

**AN ENQUIRY INTO EDWARD SAID'S
VIEWS ON THE OSLO PEACE PROCESS**

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY



ABDUL RAHAMAN ANSARI



**West Asian Studies Division
Centre for the West Asian and African Studies
School of International Studies
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
New Delhi 110067
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INDIA**



CENTRE FOR WEST ASIAN AND AFRICAN STUDIES
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI - 110 067, INDIA

Phone : 26704372
Fax : 91-011-26717586
E-mail : cwaas_office_jnu@yahoo.co.in

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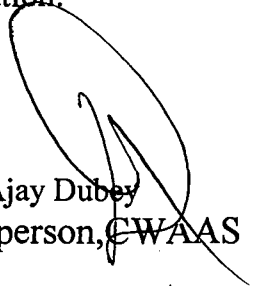
DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled “An Enquiry into Edward Said’s Views on the Oslo Peace Process” submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** of this University is my own work and has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other University.

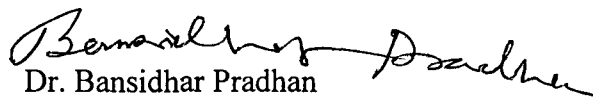

Abdul Rahman Ansari

CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.


Prof. Ajay Dubey
Chairperson, CWAAS

Chairman
Centre for West Asian and African Studies
SIS, JNU, New Delhi-110067


Dr. Bansidhar Pradhan
Supervisor



Centre for West Asian & African Studies
School of International Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110 067 (India)

Dedicated
To
Mai and Baba

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgement

List of Abbreviation

Chapter 1

Introduction: The Conflict, Oslo Peace Process and Edward Said	1
A. Brief History of the Conflict	2
B. Palestine vs Israel	7
C. The Oslo Peace Process	10
D. Edward W. Said: A Brief Introduction	23

Chapter 2

Edward Said and The Question of Palestine: A Case Study of Imperialism	32
A. From <i>Question of Palestine</i> to <i>The End of The Peace Process</i>	34
B. Zionism: An Imperial Ideology	37
C. Role of the US	44
D. Representation: Need and Nature	46
E. Palestinian Nation	50
F. Resistance vs Terrorism	53

Chapter 3

The Peace Process and the Oslo Agreements: the Classic Mistakes	59
A. Oslo Accords	60
B. Points of Disagreement	61

Chapter 4

An Analysis of Said's Alternatives to the Oslo Peace Process	83
A. A Reconsideration of Oslo Accords	84

B. Achievements of Oslo	91
C. The Meaning of Peace	94
D. Said's Alternatives and Their Viability	95

Chapter 5

Conclusion	109
References	115

List of Abbreviations

AIPAC: American Israeli Public Affairs Committee

CR: Culture of Resistance: Conversations with Edward W. Said

CI: Culture and Imperialism

DOI: Declaration of Independence

DOP: Declaration of Principles

FSN: Final Status Negotiations

PA: Palestinian Authority

PNC: Palestinian National Council

PLO: Palestinian Liberation Organisation

POD: Politics of Dispossession: The Struggle for Palestinian Self-Determination 1969-1994

PSN: Permanent Status Negotiations

RI: Representation of Intellectuals: the 1993 Reith Lecture

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION: THE CONFLICT, THE OSLO PEACE PROCESS AND EDWARD SAID

The Palestinian struggle for self determination is one of the longest struggles of its kind in the world. It is also one of the most complex problems. Further, it is one of the very few resistance movements in the Muslim world which has some secular credentials. The conflict between Israel and Palestine in the West Asian region is, for many, an example in which people have become “prisoners of their history”¹. The history of the Israel-Palestine conflict is a history of colonial repression and plight of innocent people. Generally it is considered that the history of it began on 14 May 1948 when the Zionists created a state for Jews with the explicit help of Western forces after displacing the native Palestinian Arabs. But as we will see, the various dimensions of the conflict make it very difficult to fix a particular date for the beginning of the conflict. However, for this study the history is only a reference point.

This study of Edward William Said’s criticisms of Oslo undertakes to establish the relationship between his writings on Palestine in general and his criticisms of the Oslo Peace Process in particular. This study is a product of the need of the Said’s readers who may find it difficult to understand that how one of the most prominent Arab scholars who always supported a peaceful resolution of the conflict can criticize the Oslo Peace Process and Declaration of Principles which are known as ‘the huge step forward’ in the history of the conflict (Clinton, 2004: 541).

¹ The phrase used by many historians of the Arab-Israeli conflict to denote the importance of history and also the use and misuse of a particular history of the region. See for example Milton, Beverly, Edward and Peter Hinchcliffe (2001), *Conflicts in the Middle East since 1945*, London and New York: Routledge, pp-21-33.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CONFLICT

In the pre-modern history the people of Palestine were the part of ancient Fertile Crescent² which was a regular target of invasions from every possible access to the land. When Jews first came to the land under the king Solomon in near about 1000 B.C. they were refugees thrown out from their lands in Egypt. They ruled in the area today known as Palestine for a long period with obvious regular interruptions from both the West and South. They were ultimately thrown out from their 'promised land' by the Byzantine rulers in 70 A.D. Byzantine rulers ruled the land till 637 A.D when the Muslim Arabs had conquered Palestine from them. The important part of this story is that Muslim Arabs were getting help in their mission to capture Palestine from "disaffected Christian Arabs" (Khalidi, 1992: 3). From then till early Crusade period Palestinian part of Fertile Crescent was in firm control of Muslim rulers. In between the long period of crusades, for a very brief period Jerusalem went into the hands of Christian crusaders but was recaptured by Saladin in the later half of the thirteen century. From then till the end of the First World War the Palestinian land was ruled by one Arab ruler or other (Hitti, 2004: 130-140). One thing which is very clear is that the land of Palestine before the Ottoman rule began in the fifteenth century, was never a separate province as it later became under the Ottomans and was a part of the one empire or other. So during the ancient and middle ages it was not the problem of the kind it is today. The present day Palestine-Israel problem is a modern phenomenon (Khalidi, 1992).

As a province of Ottoman empire in the modern history Palestine continued till the end of the First World War. Till the War the evolving identity among the Palestinians as "Palestinian" was not fully established. Palestinians were divided among various sects and tribes who were further divided into various classes. The development of "Palestinian identity" among the Palestinians though was a very slow process was started. When in 1831 Mohammad Ali, the then ruler of Egypt, occupied Palestinian province from the Ottomans it was a turning point in the evolution of the process of political awareness

² Fertile Crescent is a historical term denoting the area from Mediterranean East coast to the present day delta of rivers Tigris and Euphrates. Today's Palestinian lands including Israel and Occupied Territories, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq were the parts of the Fertile Crescent.

among the local Arabs. The rise of the sense of the common sufferings from Mohammad Ali's and later his son Ibrahim Pasha's rule among Palestinians culminated in the revolts against the Egyptian rule in 1834. Even at that time the local Arabs were anything but Palestinians. The revolt was led by Bedouins, rural Sheikhs, urban notables, mountain fellaheen, and various religious figures from Jerusalem some times separately and some times unitedly for their own reasons. In 1840 Ottomans recaptured the Palestinian province from Ibrahim Pasha with the European help. Ibrahim Pasha initiated many drives for modernization and reforms in the Palestinian society which contributed in the making of Palestinian identity and they were carried on by later Ottoman governors as well (Pappe, 2004: 3-4). However, the emergence of the "Palestinian identity" among these groups is a very late phenomenon. It happened only in the later part of Palestinian history, in the twentieth century (Kimmerling, Migdal, 2003: 7).

The emergence of Israel-Palestine conflict was a result of a "colonial conspiracy" against the Arabs (Said, 1979). The problem of modern day Palestine began to take shape in the last quarter of the nineteenth century not in Palestinian land but in Europe. Zionism as a modern political movement was started in Russia in the 1880s. The prevalent anti-Semitism³ against Jews created the problem of their assimilation into the European societies and compelled a section of European Jewry to join the newly started movement of Zionism in the second half of the nineteenth century (Khalidi, 1992: 2). It was the period of the first *Aliyah* (wave of Jewish immigration) to the Palestinian land. In 1882 first batch of Jews arrived in the Ottoman Palestine (Kimmerling, Migdal; 2003: 22). After first batch of migrants the need to establish an organised campaign for a Jewish state paved the way for the first Zionist congress. It held in 1897 in Basel in Switzerland under the leadership of Hungarian Jewish leader Theodore Herzl. It established the World Zionist Organization (WZO) as a body to create consensus among the Jews as well as to take major powers on board in the mission of creating a "Jewish National Home" (Khalidi, 1992: 2)⁴.

³ For the explanation of the term anti-Semitism, see the second chapter.

⁴ For detail of the programme of the WZO see the "declaration of first World Zionist Congress. See *Documents on Palestine*, P-50.

WZO started its campaign in Europe and America and in the begging, got moderate support among the Jews there. Despite all religious slogans and projections of a good life in the “national home” for Jews on the “Promised Land”, Jews in the European countries were not much willing to leave their settled life. According to Kimmerling and Joel Migdal till the end of the nineteenth century only 21 Jewish settlements with about 4500 inhabitants could be established inside the Ottoman Palestine (2003: 23). Including, native and immigrant Jews, they were only 7 percent of the Palestinian population till the end of the nineteenth century (Khalidi, 1992: 2). The role of WZO was very important in getting the very crucial support of British before the end of the First World War in the form of Balfour Declaration in the year 1917 (2 November). In this declaration British Foreign Secretary Balfour expressed on “behalf of his Majesty’s Government” his “sympathy” with “Jewish national aspirations” and expressed the British support in the formation of a “national home for Jewish people” inside the yet to be occupied “Palestine” without any prejudicing the “civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine” (see the Balfour Declaration in Documents on Palestine: 51). The reasons behind the British support have been speculated by many historians. According to one of them it was because of the need of British to have American involvement in the ongoing First World War. British knew the importance of Jewish lobby in the decision making of the United States. When British got the mandatory power to govern the Palestinian land from the League of Nations in 1919 the Jewish immigration increased dramatically. This increase in the Jewish immigration continued till 1929 riots. This was the first Arab resistance against the Zionist claim to the Palestinian land. At this time it was too late for Palestinian Arabs. They realized the danger of Zionism very late because of the idea of “collective interest” among them was still in the “formative stage” (Kimmerling and Migdal, 2003).

From 1930 and after Palestinians started organizing resistance against both Zionists and British. In the 1936-39 “Arab revolt” Palestinians participated in large numbers against the British rule and their policies of helping the “Zionist imperialist designs”. Still, according to historian Bowden, the revolt of 1936-39 was not directed against the common Jews living inside Palestinian mandate region but directed against the British

policies of allowing Zionist immigration (Kimmerling and Migdal, 2003: 119). This revolt compelled the British to issue a White Paper and also to impose restrictions on the further Jewish immigration. But, due to the *Holocaust* in Europe during the Second World War and strong Zionist pressure the restrictions imposed by British were lifted and immigration continued as usual during the 1940s, in fact it increased. In the mean time the Zionists started to have their own arm militias on pretext of security threats from Arabs. The creation of *Hagana* and *Irgun* can be attributed to this very period of Palestinian history and they were the prelude to the creation of Israel (Pappe, 2004). Till the end of 1948 many more *Aliyahs* had happened and due to this in 1948 the Jews had increased to 55 percent of the Palestinian population. The increase in the Jewish population was as much because of Jewish immigration as because of Arab migration from the Palestine. Till the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) partition plan passed on 29 November 1947 almost one third of Arabs were living outside Palestine due to continuous unrest in the Palestinian mandate (Kimmerling and Migdal, 2003).

Due to the persistent unrest and colonial rule in the Palestine many Arabs started moving out from their homes much before the 1948 *Nakbah*⁵. They mostly went to the neighbouring Arab countries as most of them had their relatives there, but some of them also went to the Western countries. Those who went to neighbouring countries could not get better facility due to lack of any policy in the Arab World to deal with this situation. In fact, Arab countries were not in a position to do much due to lack of resources and the absence of any stable government in any of the Arab countries. After the UN General Assembly passed the resolution 181 in 1947 the Arab anger became wild and riots between Palestinians and Jews started on a large scale. Zionist militias were much organized and strong in comparison to Arab militias and it gave them advantage in the subsequent first Arab-Israel War in 1948. The Zionist leadership was fully in favour of UN partition plan because they were getting more than their share in the population.⁶ According to some, British opposed the partition plan initially due to their own repeated

⁵ It is an Arabic word meaning catastrophe. In the Arabic literature 1948 mass exodus of Palestinians is remembered as *al-Nakbah*.

⁶ See UN General Assembly resolution 181 dated 29 November 1947. This resolution was based on the recommendation of the UNSCOP. There were two proposals; one was to create a federal structure which was defeated.

commitments given to some of the Arab leaders in their tactics to win friends in the West Asia. But they were not bothered to resolve the issue at the time and ultimately left the warring parties on their own fate on 15 May 1948 when they unilaterally left the Palestinian mandate (Fraser, 1995: 38).

In the first Arab-Israeli war of 1948 Israel could not capture the West Bank and Gaza as well as Eastern Jerusalem. In the 1949 April an Armistice was signed which established the *green line* between Israeli captured lands and Jordanian captured West Bank and East Jerusalem. Gaza was in the Egyptian hand. The Armistice remained in force till the Second Arab-Israeli War in 1967. In June 1967 Israel and Arab armies from Egypt, Syria and Jordan indulged in the War in which Israel occupied West Bank and Eastern Jerusalem from Jordan and Gaza from Egypt. It also occupied Sinai Peninsula from Egypt which it returned in 1979 Camp David Accords to Egypt in exchange for its recognition. In the War Israel also occupied Golan Heights from Syria. This was the second *Nakbah* for Palestinians after the first in 1948.

In the meantime Palestinians started their struggle for independence from the Israeli Occupation. The establishment of Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) in 1964 as an umbrella organisation for various resistance movement was a major event in the history of Palestinian resistance movement. PLO was earlier an organisation which denied any talks to Israel but later in the eighties of the last century began to talk about the “peaceful solution” of the conflict and expressed its willingness to adopt “two state solutions”. In the year 1988 Palestinian National Congress (PNC), Palestinians parliament in exile passed a resolution in the support of UN resolutions and the “two state solutions” (we will see these later). The rest of the history of the Palestine-Israel conflict is the history of wars, Guerrilla attacks on Israel and Israeli counter attacks and UN resolutions and consistent failures of the Peace initiatives. This history is also the history of consistent sufferings of the Palestinians, establishments of security barriers by Israel and Jewish settlements inside the Occupied Territories by Israel and mass Palestinian uprisings in the form of *Intifada*. For this study the most important event is the initiative

for peace taken by both the parties in the start of 1990s which culminated in the Oslo Accords in 1993 and after.

THE CONFLICT: PALESTINE vs ISRAEL

The Palestinians of today claim descent, not only from their forebears who defeated Byzantium, but also from the people who inhabited Palestine under Byzantium. These in their turn were descendants, ethnic layer upon ethnic layer and generation after generation, of all previous inhabitants of the land, including the ancient Hebrews and their precursors. In other words, in Palestinian eyes, the Palestinian birthright to their country, Palestine, was as pristine as the birthright of any people to their own country (Khalidi, 1992; 2-3).

“The Palestinian claim” is avowedly based upon ‘history’ and their goal is the dissolution of another state. Their alleged right of ‘self-determination’ is based upon the erroneous alleged “90% majority of Arabs in 1917 on the Jewish-settled areas that became Israel in 1948” (Peters, 1984; 402-03).

The complicated part of the Palestinian history is that it has two entirely opposite versions. One is the Arab version and the other is the Zionist. Both have described the birth of Palestinian nationalism and Israel for that matter differently according to their own claims on the land. There is an absence of a meeting point between the two versions because both have been written by respective nationalists keeping their claims in the conflict in the mind (Pappe, 2004: 1-13). In 1969 Golda Meir the then Prime Minister of Israel, proclaimed,

There were no such things as Palestinians. When was there an independent Palestinian people with a Palestinian state? ...it was not as though there was a Palestinian people in Palestine considering itself as a Palestinian people and we came and threw them out and took their country from them. They did not exist (June 15, 1969, *The Sunday Times*).

