

**Saudi Arabia's Attitude Towards
The Question Of Palestine (1932-1975)**

Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial
fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the degree

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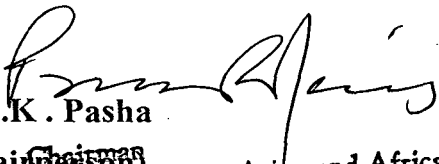
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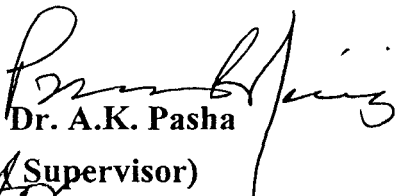
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We recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the examiners.


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Dedicated to
My Parents

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION
THE EVOLUTION OF SAUDI FOREIGN POLICY

The study of Saudi involvement in the question of Palestine demands considerable efforts due to a number of reasons. The limited significance of the state during its early years, dependency on Western economic assistance, the overwhelming predominance of Britain in the area and traditional outlook in administration made the state largely unnoticed. Saudi Arabia's main link with the outside world was due to the location of two holiest Islamic pilgrim centres-- Mecca and Medina: every year it hosts millions of pilgrims from all over the world to the Holy Places.

Although Saudi Arabia suffered political isolation during its early period, today it is a major international actor with efficient economic potentiality. As its oil production began to grow gradually, its revenue correspondingly increased and the Kingdom embarked on major economic development process.

The foremost factor that has a significant say in Saudi politics is the religion. Islam has a pervasive influence on the life of each Saudi citizen and is the fundamental driving force in most phases of his culture. It is no exaggeration to state that the Saudi perception of politics, ethics, law and society, indeed, their view of the society indelibly and inescapably molded by Islam.

Mecca's centrality in the Islamic World is attested by the annual Hajj. The Saudi rulers prefer to call themselves as the 'Custodian of the Holy Mosques'. Saudi rulers deeply believe that they are shouldering the responsibility of caring and protection of Harem al Sherif Mosque in Mecca and the Prophet Mohammed's Mosque and tomb in Medina. The traditional bondage between Islam and Politics could be visible in Saudi Politics since there is no separate entity of Church and State. In Saudi Arabia the constitution and the formal legal system are based on the Sharia interpreted by the clergy. Thus the head of the State becomes the spiritual leader or Imam also. Due to the inseparable link between Church and State in Saudi Arabia, the Chief of State derives his authority from being simultaneously the Imam (the spiritual leader of the faithful and protector of Holy Places), and the Malik (king).¹ The Ulema or religious scholars are the guardian of Islam and Islamic values throughout the world. As the involvement of religion in Saudi socio-political arena is well-known. The Ulema constitutes one of the main decision making authority of the state. They are influential in framing social values, choosing political agenda and interpreting the sacred texts. They have been assimilated into government functionaries also. Many of Saudi ministries are their privileged posts. Thus the Ministry of Education, Justice, Pilgrimage Affairs and Religious Endowments (Waqf) are the virtual monopoly of Saudi Ulema. They are used to disseminate public awareness on internal and external matters through the

¹ Lipski, George., Saudi Arabia, Its People, Its Society and Culture. (New Haven :Haraf, Survey of World Culture, 1959) p.163

Friday Sermons and other religious occasions. Thus the Ulema exerts a decisive say in internal and external affairs of the state. In this scenario to appreciate the cause of Saudi political process, it is imperative to understand the role which Islam plays in Saudi Arabia. So one could not neglect the Islamic factor in making the behavioral approach of Saudi rulers towards Palestine.

Even though Mecca enjoyed its position as the religious centre of Islam, the political centre of Muslim World was moved from Mecca to Damascus during the Umayyad period (661—750) and then to Baghdad during the Abbasid period (750—1258). Later, the Ottoman Empire obtained the prestige as the centre of Islamic Caliphate. Meanwhile, Mecca and surrounding areas remained only as religious centre and isolated from the socio—political changes witnessed by the other parts of the Arab and non-Arab World.

It was King Abdul Aziz who consolidated and unified the Arabian Peninsula into a single entity and laid foundation for a strong economic and political centre. The capacity of the House of Saud rests on its maintenance of the alliance made two centuries ago between the reformist Sheikh Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahab and the bedouin Chief Muhammad Ibn Saud. Abdul Wahab's doctrines were based on return to the basic principles of Islam as preached by Prophet Muhammad and excluded all the marks of pre- Islamic culture, rituals and beliefs which Muslims had regarded as a part of Islam. According to Abdul Wahab, the Holy Quran, Hadith (the Traditions of Prophet Muhammad), were acceptable as bases of the

Faith. He preached for the pristine idea of monotheism and considered all signs of polytheism as heretical, worse than ignorance and false religion. The convergence of Washbasin and the military power of the Al Saud family was proven successful in developing the vast barren peninsula into a full-fledged kingdom based on puritanical religious values was an epoch making event in Arab- Islamic history. This overwhelming Islamic identity of the Kingdom has its signs on the policies and principles adopted by King Ibn Saud. Although Wahabism preached the unity and fraternity of the community, the ideology was unable to organize the area into a single political or administrative unit.

The root of the Saudi dynasty goes back to the eighteenth century, to the alliance reached between Prince Muhammad bin Saud of Diriyah and Sheikh Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahab (1703—92) of Ayaina in Nejd

. Abdul Wahab, following the prosecution and humiliation from Nejd, was forced to leave his town and took asylum at al-Diriyah, attracted by the pristine preaching of Abdul Wahab, Prince Mohammed Ibn Saud reached an agreement with him, that they would together bring the Arabs back to the pristine faith and ideas of Islam. The course of time proved the maturity of the agreement. Within sixty years the concerted efforts of Ibn Saud and Abdul Wahab achieved the objectives of the agreement signed in 1744. Ibn Saud and after him his son Abdul Aziz extended the border of their domain over all Najd. By this time the Turkish Empire, aware of the disturbances unleashed by the House of Saud, sent

Mohammed Ali Pasha, Viceroy of Egypt, with a mission to subjugate the emerging power of the Arabian peninsula. He regained the control of Hijaz, which had been captured by Ibn Saud in 1803, and freed the holiest Mosque from the clutches of Ibn Saud. In the following battles, the Ottomans retook the rule of Riyadh in 1818 and the dynasty remained in disarray.

In the second phase of the consolidation of the country, Turki Ibn Saud assumed the Amirship from 1803 to 1814 and recaptured Riyadh and tacitly acknowledged the suzerainty of Mohammed Ali Pasha. Faisal, the then ruler, was forced to vacate the power in 1838, when Mohammed Ali sent a military cordon to Najd. The internal feuds among Turki's successors weakened the dynasty. Khalid Ibn Saud, raised the flag of revolt and finally Faisal had to leave the power. Khalid received the Egyptian backing in his rebellion against Faisal. Perceiving this as the best opportunity, Mohammed Ibn Rashid, the tribal leader of the Shammar, who captured Al-Hasa and forced Khalid to take refuge in Hijaz. Ibn Rashid captured Najd and Riyadh that eventually caused to the exile of Abdul Rahman Ibn Faisal Ibn Saud to Rub' al Khali, the Great Waste, accompanied by the Murra tribe. Later they moved to Bahrain and then Kuwait.

It was during the beginning of the last century that a new chapter in the history of the consolidation of the Saudi dynasty started. The emergence of Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud who reclaimed Riyadh from his archrival Ibn Rashid. Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud reached in Riyadh in January 1902 and overpowered Rashid's soldiers. Ibn Saud

brought his father Abdul Rahman back from Kuwait and awarded the administration of Riyadh, since he was the legal ruler of Riyadh. But Abdul Rahman decided to install Abdul Aziz in his place and he accepted the offer and became the ruler of Riyadh. By the fall of 1904, Ibn Saud extended his supremacy over the entire Nejd. Ibn Rashid took refuge at Jabal Shammar in northern Nejd and attempted to regroup his men for a retaliation with the support of the Turks.

The death of al Rashid in 1906 and Ibn Saud's successful military campaigns led him to accomplish complete control over Nejd, and by 1913 he extended his control to al-Hasa. Further, the treaty concluded in 1916 with Britain recognized him as the sole ruler of Najd and al-Hasa and by the end of 1925 he captured Azir, Hail, and Taif, thereby acknowledging his supremacy over the entire Arabian peninsula except Yemen far to the South of 'Grate Waste' or 'Empty Quarter' (Rub' al Khali).

The barren land and harsh climate condition with the extreme temperature range from 50⁰ C in summer to severe frosts and week long snow fall in winter and high humidity across the coast make the land of Saudi Arabia unattractive for habitation. The Rub' al Khali laying to the south of Najd protects the region from outside aggression. It was only in 1930, the Europeans entered in this 'Great Waste' area.

The Bedouin or nomadic life system has been the another characteristic of Saudi Arabia, Agriculture is negligible. As late as 1978, agriculture contributed only 2.4 % of the Goss Domestic Product².

The significance of the Bedouin population on the social formation of Saudi Arabia is well- confirmed. They are unsettled and cattle is their main source of income, so that they are occupied with searching for pastures and cattle feeding . Succinctly to say, over the present ruling elite, the al- Saud descents from one of the major Bedouin tribal confederation of Nejd- the Anazah, a kinship and affinity of which they are conscious and proud³. The survival of the House of Saud is largely dependent on the consents of Bedouins. The Kingdom spends a large share of its revenue to buy the support of nomads by granting them various subsidies and other amenities.

Modeled on the pristine Islamic state of the Caliphate, Saudi Arabia proclaimed Quran as its constitution and Islamic law or Sharia as its source of law. Moreover the Kingdom exerted much effort to project a distinct international relations based on the concept of Umma (the community). Thus, the kingdom has always been trying to strike a difference with other ideologies like socialism and Nasserism. Although during its last years of consolidation and the Arab revolt of 1916, the Saudis favored the Arab nationalism, they rejected it later on the argument that

² Korani, Bahgat., 'Defending the Faith, The Foreign Policy of Saudi Arabia', in Korani, Bahgat,(ed),The Foreign Policy Of The Arab States,(Colorado: Westview Press, 1984),p.244

³ Ibid ,p.246

Islam doesn't recognize such kind of differentiation and projected themselves as opposing any idea that creates division in the ranks of Muslims. In broader sense, the annual sermon during the season of Hajj, the 'Custodian of Holy Sanctuaries' calls for the unity and the solidarity of the community transcending national, ethnical, linguistic and economic borders. Moreover, the Kingdom portrayed Socialism and Zionism as the enemies of the all Muslims and emphasized the pan-Islamic dimension of the Palestine- Israel issue.

Further, to get acknowledged its pan -Islamic credentials, the Kingdom repeatedly chanted the mantra of emancipation of Jerusalem from the Zionist occupiers.. The Saudi condemnation of Socialism is a well established fact. It perceived the idea of Socialism as a potential threat to the stability of the Kingdom. The Socialist repercussion in many parts of the Arab world and a possible inclination of nationalism and anti-colonialism towards the camp of Socialism stirred the feeling of insecurity in Saudi regime. This was clearly evident in its hesitance to open diplomatic relation with Soviet bloc. It must read in the pretext that Saudi Arabia was a founder member of the non aligned movement and had diplomatic relations with all major powers of the opposite bloc.⁴

The hidden fact behind this "no- business" with Soviet bloc was the fear of Communist radicalism in Arab world and a tacit agreement with the West to accomplish its stability and integrity.

⁴ Ibid, p.254.

To understand the attitude of Saudi Arabia towards Palestine, it is imperative to look into the various aspects which have inseparable associations with its developments. The domestic conditions, values and perception of policy makers and transnational linkage of the state, and above all the system itself play a definite role in its behavior.

To pursue his expansionist aims and to ensure effective control over the conquered areas, Abdul Aziz sought a way of unifying his forces in a structure which would cut across tribal alliance and create a commitment to a common leader and common objectives. This led him to create the Ikhwan Movement. Using the members of the Ikhwan, Ibn Saud converted a substantial members of nomads into agricultural communities with land ownership.

