

Ze'ev Jabotinsky and the Greater Israel

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Ze'ev Jabotinsky was a towering figure in Zionist history, whose vision of a Greater Israel continues to influence Israeli politics and national security today. As the founder of Revisionist Zionism, Jabotinsky's ideas diverged sharply from the more moderate Labor Zionists, who were willing to accept territorial compromises in the pursuit of statehood. Instead, Jabotinsky believed that the Jewish state should encompass the entirety of Mandatory Palestine, including both sides of the Jordan River, and that no external power or negotiation should limit Jewish territorial aspirations. Jabotinsky's emphasis on military strength and his famous "Iron Wall" doctrine laid the foundation for Israel's defense policy, advocating for peace through deterrence rather than compromise. Though his vision of a Jewish state stretching from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River was never fully realized, Jabotinsky's ideas on territorial sovereignty and self-determination remain central to Israeli right-wing politics, particularly in the context of the settlement movement and ongoing debates over the West Bank. This article explores Jabotinsky's vision, his ideological legacy, and his lasting influence on modern Israeli politics.

Keywords: Ze'ev Jabotinsky, Greater Israel, Revisionist Zionism, military strength, Iron Wall doctrine, Israeli politics, territorial sovereignty, self-determination, settlement movement, West Bank, Israeli security, Menachem Begin, Likud, Herut, David Ben-Gurion, Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Introduction

Ze'ev Jabotinsky stands out as one of the most influential and controversial figures in Zionist history. Born in 1880 in Odessa, then part of the Russian Empire, Jabotinsky emerged as a passionate advocate for the Jewish people's right to self-determination and statehood. His views, which crystallized into what became known as Revisionist Zionism, diverged significantly from the mainstream Labor Zionist movement of his time. Whereas Labor Zionism, led by figures like David Ben-Gurion, adopted a more pragmatic approach to the establishment of a Jewish state—favoring negotiations, compromises, and eventually accepting the partition of Palestine—Jabotinsky was resolute in his insistence on a broader territorial claim and the necessity of building a strong, defensible state for the Jewish people.

Jabotinsky's leadership spanned various spheres. He was not only a political thinker but also a journalist, author, soldier, and an ardent proponent of Jewish military defense, all of which shaped his worldview. His experience of witnessing anti-Semitic violence in Eastern Europe and his deep awareness of the fragility of Jewish life in the Diaspora convinced him that Jewish survival depended on the establishment of a powerful, independent Jewish state. For Jabotinsky, the state had to be founded not just on the west side of the Jordan River (what is today Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza), but also on the east side (modern-day Jordan), encompassing what he viewed as the full historic and biblical land of Israel. He envisioned a "Greater Israel" that stretched across both sides of the Jordan River, advocating for a Jewish state that would fulfill both the ancient promise of a homeland and the modern necessity for security and strength.

However, Jabotinsky's unyielding position on territorial expansion and his emphasis on the use of force for self-defense brought him into conflict with other Zionist leaders. His writings, particularly his famous "Iron Wall" essay, articulated his belief that only after the Jewish state had established an unbreakable "iron wall" of defense could peace with the Arab world be achieved. His insistence on Jewish sovereignty over all of Mandatory Palestine, and his opposition to compromises like the Peel Commission Plan (1937) and the UN Partition Plan (1947), made him both a polarizing and revered figure.

Thesis Statement:

Jabotinsky's vision for a Greater Israel, encompassing all of Mandatory Palestine and beyond, was deeply rooted in his belief in Jewish self-determination, historical entitlement, and the importance of security. His ideological framework shaped not only the early Zionist movement but also continues to influence Israeli politics today, particularly in right-wing parties and the settlement movement. This article will delve into Jabotinsky's territorial ambitions, his ideas on Jewish self-defense, and how his vision of a Greater Israel laid the groundwork for ongoing debates about Israel's borders and security strategy.

In this article, we will explore Jabotinsky's ideological foundations, the specific territories he envisioned for the Jewish state, and the long-term implications of his ideology on modern Israeli political thought, particularly in relation to the West Bank, Jordan, and Israel's strategic security posture.

I. Ze'ev Jabotinsky: A Brief Biography

Early Life and Zionist Roots

Ze'ev Jabotinsky was born Vladimir Yevgenyevich Jabotinsky on October 18, 1880, in Odessa, a cosmopolitan port city on the Black Sea, which was then part of the Russian Empire (now Ukraine). Odessa was home to a large Jewish community, but like many other cities in the Russian Empire, it was a place where Jews faced anti-Semitic violence and repression. These early experiences in Odessa would later shape Jabotinsky's outlook on Jewish self-defense and the necessity of establishing a Jewish state where Jews could live securely.

Jabotinsky's early career was marked by his talents as a writer and journalist. He was well-educated, studying law in Switzerland and Italy, and fluent in several languages, including Russian, Hebrew, Yiddish, and English. His ability to articulate ideas with clarity and passion quickly made him a prominent figure in Jewish intellectual and political circles. In his youth, Jabotinsky wasn't initially involved in Zionist politics; instead, he focused on secular and liberal causes. However, the Kishinev pogrom of 1903, in which a wave of anti-Semitic violence claimed the lives of 49 Jews, deeply affected him and became a turning point in his life. The

massacre underscored the vulnerability of Jews living as minorities in Europe and convinced him that Jews needed their own state for their survival.

In 1903, Jabotinsky attended the Sixth Zionist Congress in Basel, where he officially joined the Zionist movement, the global effort to create a Jewish homeland in Palestine. However, he quickly grew frustrated with the moderate, diplomatic approach of the mainstream Zionist leadership, which was led by figures like Theodor Herzl and later Chaim Weizmann. Jabotinsky felt that the mainstream Zionists were too passive and willing to compromise with European governments, particularly the British, who held control over Palestine. He believed that Jewish self-determination could only be achieved through strong, direct action, rather than through relying on the goodwill of external powers.

Formation of Revisionist Zionism

By the 1920s, Jabotinsky's growing disillusionment with the moderate Zionists led him to break away and establish a more militant, nationalist faction within the Zionist movement, known as Revisionist Zionism. The name "Revisionist" reflected Jabotinsky's desire to revise the mainstream Zionist policies, particularly those that accepted compromises on the scope and methods of achieving a Jewish homeland.

One of the central differences between Jabotinsky and the Labor Zionists, led by David Ben-Gurion, was their contrasting views on how to achieve Jewish statehood and what the final borders of the state should be. Ben-Gurion and the Labor Zionists were focused on pragmatic solutions, including the possibility of accepting partition plans that would divide Palestine between Jews and Arabs. They were more willing to negotiate with British authorities and sought to gradually build up Jewish institutions through agriculture and socialist principles.

In contrast, Jabotinsky rejected the idea of partition and any solution that didn't include the entirety of Mandatory Palestine—both west and east of the Jordan River—as part of the future Jewish state. He argued that the Zionist movement must aim for a Greater Israel, encompassing both sides of the Jordan River, which meant including Transjordan (modern-day Jordan). Jabotinsky believed that such compromises would undermine the long-term survival of the Jewish people and that the Jews needed a strong, sovereign state that included all of their historical and biblical homeland.