In this proclamation she was demonstrating the power of history to indoctrinate the masses according to the proclaimed cause of an ideology. This denial of “other” is a mutual act as many Arabs are also denying the fact that discrimination against Jews in the Western societies was common. Some of the Arab leaders and historians were also denying till very recently that there was anything like *Holocaust*. They simply believed

that Jews came as invaders and should be thrown into the Sea. This consistent denial of “other” has been a strong instrument of spreading hatred against each other and mobilizing mass support in favour of. This has helped, in other words, in the creation and sustenance of strong xenophobia in each community. Israel mobilizes its citizens against the threat of Arabs. According to the successive Israeli prime ministers Arabs, if given opportunity, would kill or expel every Jew from Israel because they do not recognize Israel. Even during the Madrid Peace Conference the ‘security’ by Arabs phrased as “right to exist” was a major concern for the then Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. He stated, “Peace could not come at the expense of Israel’s security. When it comes to Israel’s security we will concede not a thing. From our standpoint, security takes precedence over peace” (Shlaim, 1994: 13). So the fear of Arabs among Israelis and the use of the old Arab slogan of “driving Israelis into the sea” have been used as a mobilizing tactic against Palestinian movement for self-determination by Israeli hawks (Shlaim, 1994).

The slogan of “wiping out the Israeli state from the map of the world” has been a motivating force for many resistance fighters since the establishment of the PLO in 1964. This has led to mindless violence against the Jews in the Occupied Territories (OTs) and even inside the Israeli territories. Some times this violence has taken place even outside the region.⁷ This slogan had been incorporated in the PLO charter and instead of helping the Palestinian cause this had only strengthened the Israeli hawk’s propaganda against Palestinian Arabs and also internationally damaged the Palestinian cause. This particular provision of the PLO charter had compelled Palestinians to concede many things in the Oslo Accords as well. But according to Edward Said through the creation of this “xenophobia” of Arabs Israel has not achieved anything substantial as well. It has only made people of Palestine to resist more vigorously against the Israeli oppression (Said, *Culture of Resistance: conversations with Edward Said [CR]*, 2003).

⁷ For example in the killing of eleven Israeli Athletes during the Munich Olympic in 1972 by Black September group.

Another major characteristic of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is the use of religion by Zionist's whole campaign to create a Jewish home land was based on the religious line (Said, 1979). The creation of Israel on the Biblical 'Promised Land' as a 'Jewish state' with the sole motive of creating a *Eretz Israel* (land of Israel) with the inclusion of *Judea and Samaria* (West Bank) is one great example of this excessive use of religion. Said criticized this phenomena. He saw it as an expression of "return of repressed religiosity" by the people (Jew) who had been denied their rights of religion since a very long time in European societies. (Hart, 2000: 88-115). The use of biblical terms in every day life by the Zionist is very general. They term every successive war since 1967 with Arabs according to Jewish religious belief and see every act of Arab against Israeli occupation as anti-Semitism. Arab movement for Palestinian self-determination in contrast has been to a large extent, secular. The use of religious symbols and terms are there in Palestinian Arabs also but it could never become a mainstream Palestinian movement. Edward Said praised PLO in its early days because of its "secular character" (Hart, 2000: 147).

Mass exodus of Palestinian Arabs from their homes in the erstwhile Palestinian mandate during the period first Arab-Israel has created an enormous refugee population. Majority of them fled to the Arab occupied lands (Gaza and West Bank and East Jerusalem which were under Egypt and Jordan respectively) in 1948. The massive refugee camps came into existence in this period. A significant Palestinian population went to Jordan, Lebanon and Syria also. In the 1967 war another major exodus of Palestinians happened and this time it happened from the Gaza, West Bank and East Jerusalem to Jordan, Syria and Egypt. Some of the Palestinians went to Western countries also. Today almost 50 percent of Palestinians are living outside their homes⁸. Some are well settled but most of them living only on the aid provided by the world community (Aruri, 2001). The reasons behind Palestinian migration have been the fear of life created by Israeli militia during and after the 1948 war and Israeli discriminatory policies towards them. In 1948 according to Ilan Pappé "Three-quarters of a million Palestinians became refugees, this

⁸ According to rough estimates in 2001 the population of Palestinians living in the refugee camps in different parts of the world total is around 5 Million including the Gaza and the West Bank. The largest refugee population is living in Jordan where around 2 Millions live, Syria has 0.5 Million, Lebanon has 0.4 Million and Egypt has 70000 Palestinian refugees. See UNWRA reports of 2001 for more details.

was almost 90 percent of those living in what was designated as the Jewish state” (2004: 139).

The 1967 war and the occupation of West Bank, Gaza and Eastern Jerusalem by Israeli forces have made Palestinians a “nation” fighting for their self determination (Kimmerling and Migdal, 2003). After this war the “Arab nationalism” has given way to the idea of “Palestinian nationalism” (Said, *Politics of Dispossession [POD]*, 1994). The importance of the war in the history of world and Palestinian struggle for self determination is immense. This war also draws the attention of world community towards the Palestinian plight for the first time in their history. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) today the main bases of Palestinians claim of their right to self determination were results of this war.⁹

THE OSLO PEACE PROCESS

After the war of 1967 the Palestinians “awakening” happened which culminated in a strong movement of self determination (Kimmerling and Migdal, 2003). It got a limited support from world community as well. In the same year UNSC passed Resolution 242 in which Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and Eastern parts of Jerusalem along with other Arab lands in the June War was condemned. This capture of new lands was a great achievement for Israeli forces but it had also created a practical problem for the Israeli policy makers. It created a situation in which now Israel had to take the responsibility of a massive Palestinian population which was not only a burden on the exchequer but also a demographic danger in a sense that in Israeli controlled areas now Palestinian Arabs became equal in numbers with Jews. It was against the idea of Zionist founders of Israel who intended to create a Jewish state. These OTs (as recognized in the UNSC resolution 242) were dangerous also because of the emergence of resistance movements. This was a security threat for Israel (Pappe, 2004: 202-204).

⁹ For the text of the resolutions see the Europa Year Book for Middle East and North Africa 2003. There is a collection of all relevant documents on the Palestine from declaration of first Zionist congress held in august 1897 to UN Security Council resolution 1397 of 12 March 2002 in this volume. See pp 50-98.

These vital problems were necessary to be solved in order to have a secure Israel. For this purpose Israeli administration initiated a policy of “Land for Peace” in the aftermath of 1967 war. This policy simply promises the exchange of Occupied Territories on the guarantee of the Israeli security to the Arab countries. Many Plans like “Allon plan” were proposed to solve the problem Occupied Territories.¹⁰ After the 1973 War in the year 1979 in Camp David Accords Egypt got back Sinai from Israel in the exchange it recognized Israel and became the first Arab state to do this. This was the first and last successful experiment of the Land for Peace policy till date (Pappe, 2004). The Oslo Peace Process was an attempt to materialize the policy of “Land for Peace” (Kimmerling and Migdal, 2003).

In the year 1988 in November PNC in its 19th session passed the Declaration of Independence of Palestine in which the existence of Israel was accepted in principle first time in the history of Israel-Palestine conflict. It also accepted the UNSC Resolutions 242 and 338 as the basis of future solution of the conflict. In response an Israeli proposal was being made in the next year. This Israeli proposal rejected any possibility of “talk with PLO” and was against any proposal to establish a “Palestinian state” in the West bank of river Jordan. This rejection of the talks with PLO and the possibility of any Palestinian state were made with the “Jordanian Option” in mind. The “Jordanian option” was an option searched by Israelis to end the Palestinian problem. In this Jordan had to be made the home of Palestinians with some or no territorial exchange with Jordan (see next page). The Israeli proposal insisted on a precondition of any talks even with a non- PLO Palestinian interlocutor. It says the talks will happen only when they (Palestinians) deny “violence” and agree on the “continuance of the settlements inside the OTs”. This was totally against the PNC proposals as we can see (Documents on Palestine, 2003: 69-72).

In Madrid (Spain) before the Oslo Peace Process there was an attempt made by US and Soviet Union (later Russians) to resolve the Arab-Israeli problem in its totality. “The Middle East Peace Conference” was based on a comprehensive agenda to resolve not

¹⁰ for various plans and proposals for settlement of dispute came from among the Israeli politicians and from the diplomats and statesman’s from many parts of the world see Documents on Palestine, Europa Year Book for Middle East and North Africa 2003; 50-98.

only Israel-Palestine question but also the problems of Golan Heights between Syria and Israel and Sheba Farms between Lebanon and Israel. With Jordan there was no territorial issue involved because it renounced its claims on the West Bank and East Jerusalem in 1988. This conference also intended to get the much awaited recognition for the Israeli state from the Arabs. For Palestinians there was nothing much to do because Israel refused to allow any PLO delegation and it was only after many rounds of negotiations that Israel permitted Palestinians in the conference only as members of a Jordanian delegation. At that time Israel considered “Jordanian Option” is the only option for Palestinians. Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir initiated this proposal which also helps in the Zionist claim of greater Israel. According to the proposal Palestinians would be incorporated as Jordanians with or without certain parts of the West Bank given back to Jordan. In this option the Palestinian State as a separate entity had no place (Pappe, 2004: 211-222).

The “Middle East Peace Conference” was called by as we have seen earlier, United States and USSR as co-sponsors in Madrid (Spain) in October 1991. It lasted till July 1993 to the full ten rounds but could achieve nothing substantial. It was a failed attempt because of many reasons, the most prominent among them was the Israeli rightwing Likud government led by a hawk Yitzhak Shamir who firmly believed in the idea of “greater Israel” and even campaigned for it during the 1992 elections in July. Likud lost to Labour first time since 1977 in July 1992 and Yitzhak Rabin became Prime Minister (Shlaim, 1994: 10-11).

According to Avi Shlaim, the Israeli denial to a Palestinian delegation in Madrid Conference “was like a rare instancing of a match in which, one party chose not only its own team for the match but also that of the other party” (1994: 8). He was referring to the Israeli rigidity during the talks. Madrid Conference failed also because no other Arab country could dare to “ditch” Palestinians and had a deal of their own as Egypt did in

1979¹¹. The sponsors of the talks failed to understand the gap between the Israeli policies and Palestinian expectations. Shlaim argued,

The negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians only highlighted the immense gap between them. The Palestinians began with the assumption that they are a people with national rights and that the interim arrangements under discussion were the precursor to independence and should be shaped accordingly. The Israeli government started with the assumption that the Palestinians are the inhabitants of the territories with no national rights of any kind and certainly no right to independence not even after the end of the transitional period (1994: 9).

Madrid failed also because the new Labour government led by Yitzhak Rabin adopted more rigid attitude towards Palestinians. Rabin's "marching on two feet" (two feet were force and negotiation) at the same time and policy of not conceding anything in the name of security had created mistrust among Palestinians (Shlaim, 1994). But this failure led to other process which was going on in disguise in Norway between PLO delegates and Israeli officials. This was an initiative of Shimon Peres, Israeli foreign minister in Rabin's cabinet and a known dove in the Labour party with the Norwegian help and hospitality. From January till July 1993 the Oslo Peace talks were going on in secrecy simultaneously with the "Middle East Peace Process" until it became known to all.

In Madrid where no separate Palestinian delegation was allowed and no member of PLO was allowed by Israelis even in the Jordanian delegation, in Oslo after almost forty five years of occupation without recognition, Palestinians got their first chance to sit across the table with Israelis and talk about their future by themselves. Most of the talks happened on different dates in Oslo and many of the technicalities of the Oslo Accords had been finalized in these secret talks. These talks were kept secret deliberately by all the parties involved due to the reason that it might become the victim of public sentiments (Qurie, 2006). So, with all details finalized earlier the "Declaration of Principle" (DOP) was signed on 13 September 1993 in Washington. The DOP, Gaza-Jericho agreement of 4 May 1994 and the Interim Agreement signed on 28 September 1995 all together are considered for this study as Oslo Accords and hereafter will be spelled out accordingly. From Israeli side it was Simon Peres who signed the agreement.

¹¹ Because of Egyptian recognition of Israel in 1979 it had to face a boycott from the Arab League from 1979 till 1990.

From Palestinian side it was Mahmood Abbaas (Abu Mazen) who signed as PLO representative. Both the signatories were accompanied by Rabin, Arafat and the then United States president Bill Clinton. With all its detail it was a historic event in many ways. It was first time that Palestinians got represented by their own people in any talks on their future. First time an Israeli government signed an accord with Palestinians and accepted officially their claims on the land (Qurie, 2006).

With all details available it was broadly accepted that the talks in Oslo had secret blessings of Israeli Prime Minister Rabin and Yassir Arafat. US president Bill Clinton from the beginning of Oslo's open sessions from July had a major role in the successful culmination of the talks (Clinton, 2004: 541-548). The role of the Yossi Beili, a dove in the Labour party, was also immense as he helped to gather the delegates for the talks. During the first six months talks were very formal and secret and only in July they became high profile when Uri Savir the director general of Israeli foreign ministry joined the talks as a chief negotiator from Israeli side along with Ahmed Qurie of PLO. From then on it also became open due to leaks in media about the developments in the talks (Savir, 1998).

After four decades of violence and bloodshed the Oslo Peace Process brought a hope of peace in the region. The DOP signed in Washington was just the beginning of the process of peace. It was suppose to go till the final settlements of all major issues recognized in the DOP. It was officially accepted by both the sides that the peace process will last for five years at most. But, nothing happened according to the plan and though two more major agreements were signed, Hebron and Gaza-Jericho, Oslo Peace Process began to face problems since the first day. Due to many violations from both the sides and killing of Prime Minister Rabin in November 1995 by a fanatic who did this because he did not want the "division" of the Israel, peace process became dead. Later many attempts were made by both the sides as well as the US to revive it but with no avail. After the killing of Rabin and coming of Benjamin Netanyahu as the Prime Minister in the 1996 elections, the Oslo peace Process was reduced to formalities. All the attempts of its revival failed

miserably when in 2000 *Al-aqsa Intifada* broke out in the OTs¹². The election of Ariel Sharon in the same year as the prime minister closed the fate of any peace proposal on the multilateral forums. His unilateral approach has failed the attempts of four major powers and the UN's joint effort in the form of "Road Map" (Kimmerling, 2003).

As we have clarified earlier for this study the Oslo Accords means the period between 1993 and 1995. The three major agreements signed in this period namely; DOP of 13 September 1993, Gaza-Jericho agreement of 4 May 1994 and the Interim Agreement on West bank and Gaza strip signed on 28 September 1995. These are commonly known as Oslo Accords. We will also include the letters written by Yassir Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin on 9 September 1993 to recognize each other. These letters are an important part of the Oslo Accords. This is because without these letters there would have been no DOP (Dajani, 1994: 5).

I. The Letters of Mutual Recognitions of 9-10 September 1993

As per the precondition put up by the Oslo talks both sides agreed to recognize each others before any agreement is signed. On 9 September 1993 Yassir Arafat wrote his letter to Rabin in which he on "behalf of PLO" gave "recognition" to the "state of Israel" and "its right to exist" in "Peace and security". He also proclaimed that the PLO accepts the UNSC resolutions 242 and 338. He proclaimed that PLO "commits itself" to the "Middle East peace process" and "peaceful resolution of the conflict between the two sides". Arafat "renounced" the use of "violence" and "terrorism" by the PLO. In the letter Arafat assured the Israeli side that those articles and provisions of the "Palestinian covenant" which "deny Israel's right to exist" and which are "inconsistent of the commitments" of "this letter" will be "inoperative" and "void". He also promised to "necessary changes" in the Palestinian covenant (Arafat's letter to Rabin, The peace Process: 115).

¹² The immediate reason of the Al-Aqsa Intifada was the Sharon's provocative march into the Al-Aqsa mosque in September of the year 2000. It was said that it broke out because people were not happy with the overall developments in the peace process.