The second major factor in Saudi behavior is the Kingdom's strong adherence to the traditional Arabism. It aspired for the freedom of Arab land from its colonial masters.

The advent of Western technology and European military dominance raised the question of protecting the traditional Arab values and culture from the domination of the Western civilization. The espousal of many modern techniques by Muhammad Ali, the Viceroy of Egypt, virtually brought Egypt into predicaments and the nationalist sentiments began to spread over the neighboring Arab states also.

Nourished and nurtured by the eminent Arab nationalist thinkers like Jamal al- Din Afghani, Rashid Ridha and Muhammad Abdu, the discourse of nationalism trespassed the border of Egypt and reached into the wider arena of the Arabian Peninsula . The concept and contribution rendered by the Egyptian scholars were always preoccupied with the larger and egalitarian Islamic belief that human race is a single entity and the community of believers should unite for the betterment of the society and defend the land from aggressors. Along with the ardent enunciation for religious reforms and need for a disciplined community, there were other nationalist groups-Constitutional Nationalists- arguing for the freedom from the restrictions imposed by colonial powers on Egypt. With a coordinated effort of these religious reformists and Constitutional Nationalists, Arab nationalism reached its full –swing and within the next seventy years Egypt dislodged the British from the Arab land.

Historically, the Arab nationalism emerged into a considerable level in the latter part of the 19th century as a movement for autonomy from the Ottoman Empire. The national aspiration along with the presence of colonial powers provided conducive condition for its growth. There were a number of factors that helped to create a common aspiration for independence and sovereignty in the Arab world. Although language and history were the primary elements constituting the Arab nation, there are other elements--religion, geographical environment, racial stock and other common national interests which encouraged the feeling of nationalism.

As a member of the Arab League Saudi Arabia had vehemently opposed any ceding of Arab land to any outside interventionists and therefore pitted against the creation of a Jewish nation in the Arab land and the forced expulsion of Palestinians from their home. Saudi Arabia emphasized the need for Arab unity, not in a federal state system but as a confederation of like-minded independent Arab states co-operating to achieve common goals. By using this ideology the House of Saud attempted to enhance its prestige and power. Thus Saudi Arabia stood for achieving the goal of sovereignty and independence of the Arab states.

The fall of the Ottoman Empire and the colonial intervention in Arab World created a number of Independent states with distinct political systems. It was the colonial interest, that created many Arab states enthroning Sheikhs and Kings loyal and subservient to them.

Sykes- Picot Agreement of 1916 between France and England and McMahon— Sheriff Hussein Agreement between England and the Sheriff of Mecca were the two important events

that cut the Arab land into different states. Sykes- Picot Agreement was a clandestine pact to part and share the land of Ottoman Empire among Britain , France and Russia after the end of First World War. The provisions of the pact signed by Mark Sykes, senior British diplomat and Francois Geroges Picot, a former French Counsel in Beirut, was a clear colonial design to divide Iraq and Syria into spheres of British and French influence, leaving only some part of

Palestine to some form of international administration. By the agreement Britain and France planned to assume direct control of the most of the fertile land of the Arab whereas the Arab got some kind of independence only in most impoverished and arid parts of Arabian Peninsula.

Sheriff Hussein , A member of the clan of Hashim to which the Prophet belonged and the official guarenteers of the Holy Places of Mecca and Medina appointed by Ottoman Empire, was eager to retain as mush autonomy as possible. During the period of First World War, the British interest in Arabian Peninsula increased due to the alignment of Ottoman Empire with the Axis Power. The British were hopeful that Hussein would be inspired by their promise of more autonomy to his domain, to revolt against Turks that would eventually weaken the power of the Axis in the area. Thus London promised the installation of an Islamic Caliphate in Mecca under Sheriff Hussein. Britain informed him and other Arab Sheikhs that the Great Britain has no design on their territories after the War and the Arabs would be helped to establish the Arab independence without any intervention in the internal affairs of the region. With these crucial agreements, Colonialism set its feet in entire Arabian Peninsula.

The concept of Arab nationalism received a boost with the onset of the Palestine issue. Although the Arabs were divided into different nation—states , they were all unanimous on the necessity of unity and were obliged to resist the demographic changes that were underway in Palestine due to the immigration of Jews en mass. The Arabs' gradual advancement in the field of education and

literacy, the popularity of radio and the spread of newspapers made the issue more exposed. Thus the advent of Arab nationalism reached its height during the period of the Palestinian Arab Revolt (1936-39). It became the first determined manifestation of Arab consciousness, making Palestine a formal Arab issue. The revolt that lasted the best part of three years and claimed lives of three thousand Arabs, two thousand Jews and six hundred British, brought the conflict into the Arab consciousness making Palestine a foremost Arab issue.⁵

The issue of Palestine was one of the many external factors that echoed in the internal and external behavior of the Saudi polity. One could not go through Saudi involvement in Palestine without elaborating the causes behind it that necessitated to adopt certain policies that tended to change accordingly with the course of time.

The individual countries like Syria, Iraq and Egypt witnessed widespread demonstrations supporting the Palestine cause, where popular opinion was anti-British and anti-Zionist. In the Egyptian perceptions, the establishment of Jewish nation amid Arab states could become an economic threat to Egypt by creating a physical barrier that would block the commercial dealings with the Arab East and other Arab states, and it would create long lasting tension in the fields of industry, trade and independence. Egypt also feared that a marginal accommodation to Jewish aspiration in Palestine would gradually grow into the massive immigration of Jews and that would create scope for the enlargement of Jewish area by

⁵ Dawisha Adeed., Arab Nationalism In The Twentieth Century, from Triumph to Despair.(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003)p.108.

occupying Arab area situated around. Thus Arab countries decided to halt any attempt to bifurcate Palestine into two independent states.

Great Britain, confronted with a conflict involving the Jews, the Arabs, and her policies in the Arab World, submitted the "Palestine Question" to the United Nations in April 1947. Consequently, the question of the future of Palestine was the subject of discussion at two sessions of the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1947. The United Nations Special Committee On Palestine suggested two plans for the future of Palestine: a majority plan and a minority plan. The majority plan proposed the termination of the mandate, the partition of Palestine and the creation of an Arab State and a Jewish State. According to the plan, the City of Jerusalem would come under a special international regime to be administered by the UN. The minority plan envisaged the termination of mandate and establishment of a Federal State consisting of an Arab State and Jewish State with Jerusalem as the capital. As a result, the General Assembly adopted the resolution 181 on 29 November 1947, calling for the partition of Palestine on the lines suggested by the majority report.

The partition of Palestine by the United Nations and the declaration of the establishment of Israel on May 14, 1948 injured the Arab pride, which led to a war with the combined force of Egypt and Syria, Transjordan, Lebanon and Iraq against Israel.

The total number of Arab troops, both regular and irregular, operating in the Palestine theater was under 25000, where as the IDF (Israel's Defense Force)

fielded over 35000 troops. By mid-July the IDF mobilized 65000 men under arms, and by December its number reached a peak of 96,441⁶

With the emergence of Nasser as the leading figure of Arab nationalism, the Arab ideological trend gathered momentum by the formation of UAR (United Arab Republic) in 1958. Nasserism was taking predominance with its favor for Arab unity and its stand on the rights of Palestinians. Egypt figured in the Arab World because of a combination of many factors. It was the most advanced state in the Arab World, exposition to western civilization due to Napoleon's invasion of 1798 and spread of literacy, education and mass-media.

The signing of Baghdad Pact on 25, February, 1955 by Turkey, Iraq, Pakistan, Iran and Britain invited suspicion and distress among the Arabs. The purpose of the organization was to provide joint defense against possible aggressors and to encourage the economic and scientific development of the member nations. Although not an official member of the Pact, the United States actively supported the Organization.

The Egyptian nationalist supporters perceived the Baghdad Pact as a greater threat to Arab nationalism and in response, an Egyptian-Syrian Mutual Defense Pact was signed and Saudi Arabia along with Yemen joined later. To weaken the credibility of the Baghdad Pact, Cairo unleashed vigorous diplomatic contacts with Arab States and involved in intense propaganda campaign to sideline the Pact. Nasser's

⁶ Dawisha . Adeed., Arab Nationalism In the Twentieth Century, from Triumph to Despair.(Princeton: Princeton University Press ,2003) p.130.

radio broadcast named as 'Voice of Arabs' was used as an efficient propaganda machine.

The radio accused the Iraqi leader Nuri-al Said as a traitor and organized a number of public speeches, in which Nasser stressed upon the need for Arab nationalism and emancipation of the Arab land from foreigners. Adding flavor to it, Nasser's charismatic presence at the conference of the developing and under-developed nations in Bandung in April 1955, calling the attention of the Third World nations to join together to form a non-aligned movement made an everlasting impact. Thus Nasser enjoyed a prominent role among the Third World leaders and enlisted the support of the Arab World and other developing nations in his fight against imperial domination. Nations outside of West Asia viewed him as the leader of Arab World with massive popular support.

The outbreak of the Suez War and its eventual end without acquiring any positive outcome to the tripartite alliance of Britain, France and Israel against Egypt in November 1956 boosted the prestige of Nasser. The post-Suez War era witnessed the rise of the Arab nationalism inspired by Nasser. Even though Nasser hardly met with any military advancement against the West, he received wide acclamations. Indeed, Arabs gave Nasser their overwhelming support throughout the duration of the crisis. Arab cities erupted with anti-West demonstrations and riots. Petroleum pumps in Saudi Arabia, Syria and Iraq were sabotaged and Syria and Saudi Arabia declared their decision to break the diplomatic relations with

Britain and France. To cap all , a treaty of Arab Solidarity was signed among Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Syria for a period of ten years.⁷

With the formation of United Arab Republics on February 1st, 1958, the strong nationalist aspirations of the Arab World found its pinnacle. Egypt and Syria joined together to form the UAR with a plan for a well-knitted economic, financial, foreign and military collaboration.

Saudi Arabia along with Jordan allied with Egypt after the Suez War of 1956. King Saud of Saudi Arabia found it comfortable to have a friendly alliance with Egypt because of his historical enmity with Hashemite rulers. The Hashemite ruler of Iraq, Nuri-al Said, always created a sense of fear in King Saud, so he viewed it safe to have a cordial relation with Egypt. Thus his reliance on Nasser was based on mere political and strategic impulses and had nothing to do with the ideology that Nasser was professing. Hence, this marriage of convenience did not last long. The reversal in Saudi foreign policy towards Egypt occurred when the heads of Arab State met in Beirut on 13 November 1956. The meeting voiced their concerns regarding the precarious conditions of the Arab monarchical states due to the sweeping victory of radical Arab nationalism and its growing trend. King Saud met King Faisal Second, the ruler of Iraq, and acceded to sideline their traditional enmity and not to succumb to radical revolutionaries.

⁷ Ibid., p. 181.

It was during this time that President Eisenhower proclaimed his famous doctrine- the 'Eisenhower Doctrine'. The foreign policy of United States President Dwight D. Eisenhower was most notable for its efforts to contain the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Concern had intensified over growing Soviet influence in Egypt and an international confrontation began when Egypt nationalized the Suez Canal in 1956. In 1957 Eisenhower pledged assistance to any Arab state against "overt armed aggression from any nation controlled by international communism." This policy, excerpted here, became known as the Eisenhower Doctrine.

This assurance from the President evoked a sense of ease in the Kingdom which translated into the event of sending the Saudi troops to Jordan to help King Hussein against his pro-Nasser Prime Minister Suleiman al Nablusi. Thus this willingness from Saudi Arabia to help another Arab monarchy against their common Arab radical enemies once again proved the persisting rivalry of the radical and the monarchical states in the Arab World.