Jabotinsky was also critical of the socialist ideologies that dominated Labor Zionism. While Ben-Gurion and his followers prioritized collective agriculture, communal living (kibbutzim), and social justice, Jabotinsky emphasized individualism, free-market economics, and national strength. He believed in creating a capitalist economy that would encourage Jewish entrepreneurship and rapid development.

However, what truly set Jabotinsky apart was his emphasis on Jewish self-defense and military strength. He believed that Jewish survival could only be ensured if the Jewish people had the means to defend themselves. In 1920, during the Arab riots in Jerusalem, Jabotinsky organized a Jewish self-defense unit to protect Jewish neighborhoods from attacks. His emphasis on military organization later influenced the creation of Jewish paramilitary groups like the Irgun (Etzel), a Revisionist Zionist militia that fought both Arab militias and, later, the British authorities during the Mandate period.

Jabotinsky famously wrote:

"We shall create, with sweat and blood, a national Hebrew military force so strong that no force in the world will ever dare challenge it."

This philosophy was later formalized in his "Iron Wall" theory, which argued that the Arabs would never willingly accept a Jewish state in Palestine. Therefore, Jabotinsky believed that the only way to secure a Jewish homeland was through building an "iron wall" of military force—a powerful Jewish state that could defend itself and deter attacks from hostile neighbors. He was confident that, once the Jewish state was strong enough to survive any aggression, peace with the Arabs would eventually be possible, but only after they realized that Jewish sovereignty could not be destroyed by force.

Key Milestones in Jabotinsky's Leadership:

- Establishment of Betar: In 1923, Jabotinsky founded the Betar youth movement, a militant nationalist youth organization dedicated to training young Jews in self-defense and preparing them for leadership in the future Jewish state. The Betar movement became a key institution in the Revisionist Zionist framework, producing future political and military leaders, including Menachem Begin.

- **Alliance with the British Army:** During World War I, Jabotinsky and Joseph Trumpeldor organized the Jewish Legion, a group of Jewish soldiers that fought alongside the British Army against the Ottoman Empire in Palestine. Jabotinsky hoped that by supporting the British war effort, the Jews would earn British support for the Zionist cause.
- **Split from the Mainstream Zionists:** By 1925, Jabotinsky's differences with the World Zionist Organization (WZO) led him to formally break away and establish the Union of Revisionist Zionists. He increasingly distanced himself from Ben-Gurion and Weizmann, as he continued to advocate for a maximalist territorial vision and a strong Jewish military force.
- **Exile and Death:** In 1930, Jabotinsky was exiled from Palestine by the British authorities due to his activism and the confrontations between his followers and the British Mandate forces. He spent the rest of his life in Europe and the United States, continuing to advocate for Jewish statehood and organizing Revisionist Zionist groups. He died unexpectedly in 1940 while visiting New York, not living to see the establishment of the Jewish state that he had fought for his entire life.

Jabotinsky's ideas, though controversial during his lifetime, laid the ideological foundation for right-wing Zionism in Israel. His emphasis on military strength, territorial maximalism, and the refusal to compromise continues to influence Israeli politics, particularly through parties like Likud, which evolved from the Revisionist Zionist movement.

Jabotinsky's life and work were marked by his unwavering belief that the Jewish people must establish an independent, secure, and powerful state. His vision of Greater Israel, his insistence on self-defense, and his rejection of compromise created a powerful legacy that continues to resonate in contemporary debates about Israel's borders and security policy.

II. The Concept of "Greater Israel"

Historical and Religious Foundations

The idea of "Greater Israel" is deeply rooted in the biblical concept of Eretz Yisrael (the Land of Israel), a land promised by God to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In religious and historical terms, this land extends far beyond the borders of modern Israel, traditionally described as stretching from the Nile River in Egypt to the Euphrates River in modern-day Iraq. This expansive biblical vision of Israel includes regions that today encompass parts of Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt. For millennia, this vision remained mostly in the realm of religious and spiritual aspiration, with many Jews around the world yearning for a return to Zion in a symbolic sense rather than a territorial one.

However, in the modern context of Zionism, particularly under the leadership of Ze'ev Jabotinsky, the notion of Greater Israel was interpreted as a political and territorial goal. While many Zionist leaders interpreted Eretz Yisrael within more pragmatic, limited borders, Jabotinsky envisioned the establishment of a Jewish state that aligned more closely with the broad biblical boundaries. His vision was based not only on religious sentiment but also on historical entitlement and strategic necessity. He believed that the Jewish people had both the right and the responsibility to reclaim their ancestral homeland in its entirety, which, according to his interpretation, included all of Mandatory Palestine (both west and east of the Jordan River) as well as Transjordan (modern-day Jordan).

Jabotinsky's Interpretation of Eretz Yisrael in a Modern Political Context

Jabotinsky took the ancient concept of Eretz Yisrael and recontextualized it to fit the political realities of the early 20th century. For him, the biblical promise of a Jewish homeland was not merely symbolic; it was a concrete territorial ambition that should be pursued with determination. His understanding of Eretz Yisrael wasn't limited to the narrow strip of land between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River (the area that eventually became Israel after 1948). Instead, he argued that all of Mandatory Palestine, including both sides of the Jordan River, should be part of the future Jewish state.

To Jabotinsky, the idea of Greater Israel was essential for several reasons:

1. **Historical Right:** He believed that Jewish people had an inalienable historical right to the land, rooted in both ancient history and biblical tradition. In his view, this right could not be forfeited or compromised by political pressures or negotiations with foreign powers.
2. **Security:** Jabotinsky also saw the geographical expansion of the Jewish state as a strategic necessity. He argued that the Jordan River should serve as the eastern frontier of the Jewish state because it provided a natural defensive barrier. Without control over the land east of the Jordan River, he believed the Jewish state would be vulnerable to attacks from neighboring Arab countries.
3. **Capacity for Jewish Immigration:** Jabotinsky was acutely aware of the demographic pressures facing European Jews in the early 20th century, especially with the rise of anti-Semitism and the tightening of immigration policies in other countries. For him, Greater Israel was not only a matter of historical entitlement but also a practical solution to the urgent need for a homeland that could accommodate millions of Jewish immigrants, particularly from Eastern Europe.

Jabotinsky's vision of Greater Israel was ambitious and maximalist, in stark contrast to the more moderate Zionists like David Ben-Gurion, who were willing to accept a smaller state within more limited borders. Jabotinsky's belief in the uncompromising reclamation of the entire biblical homeland was not only a religious and historical argument but also a political mission.

Political Vision

Ze'ev Jabotinsky's political vision for Greater Israel centered around two fundamental principles: Jewish sovereignty over all of Mandatory Palestine and the rejection of territorial compromise. He believed that any concession on the territorial integrity of the Jewish homeland would weaken the Zionist cause and ultimately jeopardize the future of the Jewish state.