This letter has been the matter of criticism. According to Burhan Dajani “it gave everything Israel wanted without any assurance from them”. It gave Israel the right to exist without any defined borders as well as it prevented any form of resistance and according to the letter it will be PLO’s responsibility to protect the Israeli state from its own people (Dajani, 1994: 6-8). However, for Israel the letter of Arafat was a real achievement. It gave the Israeli state legitimacy it wanted from the last forty five years. About the criticisms of this letter some argue as we will see later, there were no alternatives for Arafat if he wanted to start the negotiations he had to denounce violence and recognize the Israeli state. They also argue that anyway Arafat and PLO had recognized Israel in 1988 itself and had denounced the use of violence.

In response to Yassir Arafat’s letter Rabin wrote a letter on the next day which briefly conveyed the message that “in light of PLO’s commitments” the “Government of Israel” recognizes the PLO as the “representative of Palestinian people” and it is ready to have “negotiations with it” in the “Middle East Peace Process” (Rabin’s letter to Arafat, *The Peace Process*: 115). It gave no assurances and no commitment for anything. Burhan Dajani argued about the differences in letters that “While Arafat relies on (Rabin’s) ‘firm conviction’ in no certain form, Rabin relies on a written text containing clear commitments” (of Arafat and PLO) (1994: 7). In other words for all practical purposes in his letter Rabin did not commit anything.

II. The Declaration of Principles: 13 September 1993

After the fourteen rounds of talks the Declaration of Principles was signed on 13 September 1993 in Washington. The DOP consists of total XVII articles and four annexure. It is by itself not an agreement on any issue but a set of principles on which the future talks and agreements were to be based. The most important feature of the agreement was its having a programme. It consists of a well defined time table for every step to be taken during the interim period of five years till the final settlements of all the disputes.

In the very preamble of the DOP both sides agreed that the “decade’s long violence” and conflict should end. Both the parties should recognize each others “legitimate and political rights”. They both should “strive to live in peaceful coexistence and mutual dignity and security” to achieve a “just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement and historic recognition through the agreed political process” (Kimmerling and Migdal, 2003: 331). The formal part of the DOP begins with the “aim” of the negotiations in article I. According to the article one the aim of the broader “Middle East Peace Process” was to establish a “Palestinian Interim self government authority”, the “elected council” for the “Palestinian people” in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. This council would be an “interim council” for not more than “five years” for the “sole purpose of giving representation to the Palestinians in the talks”. There would have been a “permanent solution” based on “UNSC resolutions 242 and 338” in this “interim period of five year” (DOP, Documents on Palestine: 72). This acceptance of Articles 242 and 338 was a concession given by Israeli side in the context of Israeli worse record in the implement the UN resolutions.

Article II of the DOP provides the “framework” for “initiatives” and “steps” to be taken in the interim period of five years. In this regard rest of the articles in the DOP are the explanations of this Article II. Article III talks about the “democratic elections” to be held in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in order to give the Palestinian people representation “not later than nine months” after the DOP come into force. Article XVII of the DOP puts the date of the DOP’s “coming into the force” as “one month after its signing” (DOP, Documents on Palestine: 73-74). So according to the DOP, 14 October 1993 was the date of its coming in to the force. However, elections were held only in December 1996 as we will see later.

Article IV of the DOP talks about the “jurisdiction” of the elected Palestinian council. According to the article “the council will cover West Bank and Gaza Strip’s territory for all issues except for those that will be negotiated in the Permanent Status Negotiation”. The same clause in the Article IV says “the two sides view the West Bank and Gaza Strip as a single territorial unit, whose integrity will be preserved during the interim period”. In

the Article V the “guidelines” about the interim period have been led down. The first thing was to be done was the “withdrawal” from Gaza and Jericho in the West Bank of the Israeli armed forces. The other major thing was to be done was according to the Article, the commencement of “Permanent Status Negotiations” (PSN) “as soon as possible” but “not later than the beginning of the third year” of the “interim period.” The issues to be discussed in the PSN were identified as “the status of Jerusalem, the problem of Palestinian refugees, settlements, security and other issues of common interest” (DOP, Documents on Palestine: 73)

Articles VI, VII, VIII and IX of the DOP, all talk about the “powers and responsibilities” of the “interim authority.” According to article VI there will be “transfer of the powers” to the “authorised Palestinians” after the withdrawal of Israel from the Gaza strip and Jericho of the West Bank which will be “preparatory in nature” until the “inauguration of the council”. The “Interim authority” of the Palestinians was to be established according to article VII of the DOP. Article VII of the DOP talks about the “interim agreement” to be signed in the future. In the context of article VI, article VIII accepts the need of a “strong police force” to be “under the future Palestinian council” (DOP, Documents on Palestine: 73).

Article IX gave the “council” “power to legislate” according to the “Interim Agreement” to be signed later. Article X laid down the need of the establishment of a “joint Israeli-Palestinian Liaison committee in order to deal with issues requiring coordination, other issues of common interest and disputes.” Article XI and XII are related to Israeli-Palestinian “cooperation in economic fields” and “liaison” and “cooperation with Jordan and Egypt” respectively. Another main article of the DOP was Article XIII which talks about the “redeployment of Israeli forces” from the Gaza strip and the West Bank. The “redeployment” will not be complete though it will be “specific” and “gradual” and will start on the “eve of the election of the council”. According to the article “the principle”, which will be followed in the redeployment of the Israeli army from the autonomous areas, says that “Israeli military forces should be redeployed outside the populated areas”. Article XIV in the DOP further talks about “specific redeployment” of the Israeli forces

from Gaza Strip and Jericho area in the West Bank according to “annex II of the DOP” (DOP, Documents on Palestine: 74).

Article XV categorically talks about the establishment of a “dispute settlement mechanism”. The preferred sequence of dispute settlement will be, according to the article, as follows “joint liaison committee” would be established according to Article X, in the case of further complications there would be adopted the methods of “conciliation” and finally arbitration “if necessary”. Article XVI was related to “regional programs” and the “desired cooperation between Israeli and Palestinian sides” (DOP, Documents on Palestine: 74)

Out of four annexure first describes the “protocol on the mode and conditions of elections” in which Palestinians residing in Jerusalem were also given the right to vote in the council election. However refugees were excluded due to “practical reasons”. Other three annexures are “protocol on withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip and Jericho area”, “protocol on Israeli-Palestinian cooperation in economic and development programs” and the “protocol on Israeli- Palestinian cooperation concerning regional development programs” respectively (DOP, Documents on Palestine: 74).

DOP clearly says that “it is understood that, subsequent to the Israeli withdrawal, Israel will continue to be responsible for external security, and for internal security and public order of settlements and Israelis. Israeli military forces and civilians may continue to use roads freely within the Gaza strip and the Jericho area” (see the Agreed Minutes to the DOP on Interim Self Government Arrangement, Documents of Palestine: 76) This provision was being used by Israel to violate many other provisions of the DOP and later signed agreement in fact in various ways this made mockery of powers and responsibilities given to Palestinian authority. Edward Said though was critical to DOP as a whole, was harsh on this section of the DOP.

III. Gaza-Jericho Agreement

Based on the DOP the Gaza-Jericho agreement was signed in Cairo on 4 May 1994. It had XXII articles. It was an attempt to fulfil the provisions of the DOP and except the mode of elections of the Palestinian Authority (PA) it dealt with the every other provisions of the DOP. It laid down with other things, the “details” of the “scheduled withdrawal of Israeli military forces” from the “specific areas of the OTs” as recognized in the agreement (Article II). It also laid down the details of the “transfer of authority” specifically from the “Israeli military government” and its “civil administration” to the “PA” which “hereby established, in the accordance with the article V of this agreement” (Article III). It should be noted that the “jurisdiction” of the “PA” will not cover, as laid down in DOP also, the “areas in which there are settlements and military installations” whether they are inside Gaza or Jericho (Article V). Again “foreign relations”, “internal security and public order of Settlements” and the “military installations areas” and “Israeli and external security” will not be in the jurisdiction of the PA even after the withdrawal of Israeli army and the election of the Palestinian Council. These issues are to be discussed in PSN or Final Status Negotiations (FSN). The Gaza-Jericho agreement also created the “structure and composition” of PA. According to the Article IV of the agreement, PA will consist of “one body of 24 members”. It will operate only on those “departments transformed to it” by the specific agreements and its “members” must have the “prior consent” of the Israeli government. Beside all this, the Gaza-Jericho agreement initiated the “Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs)” between Israel and PA through the release of “Palestinian prisoners” from the Israeli jails (Article XX) (Documents on Palestine : 76-80).

IV. The Interim Agreement

For all practical purposes the Gaza-Jericho agreement was a temporary agreement as all the agreements signed in the interim period of five years were. Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip was signed on 28 September 1995 by the Chairman of the PLO Yassir Arafat, and the Israeli minister of Foreign Affairs Simon

Peres in Washington. The Interim Agreement was the agreement prescribed into the DOP in Article VII as we have seen above.

The “preamble” of the Interim Agreement restates the “basic items” agreed upon in the DOP. In brief it reaffirms the “determination” of both the parties to put an end to the decades of “confrontation and conflict” and make “peace” in order to have a “peaceful coexistence” of both the people. It also recognized the aim to create a Palestinian Interim Self-government through democratic elections of the Council as agreed upon in the DOP and Gaza-Jericho agreements. This Interim Agreement has superseded the Gaza-Jericho agreement of 4 May 1994, the agreement on preparatory transfer of powers and responsibilities signed at Eretz on August 29, 1994 and the protocol on further transfer of powers and responsibilities signed at Cairo on August 27 1995 (see the Preamble of the Interim Agreement). The Interim Agreement had five Chapters and XXXI Articles. The major provisions of the Interim Agreement were as follows:-

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1. According to the Article X of the Interim agreement PA would gain “all civil control” over all Palestinian cities and the highly populated refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza strip (with the exception of settled Jewish areas in the city of Hebron in the West Bank). The total territory transferred to the sole Palestinian control till the Interim Agreement was about 3 to 4 percent of the West Bank and Gaza strip in the agreement it was identified as the Area A. In the agreement it was also agreed upon that the “intermediate division” of the rest of the territory of the West Bank and Gaza would be done. It will create two areas of governance: an area of about 27 percent of the land in which there would be joint control of Israel and PA—most of the rural areas of the West Bank including about 440 villages and their surrounding lands (Area B) and an area of about 70 percent of the territory under the sole Israeli control—the Jordan valley, all the Jewish settlements in the West Bank and their venues of access (they are called as Area C). In area B the Palestinian authority was to have control over “military and security issues”; “joint armed patrols” were also to be arranged for area B. This categorization was for temporary period till the commencement of FSN



(Kimmerling, 2003: 332). This in effect divides the OTs into three major areas first, area under direct Palestinian control, second area under Joint control and third, area under sole Israeli control. Area A, B and C respectively.

2. In the second Chapter of the Interim Agreement the powers and responsibilities of the interim Palestinian self-government namely Palestinian Authority and Palestinian Council had been discussed. In the agreement Palestinians got jurisdiction over the issues including “education and culture, health, social welfare, direct taxation and tourism as well as the policing of their controlled areas”. The Interim Agreement also set the mode of “elections” (Article II) for the Council and fixed its Structure. The Palestinian Council, according to the Article IV would have 82 members with a *Ra’ees* (president) of the executive authority as its head. This put the powers and responsibilities of the *Ra’ees* vis-à-vis the Council. Hence, the Palestinian interim Self-government Authority (in brief PA) consists of the Palestinian Council and the *Ra’ees* of the executive authority of the Council [Article III (1)]. It also had the provision of a “Palestinian court of justice” (Article VIII) and allowed the PA to have its own “Police Force” (Article XIV). In brief, the Interim Agreement was like an interim constitution of the Palestinian self-government.
3. The most important part of the Interim Agreement was the provisions of FSN which were to be “commence no later than May 4 1996”. Anyhow it had to be finished within 5 years of the signing of the DOP. The Interim Agreement established that, “it is understood that these negotiations shall cover remaining issues, including: Jerusalem, Refugees, Settlements, Security arrangements, Borders, Relations and cooperation with other neighbours, and other issues of common interest” [Article XXXI (5)].

In the agreement Israelis were to ensure Palestinians about their “free and secure” land movement between the “two parts of the PA governed territories”, “release political prisoners” and “grant aid” (together with the United States and the European states) for

developing an “economic and social infrastructure” in the areas ruled by the PA, including the building of an “international airport” and a “deep water port” in the Gaza (Article XXXI) (for the text of the Interim Agreement see Documents on Palestine: 80-86). After the Gaza-Jericho agreement came into force Arafat moved into Gaza on July 1 1994 from Tunis. On January 20 1996 Palestinian legislative council elections were held and PLO got absolute majority in the house. Arafat later in the month was elected as the president of the PA.

For many reasons FSN could not be completed within the time frame agreed in the Oslo Accords. One of the main reasons was the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin on November 4 1995 by an Israeli fundamentalist Jew Yigal Amir who was totally against any attempt to divide the “holy land” and for that matter against the Oslo Accords (Rubin and Rubin, 2003: 196). The eruption of violence from time to time from those organizations and individuals who were opposed to the Oslo Peace Process like Hamas and others, created disbelief between the parties. In Israel in the 1996 elections Likud government came into power under Benjamin Netanyahu which was against the accords. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was vocal against the agreements and he used the violence in the OTs and in mainland Israel as a “pretext” to avoid the further talks. (Kimmerling, 2003). Nonetheless, the disbelief in the Accords was mutual and Palestinians were also very vocal to its provisions.

EDWARD W SAID: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Among spokesmen for the Palestinian cause in our days, surely none is so articulate, or so well known, as Edward W. Said. The holder of an endowed chair in English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University, a prolific author of books and articles both scholarly and popular, a frequent lecturer and commentator on radio and television, a sometime diplomatic intermediary and congressional witness, the subject of countless profiles and interviews in the World media, Said—who was born in Jerusalem in 1935—has earned a reputation not only for polemical brilliance but, when it comes to championing Palestinian Arab rights (and assailing Israel for infringing them), a fierce moral zealotry that will not be assuaged (Welner, 1999: 23).

In 1968-69 Said wrote *The Palestinian Experience* an article first published in Herbert Mason’s *Reflections on the Middle East Crisis* and republished in the *Politics of*

Dispossession in 1994 this was his first article on the issue¹³. Obviously he was a late comer in the Palestinian politics of struggle for self determination which had started at least in 1964 when the PLO was established.¹⁴ He according to his own admission was busy in academics and was very less interested in politics. The decade of 1960s had very less impact on his writings (Lal, 2005: 31). About the decade Said remembered, he had a high esteem for Naseer and was very assured that a united Arab nation will become a reality very soon (1994). When he came into the Palestinian politics he became very zealous about the Palestinian cause and was convinced that only West is responsible for the Palestinian plight. This somewhat shows his experience and study of West during his long stay in the America. According to Vinay Lal “When he (Said) turned to politics, he did so with the proverbial zeal of the convert-and with the convert’s extraordinary partiality for the chosen cause” (2005: 31).

Edward William Said was a celebrated cultural critic and Palestinian activist (Hart, 2004: ix). Said was a professor of English and Comparative Literature at the Columbia University, United States. Edward Said was born according to his own accounts, in the Western part of Jerusalem in 1935 in a wealthy Christian Arab family¹⁵. His father Wadie Said (William) was a well established businessman in Cairo. His mother Hilda was a Lebanese. The situations in the Palestine forced Said’s family to shift their business and home from Jerusalem to Cairo. But till December 1947 their visits to Jerusalem were very often. In that month they shifted permanently to Cairo. This incident has left a great impression of the Edward Said. He often recalls the memories of his house in Jerusalem. The feeling of exile and the inability to go back have made him realize the pain of fellow Palestinians (Lal, Vinay 2005: 32). But Said always maintained that there is nothing personal in his participation in the Palestinian struggle (Yacoobali, 2003: 36). He after his

¹³ according to David Barsamian “The Arab Portrayed” published sometimes after the 1967 war was Said’ first article on the subject. See *Culture and Resistance* 2003: ix. But there is no exact evidence of this. This study has only taken the published works of Said and could not find any article on the Palestinian issue before his “the Palestinian experience”.