Viewing the hilarious growth and appeal of Nasserism, Saudi Arabia started to indulge in counter-propaganda by invoking the Islamic appeal of the Kingdom. The Kingdom equated Nasser's nationalism with communism and Soviet Socialism. The Saudis, drawing on their status as the guardian of Ka'ba, Islamic holiest shrine, came up with their own "Islamic charter" which criticized fake nationalism based on atheistic doctrine⁸

⁸ Dawisha Adeed., Arab Nationalism In the Twentieth Century, from Triumph to Despair.(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003)p.233.

The Islamic charter advised the Islamic Community to adhere with the tenet of pristine Islam and proposed to create an Islamic alternative to Nasser's Soviet model nationalism. Besides, the Kingdom began to use its petro-dollar to buy the loyalty of other Arab states which are prone to Nasser's contrivance.

The third noticeable factor in Saudi foreign policy is its large oil deposits and the revenue incurred from its production and sale. In an energy-driven world in which Saudi Arabia acquires at least 25 percent of known world petroleum reserves, the Kingdom's oil policy is an integral part of its foreign relations. Similarly, its oil derived revenues, growing until recently have been a major factor in enhancing its international image.⁹

Although it has a huge amount of oil deposits, in the first two decades after the World War II, Saudi Arabia was fully depended on Arab American Oil Company for production, management and pricing of Saudi oil. Saudi rulers did not get a decisive say in the daily business of the company and its production, quantity of production and sale were the prerogatives of the company. Saudi rulers were more or less unaware of the international market conditions. It should be remembered that Saudi government obtained power on its own asset early after the formation of the OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) founded in 1960.

Saudi Arabia is the largest state in the Arabian Gulf. It has always rejected to accept the formation of the state of Israel by ceding the part of Palestine land. However, Ibn Saud, the founder of the modern Saudi Arabia, was more concerned

⁹ Brown L. Carl, Diplomacy in the Middle East, (London: I.B.Tauris, 2004), Page 233.

with regime security and territorial integrity of the state, apprehended communism and Zionism as major threats and devised strategies to resist political destabilization of the state.

The Arab nationalism witnessed a leap forward when a group of army officers seized power in Yemen on 26, September, 1962, and proclaimed the birth of the Republic of Yemen, immediately after the death of Yemen's ruler Imam Ahmad. The army officer Brigadier Abdullah al Sallal attempted to highlight the military coup by attributing the hallmark of a social movement with mass support against a tyrannical ruler and as a political movement erected upon genuine ideologies like nationalism and Arab unity. The revolution however presented rather severe threat to the stability and integrity of Saudi Arabia and the House of Saud feared the spread of revolution into Saudi land. Imam Badr, the son of the overthrown Imam Ahmad, fled to Yemeni interior and asked the help of Saudi Arabia to recapture the power. Saudi Arabia promised money and material. On the other hand Egypt viewed the situation as the best opportunity to undo the bad effect on his leadership in the wake of Syria's secession from the UAR and thereby to regain the initiative in Arab affairs for Egypt on the basis of revolutionary leadership.¹⁰

The ensuing months found the Yemeni affairs becoming a full-fledged civil war with dedicated involvement of Nasser supporting North Yemen with men and materials. In the beginning Nasser deployed an army of some hundreds but within a year the number of Egyptian army in Yemen swelled to several thousands. In

¹⁰ Kerr, Malcolm H., The Arab Cold War (New York., Oxford University Press, 1974).p.107

1963, the number of Egyptian troops in Yemen rose to twenty thousand, then it increased to forty thousand in 1964, and reached a staggering seventy thousand in 1965¹¹

Repeated efforts to find a solution to the problem remained unsuccessful. The Alexandria Summit Conference in September 1964, where President Nasser and Crown Prince Faisal of Saudi Arabia agreed to bring opposing Yemeni factions together on neutral ground. But the irreconcilable interests of Egypt and Saudi Arabia aggravated the possibility of a détente .

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The agreement signed in Jeddah on 24 August 1965 between King Faisal and the President Nasser also did not result in any substantial outcome. They even though agreed to end the fighting and to convene a meeting at Harad in Saudi Arabia in November 1965 to create a provincial government in Yemen, that would finally organize a plebiscite in Yemen to decide which kind of governance they prefer--the Islamic State of Yemen or Yemen Republic. The agreement did not materialize on account that the Yemenis expressed their resentments as there was no representatives from Yemen to articulate their views and opinions. Consequently, the Harad talks failed and Jeddah conference collapsed. But the June War of 1967 finally put an end to Nasser's five year old Yemeni adventure. By an agreement with King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, he withdrew the last of his troops from Yemen



¹¹ Dawisha Adeed., Arab Nationalism In the Twentieth Century, from Triumph to Despair.(Princeton: Princeton University Press ,2003)p.235



in November 1967; The Egyptian civilian technicians soon followed.¹² But the fighting between the royalists and the Republicans continued for some more days. Later the President Abdullah al Sallal was expelled, and Yemeni Republic became victorious. In 1970 King Faisal recognized the Republic and ambassadors were exchanged.

The outbreak of the Yemeni Civil War dismayed the possibility of a joint Arab effort to support the legitimate rights of the Palestinians. The clashing interests, ambitions and conventions marked their deep shadow over the struggle of Palestine. The undesired defeat in the 1967 June War and the subsequent demise of Nasser's nationalism paved way for more radicalization of Palestinian struggle. Above all, the United States used this opportunity to affirm its position in West Asia as the major outside power and Israel felt more comfortable due to the Arab defeat and disunity. The ascendancy of Saudi Arabia in regional affairs was the another direct impact of the defeat of Arab Nationalism. Saudi Arabia came closer to the US for protection and became a pillar of the US, Iran and Iraq axis.

¹² Kerr, Malcolm H., Arab Cold War (New York., Oxford University Press, 1974) .p.130

CHAPTER II

KING IBN SAUD AND THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE

The Palestine problem had been looked upon with keen interest by the different Arab and Islamic states since the early thirties of the last century. However, the first active intervention by the Arab neighboring countries came in 1936, when the Arab Kings and princes tried to mediate in the Arab revolt with the hope of relaxing tension and bringing peace.

Saudi involvement in the issue of the Palestine had its marks on the relationship with other international players also. The House of Saud's disapproval of the Balfour Declaration of 2nd November 1917 and the British effort to establish a Jewish State in Palestine created much distress between Saudi Arabia and Great Britain. However, Great Britain did not remain any stone unturned to have intense negotiation with Saudi Arabia. This was because of the growing importance of the Kingdom in Cold War context. Its geographic proximity with several countries which Britain either directly administered or treated as protectorate like Transjordan, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar and Abu Dhabi was a great matter of concern. The vital position occupied by Saudi Arabia along the shortest air route to the East through the Persian Gulf indicates the geopolitical significance of the Kingdom. Besides, the major oil pipe lines between Iraq and Palestine through Transjordan lie near to Saudi territory.

The call from the Palestinian Arab leaders especially from Hajj Amin al Hussein, the Mufti of Palestine, soliciting moral and material support from the Arab neighbors

received much attention from the King Ibn Saud. But until 1936, Saudi response to the Palestine issue was very peripheral. Most of the Arab national movements were engaged in their own freedom struggles and they did not get enough time to listen the problems occurring outside of their territories. France and Britain, the mandatory powers, discouraged any attempt from Arab side to create a web of Arab unity. Consequently, the general Arab interest in the Palestine issue was negligible and the sundry campaigns waged by the pan-Arabic and pan-Islamic societies failed to draw either public or governmental support for the Palestinian Arabs.¹³

The formation of a Permanent Secretariat and the establishment of an Islamic University were the final results of the Palestinian appeal for the Arab help. However, regardless the insufficient economy and revenue output, King Abdul Aziz supported the idea of supplying the Palestinians with money and arms to enable them to defend themselves and their land, and to send a token force fight along with Palestinians.

The Palestine- Arab general strike started in April 1936 marked a turning point in Arab States' intervention in the Palestine issue when the Palestinians sought Arab kings' participation in finding a solution to end the revolt.

Although all the Arab states were unanimous in their opposition to the British mandate and the Jewish immigration to Palestine, differences were not scant in their approach regarding the future of Palestine in the Arab world. While Syria looked for the fulfillment of their dream of a Greater Syria, Trans-Jordan wanted to annex the Palestine to the

¹³ Mayer, Thomas., Arab Unity of Action and the Palestine Question, 194548. Middle Eastern Studies, vol 22,(July 1986),no .36,p.331

Hashemite Kingdom. The Egyptian and Saudi Arabia favored independence and the status quo.

The Arab revolt which started in April 1936, not only continued during 1938, but gained in intensity. It can say that during 1938 the whole Arab population of the country, either out of conviction or by pressure from the organized nationalist revolt, joined the forces of the revolution against the British mandate, and against what the Arabs considered the danger of transforming Palestine into a Jewish nation. A consequence of this situation was that during the year large parts of Palestine passed under the administration of the revolutionary government, which in many cities especially in the mountainous districts of the country, replaced the British administration.

Under these circumstances, the British mandatory regime in Palestine under High Commissioner Sir Harold Mac Michael found it most difficult to reestablish peace. The British Government in London proceeded with its policy of trying to find a solution to the thorny Palestinian problem, where the aspirations and demands of the Arab people and of the Zionist movement were apparently contradictory and mutually exclusive in characters. Under this situation, the British government constituted a commission to look into the whole aspects of the mandatory Palestine and the feasibility of creation of separate Jewish and Arab states. Thus the Peel Commission tabled its report on 22nd June, 1937. The report constituted the principle watershed in Anglo-- Saudi relations in the inter war years. Its main provisions were for the mandate to be terminated, and Palestine to be partitioned into a Jewish and Arab states, the later to be appended to Transjordan. Ibn Saud's uncompromising standpoint over a comprehensive solution to end the Arab revolt

was; a complete amnesty to the Arab revolt of 1937 and the total suspension of Jewish immigration, legislation to protect the Palestinian land owners, a constitutional government for Palestine incorporating proportional representation with guarantees to protect minorities, the Holy Places and the establishment of an impartial judicial system. In his view, the British promise to build a Jewish home in Palestine has already been achieved with the immigration and settlement of large numbers of Jews to Palestine. This proposal from the King received wide acclaim from the Arab World. The Arab Higher Committee constituted to deal with the issue of Palestine under the leadership of Mufti Haj Amin al Husseini started to think about a possible cooperation with the British with a quid pro quo release of Arab prisoners from British hold. The Peel Commission Report had called for limitation on immigration and land sales however, most importantly, this was in the framework of a partitioned Palestine. According to the provisions of the Commission, a small Jewish state, taking about 20 percent of the land would be established in the Galilee, Jezreel valley and the coastal line. The rest including Jaffa would be tied to Transjordan, except a small enclave around Jerusalem which remained under the British control. The Jewish state would pay an annual subsidy to its Arab neighbors¹⁴.

The provisions of the Peel Commission received a harsh response from the Arab states. Hostile and virulent protests from Iraq and other Arab states provoked Ibn Saud to intervene in the issue with more attention. In fact, Ibn Saud's personal

¹⁴ Rubin, Barry., The Arab State and the Palestine Conflict (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1981),p.92.

position on the issue became overt by his request to the Palestinians to call off the strike and to co-operate with the Royal Commission. Apart from the plight of the Palestinians, Ibn Saud was embarrassed with the provision of Peel Commission that explicitly resolves to incorporate parts of Palestine to King Abdullah's Transjordan. He preferred the whole territory to be remain under mandatory control and Abdullah be prevented from being the King of the Arab Palestine¹⁵.

Although Ibn Saud valued his British connection for protection and finance, the enlargement of the Transjordanian territory and the establishment of a Jewish states were bitter pills to be swallowed. Saudi foreign Minister Hafiz Wahba expressed his fear to the British Foreign Office that his King regarded Abdullah as untrustworthy and unfriendly. He added that if London turned most of Palestine over to Transjordan, the Saudis would retaliate by demanding large parts of Abdullah's Kingdom which include the strategic towns of Aqaba and Maan and a common border with Syria¹⁶.