Opposition to Territorial Compromises

Jabotinsky was famously opposed to any form of territorial compromise, whether with the British (who controlled Palestine under the British Mandate) or with the Arabs (who opposed the establishment of a Jewish state). He believed that the Jewish state needed to be strong, expansive, and defensible, and that the borders of the state should not be limited by foreign powers or by the demands of the Arab population.

His opposition to compromise became particularly evident in the 1930s and 1940s, when various proposals were put forward to divide Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states. Two major plans that Jabotinsky vehemently opposed were the Peel Commission of 1937 and the United Nations Partition Plan of 1947:

1. Rejection of the Peel Commission (1937):

- The Peel Commission, established by the British in response to escalating tensions between Jews and Arabs in Palestine, proposed a partition of the land into separate Jewish and Arab states. The Jewish state would have included only a small portion of the territory west of the Jordan River, while the Arabs would control most of the land, including the majority of the fertile and strategic areas.
- Jabotinsky and the Revisionist Zionists strongly rejected the Peel Commission's recommendations. Jabotinsky saw the partition as an unacceptable compromise that would leave the Jewish state vulnerable and incomplete. He argued that accepting such a limited territory would be a betrayal of the Zionist dream of a Jewish homeland that encompassed the entirety of Palestine, both west and east of the Jordan River.

2. Rejection of the UN Partition Plan (1947):

- A decade later, the United Nations proposed another partition plan in an attempt to resolve the ongoing conflict between Jews and Arabs in Palestine. The UN Partition Plan proposed dividing Palestine into a Jewish state, an Arab state, and an international zone for Jerusalem. This plan would have given the Jewish state a much larger area than the Peel Commission proposal, but it still left significant

portions of Palestine, including the West Bank and Jerusalem, outside of Jewish control.

- By the time of the UN Partition Plan, Jabotinsky had passed away, but his followers in the Revisionist Zionist movement, particularly the Irgun and later the Herut party, continued to oppose any form of partition. They argued that the Jewish people had a right to the entirety of Mandatory Palestine, and that accepting partition would be a temporary solution at best. The rejection of partition plans was rooted in Jabotinsky's belief that the borders of the Jewish state should be determined by the Jewish people themselves, not by external forces like the United Nations.

Transjordan (Modern-Day Jordan) as Part of the Jewish Homeland

One of Jabotinsky's most controversial territorial claims was his insistence that Transjordan (modern-day Jordan) should be part of the future Jewish state. When the British government decided in 1922 to separate Transjordan from the rest of Palestine, creating an independent Arab emirate, Jabotinsky and his followers were outraged. They saw Transjordan as an integral part of the Jewish homeland, and they refused to accept its removal from the Zionist project.

Jabotinsky's opposition to the separation of Transjordan was not just a matter of territorial ambition; it was also driven by strategic considerations. He believed that control of both sides of the Jordan River was essential for the defense and security of the Jewish state. The Jordan River represented a natural barrier that could protect the Jewish state from potential threats from the east. Without control of Transjordan, Jabotinsky feared that the Jewish state would be surrounded by hostile Arab nations and vulnerable to attack.

His vision for a Greater Israel extended far beyond the land that was ultimately allotted to the Jewish people in the partition plans of the 1930s and 1940s. For Jabotinsky, the creation of a Jewish state in a small, divided portion of Palestine was a temporary solution that could never satisfy the long-term needs of the Jewish people. He believed that future generations of Jews would continue to fight for the reclamation of their full historical homeland, which included all of Mandatory Palestine, both east and west of the Jordan River.

Conclusion

Jabotinsky's concept of Greater Israel was an expansive, ambitious, and uncompromising vision rooted in both historical entitlement and modern political strategy. His rejection of partition and territorial compromise reflected his belief that the Jewish people had an inalienable right to their full biblical homeland, and that the future security of the Jewish state depended on its control over strategic territories like the Jordan River Valley and Transjordan. While Jabotinsky's vision was never fully realized, his ideas continue to shape the political landscape of right-wing Zionism and Israeli settlement policy today. His emphasis on Jewish sovereignty, military strength, and territorial maximalism remains a powerful force in Israeli political discourse, particularly in the ongoing debate over the future of the West Bank and the broader borders of the Jewish state.

III. The Revisionist Zionist Map: Territory Aspirations

Mandatory Palestine (Both Sides of the Jordan River)

Ze'ev Jabotinsky's vision for the Jewish homeland encompassed the entire area of Mandatory Palestine, both west and east of the Jordan River, making his territorial aspirations far broader than those of other Zionist leaders. For Jabotinsky, the Jewish state should include all the land under the British Mandate for Palestine, which, before the British created the Emirate of Transjordan in 1922, stretched from the Mediterranean Sea to the borders of Iraq and Saudi Arabia. This area not only included modern-day Israel and the Palestinian territories but also the entire region of what is now Jordan.

Jabotinsky saw this as a matter of historical and strategic importance. He believed that the Jews had a biblical and historical right to this land, which had been the cradle of Jewish civilization during ancient times. To him, the Jordan River was not a boundary between two separate entities but rather a central artery running through the heart of the Jewish homeland. Both banks of the Jordan were part of the same territorial unit that belonged to the Jewish people, and any attempt to divide it was, in his view, a betrayal of Zionist principles.

In a practical sense, Jabotinsky's vision of a Jewish state on both sides of the Jordan River also had important strategic implications. The Jordan River

represented a natural defensive boundary that could protect the Jewish state from external threats. Control over this region would allow the Jewish people to secure their eastern frontier, safeguarding against potential invasions or attacks from neighboring Arab states, which, by the 1920s, were beginning to coalesce and assert their opposition to the Zionist project.

The Political Implications of Jabotinsky's Vision

Jabotinsky's territorial aspirations for both sides of the Jordan River placed him in direct conflict with the British authorities who controlled the region under the British Mandate. Following World War I, the League of Nations had granted Britain control over Palestine, which was meant to include both the area west of the Jordan (modern-day Israel and the Palestinian territories) and the area east of the Jordan (modern-day Jordan). The Balfour Declaration of 1917 had expressed British support for the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, but the interpretation of this promise became a source of contention.

In 1922, under pressure from the Arab population and seeking to stabilize the region, the British government made the decision to separate Transjordan from the rest of Palestine. They appointed Abdullah, a member of the Hashemite royal family, as the Emir of Transjordan, effectively creating an independent Arab state. This decision enraged Jabotinsky and his followers in the Revisionist Zionist movement. They believed that Transjordan had been unfairly and unjustly removed from the Jewish homeland, and they refused to recognize the British decision as legitimate.

Opposition to Transjordan Separation (1922)

Jabotinsky's opposition to the British separation of Transjordan from Mandatory Palestine was one of the defining features of his political ideology. He viewed the division of the land as a betrayal of the Zionist cause and as a capitulation to Arab demands. In his mind, Transjordan was part of the historical Land of Israel and therefore belonged to the Jewish people. He argued that the British had no right to partition the land or to create a separate Arab state east of the Jordan River, as this violated the promise made to the Jews in the Balfour Declaration.

