A historical understanding of Zionist territorial objectives in Palestine and the State of Israel is an unending map-reading endeavor in futility, based on foregone conclusions of the plight of Palestinians, and probably unrivaled by any other settler colonies of our time. Similar to the previous chapter I do not intend to provide a detailed historical account of the Palestinian-Jewish conflict (or from 1948 onward that between Palestinians and Israelis) and the former’s losses and incredible sufferings. This has been done by other scholars and writers more comprehensively and passionately. Rather, my focus here again is on Israel’s territorial expansion and the way the two entities’ economies have become increasingly entwined to the point of unity—all with the hope in making sense of why Israel erected the Wall around the occupied Palestinian territories.

Israel’s First Expansion Phase, 1947–1949

If the Zionists’ plan for a “Jewish home in Palestine” was marked by a grand scheme of land grab for a future settler colony, the creation of the state of Israel was predictably a recipe for conflict and bloodshed based on the aggression of Jewish settlers and the Arab Palestinians’ resistance. It was in the midst of this undeclared war that the state of Israel was born. This war which Israelis call the War of Independence and Arabs as al-Nakba (literally “the disaster”) had two phases. The first phase started when the United Nations passed the partition resolution on November 29, 1947 and ended on May 14, 1948, when the State of Israel was unilaterally proclaimed by the Jewish People’s Council in Tel Aviv. The UN resolution angered Arab Palestinians who responded with guerilla attacks against Jewish targets. Zionist leaders adopted a hardline “aggressive defense” strategy of capturing as many Palestinian villages and cities as possible.

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with one clear objective: “to secure all the areas allocated to the Jewish state under the UN partition resolution as well as Jewish settlements outside these areas and corridors leading to them, so as to provide a solid and continuous basis for Jewish sovereignty” (Shlaim, 2000: 31, emphasis mine).

The second phase of hostilities began the day after Israel’s unilateral declaration of independence, when on May 15, 1948 armies from Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Trans-Jordan attacked Israeli positions from multiple fronts. A truce was reached later in June by Count Folke Bernadotte, the UN-appointed Swedish diplomat, who then traveled to the area to conduct a study of the conflict. He submitted his recommendations to the UN on September 16, 1948 but was assassinated by a member of the militant Zionist Stern Gang the next day.² Although the assassin’s motives were not investigated, it is not hard to conclude that certain factions within the Zionist movement were displeased with Bernadotte’s findings and recommendations. In his telegram to the U.S. Secretary of State, the American Chargé in Egypt referred to Bernadotte’s report and his observations of the “appalling” conditions of 300,000–400,000 Arab Palestinian refugees who lived without adequate food, clothing, shelter and basic health care (cf. Fraser, 1980: 72). In Bernadotte’s report two recommendations stood out as clearly challenging the future of the Zionist state. First, he emphasized that the UN “should undertake to provide special assurance that the boundaries between the Arab and Jewish territories shall be respected and maintained” based on the partition plan. This clearly would have challenged Israel’s excursions beyond demarcated lines and put limits on her future territorial expansions. In fact, it was for this same reason that Israel never adopted a constitution as was called for in the Proclamation of Independence document, as it would have clearly identified state boundaries and in turn delegitimized further future territorial gains beyond prescribed territories.³ Bernadotte’s second recommendation, controversial and unacceptable from the Zionists’ perspective, was the full recognition of Arab Palestinian refugees’ “right of return” by the UN, including “their repatriation, resettlement and economic and social reha-

² The Lehi, commonly known as the Stern Gang after its leader was a militant Zionist group that was active during the 1940–1948 period and aimed at forcible eviction of the British from Palestine, securing unrestricted Jewish immigration and creation of ‘Eretz-Israel.’ One of Lehi’s leaders, Yitzhak Shamir eventually became Israel’s prime minister in 1983.

³ According to the Proclamation of Independence document a constituent assembly should have prepared a constitution by October 1, 1948.