In the internal affairs also the Peel Commission findings created much trouble to Ibn Saud. The Saudi security officials warned the King that King's position at home would be critical if he agrees with the Peel proposals. The followers of Wahabism through out the Kingdom agitated against the plan and raised strong resentment to the creation of a Jewish state. The situation became more complex

¹⁵ Leatherdale.Clive., Britain And Saudi Arabia (1925-1939),The Imperial Oasis. (London: Frank Cass, 1983),p.275.

¹⁶ Rubin. Barry., The Arab State and the Palestine Conflict (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1981),p.87

with the delivery of countless number of telegrams from many prominent Muslim leaders all over the world demanding an outright rejection of the Peel proposals .To Hafiz Wahba, the Saudi Foreign Minister, every Muslim and every Arab looked on the establishment of this new Jewish state as the first step in a policy which aims at the destruction of Islam and the Arabs.¹⁷

Ibn Saud hoped for an early end of the problem and did not like to see his Kingdom driven in to turmoil. Arab nationalist leaders desired to convene a conference on Palestine in Mecca making sure the participation of all Arab leaders. However Ibn Saud refused to allow the city to be used for political purposes fearing the British disapproval. But Ibn Saud could no longer bury the developments in Palestine from his subjects due to the increasing mobility and the advent of motor traffic. Talks was ripe of the Nejdī ulema demanding a War against Palestine with Ibn Saud to spear head it¹⁸

The British government was more concerned with the strategic importance of the West Asian region where a limited number of military forces were available to deploy in the area in the event of a war. The outbreak of an another world war could not be discarded and Italy and Germany were trying to buy support of the Arabs to their war efforts in West Asia. In view of this alarming situation, Britain afraid of Saudi Arabia and other Arab states falling into the hands of the Axis Powers.

¹⁷ Ibid, p.88

¹⁸ Ibid, p.275.

Britain decided to design its game by extending financial support to Saudi Arabia. The tension reached into a new height when Britain detected that Saudi Arabia was extending logistic support to the Mufti of Palestine. By early 1938, firm evidence came to the limelight that Ibn Saud was actively supporting Mufti of Palestine by smuggling arms and ammunition to Palestine. The exposure of this new development prompted Britain to constitute a new Royal Commission. Thus the Woodhead Commission that reported in October 1938 abandoned the previous commitment for partition. The provisions of the report say that a Palestine state on the Iraqi model was to be established within ten years, with limited Jewish migration which eventually be subject to Arab acquiescence.¹⁹ Thus Ibn Saud's endeavor to withheld the idea of partition met with success for the time being. In addition the British Middle East Official Sub Committee recommended a renewed subsidy regime to Saudi Arabia which includes £200,000 per annum and a further £25000 to be provided to influence Saudi officials and another £4000 was destined for the Political Resident in the Gulf to reward the sheikhs for providing intelligence.

Saudi Arabia's poor financial background restricted its activities confined within its territory and any real involvement in international affairs was not within its reach. Ibn Saud's high personal prestige as a politico-religious figure meant, however, that he was expected to uphold the Islamic cause against the Zionists and since the King's own mind was attuned to the views of Arabism, he had been moved to

¹⁹ Leatherdale.Clive., Britain And Saudi Arabia (1925-1939),The Imperial Oasis. (London: Frank Cass, 1983),p.279.

strong public pronouncement and private lobbying; letter to President Franklin Roosevelt, diplomatic protests and newspaper interviews.

From the above account one can perceive the delicacy of Saudi Arabia's attitudes towards Palestine. During the early years of its existence the Kingdom were largely based upon some basic interests of the Royal Family. They had to adopt effective and rational measures to deal with its territorial integrity, economic well-being and to deter any threat from any major powers in view of the possibility of the outbreak of another world war, where major European powers were clamoring for a battle to achieve their colonial interests. So it was King Ibn Saud's effective diplomacy and skillful maneuverings with the other Arab states that kept the Kingdom away from a possible destabilization and created a semblance of Arab solidarity by riding on the ideologies of pan- Arabism and pan-Islamism.

However, Ibn Saud's inability to openly court the British hostility restricted his opportunity to co-ordinate the pan-Arab activities. This was evident from his denial to allow his Kingdom to convene a pan-Arab conference to discuss the Palestine Issue. More over he did not send a delegation to the Arab Conference on Palestine called in Buldan in Syria in 1937. The King was more concerned with the ambition of King Abdullah of Jordan of creating Greater Syria by annexing Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Transjordan to his Hashemite Kingdom, that was anathema to King Ibn Saud. He apprehended that the British politics in Palestine were putting pressure on his position in the Arab world and the British relinquishment of the mandate of Palestine would lead to promote King Abdullah's

desire for a Greater Syria, the fruition of which would reduce the status of Saud to a desert chieftain²⁰.

In short, Ibn Saud feared that the end of the British mandate in Palestine would ensure the territorial expansion of the Hashemite Kingdom and subsequently will undermine the status of Ibn Saud as the leader of the Arab world and the 'Custodian of the Holy Places'. Saudi dependency on the British monetary assistance abstained him from anti-British move. Ibn Saud followed two lines of policies over developments in Palestine; first, the avoidance of an outright breach with British government, in case his own immediate interest in the Red Sea region is not threatened; second, to use his influence wherever possible as a means to furthering his own position. When the Palestine provided him enough coverage and brought him to the limelight of Arab politics as a meticulous statesman, his ultimate dependence on Britain impelled him to adopt a mild policy towards Britain.

The establishment of the Arab League in 1945 as a common platform to coordinate the Arab activities on regional and international affairs enhanced the prestige of the Arabs and viewed it as a manifestation of their solidarity and generated a semblance of unity among the Arab leaders. The Egyptian government first proposed the Arab League in 1943. Egypt and some of the other Arab states wanted closer cooperation without the loss of self-rule that would result from total union. The original charter of the league created a regional organization of

²⁰ Leatherdale.Clive., Britain And Saudi Arabia (1925-1939),The Imperial Oasis. (London: Frank Cass, 1983),p.283.

sovereign states that was neither a union nor a federation. Among the goals the league set for itself were winning independence for all Arabs still under alien rule, and to prevent the Jewish minority in Palestine from creating a Jewish state. The members eventually formed a joint defense council, an economic council, and a permanent military command.

The issue of Palestine constituted one of the main pre-occupation of the agenda of the League. Three official meetings of the League Council took place during the year, in March and December in Cairo and in October in Aaley, Lebanon. All three served principally to coordinate the steps to be taken by the member states in accordance with the development of the Palestine question.

Its attempt to unleash wide scale propaganda in England and the United States and to the entire international community resulted in wide publicity of their concerns. Saudi Arabia as an active member of the Arab League supported the League's endeavors wholeheartedly. Some of the major decisions of the Organization during its formative period were the imposition of an economic boycott on Jewish products, the formation of the Arab Liberation Army to liberate Arab land from Zionists and to intervene militarily in Palestine after the termination of the British mandate in Palestine on May 15, 1948.

The decision to impose an economic boycott on Zionist industry and trade instigated the hope of success by assuming that the imposition of a total boycott on Zionist products and manufactured goods would seriously damage the stamina of

the Jewish community in Palestine. In February 1946, the League Council set up a permanent Boycott Committee to implement and enforce the earlier boycott resolutions. The Boycott Committee recommended the establishment of boycott offices in each Arab State and requested the Arab governments to create new industries to replace the Zionist share of the Arab market²¹. The boycott did not yield the desired effect on Jewish economy as their main trade relation was with the European states. The boycott offices arranged a detailed list of business firms and the name of companies around the world which have transactions with Israel or whose owners were Jews.

Not wanting to lose the Arab market, many international corporations were initially hesitant to do business with Israel. Only seven out of five hundred large companies worldwide dared to invest in Israel. Among the non-Arab countries, Indonesia, Malaysia and Pakistan joined the boycott in the 1950s and the '60s²². The boycott inflicted certain psychological impact on the Arab cause. The publicity given to boycott resolution increased the Arab awareness and concern over the Zionist activities in Palestine, and since the regulation blurred the distinction between Jewish and Zionist products by imposing a boycott on all Jewish trade with a concerted Arab anti-Jewish propaganda helped to widen the political awareness in Arab countries.

²¹ Mayer. Thomas., Arab Unity of Action and Question of Palestine 1945-48, Middle Eastern Studies, vol (22, July, 1986), no. 3 pp.331-349.

²² Kalyal, Amber Jameel. ,Israel And The Arab Boycott, Strategic Studies, Vol.21,(Spring 2001),no 1 p.170.

The UN Partition Resolution by the General Assembly on November 29, 1947 (Resolution 181) to part the Palestinian land into two independent states, did not bring any ease to the Arab world. The Arab leaders expressed their concerns, where they emphatically stressed for the cancellation of the resolution. The King of Saudi Arabia, Ibn Saud stood in forefront to express their embarrassment on the UN partition programme. The King was adamant in his policy of not allowing the land of Palestine to be occupied by the Jews. His meeting with the then US President Roosevelt clearly amplifies the furiousness of his disapproval of Jewish States in Palestine.

Soon after the passing of resolution on partition by UN General Assembly on 29th November 1947, the Arab Ad Hoc political Committee expressed its displeasure. The representative of Saudi Arabia stated that the Government of Saudi Arabia registered its protest on this historic occasion and the fact that it would not consider itself bound by the resolution adopted by the General Assembly. Further more, it reserved itself the full right to act freely in whatever way it deems fit, in accordance with the principles of right and justice²³

Ibn Saud firmly resisted President Roosevelt's arguments on behalf of freer immigration to Palestine by Jewish refugees and eventually was rewarded with promises in writing from Roosevelt that he would never undertake any action

²³ Gabbay.E Rony (ed), A Political Study of the Arab –Jewish Conflicts, The Arab Refugee Problem.(Paris: Library of Minard, 1959) p.55

hostile to the Arabs and that there would be no action from the American side affecting the interest of Jews and Arabs with out prior consultation with them.²⁴

However the conversation and the subsequent promise from Roosevelt did not materialize with any solid outcome to ease the tension in the Arab World. For the promises of Roosevelt were to mean nothing, firstly because by mid April he was dead and secondly, the new President Truman (1945-'53) was with comparative ease to the view that American domestic political considerations must be paramount in deciding on whether to give or withheld support to Zionism²⁵. He was in favour of allowing the immigration of 100,000 Jews to Palestine immediately after his accession to power. Saudi Arabia along with Britain disagreed with Truman's policy of immigration because Britain had promised in their White Paper released in 1939 that Jewish immigration would be limited to 15000 a year and after 1944 the Arabs would have a de facto veto over Jewish immigration into Palestine.²⁶The Arab league unanimously proclaimed that any attempt to renew Jewish immigration into Palestine will, no doubt, change the basic situation in that country and the Arab states cannot agree to any decisions that change standing policy in that respect by the White Paper of 1939 and consider it inconsistent with the undertakings given by both the US and the British Governments²⁷.As rumors circulated with increasing velocity about Truman's pro-Zionism, Ibn Saud called up Truman on 2nd October to honour the commitment made by the previous President Roosevelt and to be transparent on that issue. The

²⁴ Leslie.Mc Loughline., Ibn Saud, Founder Of A Kingdom, (London: Macmillan Press Ltd 1980) p.165

²⁵ Ibid,p.168.

²⁶ Neff Donald., Fallen Pillars, US Policy Towards Palestine And Israel Since 1945 (Washington D.C: Institute For Palestine Studies,1995)),p.31.

²⁷ Ibid,p..32.

King criticized the United States on its right to support the expulsion of a nation from its country so as to replace it with another nation by means of might and force and under the protection of military force²⁸ The President was more concerned with the ambitions of a large number of people who are anxious to the success of Zionism. The Arabs held demonstrations in many streets. In Alexandria Egyptian police fired on a rampaging mob killing ten and wounding 300. On October 1948 the Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal Ibn Abdul Aziz recalled the United States;

Your Government has permitted itself to be placed in the position of using the British to break their pledges to us .I assure you that the British are telling us officially that they favor the Arab case against Zionism but they are being pushed by you into pro-Zionist move.....We Arab would rather starve or die in battle than our land and people devoured by the Zionist as you would do it we were giving them one of your own states for a nation²⁹.