In a famous speech, Jabotinsky declared:

"The Jordan River will be the permanent eastern border of the Jewish state, and any attempt to separate Transjordan from the rest of Palestine is a crime against the Jewish people."

Jabotinsky's opposition to the separation of Transjordan was not just about territorial integrity; it was also about strategic necessity. He believed that a Jewish state confined to the narrow strip of land between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River would be vulnerable and difficult to defend. In his view, controlling both sides of the Jordan River was essential to ensuring the security and survival of the Jewish state. Without this buffer zone, he feared that the Jewish state would be surrounded by hostile Arab nations, leaving it vulnerable to attack from the east.

Despite Jabotinsky's fierce opposition, the British government went ahead with the establishment of Transjordan as a separate entity, and the Zionist movement was forced to adjust to this new political reality. While Jabotinsky and his followers never accepted the legitimacy of Transjordan's separation, the mainstream Zionist leadership—led by David Ben-Gurion—chose to focus their efforts on securing a Jewish state west of the Jordan River, within the boundaries of what would later become modern Israel.

Jerusalem and Jewish Settlements

For Jabotinsky, Jerusalem was the symbolic and spiritual heart of the Jewish homeland. Its centrality in Jewish history, religion, and culture made it an essential part of his vision for Greater Israel. He rejected any notion that Jerusalem could be divided or internationalized, as was proposed by several partition plans in the 1930s and 1940s. Jabotinsky believed that Jerusalem should be under full Jewish sovereignty, with the Jewish people having the right to build and settle freely throughout the city and its surrounding areas.

Jabotinsky's commitment to Jewish settlement was not limited to Jerusalem. He was also a strong advocate for Jewish settlement in the West Bank (known in biblical terms as Judea and Samaria). He believed that Jews had a right to reclaim and resettle these lands, which had been part of the ancient Jewish kingdoms. For

Jabotinsky, the establishment of Jewish settlements in these areas was a vital part of the broader Zionist project of reclaiming the entirety of Eretz Yisrael.

In contrast to the Labor Zionists, who focused on building collective farms (kibbutzim) and socialist communities in the coastal plains and northern regions of Palestine, Jabotinsky and the Revisionists promoted private enterprise and encouraged Jews to settle in all parts of the land, including the more rugged and sparsely populated areas like Judea and Samaria. He argued that Jewish presence in these areas was not only a matter of religious and historical significance but also a strategic necessity for the defense of the Jewish state.

While Jabotinsky passed away before the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, his ideas continued to influence the settlement movement in the decades that followed. Many of his followers, particularly those in the Irgun and later the Herut party (which eventually became part of the modern Likud party), saw the establishment of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem as the fulfillment of Jabotinsky's vision for Greater Israel.

Conclusion

Jabotinsky's vision for the territorial expansion of the Jewish state was far-reaching and uncompromising. He believed that the entire area of Mandatory Palestine, including both west and east of the Jordan River, belonged to the Jewish people, and he refused to accept any territorial division that would separate Transjordan from the rest of Palestine. His emphasis on the centrality of Jerusalem and the importance of Jewish settlement in places like the West Bank reflected his belief that the Jewish state should encompass the full historical and biblical Land of Israel.

Although Jabotinsky's vision of Greater Israel was not fully realized, his ideas left a lasting impact on Israeli political thought, particularly within the right-wing Revisionist Zionist movement. His emphasis on territorial maximalism and the importance of strategic security continues to resonate in contemporary Israeli politics, particularly in the ongoing debates over the future of the West Bank, Jerusalem, and Israel's borders.

IV. Jabotinsky's "Iron Wall" Doctrine

The Need for Military Strength

One of Ze'ev Jabotinsky's most influential and enduring contributions to Zionist ideology is encapsulated in his famous 1923 essay, "The Iron Wall (We and the Arabs)," in which he laid out his vision for the future of the Jewish state and its relationship with the Arab population. The "Iron Wall" doctrine became the foundation of Jabotinsky's belief in the necessity of military strength and defensible borders as the precondition for lasting peace in the region. His central argument was that peace with the Arabs could only be achieved once the Jewish state had demonstrated invincible strength—a strength so overwhelming that it would force the Arabs to abandon any hope of defeating the Zionist project militarily.

In the essay, Jabotinsky rejected the prevailing optimism of many Labor Zionists, who believed that the Arab population could be persuaded to accept the Jewish state through negotiation, cooperation, and economic development. Instead, Jabotinsky argued that Arab opposition to Zionism was both natural and unavoidable. He believed that no indigenous population would willingly agree to the mass immigration of another people and the establishment of a new political entity on their land. Therefore, he contended, any attempt to win Arab acceptance of the Zionist project in the early stages was doomed to fail.

Jabotinsky wrote:

"Every indigenous people will resist alien settlers as long as they see any hope of ridding themselves of the danger of foreign settlement. This is what the Arabs in Palestine are doing, and what they will persist in doing as long as they possess a gleam of hope that they can prevent Palestine from becoming the Land of Israel."

Jabotinsky's analysis was based on a realist understanding of human nature and political conflict. He believed that the Arabs, like any people, would not simply accept their displacement and the establishment of a new political order unless they were forced to do so. Thus, the only way to achieve peace with the Arab population was to create an "iron wall"—a metaphorical wall of Jewish military strength that would render the Jewish state impregnable and convince the Arabs that further resistance was futile.

For Jabotinsky, this “iron wall” was not just a temporary solution; it was the fundamental condition for the survival of the Jewish state. Without military superiority and secure borders, the Jewish state would be constantly vulnerable to external attacks and internal uprisings. Therefore, he insisted that the Zionist movement must prioritize the creation of a strong Jewish military force, capable of defending the state against any and all threats. Jabotinsky’s emphasis on military strength was later embodied in the creation of Jewish paramilitary organizations like the Irgun and, after the establishment of Israel, in the development of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

The Doctrine’s Emphasis on Defensible Borders

Jabotinsky’s “Iron Wall” doctrine also underscored the importance of defensible borders, particularly control over strategic territories that would provide the Jewish state with natural defensive barriers. In his view, geography played a critical role in ensuring the long-term security of the Jewish state. The Jordan River, in particular, was seen as an essential natural defense line that would protect Israel from potential invasions from the east.

The Jordan River was not just a physical boundary; it symbolized the idea that the Jewish state needed to be protected by a combination of natural geography and military fortifications. By controlling the Jordan River and other strategic territories, Jabotinsky believed that Israel could create a buffer zone that would make it more difficult for hostile forces to launch successful attacks against the Jewish state. This emphasis on defensible borders became a key component of Revisionist Zionism and later influenced Israeli security policy, particularly in the context of Israel’s control over the West Bank and the Jordan Valley.