¹⁴ This date is not to deny the early struggles by Palestinians at least from 1948 but to suggest that 1964 was the year from which an effort was made to give the Palestinian struggle an organized form.

¹⁵ There is a controversy regarding his family house in the Western part of Jerusalem. See Weiner, Justus Reid, (1999), “My Beautiful Old House” and Other Fabrications by Edward Said”, *Commentary*, September: 23-31. See also, Said’s memoirs *Out of Place: a memoir* (1999).

family's "exodus" as he uses the term, from the Jerusalem in 1947 could come back for a visit to it only in June 1992.

After completing his elementary education in Cairo, Edward Said went to Massachusetts, US in 1951 for his higher studies. Said did his B.A. from Princeton and his Masters and Ph.D. from Harvard. He became the faculty in the Columbia University in 1963 as a Professor of English and Comparative Literature. In 1977 Said became the Parr Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia and subsequently became the Old Dominion Foundation Professor in the Humanities. In 1992 he attained the rank of University Professor, Columbia's most prestigious academic position. Professor Said also taught at Harvard, John Hopkins and Yale universities. Said besides his academic writings also contributed as music critic to *The Nation* for many years. He died on 25 September 2003 after a long fight with chronic myelogenous leukemia in New York city.

He was very well known writer of *Orientalism* (1978) a book which has started a new debate on the hermeneutics or the ways of the interpretation of the text.¹⁶ Vinay Lal argues while comparing Chomsky with Edward Said that though former is a very well known professor of Linguistics and critical commentator on the American Foreign policy he has not written anything like *Orientalism*. "One of the most startling things about Orientalism is" he proclaims, "how widely it came to be read in fields as varied as film studies, literature, history and anthropology, not to mention area studies - barring, of course, the professional and lay studies alike of West Asia whose exponents remained largely impervious to the withering critique Said directed principally at them" (2005: 30).

Orientalism is a book which deals with the Western prejudices towards the Oriental people and cultures. It tries to deconstruct the western ideas which have created many stereotypes about the East, propagated through books and other modern means of

¹⁶ Hermeneutics is conventionally a study of the general principles of biblical interpretation. It has four major types Literal according to which the text is interpreted literally or according to its 'plain meaning', Moral according to which interpreter should seek to establish the principles of ethnic lessons, Allegorical according to which interpretation uses the reference 'beyond the explicit' and Analogical or Mystical according to which interpreter interprets the text seeking to establish links with 'the life to come.' Recently the word (Hermeneutics) means any "deep" reading of literally and philosophical text other than Bible only. See *Britannica Ready Reference Encyclopaedia* (2005), Vol. 5: 23.

communication like films and paintings. In other words as Joseph Mossad puts it in a tribute after Edward Said's death in 2003 in *Journal of Palestine Studies*,

For Said "Orientalism was never about the orient and its identity and culture, but about producing the West and its identity and culture, in short, "a kind of Western Projection" (Orientalism: 95) that there would never be a West if the East were not invented as its antithesis, its opposite, its other" (2004: 9).

Answering a question on the contribution of Edward Said as an intellectual Eqbal Ahmed a well known critique of imperialism, argued,

I think the singular achievement of Said, as a literary critic, beginning with Orientalism, has been to put imperialism at the centre of Western civilization...he put therefore the whole issue of Western expansion, domination and imperialism as central forces in defining the nature of civilization itself (Yacoobali, 2003: 36).

As a celebrated cultural critic and professor of Linguistics Said has written many other books and articles besides *Orientalism*. Said's major works are *The Word, the Text and the Critic* (1991), *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography* (1966), *Culture and Imperialism* (1994), *Representation of the Intellectual* (1994) and other books on the subject matter of his research. *The Word, the Text and the Critic* is his second book which is known as a milestone in the field of Comparative Literature after *Orientalism*. Besides these works the books and articles on Palestinian issues are very important. *The Question of Palestine* (1979), *Blaming the Victims* (1988), *After the Last Sky* (1986), *Politics of Dispossession* (1994), *Peace and its Discontents* (1996), *End of the Peace Process: Oslo and After* (2001, 2003) and *Out of Place: a Memoir* (1999) and many other books which are the collection of his interviews with different scholars like David Barsamian have made the collection of his ideas and thinking on the question of Palestine.

Said's consistent struggle and activism for Palestinian cause was an attempt to gain a place for Palestinian voice, a Palestinian perspective among the voices of those who present Palestine in a wrong way or do not provide it a place at all. The motive behind his so many interviews, articles, lectures and books is simply to "get a place for Palestinians just to stay and say they exist" (Said, *POD*, 1994). He used every possible means an intellectual can use to "represent the truth" about the Palestinian plight and the struggle of

the people against colonialism and their right of self determination. He made even a documentary in 1998 *In Search of Palestine* for that purpose.

In 1977 Said joined PNC Palestinian parliament in exile as an independent member. He was an independent member because he never joined PLO. The reason behind his not joining the PLO was his distaste for factionalism that prevailed in the PLO.¹⁷ He served in PNC until he resigned in September 1991 due to dual reasons of health and his opposition to the policies of Yassir Arafat in the Madrid Peace Process (2003). As a member of PNC he supported the idea of 'two state solution' in 1988. The two state solution was a big change in the policy of PLO which was earlier against the existence of Israeli state.

Edward Said in his earlier writings supported the idea of a binational solution to the Palestine-Israel problem. He was a firm believer in the harmony and cooperation between both the people. His campaign for harmony got a new form when Jewish pianist and life conductor of the Chicago symphony orchestra, Daniel Barenboim became his partner in their joint orchestra called West-Eastern Divan Orchestra. He created it to show the possibility of coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians (Lal, 2005: 31). He wrote extensively in support of the coexistence and harmony between the two people. He emphasized the need to having understanding to each other's history and respecting it. He asked those Arab scholars who deny the reality of *Holocaust* "Why we expect that West will recognize our sufferings when we do not recognize the sufferings of Jews in their history?" Because of his support of Jews on the humanitarian grounds many Arab scholars blamed him. According to some he was trying to get certificate of goodness from Zionists (Said, 2001: 286).

¹⁷ For more detail on PLO and its factionalism see Sela, Avraham and Moshe Ma'oz (1997) (Ed), *The PLO and Israel: from Armed Conflict to Political Solution, 1964-1994*, Hampshire and London: Macmillan Press Ltd. The PLO is an umbrella organization with Fatah, PFLP and DFLP as its main constituents including several more. The number of Organizations is not fixed and it varies from time to time according to the understanding between the leaders. Fatah and its leader Yassir Arafat had been dominant in the PLO always. After the death of Yassir Arafat Mahmood Abbaas is PLO's head now who also belongs to Fatah.

His zeal about the Palestinian cause was so intense that he became a victim of many criticisms. According to Lal one of the criticisms of Said goes to the extent to say that he was so zealous about the Palestinian cause that he was convinced that there are only one particular lot in today's world that are facing racism, the Arab and Muslims. Lal quotes the example of Said's criticism of Martin Luther King as racist because of latter's alleged support of Zionism. There are many critics of Said who questions his 'parochial' approach. They say that for Said Palestinian self determination is the only place in the whole World where there is a struggle going on against racism and colonialism (Lal, 2005: 31) This criticisms of Said was known to him but he never tried to defend himself. However Said was not unaware of the other movements against colonialism and racism in the world. Any reader of Said' writings can find out that he frequently gave the examples of South African anti-Apartheid movement and its leader Nelson Mandela. He wrote many articles on Iraqi invasion which has been published in the form of a book *From Oslo to Iraq and the Road Map* (2003).

According to David Barsamian, Said's zealous role in the Palestinian struggle has created many enemies for him. Hebrew press termed him as 'Professor of Terror' and his criticisms of Zionism have made him for many, an anti-Semite as once Jewish Defence League called him a Nazi for his criticisms of Israeli policies. He faced many physical threats as well (CR, 2003: x). When On 3 July 2000, Said was videotaped and phohraged by the media throwing a pebble towards an Israeli watchtower on the Israeli-Lebanese border it was propageted as an act of supporting terrorism by him and his hatred of Jews. For Said it was only a "symbolic act" to show the "anger of palestinians" towards their "opperesion". It was not only "Zionist side" or the "Western media" which tried to "demonize" him. In the PA administered territories for many years Said's books and other writings in Arabic were banned by the decrees issued by the PA. Obviously the "criticisms" of Yassir Arafat and Oslo were not acceptable to PA. Said blamed Arafat for it (2003: 69-73).

In June 2002, Said, along with Hader Abdel-Shafi, Ibrahim Dakak, and Mustafa Barghouti three major activists of palestinian liberation helped to establish the

Palestinian National Initiative or *Al-Mubadara*. It was an attempt to build a “third force” in Palestinian politics. It was intended to be a “democratic, reformist alternative” to both the established groups Fatah and Islamist militant group Hamas.

For Said the struggle of Palestinian self determination is a struggle against colonialism and imperialism. He never believed the Zionists’ claim on the Palestinian land and the argument that what has suffered by Jews in the form of anti-Semitism and *Holocaust* give them any right to displace another people. According to him

I go so far as to be convinced by Rosa Luxemburg’s statement that you cannot impose one’s own political solution on another people against their will. As a Palestinian who has suffered loss and deprivations, I cannot morally accept regaining my rights at the expense of another people’s deprivation (Hart, 2004: 174).

His criticisms of Oslo were not only on technical grounds but also due to his firm belief in the notion of “no solidarity before criticism”. This notion of criticizing one’s own mistakes before proceeding further in a common cause is a “must” for Said because otherwise the wrong steps would destroy the cause to the point where the cause will be lost forever (Said, 1991: 28). For Said no one is beyond and above the cause and if anyone commits mistakes he or she should not be spared on any ground. According to him “criticism of authority is a moral duty, silence or indifference, or compliance, in a situation when there is no defined and articulated legal order, is immoral” (Said, 2001: 22). According to Josséph Mossad,

Said took this dictum to heart when it came to the politics of Palestinian liberation. ... It is in this vein that he launched his attack against the Oslo capitulation. His commitment to the rights of the Palestinian people is what mobilized his hostility to what he rightly predicted would be the Bantustan solution signed in Oslo and celebrated on the White House lawn. According to him “the subsequent metamorphosis of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) into Palestinian Authority (PA), from a liberation movement into a police authority subcontracted his predictions (2004: 8).

Josséph Mossad wrote “perhaps one of the more important tenets that Edward Said abided by in his life and carrier was the centrality of his role as secular critic. He saw criticism as constitutive of life of the intellectual, who must “speak truth to power” (2004; 7).

About the question of Palestine, Edward Said had very firm idea that it is a result of “Western mishandling” of the “Jewish Question” in their own land. The Europeans could impose their “problem” on Arabs only because they had the power of forces, money and culture. According to Said “the resolution of the Jewish question under the constraints of European imperial hegemony created the “question of Palestine” (Hart, 2004: 143). For Said the religious nature of the Jewish Question is a matter of concern. For him secularism is a necessity for Palestinians in order to maintain the unity among them. This is the only way by which coexistence of all Arabs (Muslims, Christians and Jews) and non Arab Jews will be assured. If the movement of Palestinian self determination goes in to the hands of any religious group it will be impossible to achieve the goal of unity among Arabs (Hart, 2004).

This study is intended to do a critical study of Saidian criticisms of the Oslo Peace Process. His views on the “Palestinian question” have very deep meaning as he relates it with imperialism. This we will see later in Chapter 2. We will also see the reasons of his being critical to Oslo in detail in Chapter 2. As Said reiterates, the reason Oslo happened for example, was Yassir Arafat, was not worried about the Palestinian people and their struggle but for his “own survival” as a “leader of PLO”. Said argued that Arafat was responsible for the “surrender of Palestinian struggle” before the “Israeli tactics” in Oslo. He was of the firm belief that “from the talks Palestinians got nothing” and “Israel got whatever it wanted” from the Palestinian Arabs, “recognition as a state without any defined borders” (1996 and 2003). This and other criticisms of Oslo will be discussed in detail in the Chapter 3.

The argument of “we had no alternative other than signing the Oslo” given by the advocates of peace agreement is not worthy of consideration, according to Said. He suggested “the correct way of thrashing it is we had no alternatives because we either lost or threw away a lot of others, leaving us only this one.” According to him in the Oslo “what is particularly mystifying is how so many Palestinian leaders and their intellectuals persist in speaking about the agreement as a “victory”. The fact is, of course, as ex-

secretary of state James Baker said in a TV interview in early September 1996 that Israel has given up nothing, except a bland acceptance of “the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people.” We will see Said’s proposed alternatives of Oslo in the last chapter of this study in detail.

Chapter 2

EDWARD SAID AND THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE: A CASE STUDY OF IMPERIALISM

Let us leave aside the fact that Neibuhr could have found many instances in recent Arab Palestinian history of purely spontaneous mass uprising against Zionism, or that he could have found cases of Arab peasants turning in vain to the Zionist settlers for help against Arab absentee landlords. What he does not see as Marx did see a hundred years earlier when he wrote about the British in India- is that there was a national right being violated even by a “technical and dynamic civilization” when it made colonial incursions upon “the miserable masses”. in addition and from the view point of a famous Christian theologian one would have expected (and in later years, expected fruitlessly) same appreciation of the fact that for every Jewish immigrant coming into Palestine there was likely to be an Arab or Arabs displaced and human rights accordingly suppressed. Finally, we would have expected Neibuhr to have made some efforts to hear “the miserable masses” and their wishes, or at least to have assumed that among their more or less natural wishes would have been the desire not to be displaced or so violently “benefited” by a superior civilization (Said, 1979: 32-33).

Western prejudices about the Arab world in general and about the Palestinian people in particular had been the subject on which Edward. W. Said had worked extensively. He was one of the very few scholars who tried and successfully questioned the idea of ‘superior civilizations’, which was the basis of Western imperialism. The idea of superiority of the West had been used in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by scholars like Rudyard Kipling, Joseph Conrad, Reinhold Neibuhr and others in order to justify the western presence in the Oriental and African societies. The adherents of the idea of the ‘Western superiority’ always proclaim that whenever and wherever West has established colonies they brought there, with them, “modernity” and “civilization” to the benefit of the people who were neither “civilized” nor “modern” (Said, 1979, and *CI*, 1994).

In his *Culture and Imperialism* (1994) Said argues that it is not so that “these scholars” (like Rudyard Kipling, Joseph Conrad, Reinhold Neibuhr and others) are “imperialists” by nature. But, according to Said, they are the products of their own culture in which they

have been born and brought up (xxiv). The Israeli occupation of Palestinian since 1948, with the “explicit western help” is one major example of “Western imperialism” even after so many years of the end of colonial rules from elsewhere in the world. In other words, the “Palestinian right of self determination” is unfulfilled after so many years of “continuous resistance” despite the fact that colonialism has been finished in every other part of the world today. It is only because of the “Western help”. For Said, it was strange to see the West to help Israel to save its colonial rule, which had fought to finish imperialism elsewhere. Israeli colonial practices are sustaining only due to lack of a strong consensus against it in the Western society. According to Said, Israeli colonialism is a “unique case of colonialism” in which a “victim” of the “western imperial practices” itself is involved in the “occupation of other peoples’ land” (Said, 1979 and 2001 :-)

According to Said, Zionism and its practitioners are “racist” who believe in the above mentioned “superiority of the races”. For Said, these “racist ideas” need to be “countered” and those who cannot speak against it for some reasons or other, like lack of education, need to be “represented” for the sake of “justice”. He believes that it is “the duty” of an “intellectual” to “speak on behalf of those who cannot speak on their own” for their grievances according to their own point of view (Said, 1979, *CI*, 1994 and 2003)

The purpose of this chapter is to look into Edward Said’s thinking on issues of conflict and peace in the Israeli-Palestine struggle. The hypothesis is that, his general thinking on imperialism and colonialism has shaped his views on the Oslo Peace Process. This chapter will try to establish Said’s critique of Oslo in the context of his life long commitment to the cause. It will also attempt to see that Said did criticize Oslo because it was totally against the aims for which resistance of Palestinians is going on for so long. Said was the supporter of a peaceful solution of the conflict. Unlike PLO before Oslo, which believed in the “armed resistance”, Said never supported the “violent resistance”. He was the rare supporter of an idea of a “binational Palestinian state.”¹ His critiques of

¹ According to Said a ‘bi national Palestinian state’ will be state in which both the people will live together with equal rights and every Palestinian refugee will have the right to return in that state. But there will be no right to return to Jews. He coined this idea in his *The Question of Palestine* (1979) but he later dropped this idea in favour of a “two state solutions”. See his *Politics of Dispossession* (1994)

armed resistance and his acceptance of the “coexistence” of the Jews and Palestinian Arabs inside the Palestinian territory do not deter him to criticize the Zionist “racism” and their “imperialist practices”. He accepted the ‘two state solution’ later and gave up the idea of a binational Palestinian state only after he found that both people cannot live together in a single state as neither of them is ready to give “respect” to the history of other in the near future. So, it is better to have a two state solution sooner than to wait till infinity for the ideal to happen (Said, *POD*, 1994).