The partition of Palestine and the War of 1948 created an exodus of Palestine refugees who found their last resort in neighboring Arab countries. Saudi Arabia was adamant for the welfare of the refugees and assisted them through the United Nations Relief and Work Agency by providing fund to the Agency. Besides, the Kingdom asserted the right of the refugees to regard them as special refugees. Since the existence of the Palestine refugees was the direct result of a decision taken by the United Nations itself.³⁰ In an amendment proposal forwarded by Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Egypt in the United Nations High Commission for Refugees Statute on 1951, they pronounced this special right of the Palestine

²⁸ Ibid,p.34

²⁹ Neff Donald., Fallen Pillars, US Policy Towards Palestine And Israel Since 1945 (Washington D.C: Institute For Palestine Studies, 1995),p.35.

³⁰ Aruri Naseer , Palestine Refugees, The Right of Return., (London; Pluto Press ,2001,p.191n

refugees. The Saudi representative put forward the idea that if the General Assembly were to include the Palestine refugees in a general definition of refugees, they would become submerged and would be relegated to a position of minor importance. The Arab states asserted that the repatriation of the refugees is the only real solution to the problem.³¹

Saudi Arabia extended its help towards Palestinian refugees by assisting them find their livelihood through the United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). The organization was created in 1949 by the United Nations (UN) to serve the nutrition, health, and education needs of Palestinians displaced by the Israeli-Arab War of 1948-1949. Established as a temporary agency, the UNRWA acquired semi permanent status as the state of Israel grew and prospered and Arab nations refused to grant permanent status to Palestinian refugees living within their borders. The UNRWA does not limit its work to Palestinians exiled in refugee camps, but extends assistance to Palestinians and their descendants worldwide.

The Kingdom has contributed to the Agency's annual budget the amount of 4.5 million Saudi Riyal dedicated for several purpose, including funding the budget short falls, implementation of the programme for construction of refugee camp in Lebanon and providing educational services as well as relief, food and medical

³¹ Ibid ,p. 191n

supplies³². Many western states and even Israel contributed to the budget of UNRWA. The inherent meaning of this contribution was that, as many Arab states feared, the solution to their problem would not be achieved by repatriation to their homes or compensation, but that it should instead be sought in the settlement and rehabilitation of the Palestinian refugees in the neighboring Arab states³³.

At the out break of World War Second, Saudi Arabia adopted a policy of neutrality . Many of Ibn Saud's political advisers tried to convince the King that the wind is lashing in favour of the Axis Power and there was credible evidence on the potentiality for a victory over the Allied Power. Ibn Saud dismissed all this predictions and maintained neutrality . In effect, this was helpful to the Allied Power. The King's neutrality was by no means a negligible asset to the Allies especially to Great Britain. Had he extended his support to Axis Powers with political miscalculation, he might have preached a holy war against the West, that might have provoked the sentiments of a large number of Muslim subjects under the British rule in India and else where and might caused much embarrassment to the British. The King's political maturity was evident in his conscious refrainment from hostility and to a certain extend expressed his inclination to side with Britain by sending his son Mansur to address Indian troops to Egypt on the eve of a decisive battle of Et-Alamain in 1942.

³² www.saudiinfo.com

³³ Tomeh J. George 'When The UN Dropped The Palestinian Question', Journal of Palestine Studies, vol.iv, no.1, Autumn, 1974, pp.15-30) p.24.

It was in 1933, the Standard Oil Company of California acquired a concession from Ibn Saud to drill oil from Saudi Arabia. The Company later merged with Texas Company and christened as the ARAMCO. Oil began to flow in 1938 and the output reached at a level of 30000 barrels per day in 1940, providing Ibn Saud a royalty of £ 200,000 annually. Even during the war period the Company managed to present a royalty of \$3 million against future production, it found unable to meet King's further monetary demands. This led the Company to approach US government for financial support. Finally, President Roosevelt agreed to grant help with the British support with a basis of fifty-fifty subsidy to Ibn Saud. Though Ibn Saud accepted money directly from the Company, it was indirectly coming from American coffer.

It was during the period of Second World War that, Saudi Arabia cultivated a close cooperation and contact with the United States. This major foreign policy initiative proved an epoch-making event in the annals of Saudi Arabia and West Asia. The cooperative mentality of both these countries led Saudi Arabia in to an entirely new path of progress. Earlier, there were little efforts from the side of the United States to extend its friendship with this medieval country. Until 1940, there was no diplomatic representation in Jeddah and no consular office. Although some American companies conducted vast operations to explore oil concentrations in eastern Arabia, that was without the official approval of the US government. But the conditions changed rapidly by the end of the World War II.

Ibn Saud adopted a realistic approach in building the confidence of US by rejecting a very advantageous offer from Japan in 1937, believing it to be motivated by political calculations.

Germany also had designs on Saudi oil and the same year Dr. Fritz Grobba, German Minister to Iraq and Saudi Arabia, visited Jeddah. Nevertheless, Ibn Saud preferred to continue his association with Americans³⁴. Even though the World War Second thwarted the flow of Hajj pilgrims and cut short the revenue from pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia, the American assistance of nearly \$100 million by 1947 as lend-lease programme saved the Kingdom from imminent bankruptcy. Saudi relation with the US grew fast and it broadened to the security affairs of the Kingdom. The Kingdom granted the United States the privilege to build a military air base in Dhahran in early 1943. it was followed by the resumption of a military mission by Saudi Arabia in 1943. Prince Faisal and Khalid visited the United States in September 1943 and the oil export re-started in 1944. Thus the end of the World War II and the progress of the business as usual promoted Saudi Arabia as a good and worthy ally of United States. As the World War II coming to an end, Saudi Arabia moved away from Britain as its power waned, and became more closer to the USA.

The out break of war and concomitant derailment of economic activities through out the world impinged the growth of Saudi economy too. The smooth operation of oil production by the Arab American Oil Company met a standstill and revenue

³⁴ Al Farsy, Fouad., Saudi Arabia, A Case Study in Development.(London: Kegan Paul International, 1982)p.92

from the pilgrimage to the Holy Places reduced. It was in this background that the Kingdom looked for other sources of income for survival. During this time the Axis Power seemed to be heading towards victory over Allied Powers; German conquest of Yugoslavia, Greece and its march towards the Crete, the favorable condition for Germans for a victory in Baghdad and Egypt and Japanese calculation over Persian oil were gathering momentum during the first half of 1941. At that time Britain was alone in the war field since the United States still stuck to its neutrality and Russia was not in war with Germany. Yet Ibn Saud refused to side with Germany and Japan.

On the other hand, Saudi Arabia appealed to the ARAMCO and Britain to extend their helping hand to meet its basic economic necessities. The King asked for \$30 million loan to be delivered in five years installment and threatened to cancel the oil concession if it fails to obtain the loan. The ARAMCO approached the US government and obtained the approval for a loan to the King. By accepting financial assistance, Ibn Saud to some extent compromised his neutrality. But this was just the beginning of larger process which eventually brought his country into the bosom of the United States.³⁵

This was in this circumstances that accepting money from the United States and allowing ARAMCO as a quid pro quo to operate in Saudi Arabia received criticism from other Arab countries. There was evidence that the local climate is changing

³⁵ Mordechai. Abir., Saudi Arabia, Government, Society and the Gulf Crisis .(London : Routledge, 1993) p.349

with the growing conviction that America is the main protagonist of the Zionist claims. Public opinion seemed to be restive at the successive manifestation of American influence in Saudi oil.³⁶

Ibn Saud had to undo the allegation made by the other Arab states. He prevented this accusation by pointing out certain features of his tie up with the United States. By accepting American investment, Ibn Saud hoped that a pro-Arab lobby might be created in the United States, in Congress and other state apparatus that would stem the unchecked growth and activities of pro-Zionist lobbies in US. Supporting this view the then British minister for Saudi Arabia, Graffey Smith Wrote;

I had every reason to welcome American involvement in Arab affairs and the creation of an Arab lobby in Washington politically offsetting the hitherto unchallenged influencing attitudes on Palestine³⁷

The second argument forwarded by Ibn Saud supporting his engagement with the ARAMCO was that the company is not an American enterprise, rather an independent firm backed by American concession.

President Truman was a staunchest supporter of Zionist ambition of creating a Jewish nation in Palestine. Arabs were aware of this fact and were finalizing strategies to undo the overwhelming support of the President to Jews. In this scenario, the Saudi financial attachment with the United States created much hue and cry in many parts of the Arab world. Saudi Arabia could not survive with out a

³⁶ Louis Wm. Roger ., The British Empire in the Middle East 1945-51, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984)p.194

³⁷ Ibid. p.194.

foreign patron to meet its economic needs. It was an immense, sparsely populated, and desperately poor country where Ibn Saud depended on foreign assistance for the revenues needed to maintain internal order.³⁸ Thus the Saudi thrust to become the leader of the Arab cause and the patron of Muslims met a deadlock by accepting revenue from United States and allowing the ARAMCO to operate within its territory. In previous decade Ibn Saud's finance had two fold basis: the revenue from the annual pilgrimage and the beginning of the oil revenue. As a King, his ideas, functions and obligations needed a large amount of money that surpassed his available revenue. The economic depression of 1930s caused a steady decline in the revenue from the pilgrimage which further declined after the outbreak of war. The production of oil, which was severely curtailed during the war, did not prevent the deterioration of Ibn Saud's finances into a state of distress³⁹. During the Arab Israeli war of 1948, the criticism against Saudi Arabia sharpened. Egypt and Iraq strongly opposed Saudi attachment with the ARAMCO pointing that the Kingdom has become a virtual satellite of the United States and that he should cancel the oil concession in order to prove his faith in the Arab cause by retaliating against the United states. Ibn Saud retorted by asserting that the oil royalties helped to make Saudi Arabia a 'stronger and more powerful nation ,better to assist her neighboring Arab states in resisting Jewish pretensions'.⁴⁰

³⁸ Louis Wm. Roger „The British Empire in the Middle East 1945-51, (Oxford: Clarendon Press ,1984) p.175.

³⁹ Ibid., p.178.

⁴⁰ Louis Wm. Roger „The British Empire in the Middle East 1945-51, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984) p.175.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.204.

It was the creation of Israel and the US recognition of the State of Israel shot the first bullet of suspicion and tension in the US-Saudi relationship. Ibn Saud, irrespective of President Roosevelt's promise of prior consultation with Arabs on partition of Palestine, could not hide his observation. Throughout the Arab World there was turmoil, with massive demonstrations, attacks on American Legations, and angry talks of an economic war against the United States. Ibn Saud expressed his shock at what he perceived as a betrayal by Washington, and cancelled a portion of the \$15 million loan agreed with the American Export-Import Bank.⁴¹ The anti- Israel sentiments in the Arab World pressured Saudi Arabia to criticize America, as it was Israel's closest ally. Thus, the House of Saud caught in a predicament that, on the one side its Arab friends are asking to break the relationship with the US and on the other hand, the Kingdom itself wanted more protection from US in view of the growing tendency of anti-monarchical and radical elements around the Arab World.

