



Evidently, the location of the West Bank entails several economic difficulties and political hazards which will have to be tackled by any future Palestinian state consisting of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. On one side the two territories are separated by over 60 kilometers of "Israeli" land, while on the other, Jordan lies as the only gateway for their vital connections with the rest of the Middle East. The political implications of both facts are significant.

Area

The total land area of mandatory Palestine was 26,192 square kilometers. The United Nations Resolution No 181 of 1947 demanded the partition of that area into two political entities, one Arab occupying 43%, and the other Jewish occupying 56.5% of the total area.* However, Israel was able to occupy a wider area during the course of the 1948 war. Several months later, Israel was able to reach an agreement with Jordan, which was then the "custodian" of West Bank land and people, whereby the former stripped the West Bank of all its remaining coastal plains, estimated at an area of 450 km²¹. The area surrendered in this process was so rich in water resources and of such a topography that it would have increased irrigated farming in the West Bank by four times had it not been lost. Instead, it was left with a strikingly mountainous topography which, as we shall see later, may prove to be the most serious constraint for the development of West Bank agriculture.

1. This agreement was reached in the famous Armistice Treaty between the two governments in 1949 on the island of Rhodes.

* The rest was to be left under U N mandate.