected flaws. Israeli Arabs lived under military government, and some political parties, such as the ultraorthodox, were highly selective about which parts of democracy they accepted and which they rejected. In addition, the militant undergrounds of the early 1950s, such as Brit HaCanaim, were quite happy to commit acts of violence against elected representatives. In such circumstances, Ben-Gurion's approach during these years was more akin to that of a Kenyatta or Nyerere than his Knesset colleagues.

Ben-Gurion's ardor for government by the executive led to ensuring that the Knesset foreign affairs and security committees were left in the dark regarding decisions and developments on the 1949 armistice agreements. When the Law and Justice Committee wished to meet Ben-Gurion to discuss the Israeli constitution, the prime minister first refused to participate and then cancelled meetings. He took the view that a constitution would ignite a *kulturkampf* between secular and religious and was thereby detrimental to building a stable state. During his sojourn in Sde Boker, when Moshe Sharett was prime minister, Ben-Gurion neither frequented the Knesset nor refused his salary as an elected member. Goldberg notes that Ben-Gurion was also averse to granting Knesset members a broad immunity from prosecution, as is the case in many other democracies. Goldberg argues that they pushed the immunity bill through because they simply did not trust Ben-Gurion.

Perhaps one of the more interesting sections in this well-researched book is Ben-Gurion's interventionist approach when it came to his own and other parties. During the first and second Knesset elections, Ben-Gurion was highly influential as to who should be placed on the Mapai list of candidates. In the 1949 election, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi was given a high-ranking position; seven seats were reserved for women and six for *kibbutzim* and *moshavim*. However, Ben-Gurion rejected a proposal in which lawyers—who knew a little about making laws—would be favored. Goldberg suggests that such a move would have enhanced the legislative ability of the Knesset. Most Mapai members went along with Ben-Gurion, but one member of its central committee commented, "I have seen the Knesset choose a government, but I have never seen the government choose the Knesset" (p. 210). Ben-Gurion was also happy to aid his party's chances by obtaining information about the preparations for Herut's first conference from the security services. In addition, members' correspondence was monitored, and scheduled radio broadcasts were withdrawn. A poem by Natan Alterman lauding the Palmach—the fighting force of the rival Ahdut Ha'avoda—was prevented by the censor from being published in *Davar*.

Goldberg argues that Ben-Gurion was responsible in part for the unruly style of Knesset debates in that he did not set an example for his colleagues. His provocative language often led to unparliamentary scenes. In the case of Menachem Begin and his followers in Herut, he employed this to good effect with a studied display of bile and sarcasm. Irritated and nonplussed, Begin always responded in kind and thereby propagated the imagery in the public mind of Herut as “extremist.” As Ben-Gurion envisaged, this probably retarded the coalescence of the right in Israeli politics by many years and tarnished Begin’s repeated attempts at respectability.

As Israel’s future became more certain, parliamentarians both inside and outside his party were unwilling to accept Ben-Gurion’s actions in reverential silence. This can be observed by the increase of the number of private members’ bills passed. By 1960, when he declared, “I have dismissed the government,” Ben-Gurion’s rationalized authoritarianism provoked an alliance that cut through party lines.

This interesting book does not explain why Ben-Gurion embarked upon this path and also omits any ideological rationale. Ben-Gurion, the self-assured politician and state builder, was also the arch pragmatist. In this area, he learned much from the operational style of Lenin and the Bolsheviks and opposed Moshe Sneh’s Communists and the ideologically moonstruck pro-Soviet Mapam. Even so, this is an important contribution to comprehending Israel’s first decade.

PAUL SCHAM, WALID SALEM, AND BENJAMIN POGROUND, EDS., *Shared Histories: A Palestinian–Israeli Dialogue* (Walnut Creek, Calif.: Left Coast Press, 2005). Pp. 304. \$59.00 cloth, \$23.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY REBECCA LUNA STEIN, Department of Cultural Anthropology, Duke University, Durham, N.C.; e-mail: rlstein@duke.edu  
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During the course of the negotiations that would culminate in the Declaration of Principles (DOP), or the Oslo Accords, historical narratives were effectively barred from the negotiating table. “History,” as Paul Scham argues elsewhere, “was considered too hot to handle.”<sup>1</sup> As a result, the so-called “mutual recognition” codified in the DOP was enormously limited. Although it addressed the political future of the negotiating process, however contingently, the past was not afforded equal attention—a critical blind spot in the substance of “recognition” that led to successive failures in subsequent negotiations over the status of Jerusalem and Palestinian refugees.

*Shared Histories: A Palestinian–Israeli Dialogue* returns us to the terrain of history. The editors argue that counter to the “conventional logic of peace-making,” a mutual understanding of the historical narratives on which Israelis and Palestinians stake their respective political claims is a sine qua non of conflict resolution. This is not a call for historical consensus. Rather, it is an attempt to foreground the narrative discontinuities and historical disagreements on which politics is built. Although this is not a text grounded in political pragmatics, peace-making is its explicit horizon. In their introduction, the editors argue that an appreciation of the stakes in history and a mutual understanding of the divergent ways that Israelis and Palestinians tell their own pasts will advance peace building, that now elusive project. Originally conceived in 1999—prior to the failures at Camp David, the outbreak of the al-Aqsa intifada, and the election of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon—the volume emerged from what now seems, in retrospect, a much more hopeful time.