The death of King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud in 1953 and King Saud's accession to power coincided with the growing trend of Pan-Arabism, Nasserism and various Arab Socialist and Marxist movements. The Kingdom feared the backlash of these radical movements in Saudi Arabia and decided to take defensive measures. Meanwhile, Saudi workers of the ARAMCO started strike and attacked the US Air Force vehicles in Dhahran. King Saud suspected the hands of Egypt in this strike and responded with a wave of subsidies and paternalism. He constructed schools,

⁴¹ Geoff. Simons., Saudi Arabia The Shape of a Client Feudalism. (London: Macmillan Press, 1998) Page 193.

medical facilities and more modern services throughout the Kingdom. The outbreak of Yemeni War and the involvement of Egypt and Saudi Arabia made the situation more complicated. It was in this contest that the President Eisenhower announced the 'Eisenhower Doctrine', a mechanism to highlight the phenomenon of international Communism as the greatest threat to the Persian Gulf region and offered financial aid to any government prepared to resist it. King Saud of Arabia expressed his willingness to benefit from the 'Doctrine'. The King tended to pose Nasser as a major threat to Saudi Monarch. Thus the US was successful in generating a kind of schism among the Arab states and this prevented any Arab attempt to build a collective voice against the oppression committed by Israel against Palestinians. But, with the growing criticism from the Arab streets against the American ambition of creating division among the Arab States, Saudi government realized the need of the time and decided to hold more friendly relation with other Arab states. King Saud became increasingly uneasy about the appearance of any public difference with Nasser, began exerting diplomatic pressure to encourage Arab governments to hostile to Syria to moderate their views and to edge away from the US policy.⁴² Even though King Saud played as a nationalist and openly stood for Arab unity and friendship, he could not break the cordial relationship with the United States. He was worried about a possible aggression from any radical movements from outside or within the state. Further, as head of traditional feudal society he had little interest in any Arab espousal of

⁴² Geoff, Simon., Saudi Arabia: Shape of Client Feudalism (London: Macmillan Press, 1998)p216

progress to socialist independence⁴³. King Saud's apprehension over Nasser's ploy in Saudi Arabia became more evident during 1955 when pro-Nasser demonstrations took place in the ARAMCO labour force that culminated in the arrest of two hundred workers and flog three to death⁴⁴.

Besides, King Saud did not support Egypt's appeal to implement oil embargo against West during the Suez Crisis of 1956. Contrary to it, King Saud was coming closer to the United States for its security and protection. He was keen to maintain a delicate balance with America and was cautious enough not to encourage an Israeli military strike or inviting American discontent. King Saud turned to the United States for a new military agreement in April 1957 and renewed the US lease on Dhahran for five years. This shift was enforced during 1957 and 1958 by growing Saudi fear of Egypt following the creation of United Arab Republic with Syria and Yemen.⁴⁵

⁴³ Ibid.p217

⁴⁴ Cordesman S.Anthony., Saudi Arabia Enters the 21st Century, The Political, Economic and Energy Dimensions,(Washington DC, Centre for Strategic and International Studies,2003) p.107.

⁴⁵ Cordesman S.Anthony., Saudi Arabia Enters the 21st Century, The Political, Economic and Energy Dimensions,(Washington DC: Centre for Strategic and International Studies,2003)p.107

CHAPTER III

KING FAISAL AND THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE

It will be no exaggeration to assert that while King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud was the founder and consolidator of the Saudi Kingdom, King Faisal (1964-75) was the architect of the Saudi foreign policy.

Faisal's experience in the field of foreign affairs starts from his visit to England in 1919 with a mission to felicitate the Allied Power on their victory in First World War. After that he was appointed as the Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1930.

King Faisal regarded himself as the 'Custodian of the Holy Places' and wished for the unity and solidarity of the Arab nations. During his tenure as the King of Saudi Arabia, he had to meet many embarrassing events, most of them emanated from the Arab –Israeli conflict, where the Arabs were fighting for independence and self-rule, while the other for security and expansion of the existing state.

The 1967 Arab-Israeli War, the 1973 War and the lose of Jerusalem to Arabs, the Arab strategy of using oil as an effective weapon and the emergence of PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian entity were the main events that demanded King Faisal's active role as the Arab leader.

The second Arab Israeli War or the Six Day war started on June 5,1967. Israel attacked Egypt with the covert support of the United States. The War established Israel as the predominant power in West Asia and the vigor of pan-Arabism and

Nasserism met a major set back. The economic stature of Egypt began to deteriorate and its military morale plummeted to its lowest ebb. But for Saudi Arabia, it was an opportunity to instill its supremacy on Arab land. All most all the Arab radical groups had eaten the humble pie by their defeat in the War and the threat from these groups equal to that of prior to War was convincingly diminished. Saudi Arabia had participated in the war effort by sending a troop consisting of 4500 men, 10 tanks and forty aircraft to assist in the defense of Jordan in 1967. The total Arab strength was over 250,000 men, 2000 tanks and 950 aircraft .Saudi forces, however, arrived only after the lightning pace of the Six-Day War had already ensured a decisive Israeli victory.⁴⁶ .At the end of the War the Arab lost Syria's Golan Heights, Jordan's West Bank and rest of Jerusalem and the entire Sinai peninsula.

The Arab states contemplated the idea of exercising their power and control over oil in 1967 when the third Arab –Israel War broke out. The alleged causes for the implementation of the oil embargo were that the British and American stand in favour of Israel and President Nasser's revelation that the US' Sixth Fleet helped Israel to attack the Egyptian air port and military bases. The effort for a successful embargo failed on account of various causes. The Europe was importing oil from Libya, Algeria and Venezuela and the United States used its oil reserves to help many European countries by exporting oil to them. The lack of adequate

⁴⁶ Cordesman. Anthony H., Western Strategic Interests In Saudi Arabia, (New Hampshire, Croom Helm, 1987)p.241.

propaganda from the Arab side effected the fulfillment of the Arab desire and above all the economy of oil producing states started to weaken due to the erosion of revenue from oil exports-- the only reliable revenue source of these countries. Saudi Arabia suffered most and King Faisal informed his Finance Minister about the dwindling position of the economy. To avert further instability, the Arab Summit Conference at Khartoum on 29 August to 3rd October 1967 asserted that oil should be used 'positively', implying that their approach was based on false propaganda and other wrong notions. By this pronouncement they meant that oil revenue could be used to uplift the Arab economy and that can be diverted to uphold and strengthen the struggle against Israeli imperialism. Since the end of the war, the Arab oil countries began to help other non-oil producing Arab countries with financial contributions. Thus the short-lived embargo did not yield any desired result. In turn, the international companies exploited the situation by selling the US and Venezuelan oil earning more profit than before.

The Israeli victory in 1967 signaled the death of Nasser's strident pan-Arabism. The defeat unleashed far and wide political under-currents in the Arab World. Egypt was forced to inform its willingness to retreat from Yemen and to initiate rapprochement with Saudi Arabia. Nasser envisaged that the failure in 1967 War was the failure of pan-Arabism. In addition, failure in the Yemen adventure and the stagnation of the economy caused Nasser enough hardship. Further, the additional cost of the war along with the loss incurred by the closure of Suez canal affected the economy badly. Thus the crumbling economy and the loss of face in

Arab World due to the defeat in the war prepared Egypt to make rapprochement with Israel later during the reign of President Anwar al Sadat. The prime reason for Egypt's move to seek peace with Israel was the disillusionment he experienced in Arab Summit in Rabat in 1969. In the Summit, Nasser requested more help from the Arab states to continue his War of Attrition against Israel until she withdrew from occupied land. He insisted that they should also share the responsibility of the war rather than staying as mere spectators. Nasser's appeal received little attention as when Libya discarded an increase in its share of help while King Faisal wanted Libya to pay as much amount as Saudi Arabia was spending. This led to the complete halt of the Summit and Nasser walked out of the Summit leading to virtual collapse of the meeting.

In 1972, the Economic Council of the Arab League published a report on the strategic use of the Arab economic power vis-à-vis Israel and the energy consuming states who support Israel. It emphasized the need for the restriction of oil production by the OPEC countries. So that it would bring pressure on the consuming nations to revise their persistent and unreasonable pro-Israel policy. Eventually, Saudi Arabia and other nations prepared to cut short their oil output.

King Faisal advised Anwar al Sadat (1970—1981), the President of Egypt to drive out the Russians from Egypt so that it would be rewarded with the exertion of power by the US on Israel to withdraw back to the 1967 borders. Although Sadat complied with Faisal's advice, President Nixon (1969—'74) did not act in

accordance with with this commitment he had made to Faisal. Egyptian President Anwar Sadat sent his National Security Advisor, Hafez Ismail to Washington to persuade President Nixon to uphold his promise. To the Arab disappointment, Nixon adopted a policy that was totally unacceptable for the Arabs. He declared his intention to supply Israel with Phantom Jets. Besides, the President was keen to assist Israel financially. On October 19, 1973, five days before the cease-fire ending the October War, President Nixon asked the Congress to provide \$ 2.2 billion in emergency security assistance to replace Israel's losses in the War.⁴⁷ On October 20, 1973, Saudi Arabia announced a total embargo on oil shipment to the United States. The other oil producing Arab States followed the suit. The US government criticized the embargo and declared that the government would not yield to the Arab pressure to withdraw its support for Israel. Obviously, the Arab objective by imposing an oil embargo was nothing but the liberation of Palestine from occupation. The meeting of the ministers of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting company (OAPEC) held in Kuwait on October 17, 1973 stated inter alia that the ultimate goal of the current struggle is the liberation of the Arab territories occupied by Israel in 1967 War and the restoration of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people in accordance with the United Nations' resolutions.⁴⁸ Apart from the concern over the plight of the Palestinians, Arab states were afraid of their security being challenged as the Israeli border come

⁴⁷.Seth P. Tillman., The United States In The Middle East.,(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982),p.75)

⁴⁸ Ali. Shihab Rustum.,Saudi Arabia and Oil Diplomacy (New York: Praeger, 1976)p.109.

closer to these states following the 1967 war and the subjugation of more land by Israel. Saudi Arabia separated only by a narrow stretch of Jordanian territory and the Gulf of Aqaba from Israel. In fact a few Saudi islands given to Egypt were occupied by Israel in the 1967 Arab- Israeli War.⁴⁹ So the Arab states demanded a complete end of Israeli occupation of these places. Saudi Arabia reduced its oil output by ten percent and when the Kingdom was informed of the massive aid of arms and money to Israel by the United States and the Netherlands, A total termination of oil flow was declared by the Kingdom to these countries. For the easy execution of the embargo, Saudi Arabia divided countries of the world into three categories; friendly states, unfriendly states and all other states. Britain, France, Spain, Malaysia, Pakistan and all other non-oil producing Arab states were included in the first category. Canada, Portugal, the United States, the Netherlands, Rhodesia and South Africa received 'unfriendly' status. The friendly states received oil as usual while the unfriendly states not. All the other states received the remaining part of the output.

The Arab oil embargo badly affected the economy of the world. The oil cutbacks were felt most by the European countries and Japan, which were importing almost 70 percent of their oil requirements from the Gulf.⁵⁰

⁴⁹Pasha, A K., "Role of Gulf States in the Arab—Israeli Peace Process" ,in Pasha, A K (ed),Arab-Israeli peace Process ,An Indian Perspective.(New Delhi. ,Manas publications, 2000),p.211

⁵⁰ Sahukar A.Behram., Gulf Countries and Struggle for Palestinian Cause, World Focus, Vol 24 ,no 2 (,February 2003). p.20.

However, the United States and Japan were stick to their friendly attitude towards Israel and were not prepared to abide by the instructions of the Arab World. However Britain and Germany took some measures to ease the situation. Britain and West Germany, both known for their long pro-Israeli attitudes, banned arm shipments to the combatants including Israel. London even stopped American transport plane from landing on British territory and Bonn protested the shipment of American arms from Germany⁵¹.