FROM QUESTION OF PALESTINE TO THE END OF THE PEACE PROCESS

Before we proceed further in this chapter, a brief introduction of some of Said’s books on Palestine is necessary. This is necessary because otherwise we will be unable to make a link between his many works on Palestine. He had written many articles and most of them have also been reproduced as books besides his major works on Palestine. Obviously there are repetitions of arguments and facts in many of them. It is important to see the basic tenets of Saidian perspective on the Palestinian question. This will help us to understand and appreciate his views on the Oslo Peace Process. Here we first see a brief introduction of some of his works (not all because first, it is not possible and will be out of the scope of this study as well) one by one and then we will make some general observations about what we have called “Saidian perspective” on Palestine.²

In the 1960s when the Palestinian question was getting its complexities Said was not writing much on the question because of his involvements in academics. He himself admitted that the happenings of 1960s left no impact on his life (Lal, 2005: 31). After *Orientalism* Edward W. Said began to write on the Palestinian question. His first major work on the subject was *The Question of Palestine* (1979). According to many “although

² Said had given many interviews and most of them have been compiled as books by many writers and scholars. We are not including them here, at least in the section below but they are an important part of this whole dissertation and they have been used as primary source. We are not introducing them here only because many of the interviews have been published in different books and this creates difficulty to generalize. Most of his arguments on the Palestinian question have been the same as in his many books and in various interviews given to many people from time to time. So it will unnecessary to review them also.

primarily intended to expose a Western audience to the realities of Palestinian history and the legitimacy of Palestinian national aspirations, it remains the most powerful statement produced on behalf of a two-state settlement to this day” (Rabbani, 2003: 34). However the substantial part of the book also argues in the favour of a “binational” solution. This book states strongly in favour of Palestinian claim. Said counters the Zionist and Western versions of Palestinian history in this book. He proposes the two state solutions and praises the PLO and other resistance movements. He does not prescribe violence however, differentiates between the violence used by the weak and the strong. He also emphasizes the “secular nature” of the Palestinian resistance. Said in this book repeatedly stresses on the need to consider Palestinians as a “nation” and not a group of “anonymous Arab refugees”. In the book Said establishes the need and right of every Palestinian refugee to go back to their “ancestral home” in Palestine. The crux of the book establishes the Saidian perspective on the Palestinian question.

The pictorial depiction of Palestinian people, their history since *Nakhba* and their sufferings comes in his *After the last sky: Palestinian Lives* (1986). The Saidian comments and slogans and Jean Mohr’ photographs of the various aspects of Palestinian life, successfully demolish many stereotypes concerning Arabs in general and Palestinians in particular. However, this book does not give any detailed analysis of the Palestine and its conflict with Israel. Unlike *the Question of Palestine* this is less scholarly a book. But, “it was the zenith of many qualities of Said, for example, his eloquence and capacity for representation” (Rabbani, 2003: 35).

Said with his long time ally Christopher Hitchens co-edited *Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question* (1988 and 2001). This book is a collection of essays on the Western media and intellectual’s biasness. According to both the editors, Western writers and media write and cover about Palestinians and Arabs with preconceived images of Arabs being backward and terrorists. This books tries to establish the Saidian hypothesis that Western media is anti-Arab and Orientalist. According to the essays in this book this presents Palestinian resistance in a bad light for general masses in the West. In this book Said tries to defuse the atmosphere of fear and

hatred created by Israeli tactics to quote Palestinian documents and declarations against the Zionists during the Palestinian resistance. With his own experience he could draw a line of differentiation between those who really are sympathetic to the victims and those who are not.

Politics of Dispossession: struggle for Palestinian self determination (1994) is a collection of Edward Said's essays on the Palestine and Arabs in general published from time to time from 1968 till 1993. This book besides Said's arguments on Palestine also deals with general issues related to Arabs for example nationalism, democracy and the issue of identity. For Said these all are interconnected with the Palestinian question. This is because no Palestinian state will survive until there will be larger secularism and democracy among the Arabs. In the introduction of the book Said not only criticizes Arafat and PLO but also gives the reasons of his differences with them.

Peace and its Discontents: Gaza-Jericho 1993-1995 (1996) is a collection of his articles and essays on his criticisms of the Oslo Peace Process. It also has the preface written by Christopher Hitchens. His only autobiographical book is *Out of Place: a Memoir* (1999). In many sense it is not an autobiography. It is only a recreation of Said's memories related to his visits inside the Occupied Territories from time to time and his childhood stays in Jerusalem and Lebanon. The gradual formation of Edward Said' views and perspectives vis-à-vis Palestinian cause is the focus of this book, however.

For many general readers *The End of the Peace Process: Oslo and After* (2001 and 2003) is the book which is Edward Said's most important work on Oslo Peace Process. This book is again a collection of his many articles on the Oslo Peace Process and its aftermath. This book is a continuation of *Peace and its Discontents*. It also describes the other issues related to the Arab World, like "Western propagandas" regarding Islamic terrorism and the lack of "democratic institutions". The Saidian approach towards the Oslo, in this book is first to look it in totality. In other words, to see the complete length of the Oslo Peace Process from 1993 till the last talks in the eve of the 2000 *Intifada*.

ZIONISM: AN IMPERIAL IDEOLOGY

In the writings of Said from early 1970s Palestine appears very often. Whenever he writes about the people of Palestine he writes about the Zionist narrative of history of West Asia. Since Edward Said was one of the proponents of Post-Colonial studies and founders of the idea of Orientalism³, he was very much able to see the nuances of the Western writings about the West Asian history. He emphasizes the need of having right kind of “representation” of the Arabs. This is because of his belief in the idea of cultural imperialism⁴.

Valerie Kennedy, while introducing Said’s writing on Palestine, argues that since the early 1970s the basic tenets of his writings on the Palestinian question have remained same. Beside Saidian search of “solution” (which we will see later), his main concerns had been first, to write a “Palestinian narrative” of their history written and presented by them only and not “narrated by the West” and second, his critique of all major players in West Asia (2000: 50). Obviously, Said never believed in the Western narratives of West Asian history because he found it “biased” (Said, 1979). He neither accepted the “Zionist narrative” of Palestinian history. Zionists tried to “establish” through their high skills of writing history and influencing people, the fact that the land of Palestine was “empty” when they arrived there and there were no “civilized” people there. They claimed that Palestinians, if there were any, were savage and backward people. They did not know how to produce on the fertile land. Zionists claim that they brought civilization and modernity there. They claim “the Chosen people” have every right to live in Palestine because this land was “assigned” to them by god. They propagated the slogan “*a country without a people for a people without a country.*”⁵ This particular history is a part of the national curriculum of Israel till date. The complete negation of any exodus of Palestinians from their land in 1948 is also a part of official Israeli history. Said sees this

³According to Edward Said “Orientalism has different meanings. It can be defined as a way of studying Orient. In this way there are certain people who are Orientalists. But when Said talks about Orientalism it means a biased and inferior reading of oriental society and history in which eastern people are depicted as inferior, backwards and savage. See Orientalism (1978).

⁴ For detailed discussion on the Cultural Imperialism see Said’ Culture and Imperialism (1993)

⁵ Chaim Weizman coined this phrase in one of the World Zionist Congresses.

as a misuse of history for imperial purpose as Western imperials have done elsewhere (Said, 1979 and Kimmerling, and Migdal, 2003).

His writings which are not directly related to the Palestinian question like *Orientalism* (1978) and the *Culture and Imperialism* (1994) establish the idea that most of the western thinkers and writers, who write about/on the “Orient”, whom Said termed as “Orientalists”, have been writing for a “cause”. The “cause” was to establish the idea that Orient needs West in order not to be left behind from the rest of the world. “Modernity” as it is known commonly is a thing which only West can bring to the rest of the world including the Orient. Those who do not see this necessity of being modern are branded by the West as backwards (Said, 1978).

The superiority of colonizers has been a broadly accepted notion among the writers from the time of Rudyard Kipling to Joseph Conrad. Through the studies of their novels, particularly of Joseph Conrad, Said tried to establish his argument about “Cultural Imperialism”. He saw the idea of Cultural Superiority coined by people like Conrad and Neibuhr had been providing “justification to imperialism and colonialism”. Otherwise how can one justify the destruction of local cultures and customs by the colonizers? According to Said, “The imperialist forces” always felt that they were doing a noble work. Through colonies, they are “modernizing” the otherwise “savage people” (1994).

As one of the proponents of post-colonial studies, Edward Said was more committed to unveil what he called as ‘wrong propaganda’ about the Arab’s inferiority, created by the Western media and Western intelligentsia. In his *Question of Palestine* (1979) he successfully builds an argument against this ‘Western propaganda’. One thing which is very obvious in Said’s writings is that he never felt prey to the strength of Western propaganda. Jews had been depicted as victims and Zionists’ claims on the “Holy Land” were accepted by the Western media without giving any chance to Arabs to explain their version of history (Said, 1979).

Before we proceed further we need to define Imperialism. In his *Culture and Imperialism*

(1994) Said argues “as I shall be using the term “Imperialism” means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory; ‘colonialism’, which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory.” Michel Poyle, Said quotes, puts it in detail. Poyle argues that “empire is a relationship, formal or informal, in which one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another political society. It can be achieved by force, by political collaboration, by economic, social or cultural dependence. Imperialism is simply the process or policy of establishing or maintaining an empire” (1994: 8). In order to be more specific about Imperialism, Edward Said argues in the same book that “at some very basic level, imperialism means thinking about, setting on, controlling land that you do not possess, that is distant, that is lived on and owned by others”(5). For Edward Said imperialism’s main motive is control of land or resources which are other’s property by force. Culture has been used to sustain the imperialism.

Edward Said never claimed himself to be a Marxist. He was a supporter of liberal traditions and in this context he did not bother to engage himself in the “Marxist debate” on imperialism (Said, 1979). Among the Marxist thinkers the main debate regarding imperialism is whether it is a “system of production” and “division of labour” or it is an “ideology” of controlling the world “politically if not economically” (Brewer, 1990). Said nevertheless “praised” Marx for his being the first thinker who could see the imperial practices destroying the local economy (1979: 32-33).

Said’s ideas of imperialism were influenced by the ideas of Antonio Gramsci, a twentieth century Marxist who propounded the idea of *Hegemony* which has great links with culture. He argues that hegemony, of a particular hegemon sustains itself through “culture and educational system”.⁶ Said was also very much influenced by the ideas and works of Foucault. Edward Said’s idea of relationship between culture and imperialism was a product of his readings of Foucault and his idea of ‘Discourse’. The Gramscian idea of ‘Hegemony’ is related to the idea of ‘Discourse’ in a sense that both state that the general

⁶ For more information on Gramsci and his idea of hegemony see Martin, James (1997), “Hegemony and The Crisis of Legitimacy in Gramsci”, *History of the Human Sciences*, Vol. 10 (1), pp-37-56.

ideas and myths are created by powerful forces or the “dominant forces” of the society who do not want to lose their “grip on power”. For Gramsci, it is “ruling powers or classes” who do create their “ideological hegemony” through education system and traditions of the society. For Foucault, “societal norms” and traditions do not allow a person to “think beyond” what he or she has been observing since his or her birth around their surroundings. When Said saw the biasness among the thinkers and scholars who otherwise can not be categorized among imperialists, racist and greedy, he found the reason behind their support in their environment in which they have been brought upon. He argues in the *Culture and Imperialism* that,

I do not believe that authors are mechanically determined by ideology, class, or economic history, but authors are, I also believe, very much in the history of their societies, shaping and shaped by that history and their social experience in different measures (xxiv).

In his various works, *Discourse* comes often particularly when he talks about the Western propaganda and the role of scholars and media in spreading the myths regarding the East or the Orient which in result creates anti-Arab feelings among the masses who do not have any alternative source of information. It is a Western discourse that Arabs are backwards and savage and it helps to sustain Western hegemony in the West Asian region, in the way that it creates stereotypes among the masses about the Arabs in general and Palestinians in particular. According to Said, “hegemony of culture” is used to sustain the “hegemony of power”. The Zionist propaganda regarding the Palestinians is not different either (Said, 1979 and 1994).

When Said talks about the Israeli imperialism he admits that the need to differentiate between the Western imperialism and Israeli colonialism is very important. Israeli imperial rule in Palestine is different from other imperial examples in a very important sense. We can see one very clear difference between the imperialism in general and Israeli imperialism. The critical element of ‘state’ is missing in the later case. When the Zionist forces were in the process of the creation of the Israeli state, Zionism was only an ideology. Unlike in other cases there was no Israeli state before 1948 which pursued the imperial policy.

As we have seen in the introduction, Zionism is an ideology which intended to establish Zion (Jewish homeland) in the land of Palestine.⁷ Said argues that, the ideology of Zionism was a result of anti-Semitism⁸ and “Jewish nationalistic ambitions” in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (1979: 72). In this light, Israel presents a unique example of imperialism and colonialism. “Zionism and the creation of the state of Israel must be seen as unique because they involve a victimized people transformed into victimizers” (Kennedy, 2000: 55). In his *Question of Palestine* Said wrote “once victims themselves, occidental Jews in Israel have become oppressors” (69). In this context, Edward Said points out the “complications” in dealing with the imperialist forces like Zionists in Palestine. According to him there are many difficulties for Palestinians in their dealings with the Zionism, the difficulties arising out from the uniqueness of the Zionist imperialism. He says besides the daily sufferings of Palestinians and their consistent failure to get support from the West for their genuine demands as used to happen elsewhere with colonial people. According to him,

there is also the added complication that our interlocutors were Jews who were at the same time survivors of the Nazi Holocaust, as well as colons who used the strategies and tactics of colonialists in other parts of Africa and Asia. No one to my knowledge has had to deal with such a complication anywhere else in the World, where white colonialists were wresting control of land and resources from native people. In addition, Zionism’s authentically idealistic component so far as only Jews were concerned—which argued the world over that Jews were coming to Palestine in order to be reborn as a nation after centuries of unequal ordeal—swayed public opinion, as well as the policies of Western governments whose guilt at doing very little to assist Jews during the Holocaust made them compensate (relatively inexpensively) in the present for their costly sins in the past (1979)

Zionist colonialism’ “uniqueness” becomes very obvious in the minds of Said’s readers. The victims of *Holocaust* had sympathy of the world. West was feeling “guilty” and they wanted to do “something” for the Jews in order to hide their atrocities done in the past to

⁷ For the definition of Zionism and its history see Walter, Leaguer (1972), *History of Zionism*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

⁸ Semites are those people who speak Semitic languages. Semitic languages are a group of Afro-Asiatic languages spoken in northern Africa and southern west Asia. Though there were many Semitic languages in the past today Arabic and Hebrew are the only surviving Semitic languages. Because of religious reasons Christians in the West did not like Jews (a Semite). Jews had been discriminated in the European societies. This is called anti-Semitism.

the Jews in the various forms of anti-Semitism. The revelation of *Holocaust* and terror done by other states on Jews had raised many questions about the European claims of being “civilized”. This question of their being civilized was very prominent at the end of the World War II. Instead of the message of ‘freedom and modernity’ message of barbarism and inhumanity of Europeans was spreading outside to the various native populations in the many parts of the world. Native could now, come out from their inferiority complex created by the colonisers. In this situation Zionists saw opportunity. They used this Western embarrassment and resulted eagerness to do whatever possible to do to save their faces. In order to fulfil their imperialist mission in Palestine Zionists presented themselves as victims and demanded their due rights. The West could not deny them. Western media and intelligentsia helped them too.