Jabotinsky’s focus on military strength and defensible borders was rooted in his understanding of the geopolitical realities of the Middle East. Surrounded by hostile Arab nations and a largely unfriendly international community, the Jewish state, he argued, could not rely on diplomacy or external guarantees for its survival. Instead, it had to build its own self-sufficient defense infrastructure, capable of repelling any external threats and ensuring the security of its citizens.

Rejection of Compromise

At the heart of Jabotinsky's "Iron Wall" doctrine was his categorical rejection of compromise with the Arab population in the early stages of state-building. Jabotinsky did not believe that peaceful coexistence could be achieved through negotiation or diplomacy, at least not until the Jewish state had established itself as a powerful and secure entity. He argued that any attempt to reach a compromise with the Arabs before the establishment of a strong Jewish state would be premature and self-defeating.

Jabotinsky believed that Arab leaders would never voluntarily agree to the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine, no matter how generous or accommodating the Zionist movement might be. He saw Arab resistance to Zionism as inevitable and uncompromising, rooted in the natural desire of any people to maintain control over their land. Therefore, he viewed attempts at negotiation or compromise as naive and dangerous. In his view, the Arabs would interpret any willingness to compromise as a sign of weakness, and this would only encourage further resistance.

In his essay, Jabotinsky wrote:

"We must either suspend our settlement efforts or continue without paying attention to the mood of the natives. Settlement can thus develop under the protection of a force which is not dependent on the local population, behind an iron wall which they will be powerless to break down."

For Jabotinsky, the only way to establish a secure and sovereign Jewish state was through a policy of deterrence. He believed that the Jewish state had to be so strong that the Arabs would eventually accept its existence as a permanent and irreversible reality. Only after the Arabs had come to terms with the fact that the Jewish state could not be defeated or dismantled, Jabotinsky argued, would it be possible to begin a process of peaceful coexistence and negotiation. But until that point, he insisted, any talk of compromise or reconciliation was not only futile but counterproductive.

Jabotinsky's rejection of compromise was not based on a desire for perpetual conflict but on a pragmatic understanding of the political dynamics in Palestine. He believed that the balance of power had to be decisively in favor of the Jewish

state before any meaningful peace process could take place. Once the Jewish state had achieved military superiority and the Arabs had abandoned any hope of defeating it, Jabotinsky believed that a realistic peace agreement could be negotiated. However, until that point, he maintained that the only way to ensure the survival of the Jewish state was through force and deterrence.

Force and Deterrence as Essential for a Secure and Sovereign Jewish State

Jabotinsky's emphasis on force and deterrence was rooted in his belief that the Jewish state faced existential threats from its Arab neighbors. He argued that the Jewish people could not afford to rely on the goodwill of their adversaries or on international guarantees for their security. Instead, they had to build a self-reliant military force that could defend the state against any external or internal challenges.

In Jabotinsky's view, the use of military force was not only a matter of self-defense but also a way of establishing sovereignty. He believed that sovereignty required not just the formal declaration of a state but the ability to defend its borders and its population. Without a strong military, he argued, the Jewish state would be vulnerable to attacks, invasions, and uprisings, and its existence would be constantly threatened.

This focus on military strength and deterrence became one of the defining features of Revisionist Zionism and continued to influence Israeli security policy long after Jabotinsky's death. His belief that peace could only be achieved through strength laid the foundation for the security-first approach that has characterized Israeli defense policy for much of its modern history. The idea that Israel must always maintain a qualitative military edge over its neighbors and the emphasis on defensible borders are direct legacies of Jabotinsky's "Iron Wall" doctrine.

Conclusion

Ze'ev Jabotinsky's "Iron Wall" doctrine was a profound and influential contribution to Zionist thought, shaping the way Jewish leaders and policymakers approached the question of Arab resistance and the future security of the Jewish state. His belief that peace could only be achieved through the demonstration of overwhelming strength became a central tenet of his political ideology. The "Iron Wall" doctrine emphasized that the establishment and survival of the Jewish state

could not depend on negotiation or goodwill but had to be secured by military force, deterrence, and defensible borders.

Jabotinsky's assertion that compromise with Arab leaders was unrealistic during the early stages of state-building laid the groundwork for a realist and security-first approach to Israeli defense policy. His rejection of early negotiation was based on the belief that the Arabs would not accept the Zionist project until it became clear that the Jewish state was invulnerable to military defeat. By building an "iron wall" of military strength, Jabotinsky argued, the Jewish state could eventually create conditions under which peace and coexistence could be negotiated—only after the Arabs abandoned the hope of reversing Jewish sovereignty.

Even though Jabotinsky passed away before the establishment of Israel in 1948, his ideas lived on through his followers in the Revisionist Zionist movement, particularly in the Irgun and later the Herut and Likud parties. His doctrine heavily influenced Israel's military strategies, particularly the emphasis on maintaining a qualitative military edge over its Arab neighbors and securing defensible borders such as the Jordan River and Golan Heights. This legacy has continued to shape Israeli defense policy, from the Six-Day War in 1967 to contemporary security challenges.

In the context of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Jabotinsky's "Iron Wall" doctrine still resonates. The idea that strength and deterrence are prerequisites for peace remains a powerful force in Israeli political and military thought, particularly among right-wing parties and leaders. The policy of constructing physical barriers, such as the separation barrier in the West Bank, can be seen as a modern extension of Jabotinsky's vision of a literal and metaphorical "iron wall" to protect the Jewish state from external threats.

Jabotinsky's legacy, while controversial, has undeniably shaped the course of Israeli history. His insistence on the need for military power and strategic security as foundations for the Jewish state continues to influence Israeli policy decisions, making him one of the most significant Zionist thinkers of the 20th century. His "Iron Wall" doctrine remains a touchstone for debates on the balance between security and diplomacy in achieving lasting peace in the region.

V. Jabotinsky vs. Ben-Gurion: A Clash of Zionist Visions

The ideological clash between Ze'ev Jabotinsky and David Ben-Gurion represented two fundamentally different approaches to the Zionist project and the establishment of a Jewish state. While both men were committed to the goal of creating a secure homeland for the Jewish people in Palestine, their visions for how to achieve this differed significantly. Ben-Gurion's pragmatism and willingness to accept partition plans that divided the land between Jews and Arabs stood in stark contrast to Jabotinsky's uncompromising maximalist vision of a Jewish state encompassing all of Mandatory Palestine, both west and east of the Jordan River. These differences shaped the course of Zionist politics, and the legacy of this ideological battle continues to influence Israeli political thought today.

Ben-Gurion's Pragmatism

David Ben-Gurion, the leading figure of Labor Zionism, adopted a pragmatic approach to state-building that emphasized the need to secure international legitimacy and work within the political realities of the time. Unlike Jabotinsky, who rejected any territorial compromise, Ben-Gurion believed that the establishment of a small, viable Jewish state was more important than holding out for a larger state that might never materialize. His primary focus was on achieving statehood as soon as possible, even if that meant accepting less land than the full extent of the historical and biblical Land of Israel.