The European Union came forward with a statement explicitly demanding Israel to return pre-1967 borders and also admitted the existence of the legitimate rights of the Palestinians. To get return from the embargo and to make good use of the Arab policy, the Arabs launched vigorous diplomatic and publicity campaign throughout the Western Europe and Japan. Along with the Algerian Minister of Finance, Saudi Petroleum Minister Sheikh Ahmad Saki Yemeni visited Western Europe, the United States and Japan. Many press conferences they convened highlighted the Arab stand on the use of oil in their struggle for the liberation of Israeli-occupied Arab territories. The Saudi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Omar Sakkafi stated in an advertisement published in the Washington Post on the new year eve of 1974 that;

We cut oil supplies to the United States after the United States, which had repeatedly assured us our rights to our lands, made massive arms deliveries to help them remain in our land. We did so not to impose a change in US policy in the Middle East, but to demand the implementation of US policy in the Middle East as it has been

⁵¹ Ali. Shihab Rustum. Saudi Arabia and Oil Diplomacy (New York: Praeger, 1976)p.111.

repeatedly defined. We did so not to 'black mail' the American people, but to put our case to them as effectively as we knew how.⁵²

The Kingdom exerted power through the ARAMCO to reach in a settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict. It declared the embargo will continue until a satisfactory settlement of the conflict be implemented. These messages were imparted through the ARAMCO officers who communicated the seriousness of the Saudi intention of taking counter measures, if the US military aid continue unabated. In a cable message dated 25 October 1973 from Jungers, the president of the ARAMCO to Johnson, senior Vice President, stated that;

There is absolutely no question that the cutback in oil production would remain in effect until entire implementation of a political settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict was achieved on the basis of UN security Council Resolution 242 of 22 November 1967.⁵³

The US Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, James Akins also conveyed US the political consequences of a protracted oil embargo. He put pressure on ARAMCO to convince the US the wrath of the Arabs and to take pro-Arab stand on the Palestinian issue.

Akin urged that oil industry leaders in the US should use their contacts at the highest level of US government to hammer home a point that oil restriction were not going to be lifted unless political struggle is settled in a manner satisfactory to the Arabs. He added that this message should be delivered to the US government

⁵² Washington Post, December 31, 1973, in Ali, Shihab Rustum., Saudi Arabia and Oil Diplomacy (New York: Praeger, 1976) ., p.114

⁵³ Text of cable in Multi National Corporation and United States Foreign Policy Hearings, part.vii, pp.530-31, in Sirreyeh Hussein, US Policy In The Gulf, 1968-77, Aftermath of British Withdrawal ,(London: Macmillan Press, 1984) p.184).

in a clear unequivocal way in order not to leave any mistake about the oil industry's position⁵⁴

Besides these hectic diplomatic measures, King Faisal invited the attention of the Muslims of the world to convince their strong feelings over the Israeli and Western attempts to take away the Muslim Holy Places from their hands. He urged to rescue the sacred places in Jerusalem from the Zionist and Communist menaces.⁵⁵ He indicated his desire to protect Muslim Holy Places and to liberate Jerusalem.

Despite all these diplomatic measures from the side of King Faisal, the US was adamant to keep its pro-Israeli policy unchanged. The US even attempted to threaten Arab states with military intervention if the embargo went on. American Secretary of State Henry Kissinger warned at a news conference in Washington D.C in November 1973 that;

If Arab pressure continued independently and unreasonably, the US would clearly have to consider what counter measure he might have to take.⁵⁶

Irrespective of these verbal encounter Saudi Arabia and other Arab states(except Syria and Libya) lifted the embargo on 18th March 1974 and oil supply to the US and other countries resumed. But the prospects of using oil as an effective weapon by Saudi Arabia for the larger interests of the Arabs was really an eye opener to

⁵⁴ Ibid.,p.517.

⁵⁵ Ali, Shihab Rustum., Saudi Arabia and Oil Diplomacy (New York: Praeger, 1976) p.114.

⁵⁶ Deptt of State Bulletin,10 December 1973,p.702, in Sirreyeh Hussein., US Policy In The Gulf, 1968-77, Aftermath of British Withdrawal (London; Macmillan ,1984) p.192 .

Israel. Its role in 1973-4 oil embargo made Israel view Saudi oil power as a threat potentially more devastating than Arab military force.⁵⁷

The early lifting of the embargo can be seen on the fact that Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries were aware of a possible psychological backlash and world wide resentment against Arab countries on their use of oil as a strategic weapon to strengthen their political interests. It was also pointed out that Arab strategy of categorizing countries into friendly and unfriendly states had its own pitfalls. By this categorization, Arab oil was (thus) shipped to friendly countries, that is not effected by the embargo, while non-Arab oil exports were shipped to those countries effected by the Arab embargo.⁵⁸ Moreover the Kingdom realized the conflicting aspects of the two sides of 'oil weapon'. If the embargo could cause wide range of impact on American economy which in turn would effect Arab economy too. It was obvious that Saudi Arabia needed American technology and manpower to set up a functional economic infrastructure to convert the crude oil into a viable and lucrative mercantile product.

Apart from calling off oil embargo, many key Arab states expressed their wish to make peace with Israel- notably Egypt and Syria. This desire for peace received a thrust when the Secretary of State Henry Kissinger introduced his celebrated Shuttle Diplomacy to bring the warring groups to reconciliation. Kissinger

⁵⁷Pasha, A K. , "Role of Gulf States in the Arab—Israeli Peace Process", in Pasha, A K (ed), Arab-Israeli peace Process ,An Indian Perspective. (New Delhi.: Manas publications, 2000), p.213

⁵⁸ Tibi, Bassam., Conflict and War in The Middle East. From Interstate War to New Security, (London: Macmillan Press ltd, 1998). p.138

promised Egyptian withdrawal from Israeli territories that Israel had occupied during the war. The advantage for Israel was that Egypt would be neutralized in the Arab war effort against Tel-Aviv. King Faisal also expressed his willingness for negotiation but only on the provisions of the Resolution 242 of the UN.

Nonetheless, the short-lived embargo had its mark on the Arab-Israel conflict. The PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) received a major victory at the Rabat Summit Conference of the Arabs in October 1974 as the PLO was proclaimed as the sole representative of the Palestinian people. The United Nations, previously reluctant to invite PLO as a political movement in its meetings, adopted a decisive step to invite the PLO to address the General Assembly as though it represented a government. Palestine received international personality and prestige. The other aspects of the embargo that had direct impact on Palestine were the announcement of the Shah of Iran who until then was hesitant to come out for Palestinian rights, calling for Israel's total withdrawal from the occupied Arab land. The EU (European Union) asked Israel to return to pre-1967 border. EU went further asking for an immediate withdrawal from the areas it had occupied after the UN declared cease-fire of 22 October 1973.

A year later, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution equating Zionism with racism. Other diplomatic success followed quickly. The PLO gained full membership in the Non-Alignment Movement in August 1975, and by the late

1970s eighty six countries had recognized the PLO compared to just seventy two that recognised Israel.⁵⁹

The increasing concern by Arab states over the status of Palestinians as mere refugees finally led to the formation of Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964. The need for a separate Palestinian identity actually derives from the political, social and demographic condition of the Palestinians in the wake of the Arab Israeli war of 1948. After the war, Palestine disappeared from the political map of the region. The eastern part of Palestine came in the hands of Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Palestinian who settled in that part became Jordanian citizens. Gaza fell under an administrative governor and the remaining Palestinians fled to other Arab states and voluntarily accepted the status of refugees.

Saudi Arabia did not resist the establishment of a separate Palestinian Entity. But the Kingdom had to have a second thought over the entire gamut of the issue. The Kingdom was afraid of an eventual concentration of all radical movements in the Arab World to join under a single umbrella, that would lead to possible tension in the maintenance of the Kingdom. There were other concerns too. For Saudi Arabia, the Palestinian representative in Arab League, Ahmad al Shuqayri was a Jordanian and an Egyptian protégé, who were not friendly with the Kingdom. So the Kingdom insisted that Shuqaiyri should work to establish contacts with

⁵⁹ Ruby, Barry and Rubin. Judith Colp., Yaser Arafat, A Political Biography (New York: Oxford Press., 2003) pp.72-3.

Palestinians and to present a survey and to propose a plan in which the Palestinian entity would set up.⁶⁰

Further more, Saudi Arabia asserted to hold an election rather than selection to find its leaders. King Faisal's demand was accepted by the whole Arab states. On 14 March 1964, a declaration was made on behalf of four Palestinian organizations calling for the establishment of Palestinian entity which became Palestinian Liberation Organization.

King Faisal as the 'Custodian of the Holy Mosques' expressed his great distress over the loss of Jerusalem to Israel. The Kingdom feared a Soviet hijack of Arab-Israeli conflict and may work as catalyst to inspire Arab radicalism again. The war displaced more than 240000 Palestinians from their land out of which nearly 100000 migrated to Saudi Arabia and assimilated into the work force of the Kingdom .This influx of refugees incited the fear in the Kingdom that radical elements could exploit the situation posing a threat to the stability of the Kingdom. To avoid such a situation, the Kingdom decided to support PLO in their struggle for independence and provided fund for the Organization. On the one hand, the Saudis feared the revolutionary potential of Palestinian irredentism with in the Arab world, on the other hand, the Saudis felt bound to the Palestinians by a sense of kinship and common cause⁶¹. This ambivalency of fear and kinship was clearly

⁶⁰ Moshe, Shamesh., The Palestinian Entity 1959-74, Arab Politics and PLO,(New Jersey: Frank Cass, 1988)p.50

⁶¹ Seth P. Tillman., The United States In The Middle East, Interests and Obstacles, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 1982.p.117.

evident during the Jordanian-PLO Civil War in September 1970. While King Faisal was supporting Palestine cause both diplomatically and financially, he ordered the commander of the Saudi forces based in Jordan to dispense King Hussein with any kind of help to suppress the PLO. The Jordanian government agreed to a ceasefire only after nine Arab head of states convened an informal Arab Summit in Cairo on September 27, 1970 and forwarded 14 points agreement between Yasar Arafat, the leader of PLO and King Hussein. Saudi Arabian troops along with Egyptian, Kuwaiti and Sudanese and Syrian forces were deployed to monitor the cease-fire. But the cease-fire did not last long. The bloody coup attempted against Morocco's King Hasan on July 10, 1971 and the assassination of Jordanian Premier Wasfi Tal in Cairo in November completely destroyed the chance of peace in Jordan. Disappointed with this marooned situation, the Saudi Foreign Minister threatened to close his country's border with Jordan and suspended its annual financial subsidy of \$ 35 million if the Jordanian would not join the mediation efforts⁶²

Accepting the re-capture of Israel as an obligation, he took an active role in the Arab Summit in Khartoum from 29 August to 3rd September 1967. Eight Arab heads of States attended the Summit Conference in the Sudanese capital. The resolution adopted at the meeting called for continued struggle against Israel, the creation of a fund to assist the economics of Egypt and Jordan and the lifting of an Arab oil boycott against the West. Saudi Arabia Along with Libya and Kuwait were in need of protecting their vital oil export and maintaining a modicum of

⁶² Jabber Fuad., 'The Arab Regimes and the Palestinian Revolution, 1967—71, in Journal of Palestine Studies, vol II, no. 2, Spring 1972, pp. 79—101.) p. 99

friendly relations with the West. At the same time, they were aware of the necessity of keeping away the pressure from the Arab Left and internal opponents within a tolerable limit. A compromise formula was evolved and tacitly ratified at the Khartoum Summit, whereby the three oil countries were to provide £135 million to Egypt and Jordan in exchange for continuance of unhindered oil supplies to the Western countries⁶³ Besides, the conference adopted a resolution seeking the end of war in Yemen. The summit adopted the dictum of no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel and no negotiation with Israel.⁶⁴ In fact, King Faisal was the architect of pronouncing this dictum at the conference.

The immediate cause for the formation of the Organization of Islamic conference was the incident of arson at Masjid al Aqsa on 21st August 1969. The failure of Arab armies in June 1967 and the military occupation of Jerusalem led the Arab leaders to be gathered in Rabat on 22-25 September 1969 and the OIC was formed.

Thus to its leaders, the most important issue to be addressed was the occupation of Jerusalem by Zionists and subsequent fire on Masjid al-Aqsa.. The OIC viewed the liberation of al-Quds from Zionist aggressors as their first and foremost duty. The first Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers held in March 1970 reiterates this fact, since the prominent agenda of the conference was the al- Aqsa arson.