The Israeli imperialism was unique in other aspects too. The creation of the Israeli state was due on the Britain even before it had the practical control over the land of Palestine. The land of Palestine was with Ottomans when in 1917 Britain promised in the Balfour Declaration to the Zionists about the creation of the “Jewish National Home” inside the then Palestinian territories. This British mission was also a result of Western mindset of their superiority in many ways. The Palestinian mandate under the Britain was the victim of the constant imperialist onslaught. Said saw these both incidents of history; ‘Balfour Declaration’ and *Holocaust* emerging from the same mindsets in the West. The time lag between both does not obscure the argument of Western hegemony and imperialism (Said, 1979). The uniqueness of Zionist imperialism lies also in the fact that Zionist used the history of “Jewish exodus” from the land of Palestine in the ancient past to get support for their imperial cause. The tragedy is that at both the moments of history (in 70 AD and in 1948) it was one or another Western power which was responsible for the sufferings of first Jews and then Palestinian Arabs (Said, 1979).

In his book co-authored with Christopher Hitchens *Blaming the Victims* (1988) he argues that “both British government and later Jewish immigration permitted by them were imposed by others on the original Palestinian inhabitants.” This imposition by others was forceful too and it alienated them from their own land. He termed the 1917 Balfour

Declaration as “doctrinal annihilation of the Palestinian people” (Kennedy, 2000; 54). According to Said “Israeli state is colonialist because of the dispossession of the Palestinians in 1948 and thereafter, and because of the current status of Palestinians in Israel as second-class citizens” (Kennedy, 2000: 55).

For a very long time, Said agrees, there was a strong ideological backing both internally and externally, for the ideas of Zionism. Through the wars, statements like Golda Meir’s in which she denied the existence of Palestinians, Western media and intelligentsia, imperialists propaganda against Palestinians sustained itself. In the West as well as in Israel the occupation of more and more land in successive wars with Arab neighbours by the state of Israel was not seen as a hostile act but a “necessity”. The “necessity” was of gaining “strategic depth” and “security” for the Israel. Palestinian resistance was termed as “terrorism”. Zionists successfully propagated the myth of Arabs being hostile towards Israel (Said, 1979 and 1994).

The denial of Palestinian right of self determination and even denial of their existence in Palestine is an “imperial practice”. Zionist Prime Minister of Israel Golda Meir proclaimed in 1969 that there is nothing called “Palestinian people” (Said, 2001). Israeli political parties and leaders have used the Palestinians’ genuine anger towards Zionists, in favour of their argument of “danger of existence.” The difficulties Said was talking about, are the those coming out of the fact that Palestinians were frustrated and hopeless in the light of the developments of 1940s both inside the Palestinian mandate and in the word outside. They were getting no support from anywhere against Zionists. Even in the United Nations, it was Israel which was getting support from the US and its allies.

According to Said, the hopelessness and frustration led them to believe in violence and they used threats like “driving Jews in the Sea.” These threats according to Said, were nothing but the demonstration of Palestinians “weakness and hopelessness”. This same argument can be applied on the step taken by Arab League in its Khartoum conference

aftermath of June 1967 war in which they proclaimed the “three nos” policy.⁹ According to Said, Israel and its Zionist rulers used this “Palestinian frustration” against the Palestinians. World media and intelligentsia also became the victim of this Israeli propaganda. This same fear of existence and fear of Arabs created by Zionists still guide the policy of Israeli state (Said, 1979 and 1994).

The phenomenon of ‘post’ has arrived in Zionism also as in the other ideologies (for example, post-colonialism and post-imperialism, etc). This was a result of the end of the colonialism and imperialism in almost all parts of the world. “Post-Zionists” like Israel Shahak, have begun to talk about the “wrongs” done by the Israeli state on the Palestinian people inside Israel rather in a weak voice. They have started questioning the imperialist plots of the Zionism and denial of the history of Arabs. They have started the movements against the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian land and getting support of the Israeli left. Said saw it as a “positive development”. His main concern remained the same that until these movements do not get mass base they cannot do much difference. As Left in Israel, could not do much despite its presence in the Israel for so long (Said, 1988).

ROLE OF THE US

In Saidian writings “American imperialism” has a very important place. Edward. W. Said saw that American imperialism and hegemony has many roles to play in the world in general and in the West Asia in particular. Edward Said pointed out how American people are getting a very imbalanced picture of Arabs which often culminates in blind support of imperialist American policies. The American media and its intelligentsia are very much biased and they project Arabs and every other third world society for that matter in a way which creates unfavourable images among the general American. This helps in the imperialist manoeuvres of the rulers and their Zionist friends in the Arab world in general and in Palestine in particular because no body questions this or those who question remain in the minority (Said, 1979, 1994, 1996 and 2001).

⁹ The three nos policy was no recognition to Israel, no negotiations with Israel and no peace with Israel until it go back to its pre 1967 borders.

The reasons behind the American imperialism are, according to Said, not different from other examples of imperialism in the past. Resources like oil are there in the region. Every modern society needs these resources and some try to grab it even by unfair means. The hegemon needs to maintain its dominance. In West Asia constant conflicts provide the US chances to play a role and keep its importance alive. The spread of Democracy and Peace, noble ideas from which these Arab societies are unfamiliar, had been the justifying slogans for the imperialist manoeuvres by US in the Arab World. Said says now after the incident of September 2001 in the US, the war against terrorism is the new slogan used to justify the imperialist desires (Said, 2001 and 2003).

Said emphasizes the need to look into the American imperialism first in order to understand the nature of Israeli colonialism. According to him it is American imperialistic policies which help Israel to sustain his policies of suppression against the Palestinian people and their justified demands (Said, 1979 and 2001). The presence of a strong Jewish lobby AIPAC¹⁰ has been the main force behind strong American support to Israeli policies. Outside Israel it is only American policy makers who buy the argument of Zionist claim of security. The Zionist propaganda of branding Palestinian resistance as anti-Semitism has good support in the US ruling corridors. After the September 2001 incident the fear of Arabs got increased due to mishandling of media and intelligentsia inside the US and Israel is using this in its own favour against Palestinians (Said, 2003).

Said categorizes Israeli acts inside the occupied territories like displacement of Palestinians from their land and properties particularly from Eastern Jerusalem commonly known as creating “facts on the ground” as imperial practices. The displacement of Arabs strengthens the Israeli claim on the land. This is the policy adopted by the Zionists during the mandate days in Palestine. The policy of “Another Acre another Goat” denotes the same tactic. The absence of any defined borders and the

¹⁰ The American Israeli Public Action Committee (AIPAC). It is the strongest Jewish lobby in America and it is believed that it influences every policy decision of American Congress. For more detail on the American policies towards the Arab World and the role of AIPAC see Little, Douglas, (2003), *American Orientalism: the United States and the Middle East since 1945*, London: I.B. Taurus. See particularly chapter 3 and 4.

policies of building settlements in the Occupied Territories are the Israeli policies with imperialist designs. These policies have enabled Israel to capture more Arab land through successive Wars. These all policies have been either neglected or given active support by America both inside and outside the United Nations (Said, 1979, 1994. Viswanathan, (ed), 2001).

Due to active American support Israel could not only managed to win wars against every Arab neighbour but also got the attitude of doing whatever and whenever it wished. According to Said for US Israel is a platform inside the Arab world and to maintain the gateway of the Arab world Americans can do anything. Israel knows that Americans need them (Said, 2003). This fact that there will be no peace in the West Asia without the US is well known and accepted and that is why Arabs need Americans as well. The successive peace processes organized by the US and not by any other force in the World show the potential of the US. Its influence in Israeli decision making is very obvious. The problem is according to Said, the biasness of Americans against Arabs and it has been proved in every successive peace talks when Arabs got nothing substantial (Said, 2001)

REPRESENTATION: NEED AND NATURE

The first task (*for Palestinians*) was to get a place-literally anywhere-to say that we did exist (Said. 1994: xvi).

Why one should be represented? Can a representation be objective? Above all this, is representation possible? These were the questions Edward Said interacted with very often. His book *Representations of the Intellectual: the 1993 Reith Lectures* (1994) and his many other writings including his writings on Palestine deal these questions in detail. For Said the problem of representation was important because it was impossible to talk about imperialism without solving the question of representation. No colonial people were able to counter the propaganda created by imperialists against them on their own. Obviously the control of resources and means of communication have been in the hands of those who wanted to rule on others.

The issue of representation became so important because Edward Said believed that an intellectual should engage with the society in which he or she works. For most of the post colonial intellectuals and Said was one of them, “the issue of representation is central to their role” (Kennedy, 2000: 133). According to Said “an intellectual is a necessarily oppositional figure whose *main function is to provide alternatives: alternative sources, alternative readings, and alternative presentation of evidence.* He further says that presenting alternatives raises *the issue of positionalilty* (1994). He never believed in neutrality. The Behavioural theorists in social sciences in 1960s argued in favour of neutrality. Said does not believe in that. In a 1988 interview with Bruce Robbins, Said argues that the *intellectual should not be an outsider, hovering on the margins* (Kennedy, 2000: 133). Said was looking into the issue from a moral point of view. He never gives a reason other than his or her consciousness to the question why should an intellectual represent at all? He hardly goes to the extent of explaining the need. In his *Reich Lectures* he rather sees it as a ‘moral duty’ of an intellectual to give voice to the voiceless. In fact, he unlike Foucault never tried to find out what representation means other than speaking for those whom one finds oppressed despite of his or her innocence and just grievances. One who can not speak for himself or herself needs a voice to speak on behalf of his or her (Said, 1994)

In one of his essays Said gives two alternatives for the postcolonial intellectuals. The first, which he himself rejects, is to choose silence, exile, be cunning and so on. The second is to accept the responsibility of representation and try to influence public policy on behalf of those who are the victim of the oppression by the powerful. While this project is ‘deeply flawed and perhaps too marginalized’ Said says, it must be attempted, since although “what injustice and power inflict on the poor, the disadvantaged, and disinherited cannot be adequately spoken of, there are approximations to it, not representations of it” (Said, *POD*, 1994: 43). His position is that the intellectual should not shy away from the responsibility of representing the political and human rights of others, despite the difficulty of doing so adequately (Kennedy, 2000: 133). He says an intellectual’s responsibility is “to speak the truth, as plainly, directly, and as honestly as possible.” He believed in the true representation that includes the self criticism also. He

says “there can be no solidarity without criticism.” An intellectual who represents someone or some cause has every right to assure the genuineness of the cause (Said, *RL*, 1994).

As we have seen earlier, Golda Meir proclaimed in 1969 that, “Palestine does not exist”, according to Said, the need of speaking out for Palestinians to claim the existence of the Palestinians, became very important (Said, *POD*, 1994: xvi). Golda Meir was not the “first” to deny the fact that Palestinians exist. Before that many Zionists, both Jews and non-Jews had spoken in the same way. Reinhold Neibuhr, Chaim Weizman, Ben Gurion and many more known and unknown persons, writers and leaders have been either blaming the Arabs for not been receptive for modernity which Zionists have brought or simply have been denying the fact that Palestinians exists. This misrepresentation of the Palestinians/Arabs should be restricted with representation. In the concluding remarks in the *Question of Palestine* Edward Said writes,

...I must again repeat what I have said in this book and in “Orientalism” that discussion of the Arab world in general and of the Palestinians in particular, is so confused and unfairly slanted in the West that a great effort has to be made to see things as, for better or worse, they actually are for Palestinians and for Arabs. The danger is that in trying fairly to represent the complex circumstances of the Palestinian-Zionist conflict, I may not be doing enough to dispel the massive accumulation of lies, distortions and wilful ignorance surrounding the reality of our struggle. Perhaps there is no simple formula for letting the truth emerge in such cases, and certainly I would add that in my own case I have the strongest belief that historical and moral sufficiency of the Palestinian cause will finally outlast and outstrip any attempts to misrepresent it. In the end, of course, it is the struggle of a people, and not only of writers about that people, which determines its history. Nevertheless writing does count for something, and so certain points have to be made (1979: 215).

In *The Politics of Dispossession* (1994), a collection of his essays on the Palestine and Arab issues, he argues on the same line as he argued in *the Question of Palestine* (1979). In the introduction of *POD* he says besides his criticisms of Zionist Imperialism and the plight of Palestinian people caused by the forceful creation of Israel and expulsion of them from their land, *his most specific task through his writings was to establish the Palestinian cause*. In his words “...to make the case for Palestinian presence, to say that there was a Palestinian people and that, like all others, it had a history, a society, and

most important, a right to self-determination. In other words, *my work will be to try to change the public consciousness in which Palestine had no presence at all*" (1994: xvi) (Emphasis added). The Palestinian people need representation because the Western media and Zionists have either misrepresented them or have never represented at all.

Edward Said was engaged to give representation to the otherwise misrepresented people of Palestine not only because of his personal connection with the people and their plight but also because he thought that it is a duty of any claiming intellectual. By his own admission Said was interested to achieve 'peace' by giving equal share of public space to the Palestinian people. Anyways it was the only way out but, it is quite rational to think that he was interested in justice being done. Self-determination is a right of every nation and Said believed that Palestine is a nation.

Many more thinkers from inside and outside Palestine came forward to give representation to the Palestinians in the world public space. Israel Shahak and Left parties of Israel have been raising the issue of Palestinian' right in front of Israeli government and trying to create consensus among the Israeli people in favour of Palestinians. They have been praised by Said for their lasting contribution in the Palestinian self determination movement (1994: xxviii-xxix). In the aftermath of the Oslo Peace Process however, Said became critical of them because of their support to the Oslo (Said, 2001). The particular school of thought commonly known as post-Zionism is also an attempt to recognize the Palestinians' plight during and after the *Nakbah*. It is an attempt to undo the Zionist history.

The question of imperialism in Palestine and the issue of representation given to the Palestinian people remain out of individuals rational horizons until there is any argument about Palestinian nationalism. Is Palestine a nation? If yes, what are its components? Said believes it is and he explains it.

PALESTINIAN NATION

The search of nationalism in the Palestine can be divided into two phases. The June 1967 war can be the dividing line between the two. Before 1967 there was no such idea as "Palestinian nation". In *the Question of Palestine* Said argues that even during the Ottoman Empire the province of Palestine was an autonomous region ruled by local rulers from Jerusalem. Said emphasizes Palestinian people before 1967 were part of the movement of the Arab nationalism. In his *Politics of Dispossession* (1994) he gives a brief account of Palestinian history. In which he accepts that "my generation had been formed by the Arab nationalism represented by the late nineteenth century *Nahda*, the renaissance of Arabic culture that culminated in the great 1917 Arab revolt against the Ottoman empire"(xiii). So there was no question of a Palestinian nation. All the Arabs were aspiring to be one nation and that is how any one can explain the common struggle of Arabs against Zionism before 1967.

Said, during the early period of his writings, was very impressed by Gamal Abdul Nasser and his idea about Pan-Arab unity and its anti-imperialist designs. He admits the charm of Nasser on him, "...I felt the great power of his appeal and did not much question his ability to liberate and unify the Arab World". Anyway Said was not much interested in politics during Nasser and Arab Nationalism and what he argues is solely based on his readings of that period's history. Defeat in June 1967 war was a great shock and turning point in the history of Palestine. According to Edward Said "in a matter of six days, everything that Abdul Nasser and his followers had created came apart" and from this day onwards "to be an Arab meant a sense of defeat, profound shock, and bewildering uncertainty". Still, the shock brought by the 1967's defeat could not let the "hopes of unity and independence shattered" (1994: xiv).