Ben-Gurion was a realist in the sense that he recognized the political and demographic challenges facing the Zionist movement. He understood that the Arabs living in Palestine were deeply opposed to the establishment of a Jewish state and that Britain, which held the mandate over Palestine, was balancing conflicting promises to both Jews and Arabs. In light of these challenges, Ben-Gurion believed that the Zionist movement had to be flexible and willing to make concessions in order to secure a Jewish homeland that could serve as a refuge for Jews fleeing persecution in Europe.

Willingness to Accept Partition

One of the key differences between Ben-Gurion and Jabotinsky was their respective views on partition plans, which sought to divide Palestine between a

Jewish and an Arab state. Ben-Gurion was willing to accept these plans as a necessary compromise to achieve Jewish sovereignty, even if the borders proposed by the British and later the United Nations did not include all of the land that many Zionists had hoped for.

For example, in 1937, the Peel Commission, appointed by the British government to address the growing conflict between Jews and Arabs in Palestine, proposed a partition plan that would create a small Jewish state in the northern coastal region of Palestine, while the majority of the land, including Jerusalem, would become part of an Arab state. The Jewish state proposed by the Peel Commission was far smaller than what the Zionist movement had envisioned, but Ben-Gurion was willing to consider it because it offered the possibility of immediate statehood.

Ben-Gurion famously said in response to the Peel Commission:

"The acceptance of partition does not forfeit our claim to the whole land. But we must take what is offered now. After we have become a strong force, we shall expand in the entire country."

This statement encapsulated Ben-Gurion's pragmatic approach. He understood that the immediate priority was to establish a Jewish state, even if it was smaller than desired. Once the state was established, Ben-Gurion believed, it could serve as a base from which the Jewish people could eventually expand and secure more territory.

In 1947, when the United Nations proposed another partition plan, which would divide Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state with Jerusalem as an international zone, Ben-Gurion again supported the plan. Although the borders of the proposed Jewish state did not include Jerusalem or the entirety of the West Bank, Ben-Gurion viewed the plan as the best available option for achieving Jewish sovereignty. His acceptance of the UN Partition Plan paved the way for the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948.

Labor Zionists' Focus on Statehood Over Territory

The Labor Zionist movement, led by Ben-Gurion, prioritized the establishment of a functioning Jewish state over the maximalist territorial ambitions of Jabotinsky and his followers. Labor Zionists believed that the immediate goal should be to

create a Jewish state that could serve as a safe haven for Jews fleeing persecution in Europe and as a platform for building a strong, independent society. Once this goal was achieved, the Jewish state could focus on expanding its borders and securing the rest of the Land of Israel through diplomatic means or military strength if necessary.

Labor Zionists also placed a heavy emphasis on agriculture, socialist principles, and the kibbutz movement, which sought to establish collective farming communities that would form the backbone of the new Jewish society. This focus on building the infrastructure of the state, rather than holding out for a larger territory, reflected Ben-Gurion's pragmatic belief that the Jewish people needed a secure base from which to build their future.

Jabotinsky's Opposition to Partition Plans

In contrast to Ben-Gurion's pragmatism, Jabotinsky was a fierce opponent of any partition plan that divided Palestine between Jews and Arabs. He believed that the Jewish state should encompass all of Mandatory Palestine, including both the area west of the Jordan River (modern-day Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza) and the area east of the Jordan River (modern-day Jordan). For Jabotinsky, the partition of Palestine was not only unacceptable but a betrayal of the Zionist dream and the historical right of the Jewish people to the entirety of the Land of Israel.

Rejection of the Peel Commission (1937)

Jabotinsky's opposition to the Peel Commission in 1937 was rooted in his belief that the borders of the Jewish state should not be limited by external powers, whether British or Arab. The Peel Commission's proposal to create a small Jewish state in part of northern Palestine, while leaving most of the land to an Arab state, was seen by Jabotinsky as a dangerous compromise that would leave the Jewish state vulnerable and incomplete. He argued that the Jewish people had a historic right to the entirety of Palestine and that any partition plan would undermine the long-term security and viability of the Jewish state.

Jabotinsky's opposition to the Peel Commission was not just about territory; it was also about principle. He believed that accepting partition would set a dangerous precedent, signaling to both the Arabs and the British that the Jewish

people were willing to compromise on their core national aspirations. Instead, Jabotinsky argued that the Zionist movement should focus on building its military strength and establishing defensible borders, rather than settling for a small, fragmented state.

Rejection of the UN Partition Plan (1947)

Jabotinsky's rejection of partition extended to the United Nations Partition Plan of 1947, which sought to divide Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state. Although Jabotinsky had died in 1940, his followers in the Revisionist Zionist movement, including members of the Irgun and later the Herut party (which eventually became the Likud party), continued to oppose partition on the grounds that it did not provide the Jewish people with their full historical and territorial rights.

The Revisionist Zionists, following Jabotinsky's ideology, believed that the Jewish state should not be restricted to narrow borders and that the Jewish people should continue to fight for control over the entirety of Palestine. They rejected the idea of an internationalized Jerusalem and argued that the West Bank (then known as Judea and Samaria) was an integral part of the Jewish homeland. For Jabotinsky and his followers, any attempt to partition the land was a temporary solution that failed to address the long-term aspirations of the Jewish people.

Belief in Future Expansion

While Jabotinsky rejected the immediate acceptance of partition, he also believed that the Jewish state should be expansionist in the long term. He argued that future generations of Jews would continue to expand the borders of the state, both through military means and through diplomatic efforts. Jabotinsky's vision of the "Greater Israel" was not limited to the borders drawn by the British or the United Nations; he believed that the Jewish state should eventually encompass all of the territory promised to the Jewish people in the Bible, including the land east of the Jordan River.

For Jabotinsky, the establishment of a Jewish state was only the first step in a much larger project. He believed that future generations of Jews would have the strength and the will to expand the borders of the state and secure the entirety of Eretz Yisrael. This belief in future expansion was a core tenet of Revisionist

Zionism and continues to influence right-wing Israeli politics today, particularly in the context of settlement expansion in the West Bank and the ongoing debate over the future borders of Israel.

Conclusion

The ideological clash between Jabotinsky and Ben-Gurion was a defining moment in the history of the Zionist movement. While Ben-Gurion's pragmatism and willingness to accept partition led to the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, Jabotinsky's uncompromising vision of a Greater Israel continued to resonate with many Zionists who believed that the Jewish state should encompass all of Mandatory Palestine. Jabotinsky's refusal to accept territorial compromises and his belief in military strength and future expansion left a lasting legacy that continues to shape Israeli politics and policy to this day, particularly within the right-wing and settler movements. The debate between pragmatism and maximalism remains central to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the ongoing struggle to define the borders of the Jewish state.