⁶³ Ibid,p.80

⁶⁴ Khan. Zafarul Islam., Palestine Documents, (New Delhi: The Institute of Islamic and Arab Studies 1998),p.96

To provide an atmosphere of universal solidarity and affinity with Palestinians, the conference decided to observe the 21st August every year 'as a day of solidarity with the struggle of the people of Palestine'. The Conference identified the arson in al- Quds as an open aggression against the Islamic Community.

The conference also passed a resolution equating Zionism as racism and denounced the Zionists' inhuman and aggressive expansionist tendencies.

Apart from the Khartoum Conference, a summit Conference in Rabat, the capital of Morocco in October 1974 and Algiers Summit Conference on 26—28 November 1973 were convened and representatives from many Arab and Islamic countries attended. The Algerian summit Conference called for peace in West Asia. According to a resolution, peace 'presupposes a certain number of conditions' of which two were 'paramount and unchangeable'. first the evacuation by the Israel of al occupied Arab territories, in the first place Jerusalem and second, the re establishment of the full national 'rights of the Palestinian People'⁶⁵

The Algerian summit voiced the Arab concern over the Palestinian people's inalienable rights for the first time. Thus the summit undermined the US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's covert attempt to sideline the importance of Palestinian entity in Arab politics and his deliberate attempt to deny a satisfactory place in the negotiating process were halted by the summit resolutions.

⁶⁵ Pradhan, Bansidhar., Shuttle Diplomacy and Palestine Question (New Delhi: Kalinga Publications, 2001), p.125

The Rabat Conference of October 1974 appreciated Faisal's efforts for maintaining Arab unity. The conference adopted many resolutions and affirmed the right of the Palestinian people to establish an independent national authority under the leadership of the PLO in its capacity as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestine People, over all liberated territories and affirmed the right of the Palestinian people to return to their homeland and to self-determination.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The United Nations, the Supreme authority of the present day international political order couldn't find a solution to the issue of Palestine. Many resolutions passed by this international body became matters of mere academic debates. It denotes the complexity of the issue. Two major power blocs during the Cold War period and after the war, the single world heavy weight, the United State of America and its European friends failed to achieve an amicable solution to the problem. Then hoping a firm and persuasive approach from a relatively weak political and economic entity- Saudi Arabia – would be unreasonable.

Every single state in Westphalian states system has to adopt certain prerequisites to protect its territorial integrity, security and other national interests. Giving scant attention to politically devastating issues and applying unproportional attention to external issues would finally lead any state into chaos and ultimately to non – existence . King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud, the founder of modern Saudi Arabia, deserves appreciations on his meticulous efforts to engage in domestic, regional and international issues in ample proportion. At any time, he did not sacrifice his disapproving attitude towards Jewish state in Palestine and used every opportunity to castigate the power politics of the major international players. It should be remembered that until the end of the 1940s the Kingdom was economically weak and the only reliable revenue till that time was from the annual Hajj pilgrimage.

The Kingdom fully depended on its foreign benefactors for money and materials. The royalty from the ARAMCO and loan from the USA preserved the Kingdom intact. The sterile land, nomadic life and continuing feud of rival tribes and clans in several parts of the country checked an easy cake walk towards stability and prosperity of the state..

Considering the Palestine issue, the Kingdom had to consider a number of other problems incorporated with Palestine issue. The burgeoning ideological cleavage among the Arab states and their varied approaches towards the Arab common issues hindered the possibility of a unanimous Arab voice . This is happening at a pretext that the entire Arab World has been homogeneous in language, religion and culture. Yet the unanimity on common concerns was a rare commodity. The balkanization of the Arab land into tiny Sheikhdoms and Kingdoms without any noticeable heterogeneity and the supreme concern exerted on national interests of the states prevented the Arab states from adopting a collective measure in their common cause. It was in such a situation that none of the Arab states were approved the formation of Israel in Palestine and all were unanimous in dismantling the Jewish states from the Arab land..

The House of Saud always hoped for the leadership of the Arabs, as it has been the 'Custodian of Holy Mosques' and rulers of the centre of Islam, whereas many other Arab countries like Jordan and Egypt also aspired to take the reign of Arabs in their own hands. So each and every state was susceptible with their neighbors'

activities . King of Hussein of Transjordan and Saudi King always stood at loggerheads till the end of 1967 June War. Egypt as a radical state bitterly opposed the very existence of monarchical states in the Arab land. Syria after the military revolt of 1963 inclined more towards Egypt and joined the camp of radical groups.. Jordan was exerting tremendous effort to block PLO becoming a decisive voice in internal and external affairs of the Kingdom. Iraq ,Yemen and Lebanon gave no voice since they involved in their own internal troubles.

The introductory chapter has briefly discussed the emergence and consolidation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia . It also looked on the various aspects of Saudi foreign policy and how it evolved. The influence of religion and religious establishments, the power enjoyed by the Ulema and their position in the policy makings of Saudi Arabia have examined in this session of the work. The alliance between religious reformer Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahab and Muhammad Ibn Saud of Diriyah was the corner stone of Saudi Arabia's origin.. It took nearly two centuries to be consolidated the Arabian Peninsula under a single government. The Ottoman disintegration, colonial interests, World Wars along with the Arab Revolt, the application of mandatory system. And Jewish- British- American cooperation to create a Jewish state in Palestine were some of the many problems Ibn Saud had to face. Unless he had not adopted a balanced approach towards these issues ,the Kingdom would have been in turmoil. His policies kept the Peninsula from a direct colonial rule. The Islamic aspects of the state, the Bedouin population, insufficient revenue till the beginning of the oil production and

dependency on Britain and later America for protection and stability-.these factors predominantly reflected in the attitudes of King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud.

The Palestinian Arab revolt of 1936 offered Saudi Arabia a better chance to involve in Palestine issue directly. The unexpected response from the Arabs in favour of the revolt and the British trepidation that the prolongation of the revolt would badly damage the prestige of the Empire in Arab and non-Arab World demanded an immediate end of the revolt. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia did not miss this opportunity to promote itself as a major regional player by trying to arbitrate between the warring group to solve the crisis. Thus, by forwarding certain measures acceptable to both the groups Ibn Saud proclaimed his supremacy in the Arab politics.

Oil has been a decisive factor in Saudi Arabian foreign policy. The US' interest in West Asia reached new height with the discovery of massive oil fields in Saudi Arabia. Previously, the US' concerns over the area were mainly focused in the containment of Soviet influence and fulfillment of its promise of establishing a Jewish state in Palestine.. The oil discovery and subsequent production and revenue acquired from oil, revamped the outlook of Saudi Arabia.. This was in a situation that the Kingdom was eagerly looking for financial assistance from the USA and Britain and now the Kingdom became a benevolent donor to many Arab neighboring countries whose economic performance is poor. Palestine received substantial amount of money as assistance through UNRWA and other funds. The

1948 Arab – Israeli War and the creation of countless number of refugees exacerbated the existing stability of the nation. The Kingdom attempted to pacify them by assisting them for food, shelter, education and employment. By and large, it can be seen that the economic well-being of Saudi Arabia accomplished with the onset of oil insulated the Kingdom from the rage and disillusionment of Palestinians and neighboring Arabs, that would have created major political impact over the stability of the Kingdom. The second chapter of this work has highlighted these issues briefly.

The effort to use of this newly acquired wealth against Israel could be seen in the Arab endeavor to implement an economic and trade boycott to Jewish products in the second half of the 1940s. The tendency gradually grew and again in 1956 Suez Crisis, there were abortive attempts to install embargo regime. The aftermath of 1967 and 1973 Arab- Israeli wars witnessed the application of oil embargo against Israel and nations supporting Israel.

Arab land is homogeneous in language, religion and culture. The Arabs enjoy a sense of identity that transcends frontiers of nations. The linguistic homogeneity has helped to disseminate ideas and political developments from one country to other uninterruptedly. The spread of newspapers and radio enhanced the Arab political awareness. The kind of disadvantage from this development is that, even though it was a closed society, could not gloss over the events occurring in other neighboring countries. The instant spread of ideologies emanating whether from

Egypt, Iraq or Syria injected a sense of fear in the Kingdom. In view of the radicalization of the Palestine issue, the Kingdom had to adopt a balanced approach on the issue, where the Kingdom feared that it would create a chain of reaction in the Kingdom. King Saud assured this balancing approach. He felt convenient to agree with Eisenhower Doctrine and recognizing Socialism and Communism as major threats.

The humiliating Arab failure in 1967 War and the impotency of the radical Arab states to defeat Israel led to the decline of radical ideologies and in its place, moderate views of the Arabs began to attract more attention. Egypt's radical potentiality was crumbled and later the death of Nasser in 1970 closed the chapter of Egyptian radicalism or nationalism.

The third Chapter of the dissertation deals with the emergence of King Faisal of Saudi Arabia as a regional leader. The role of political leadership in the Arab world fell into the hands of Saudi Arabia and Faisal became more assertive in his views regarding the regional and international issues.

The radicalization of the PLO was the main concern of Saudi Arabia. Frustration and disillusionment due to the defeat in 1967 June War was conducive for the growth of radical groups in Arab World. The Palestine refugees seeking asylum in the Kingdom can make trouble to the stability of the nation, where a large number of Palestine expatriates, absorbed in various professions had been posed as a threat to the Kingdom. This speculation proved true with the PLO-Jordan Civil War in

1970. Like Jordan, the political system of Saudi Arabia being monarchical, the Kingdom desired to assist Jordan to quell the rebellion, at the same time, fearing the Palestinian resentment, King Faisal forced Jordan to adhere to the cease-fire agreement or to face withdrawal of annual monetary assistance. Faisal's endeavor to become the leader of the Arabs can be seen in its proclamation of the 'Islamic Charter'- an alternative to Nasser's pan-Arabism. It developed into a new height when he established a pan-Islamic organization being built on pure religious identity and proclaimed that the struggle for the liberation of Masjid al Aqsa, the third holy shrine of Islam in Jerusalem has been the main objective of the OIC.

The Arab - Israeli war of 1973 and the use of oil as an effective weapon against Israel and its allies would be considered as a historical event in Arab politics. The credit for the effective implementation of the embargo goes to King Faisal, who was the architect of the embargo. The embargo could taught the Arab many facts. Although oil was a potential weapon, its blockade did many advantageous and disadvantageous effects on Arab cause. The Arab economy weakened along with the US economy. The West informed its disapproval of the embargo and there was a psychological backlash in Europe, where they felt the Arabs were using natural resources to get their political interest accomplished.

The PLO-King Faisal relation was also complex. While the Kingdom had been offering huge some of money to the PLO and Fateh, Faisal wanted the PLO be subservient to Saudi design. In fact, Saudi needed the PLO more than the PLO needed Saudi Arabia. For Saudi Arabia, the PLO symbolizes the moderate voice

of the Palestinians and it would block the emergence of other Palestine group more radical and violent and can escape criticism from Israel's western allies, especially the USA.

Briefly to say, from the origin and establishment of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia till the death of King Faisal, Saudi Arabia never sought to break its basic behavior towards the question of Palestine. As a sovereign and independent state the Kingdom tremendously struggled for the integrity, stability and the regime security of the House of Saud. All other Arab and non- Arab issues attracted only a second thought.

In the post World War Second period, the United States' main strategic concerns over the West Asia were the prevention of the spread of Soviet influence into the region, protection and easy accessibility of the Arab oil and the creation of Israel. The US relation with any individual state would be constructed upon its desire to acquire these three objectives. Saudi Arabia also was not exempted from this US attitude and any attempt from the Arab side to unite themselves for their common cause by employing collective bargaining was jeopardized by outside powers. The US achieved its goal of making disunity among the Arabs by frequently generating distorted perceptions about Soviet Bloc that the USSR is moving fast to disrupt and destabilize the Arab regimes. By demonizing Nasser of Egypt and projecting him as a major threat to Arab regimes and providing arms and weapons to both Israel and the Arab states, the US achieved these objectives.

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