The rise of Palestinian nationalism was the greatest achievement of the defeat in the 1967 war. Said says "although many of us were shattered by the catastrophe of 1967, we were reinvigorated by the Palestinian National Movement whose promise and ideas during its early years after the June War were felt throughout the Arab World" (*POD*, 1994: xv).

This rise of nationalism was occurring on the ruins of idea of Arab nationalism. Said says “on the cultural and intellectual level, the appearance of an organized movement of resistance against the Israeli occupation began as a critique of traditional Arab nationalism whose ruins were strewn about the battlefields of 1967” (POD, 1994: xv).

Said recognized the role of imperialism and incapability of Arab nation or nations in the formation of Palestinian nationalism after the 1967. He however, saw, the seeds of Palestinian identity shown in 1948 or even much before it in 1917 Balfour Declaration. But he was sure about the importance of 1967 in the history of Palestinian nationalism. He argues,

After 1948 most Palestinian refugees had been obliged to take on the identities of the Arab states to which they came as refugees. In Syria, many became Baathists, in Egypt they were Nasserites, and so on. *For the first time, after 1967 it became possible not only to become Palestinian again but also to choose Fatah, or the Popular Front, or the Democratic Front as one's movement of choice: each was Palestinian, jealously guarding its own vision of a Palestinian future* (POD, 1994: xv). (Emphasis added)

As defined by Oxford dictionary of Politics “the general feature of universal principles of nationalism is an assertion of the primacy of national identity over the claims of class, religion, or humanity in general” (2003: 361) Nationalism is the sense of one’s belongingness with its Nation. A Nation is, according to the Britannica ready reference Encyclopedia, a group of “people whose common identity creates a psychological bond and a political community based on common language, culture, ethnicity and history” (2005:71). Therefore, at certain level nationalism is nothing more than a feeling, a feeling of togetherness, unity coming out of the sense of common interest.

Many people define nationalism in different ways but, the core remains the same as mentioned above. According to Edward Said “Palestinian Nation” is the feeling of unity, common identity coming from the sense of common interest among the Palestinians. One thing which binds Palestinian people together is their common history. Common history gives common identity and here Edward Said establishes the “commonality” of Palestinian history in their “sufferings” by the hand of colonisers. He proclaims “we were

the first Arabs who at the grass-roots level-and not because a colonel or king commanded us-started a movement to repossess a land and a history that had been wrested from us". He further argued "Our leaders were popular and accountable to us, not hereditary or imposed on us from above" (*POD*, 1994: xv).

Edward Said in his *The Question of Palestine* (1979) traces the evolution of Palestinian nationalism. He was able to see the expression of common anger against Israel as a feature of Palestinian nationalism. When Said proclaims Mahmood Darwish as Palestinian national poet and his 'Bitaqah Huyvia' (Identity Card) a Palestinian national poem¹¹, the intentions were clear (155-156). In the poem Darwish portrays the anger of Palestinians of their common sufferings. He was not writing a critique on literature but he was trying to establish the commonality of the Palestinian people. Palestinian nationalism is not Islamic it is rather secular Arabic nationalism. Whenever Said uses the term Palestine he means every Palestinian Arab irrespective of his or her religion. (Kennedy, 2000: 77-78).

In fact, Said believed firmly that a Palestinian nation can be secular only. Use of religion will weaken the Palestinian resistance. He was a firm critic of religious fundamentalism and use of religion in politics. He saw the rise of religious leaders in politics both in Zionist movement and in the Palestinian movement as the rise of "suppressed religiosity" in rather critical tone unlike Freud's account of Psychosexual theory (Hart, 2000: 143-162). Said praises PLO for its idea of a "secular democratic Palestinian state" as "most novel and revolutionary aspect of the PLO" and criticizes "Zionists and their American supporters" to undermining this idea of a Secular democratic Palestine (Said, 1979: 220-

¹¹ Mahmood Darwish' poem is as follows "Record!

I am an Arab
And my identity card is number fifty thousand
I have eight children
And the ninth
Is coming in midsummer
Will you be angry...
Beware-beware of my hunger and my anger!
See for full text Said, Edward (1979), *The Question of Palestine*.
Pages-156-157

221) (Hart, 2000: 147).

The rationale behind the study of Palestinian nationalism in Edward Said was not chauvinistic and narrow in a sense of creating xenophobia. There can be criticisms of his ideas of nationalism in the Palestinian context. For example one can argue that a nation created purely on a specific agenda (in Palestinian context getting back the lands occupied by Israel), has no secure future after the goal achieved. The current happenings in the form of sectarian clashes and rivalry between Hamas and Fatah (much before anything could be achieved) are showing the validity of the argument. But, no one questions the fact that the Palestinian nationalism has achieved its identity and no one either denies the existence of Palestinians as a nation now. The Zionist propaganda of non-existence of Arabs and their savagery is no more valid (Said, 2001).

The role of undisputed leader for a nation is as important as its common history. There were many problems between Said and Arafat in their later interactions; especially in 1990s. But Said was before the beginning of the decade of 1990 a supporter of Arafat and his tactics to the extent that they gained the world's attention to otherwise neglected cause (Said, 1979). He recognized the importance of a strong leadership for a movement to be successful. He wrote in 1983, "*solidly behind Arafat*" an article republished in *Politics of Dispossession* in 1994 in which he expressed his faith in the leadership of Arafat and PLO. As we have seen in the introduction Said was a member of the PNC from 1977 before he resigned in 1991 due to differences on Kuwait crisis and Oslo with Arafat. He was against the support given to Saddam Hussein in 1991 by Arafat. Palestine became isolated in the Arab world due to this mistake. When the Oslo started Said had a different view on peace talks and he resigned from the PNC. During and after the Oslo Accords Said discovered in Arafat a dictator and corrupt personality (we will see it later) who betrayed the cause of Palestine for only his personal ambitions (Said, 2001)

RESISTANCE vs TERRORISM

Edward Said has never accepted the arguments related to one sided blaming of

Palestinians for their use of violence. Palestinians are invariably named as ‘Terrorists’ when they use violence as a mean to draw the attention of the world towards their plights. The era of ‘Global War against Terror’ and equating Palestinian resistance with terrorism, both have been a matter of criticism in the writings of Edward Said. However, he had been criticizing the use of violence against the innocents irrespective of the cause. Said criticizes the use of religion as well in any resistance movement. In his words “cynical manipulations of religion are appalling: to kill children or bus passengers in the name of God is a horror to be unconditionally condemned, as much as one should also condemn leaders who send young people on suicide missions” (Said, 2001: 45).

But he emphasizes the need to see the reasons behind the violence. No one recommends use of violence and killing of innocents. But for Said one cannot also preach a person who has “no other option” but to kill him or her in order to end his or her miseries. The person who compels a person to kill is also as guilty as the killer. He argues “terrorism is bred out of poverty, desperation, a sense of powerlessness and utter misery: it signals the failure of politics and vision.” Said argues, the Palestinians use violence only because of American supported imperial practices used by Israel has left them no other option but to use this. According to Said US’s help to Israel is halting to have any “political solution” to the problem which in a sense pushes Palestinians to use terror (Said, 2001: 46).

Terrorism in the West Asian region was brought by Israelis in the early 1940s in the form of their militias. The argument behind having armed militias in mandate of Palestine given by Zionist was due to their concern for security. Instead of providing security only to the Jews, *Haganah* like Zionist militias were killing innocent Palestinian and creating havoc among them which culminated in the massacres like Der Yassin in 1948 and resulted mass exodus of Palestinians from their homes out of the fear of more some killings. The Zionist terror did not end in 1948. The plight of Palestinians inside Israel, Occupied Territories and elsewhere increased after their exodus. According to Said Western media never gave heed to Israeli terrorist acts and only criticize Palestinians. He argues “it is simply extraordinary and without precedent.” He again argues that Israeli acts of terror also need to be criticized before nurturing any hope of halting the violence

in the region and going towards a genuine political solution (Said, 2001: 46).

Edward Said had been engaged with the question of terrorism since he first wrote *the Question of Palestine*. He was very much aware of the fact that the Israeli state uses the “dehumanising” and over “generalising image” of Palestinians as terrorists in order to hide its own much more extensive and inhumane use of force against the innocent Palestinians (1979: xxxx). He knows that this label of ‘terrorist’ hides the fact of Palestinian people’s miserable condition under the Israeli occupation. At the same time it makes Palestinian people’s right to fight for their self-rule “illegitimate”(1979: 224).

The Western Media and Intelligentsia generalize every act of resistance in the West Bank and Gaza as terrorist act. According to Said, it shows the general biases against Arabs in the West. Western media often used to equate the Palestinian resistance with ‘anti-Semitism’, the phenomenon which was the dominant behaviour in the West against Jews, and which culminated in the horrors of Holocaust. Said ridicules this act of equating Palestinian resistance both with terrorism and anti-Semitism. In fact, Arabs are themselves ‘Semite’ as we have seen before (2001: 2-3 and 15-16).

What is called the ‘hype of terrorism’ was a known fact for Edward Said. In his 1988 article *Identity, Negation and Violence*, which reappeared in *the Politics of Dispossession* (1994), Said expressed the need to ‘conceptualize terrorism’ in order to find out the misuse of the term. He was aware of the fact that “the American mainstream media use the rhetoric of terrorism to disparage anything that does not meet the approval of the American government” (1994: 354). In his interviews with David Barsamian he often talks about terrorism in its two different meanings. According to Western media and certain section of intelligentsia “terrorism is anything that stands in the face of what *we* want to do”. “We” here denotes the Western powers (Said and Barsamian, 2003: 89). According to Said this is the first “general” use of the word terrorism in the western media and foreign policy documents. For Said, this use of the word terrorism denoted the power balance in the world politics and has nothing to do with the real menace of terrorism (Said, 2003).

Edward Said while accepting gravity of the problem of terrorism, try to see the real problem of it through the definition given by Eqbal Ahmad. According to Ahmad “terrorism is *an act of intimidating and injuring unarmed, presumably innocent civilians*. It has five sources *state, religion, protest/revolution, crime and pathology*, of which *only the first three have political motivation*. Ahmad argues that the “terrorism” as defined above does exist and is a source of genuine concern, but needs analysis and discrimination if we wish to do *justice to its victims, or to understanding on both sides of the ideological boundary*. Ahmad offers a set of half a dozen guidelines for analysis. These are: terrorism is connected to *the need to be heard*, since it is *a violent way of expressing long-felt, collective grievances when legal and political means fail over a long period, a minority acts violently*. Moreover, Ahmed continues. *Anger and helplessness produce compulsions towards retributive violence*, this explains not only the violence of the helpless, but also of the powerful: *I have pounded a few walls myself when I am alone*, said President Reagan in 1985. Then we should acknowledge the sad truth that *the experience of violence at the hands of a stronger party has historically turned victims into terrorists*. Similarly *when identifiable targets become available, violence is externalized*, that is people pass from the stage of pounding walls to shooting what stands before them (Said, 1994: 346).

The arguments regarding the “so called terrorism” in Palestine have been dealt in detail in his every writings. His *Covering Islam* (1987) and *Blaming the Victims* (1988) are two major books which deal with the Western media’s biased reporting of both Islam and Palestinian resistance. According to Said the need to discriminate between the two and to address the route causes of violence was the most important task in the fight against terrorism.

CONCLUSION

The autonomy arrangements that Palestinians (excluding the four million refugees whose destiny was postponed to some nebulous “final status” situation) have to live with today are a bizarre amalgam of three historically discarded “solutions” devised

by white colonialists to the problem of native peoples in nineteenth century Africa and the Americas. One was the concept that natives could be turned into irrelevant exotics, with their lands taken from them, and living conditions settled on them that reduced them to day labourers and pre-modern farmers. This is the American Indian model. Second is the division of lands (reservations) into non-continuous Bantustans, in which an apartheid policy gave special privileges to white (today's Israeli) settlers, while letting the natives live in their own run-down ghettos; there they would be responsible for their municipal affairs, yet subject to white (again, Israeli) security control. This is the South African model. Finally, the need to give these measures some degree of local acceptability required a native "chief" to sign on the dotted line. He temporarily gathered a little more status than before, the whites gave him some support, title and a privilege or two, even a native police force so that everyone could rest easy that the right thing had been done for his people. This was the French and British model for nineteenth-century Africa. Arafat is the late-twentieth-century equivalent of the African "chief" (Said, 2003: 110).

Said criticizes the PLO and other organizations for their failure to fight Israeli propaganda as well its imperial practices inside the Occupied Territories and outside that. The 1987 *Intifada* was, according to Said, a spontaneous reaction coming from the general people. No organization has dared to mobilize the masses behind their banner only because they are involved in mindless violence and their own sectarian and parochial interests are getting more priority than the Palestinian cause (Said, 1996). Said criticizes PLO the most, as we have seen earlier and will see in the next chapter as well. According to Said what PLO and any other Palestinian organization for that matter is lacking the most is 'The Discipline of Detail.' For Said to describe PLO's negligence of technicalities of a peace process and its lack preparation for the occasions like Oslo caused great damage to the Palestinian cause. According to him PLO failed to understand the nature of American sponsored talks and the motives of Israel. This happened only because they never gave heed to the history of Palestine in particular and imperialism in general. PLO was almost inactive ever since 1980s. Even the *Intifada* of 1987 was not led by them. The leaders of PLO were enjoying their comforts in Tunis and never tried to mobilize Palestinian masses behind them. Yassir Arafat above all this went to the extent to support a dictator. These together cost very dearly for Palestinians in Oslo. Said says PLO was not at all ready for talks and they were highly ill prepared in comparison to Israelis and this led to sheer surrender of Palestinian cause (Said, 1996)

Imperial practices of west in the form of helping the Zionist mission to colonise

Palestinians has been successful to the extent that Palestinians have not succeeded to achieve their self rule even after so many years. But it has also created a very strong opposition for it which is keeping eyes on the each and every step of it. This is preventing the free move and manoeuvre of imperial powers. In the Palestinian case, Edward Said was not only aware of the fact of the Israeli imperialism and colonialism but also worried how to deal with it. He wrote, as we have seen, extensively on Palestine just to counter the Western propaganda and to give voice to the voiceless people. The ideas of Said regarding the imperialism and colonialism have shaped his perceptions regarding the Oslo Peace Process. He saw it an imperial method just to strengthen Israeli colonialism inside Palestine. His criticisms of Oslo were the result of his comprehensive understanding of Palestinian history.

Chapter 3

THE PEACE PROCESS AND THE OSLO AGREEMENTS: THE CLASSIC MISTAKES

Referring to the Palestinian autonomy talks between Israel, Egypt and the United States in May 1980 Edward Said wrote way back in summer 1980 in *Trialogue* about the indifference of Israel towards most of the important points for Palestinians. He identified that in between the on and off of the “Peace Process” Israeli spokesman have been unyielding on important points: no Palestinian self determination, no Israeli withdrawal, no change in an increasingly aggressive settlements policy, no Palestinian control over anything as important as water resources or security or foreign policy or immigration or East Jerusalem”(Said, 1994: 43). After thirteen years of the publication of this article Said had to write again. This time it was on the Oslo peace process. For Said, the major points of criticisms were the same as thirteen years before they were in the case of Egyptian-Israeli talks on Palestine in 1980. There were differences between the two situations, but Said did not consider them substantial. For example, during the Oslo, unlike before, a strong Palestinian side, PLO was leading the Palestinian delegation. In 1980 it was Egypt which represented Palestinians in talks with Israelis. For Said this was not acceptable. He raised the question in the article written in 1980 and republished in 1994 in his book *The Politics of Dispossession: the Struggle for Palestinian Self-determination 1969-1994*, “how is it that Palestinian autonomy talks include no Palestinian? Is it not manifestly odd and does it not requires some explanation, that the party whose “autonomy” is being discussed is not present?”(Said, 1994: 44). However, this was the only difference between the talks in 1980 and in the secret talks of Oslo. After thirteen years in between, the issues remained the same. Norway played an important role as facilitator in the Oslo peace process. But it was the United States which was behind the talks in the Oslo (Ross, 2004).