VI. Jabotinsky's Legacy: Influence on Modern Israeli Politics

The ideological contributions of Ze'ev Jabotinsky have had a profound and enduring impact on modern Israeli politics, particularly within the right-wing political sphere. His ideas on territorial sovereignty, military strength, and the uncompromising nature of the Zionist project have continued to shape the policies and strategies of successive Israeli governments. Jabotinsky's Revisionist Zionism—characterized by a commitment to a Greater Israel and the belief in force and deterrence as necessary preconditions for peace—has directly influenced the creation of political parties like Herut and Likud, which have played central roles in Israeli politics since the state's founding.

The Revisionist Zionist Influence

Jabotinsky's influence can be traced most clearly to the Revisionist Zionist movement, which he founded in the 1920s as a reaction to the pragmatic approach of Labor Zionism. Revisionist Zionism advocated for a maximalist territorial vision of a Jewish state that encompassed all of Mandatory Palestine—both west and east of the Jordan River—and rejected the idea of compromising

on this vision in order to achieve immediate statehood. Jabotinsky's followers, who continued to advance his ideas after his death in 1940, went on to form some of the most significant political movements in Israeli history.

One of the key developments following Jabotinsky's death was the formation of the Herut party in 1948, led by Menachem Begin, a close disciple of Jabotinsky. Herut, which means "freedom" in Hebrew, was established by veterans of the Irgun, the underground Jewish paramilitary organization that had fought against British control in Palestine and was deeply influenced by Jabotinsky's ideas on the need for Jewish military strength and territorial sovereignty.

Herut became the political embodiment of Jabotinsky's vision of a Greater Israel, rejecting the partition plans that had led to the creation of the State of Israel within limited borders and advocating for the expansion of Israeli control over the West Bank and other territories that had been part of historical and biblical Israel. The party's uncompromising stance on territorial issues and its focus on Jewish self-defense resonated with many Israelis, particularly in the aftermath of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, when the young state of Israel found itself surrounded by hostile neighbors.

From Herut to Likud: The Rise of Menachem Begin

Herut's transformation into Likud, Israel's leading right-wing party, marked a significant moment in Israeli politics. In 1973, Herut joined with several other right-wing and centrist parties to form the Likud bloc, a political alliance that aimed to challenge the dominance of the Labor Party, which had governed Israel since its founding. The creation of Likud represented the culmination of Jabotinsky's political vision, as it brought the principles of Revisionist Zionism into the mainstream of Israeli politics.

In 1977, Menachem Begin became the first Likud prime minister, marking a dramatic shift in Israeli political power. Begin's election was a watershed moment in Israeli history, as it signaled the rise of the right-wing and the increasing influence of Jabotinsky's ideas on government policy. As prime minister, Begin implemented several of Jabotinsky's key ideas, particularly regarding territorial expansion and the refusal to compromise on Jewish sovereignty over disputed areas.

One of Begin's most significant moves was the formal annexation of East Jerusalem in 1980, following Israel's capture of the city during the Six-Day War of 1967. This action reflected Jabotinsky's belief that Jerusalem should remain undivided and under full Jewish control. Begin also expanded Jewish settlements in the West Bank (referred to as Judea and Samaria in biblical terms), continuing the Revisionist Zionist belief that the West Bank was an integral part of the Jewish homeland.

While Begin made peace with Egypt in 1979 through the Camp David Accords, returning the Sinai Peninsula in exchange for peace, this move was an exception to Jabotinsky's maximalist territorial vision. Begin justified the decision by arguing that the Sinai was not part of the historical Land of Israel and that peace with Egypt, the most powerful Arab state at the time, was strategically essential. However, on issues relating to the West Bank and Jerusalem, Begin remained committed to Jabotinsky's principles of Jewish sovereignty and military deterrence.

Settlements and the West Bank

The legacy of Jabotinsky's territorial vision is perhaps most visible in Israel's ongoing settlement policies in the West Bank. Since Israel's capture of the West Bank during the Six-Day War in 1967, successive right-wing governments, particularly those led by Likud, have pursued a policy of expanding Jewish settlements in the region. This policy is directly rooted in Jabotinsky's belief that the West Bank (Judea and Samaria) is an integral part of the biblical Land of Israel and should be under permanent Jewish control.

The expansion of settlements in the West Bank has been a contentious issue both within Israel and internationally. For the Israeli right, the settlement movement is seen as a fulfillment of Zionist aspirations, a way to secure the Jewish state's borders, and to ensure that the West Bank remains part of Israel in any future peace negotiations. For Jabotinsky's ideological heirs, ceding the West Bank to the Palestinians in exchange for peace would be a betrayal of the Zionist mission to reclaim the entirety of the Land of Israel.

Jabotinsky's influence on this policy can be seen in the refusal to cede territory in peace negotiations, a stance that has shaped the political discourse around the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Right-wing Israeli politicians, particularly those in the

Likud party, have consistently argued that Israel cannot afford to withdraw from the West Bank, as doing so would create security vulnerabilities and undermine the state's territorial integrity. This position reflects Jabotinsky's belief that concessions on territory weaken the Jewish state and that the borders of Israel must be determined by Jewish sovereignty rather than by external pressure or negotiation.

Military Doctrine and Security

Jabotinsky's "Iron Wall" doctrine, which emphasized the need for military deterrence as a precondition for peace, continues to shape Israeli security policy to this day. The central tenet of this doctrine is that peace with Israel's neighbors, particularly the Arab states and the Palestinians, can only be achieved once Israel has demonstrated its military invincibility. According to Jabotinsky's theory, the Arab world would only accept Israel's existence once it became clear that the Jewish state could not be defeated through military means.

This emphasis on military strength and deterrence has been a cornerstone of Israeli defense policy since the state's founding. Israel's military strategies, particularly its commitment to maintaining a qualitative military edge over its neighbors, are direct reflections of Jabotinsky's belief in the necessity of an "iron wall" to protect the Jewish state. The development of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) as one of the most powerful and technologically advanced militaries in the world is a testament to the enduring influence of Jabotinsky's security doctrine.

Israeli leaders have consistently invoked Jabotinsky's ideas when justifying defensive actions and military operations aimed at securing the state's borders. The construction of the security barrier (or separation wall) between Israel and the West Bank is often seen as a modern-day manifestation of the "iron wall" concept—an attempt to create a physical barrier that prevents attacks and enhances Israel's ability to control its security environment.

Continuing Debate: Compromise vs. Sovereignty

Within Israel, there is an ongoing debate between those who advocate for compromise in the pursuit of peace and those who adhere to Jabotinsky's more uncompromising vision of territorial sovereignty and military strength. This

debate is central to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the broader question of Israel's future borders.

On one side of the debate are those who, like Ben-Gurion, believe that peace and security can be achieved through negotiation and territorial compromise. These advocates argue that Israel should be willing to make concessions, particularly in the West Bank, in exchange for a peace agreement with the Palestinians that would end the conflict and secure Israel's long-term future as a Jewish and democratic state.

On the other side are those who follow Jabotinsky's legacy, arguing that territorial concessions are dangerous and that Israel must maintain control over strategic territories like the West Bank to ensure its security. These advocates believe that military strength and the refusal to cede territory are the only ways to protect Israel from its adversaries and that any compromise would lead to greater insecurity and further conflict.

Conclusion

Ze'ev Jabotinsky's legacy has had a profound and lasting impact on modern Israeli politics, particularly in the areas of territorial expansion, settlement policy, and military doctrine. His Revisionist Zionist ideas, which rejected partition and emphasized the importance of a Greater Israel, continue to influence right-wing parties like Likud and shape the political discourse around the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The tension between Jabotinsky's uncompromising vision of sovereignty and the pragmatism of those who advocate for peace through compromise remains a central feature of Israeli political life, and the debate over territory, security, and sovereignty will likely continue to define the future of Israel for generations to come.

VII. Conclusion: Jabotinsky's Enduring Influence on Zionism

Reflection on Jabotinsky's Vision

Ze'ev Jabotinsky's vision of a Greater Israel, rooted in his belief in military strength, self-determination, and territorial integrity, remains a powerful force in Israeli political discourse today. Jabotinsky saw the establishment of a Jewish

state not only as a moral and historical necessity but as an act of national survival in a hostile environment. His advocacy for an uncompromising defense of the Jewish state's borders and the rejection of territorial concessions set him apart from more moderate Zionist leaders. Even though Jabotinsky died before the creation of the State of Israel, his ideas continue to influence Israeli politics, particularly within the right-wing and nationalist movements.

Jabotinsky's vision of a Jewish state that extended beyond the borders of Mandatory Palestine, including both sides of the Jordan River, reflects his belief that the Jewish people had an inalienable right to the biblical land of Israel. His insistence on the necessity of building an "Iron Wall"—a metaphor for the overwhelming military strength and deterrence required to secure peace—continues to be echoed in Israeli security policies. For Jabotinsky, the survival and security of the Jewish state were paramount, and his vision was one where force and self-defense were crucial to establishing and maintaining sovereignty.

Today, Jabotinsky's ideas on the importance of self-determination, the refusal to compromise on territorial integrity, and the need for strong defense capabilities continue to resonate, especially in the context of ongoing debates about Israel's future borders, the settlement movement, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. His ideological framework offers a lens through which to understand much of modern Israeli policy, particularly regarding territorial expansion, military doctrine, and the nation's complex security environment.

Lasting Legacy

Although Jabotinsky's maximalist territorial vision—which included the idea of a Jewish state stretching across all of Palestine and Transjordan—was never fully realized, his ideas laid the groundwork for much of modern Israeli right-wing politics. Parties like Herut and Likud, which emerged from Jabotinsky's Revisionist Zionist movement, have been instrumental in shaping Israeli policy on issues of territory, security, and national identity.

The impact of Jabotinsky's legacy can be seen in several key areas of Israeli politics:

1. Territorial Sovereignty and Settlements: His belief in the inalienable right of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel, particularly the West Bank (Judea

and Samaria), has been a driving force behind the settlement movement. The expansion of Jewish settlements in the West Bank is a direct reflection of Jabotinsky's conviction that Israel's borders should encompass as much of the biblical land as possible, and that ceding territory would weaken the Jewish state both morally and strategically.

2. Right-Wing Politics and Likud: Jabotinsky's Revisionist Zionism paved the way for the rise of right-wing parties like Likud, which have dominated Israeli politics for much of the country's modern history. Leaders like Menachem Begin and Benjamin Netanyahu have drawn on Jabotinsky's ideas, particularly his emphasis on strong defense policies and the rejection of territorial concessions, as they navigated Israel's complex geopolitical challenges.
3. Military Doctrine: Jabotinsky's "Iron Wall" doctrine, which posits that peace can only be achieved once Israel's enemies have been convinced that the Jewish state is militarily invincible, remains a cornerstone of Israeli security policy. The belief that military deterrence is key to long-term peace has influenced how Israel approaches its defense strategy, particularly in its relationships with neighboring Arab states and the Palestinians.
4. Jewish Self-Determination: Jabotinsky's insistence that the Jewish people must control their own destiny, free from the influence or dictates of external powers, is central to Israeli nationalism today. His vision of self-determination continues to resonate, particularly among those who believe that Israel must prioritize its own security and interests over international pressure or diplomatic initiatives.

While Jabotinsky's vision of Greater Israel was never fully realized—Israel did not expand to include Transjordan, and compromises were made in the form of peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan—his ideas continue to influence the right-wing vision of Israel's future. The tension between Jabotinsky's uncompromising approach to territorial sovereignty and the pragmatic necessity of compromise remains a defining feature of Israeli politics.

Relevance Today

Jabotinsky's vision still resonates in several key areas of modern Israeli society, most notably in the settlement movement and the ongoing debate over national security policies. The expansion of settlements in the West Bank—a policy that has been consistently supported by right-wing governments—is a continuation of Jabotinsky's belief that the Jewish people have the right to settle in all parts of the biblical land. This view is particularly evident among settler leaders and political factions who see the West Bank as an integral part of the Jewish homeland, not just a bargaining chip in peace negotiations.

In terms of national security, Jabotinsky's ideas continue to influence how Israeli leaders approach issues of deterrence, defense, and peace negotiations. The idea that Israel must remain militarily strong and capable of defending itself without relying on international guarantees has shaped Israeli policy toward its neighbors, particularly in the face of ongoing threats from groups like Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran. The construction of security barriers, the development of advanced military technologies, and the maintenance of Israel's qualitative military edge are all reflections of Jabotinsky's legacy in Israel's national security doctrine.

The ongoing tension between the desire for peace and the need for territorial expansion remains one of the central issues in Israeli politics. While some Israeli leaders and factions, particularly on the left, advocate for territorial compromise as a means of achieving peace with the Palestinians, others continue to draw on Jabotinsky's belief that territorial concessions weaken the Jewish state and that the Jewish people should not give up land that is rightfully theirs. This debate reflects the broader struggle within Israeli society between pragmatism and ideology, between those who seek a negotiated settlement to the conflict and those who believe in retaining the entirety of the land for future generations.

Conclusion

Ze'ev Jabotinsky's legacy is deeply embedded in the fabric of modern Israeli politics. His vision of a Greater Israel, combined with his emphasis on military strength, territorial integrity, and self-determination, continues to shape the policies and strategies of Israel's right-wing parties and national security establishment. While Jabotinsky's maximalist vision was never fully realized, his

ideas laid the foundation for the settlement movement, the rise of Likud, and Israel's enduring focus on military deterrence as a means of achieving peace.

Jabotinsky's relevance today can be seen in the ongoing debates over the future of the West Bank, the question of territorial compromise, and the role of military strength in securing Israel's borders. As Israel continues to navigate its complex geopolitical landscape, Jabotinsky's ideas remain a touchstone for those who believe that Israel must be strong, independent, and uncompromising in the defense of its territory and sovereignty.

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These references provide a comprehensive understanding of Ze'ev Jabotinsky's ideological contributions and their impact on modern Israeli politics, security policies, and territorial debates.