This chapter will look into the details of what was the Oslo Peace Process and why Edward Said was so critical of it? For the purpose of this study there was a need to define the Oslo Peace Process. As we have seen in the introductory part of this work, the Oslo

Peace Process was a long one that started in 1993 and lasted till 2000. Even now in 2007, nobody has declared formally that the Oslo Peace Process is finished. Despite this, for this study we are having a deadline. For all practical purposes the Gaza-Jericho agreement signed in May 1995 and the Interim Agreement signed in September 1995 were the last major agreements signed between the parties during the Oslo Peace Process. Though there were hiccups in the process even during Rabin's period as Prime Minister of Israel it, after the assassination of him on 4 November 1995, became virtually dead (Kimmerling, Migdal, 2003: 362).

Edward Said had been writing very often on the flaws of the Oslo Peace Process. He had been critical of Oslo because of its "biased" and "temporary" nature. In fact, he was not alone who criticized Oslo. Haider al Shafi and Noam Chomsky were also the staunch critics of the Oslo.¹ This chapter will discuss the points of disagreements between the supporters of the Oslo and Edward Said. Said had some major works on the Oslo and its later versions. Most of his essays had been published in *Al ahram* weekly in Arabic and in the *Guardian daily* and *The Nation* in English. Some of them have been published in other Journals and magazines too.² His books are mainly collections of his articles and interviews on the Israel-Palestine conflict in general and the Peace Process in particular. His main books on the subject are, as we have seen earlier, *The End of the Peace Process: Oslo and after* (2003), *Peace and its Discontents* (1996), *The Politics of Dispossession: the Struggle for Palestinian Self-determination 1969-1994* (1994), *Culture and Resistance: Conversation with Edward W. Said* (2003).

OSLO ACCORDS

According to Moshe Ma'oz, "the Oslo Accords of 1993 and 1995 in their grand principles represented a historical and psychological breakthrough in Israeli-Palestinian

¹ See Haider al Shafi's interviews in *Journal of Palestine Studies* in the issues of before and after the signing of the DOP. Chomsky has been writing on Oslo regularly. See particularly his 2003 book *Middle East Illusions: Peace in the Middle East? Reflections on Justice and Nationhood*, New Delhi: Penguin Books

² Said had been writing in Arabic and English both. His most Arabic works have been translated mostly by himself and republished in English. For detailed list of his publishers see Bibliography.

relations. For the first time, the two rival nationalist communities mutually recognized each other's legitimacy and national political aspirations, and committed themselves to working together for peaceful coexistence in the land of Israel-Palestine"(1994: 406). This is the majority opinion on the Oslo Peace Process. It remained as hopeful, in various quarters till the assassination of the Prime Minister Rabin. There was a minority of scholars who was not so "optimistic" about the event and its outcomes. In fact, they were skeptical towards it Edward Said was the most outspoken among them. He wrote in 1994 that, "we are now supposed to feel that peace is moving forward and to question anything about the 'peace process' is tantamount to being an ungrateful, treasonous wretch". He further argued, "I spoke in terms of facts and figures, and ___ was unsparing in my criticism of all the parties to the peace process. But I found that I was expected to express gratitude and a general attitude of cheerfulness". He proclaimed that "I had violated [the general expectations of the supporters of the Oslo] by complaining about concrete abuses". "Lastly", Said declared, "I had had the nerve to speak about the situation neither as a supplicant nor as a subservient "native"" (Said, 2003: 4). He argued elsewhere, "Those of us who criticized it [Oslo] from the start were a tiny minority of Arabs and Jews who grasped its ungenerous, essentially humiliating implications for the Palestinian people (Said, 2003: 109). It is a well known fact that Edward Said always shared his views with the people who supported the idea of "peaceful coexistence" of Palestinians and Israelis. In fact, he was among the few Arab scholars who supported the idea of a "negotiated solution" to the Arab-Israeli conflict (Bill, A, 2002).

POINTS OF DISAGREEMENTS

Said has criticised Oslo on many counts. For our convenience, we can sum up them into four broad categories. First, the argument that, Oslo was "inevitable" and "most suitable" solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has been the basic argument given by the supporters of the Oslo, as Nabil Sath proclaimed in 1993 "there was no alternative to Oslo". Edward Said does not agree. He argued otherwise and proclaimed that "there were alternatives" to Oslo (Said, 2003: 21). Second, for Edward Said peace, in the region, will come only when Israel admits its misdeeds against Palestinians and shows readiness to

correct them. Again, Said questions the “intentions” and “motives” of the participants in the peace process, namely PLO, Israel and the United States. Third, when every one was praising the various accords signed by both sides on different occasions during the Oslo, Said was able to find out the basic flaws in the agreements according to the Palestinian interest. For Edward Said, as we will see it as the fourth point of disagreement, every Israeli violation of the provisions of the peace process, the “historic agreement”, make it more unacceptable for Palestinians. He pointedly questions the increasing settlements, presence of Israeli army inside the areas which were to be under Palestinian control according to the DOP, and its failure or rather “indifference” to start the process of the Final Status Negotiations (FSN) also agreed in the DOP. Following are the details of these points of disagreements.

1. *Was Oslo an Opportunity?*

Supporters of the Oslo Accords believe that state of affairs in the last part of 1980s and early years of 1990s led PLO in a position of isolation and insignificance and in this situation of peripheral positioning the peace process started in “Middle East Peace Process of Madrid” (Spain) was an “opportunity”³. The success in it, as it is seen by the PLO leadership in Tunisia, could have changed the fate of the PLO and the Palestinian cause for that matter (Ross, 2004: 48-49). They elaborate it and argue that, due to Yassir Arafat’s support of Saddam Hussein during latter’s invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 the acceptability of PLO among the Arab world became very low. It was very difficult, in the contemporary situation to even sustain the resistance against Israel because Kuwait and other Arab states had denied funding the PLO. After the end of the Cold War, the United States remained the sole superpower. It was the only country which could help PLO to achieve its goal of a free Palestine. No other country could do anything substantial for that matter. Hence, it was a realistic tactic to participate in the talks proposed by the United States and co-sponsored by Soviet Union (later Russia) even as a part of the Jordanian delegation and not as an independent delegation. One more reason

³ As we have seen it in the First Chapter that the Oslo Peace Process was an outcome of the failure of the Middle East Peace Conference for a great extent.

given by the supporters of the peace process was that the remoteness of the leadership from the Occupied Territories (OTs) (PLO was based in Tunis since 1983) was creating hurdles in the effective functioning of the resistance movement. Oslo provided an opportunity to the leadership to come inside the heart of the resistance that is, inside the OTs (Kimmerling, Migdal, 2003: 315-329).

Edward Said accepted that the conditions in the beginning of the 1990s were not favourable to the Palestinian people and the PLO. In his memoir *Out of Place*, he accepts that the circumstances in the early years of the decade had been the compelling force behind the PLO participating in the Madrid conference (Bill, A, 2002: 61). He admits it on many other occasions as well.⁴ For example he wrote while giving reference to the 1988 PNC summit (about it we will talk later) in which PLO proposed a negotiated settlement first time in its history. He argues,

in any event, the great compromise of 1988⁵ did not yield very much for very long: a year and half later, after a stupidly criminal and useless attempted raid (with only Palestinian casualties) by one of the PLO factions against a Tel Aviv beach, the United States broke off the dialogue in May 1990 with no results for the Palestinians to show for it. There after, Arafat and his inner circle-marooned in Tunisia, forced to bear the humiliation of endless losses, as well as the opprobrium and gradual dislike of its own Palestinian constituencies-became increasingly reclusive. I and many others felt the increasing gap between the rhetoric and the reality. We had already ceased being a people determined on liberation: we had accepted the lesser goal of a small degree of independence. The PLO seemed to be getting more bureaucratic and delivering less and less. After the Gulf War, the money from wealthy Arab governments and states began to shut off, until by the middle of 1993, hundreds of people remained unpaid in PLO offices abroad, more families were left unsupported, greater cries of dissatisfaction and despair went up (Said, *POD*, 1994: xxiii).

According to Said because of these happenings the leadership of PLO “itself became far too concerned with its own survival”. It could not gather the “strength with learning from the past” and “capitalizing and building on strength and potential”. He argues that instead of “remaining focused on principals (like freedom and equality for Palestinians) and real

⁴ See his interviews given to many on many occasions for example with his interview with Mouin Rabbani in 1995 he say “it true that we were weak ____”. Viswanathan, Gauri (Ed) (2001), *Power, Politics and Culture: interviews with Edward W. Said*, New York: Pantheon Books.

⁵ On November 15 1988 Arafat declared a Palestinian state inside the Occupied Territories. For Said it was a compromise because before it Palestinians were claiming whole Israeli territory as Palestinian state. See Kimmerling and Migdal, 2003: 317.

goals, mobilizing its people and their best elements for work in a common cause” PLO leadership compromised the Palestinian cause in Oslo (1994: xviii)

But, according to Said, “the handicaps” of PLO were “its own creation”. He argues that the “weakness of PLO” was due to the “inability of the leadership”. He found the lack of a firm determination to fight against “injustice” among the leadership of the PLO. According to him, the leadership had failed to mobilize their people even once since 1982 which resulted in the mass discontent among the masses towards their leadership. Obviously leadership took it as people did not bother to fight. He argued that the 1987 *Intifada* though was a “spontaneous” uprising of the masses the PLO leadership failed to take lesson from it. He often quotes Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress as an example of firmness and commitment towards a cause. He felt disappointed that the Palestinian leadership failed to take lessons from them as well. Said argues that, though

Mandela was in jail for twenty five years and still he was able to remain steadfast in his devotions to certain principles. And though the African National Congress was completely exiled or underground, he was able to mount an international campaign, which is what turned the tide. We (Palestinians) have never done that (Viswanathan, 2001: 397).⁶

By giving reasons his deteriorating health in public Said resigned from the PNC in 1991. But, “misadventure” of Arafat during the Gulf War and Arafat’s agreement to participate the Madrid conference was the real compelling reasons for his dissociation with PNC.⁷ According to Said it was the weak PLO which saw the American proposals during the Oslo, as an “opportunity”. Said was however, not receptive to the idea of signing the Oslo Accords. In his early writings after DOP he was showing his total puzzlement “as to why both the PLO and the Arab states allowed themselves to get in such an extraordinarily stupid position, that is, to sign peace agreements with Israel before even the most limited versions of resolutions 242 and 338 had been complied with” (Said, 2003: 5). Expressing his desire for a negotiated settlement but not the “poor deal” in Oslo and at the same time

⁶ Said often compares South African struggle against apartheid whenever he writes on the Palestinian issue. See his *The Question of Palestine* (1979), *The End of the Peace Process* (2003) and other books on Palestine.

⁷ See Introduction

showing his lack of confidence in the Arafat after the Gulf War, in his September 5 1996 article *On Visiting Wadie Said* wrote

I was an early dissenter from what I interpreted as a poor deal for Palestinian; for the past two decades I had had few doubts that a negotiated political settlement was the only valid option for our struggle with Israel, but after the Gulf War and his disastrous alliance with Saddam Hussein, I had lost confidence in Arafat' abilities to lead or truly represent our national interest (2003: 77).

Said did not buy the logic of the peace supporters. He simply saw the attempts as opportunism on the part of PLO leadership. He also cites it as a reason for his distance from Arafat and others after the Oslo (Viswanathan, 2001: 398-99).

According to Said PLO conceded every single "national aim" to Israelis due to its opportunism and inactivity. He argued about the Oslo's predecessor, Madrid talks that it was the waste of the "gains" of the 1987 *Intifada* by "the Arafat and a few of his closest advisors" who had decided to accept anything thrown in their way by "the United States and Israel" as part of the process. According to Said it was a tactic of the PLO "just in order to survive". He more specifically claimed about the Madrid, that "The major losses incurred by the misguided policies of the PLO leadership in a panic to concede every single national aim and legal principal to the so called interim solution proposed by Yitzhak Shamir (*that time Israeli prim minister*) and seconded by George Bush (*senior*) and James Baker (*US Secretary of State*)" (Said, 1996: xxviii).

In fact, Said argued, due to successive killings of PLO leaders by Israeli (Abu Jihad was killed in 1988 and Abu Iyad was in 1990), cutting of funds from Arab states, expulsion of hundred of thousands of Palestinian workers from Kuwait, corruption in the organization of the PLO and end of the Cold War Yassir Arafat and his followers became in the early years of the last decades of the millennium, so "disorganized and enthused" that they chose to accept a kind of "Allon Plan"⁸ they themselves had rejected in 1977 (Said,

⁸ Allon plan was submitted by the Labor party' leader Yigal Allon in 1967 in which certain parts of the Occupied Territories were to go to Israel and certain other to Jordan. Rest of the land would be autonomous Palestinian territories. It was believed that it will buy peace with neighboring Jordan. It was rejected inside

1994: xii-xxxiv). Said argued that we should call DOP by “its real name” and according to him it is “an instrument of Palestinian surrender, a Palestinian Versailles”. He further argued that “PLO could have negotiated a better arrangement than this modified Allon Plan”, in which unlike this “modified Allon plan” there would have been no requirements of “so many unilateral concessions to Israel”. He emphasizes “for reasons, best known to the leadership, it refused all ...previous overtures” (*POD*, 1994: xxxiv).

Edward Said was well aware of the fact that PLO itself created in last few years before the Oslo peace process, a situation in which it became somewhat inevitable to it to sign the Accords. Except the end of the Cold War, almost all handicaps which “compelled” PLO and its leadership to see the Oslo as an opportunity were their own creations. The argument that ‘there was no alternative’ was a result of, as Said pointed out, the ineffectiveness and inefficiency of the PLO’s leadership and was not a fact. If PLO could have mobilized Palestinians against the US and Israeli imperialism and occupation as happened during the 1987-89 *Intifada* and if there would have been no greed of position and power among the PLO leaders, Oslo could not have happened at least in the way it happened.

2. Was Peace a Motive?

...there could not be a military solution to the Arab-Israeli, and in particular the Palestinian-Zionist conflict. I sincerely believe in reconciliation between peoples and cultures in collision, and have made it my life’s work to try to further that end. But, *true reconciliation cannot be imposed; neither can it occur between cultures and societies that are enormously uneven in power*. The kind of reconciliation that can bring real peace can only occur between equals, between partners whose independence, strength of purpose, and inner cohesion allows them fully to understand and share with the other (Said, 1996: xxvi).

In other words at the time of Madrid conference and later in Oslo peace process the parties to the negotiation were not in equal position. As we have seen earlier, PLO was totally hopeless and disoriented. It was a condition in which PLO would agree on any

Israeli political sphere, at that time. Later it got many versions. See Reinhart, Tanya, (2003), *Israel/Palestine: How to end the War of 1948*, New Delhi: Left Word.

proposal put by the Israeli side with the backing of the United State. The real objectives of Israel and the United States were the matter of enquiry for Said. Whether the objectives were to support the peace in the region or they were only methods to cash the weakness of the PLO for the maximum gain of imperial powers. The intentions of the PLO leadership and its preparedness to deal with high bargaining skills of Israelis and the United States were also a matter of apprehension for Edward Said.

The first question raised by Said was how genuine the Israeli intentions were? He himself gave a negative answer. Criticizing all the three parties to the Oslo negotiations, Said laid blame on Israel for the pathetic conditions of Palestinians even after the peace process. He targeted Israel as the one “which exploits Palestinian weakness to prolong its military occupation and settlement practices by other means” (Said, 2003: 3). According to Said no matter which party rules in Israel, their policies vis-à-vis the Palestinians remain the same, they all are Zionists and imperialist. If Rabin signed the peace agreement it was the result of circumstantial pressure put by the US only in order to consolidate the gains from Palestinian weakness at that moment. He described the situation before 1996 elections in Israel, on which everyone in Palestinian side was concentrating in order not to be seen as hampering the chances of Shimon Peres to win, as a naivety to the Israeli politics among the Palestinian leadership. He argued that, For Palestinians and for world community as well Labour was the only political party in Israel which was supportive to the idea of peace between Arabs and Israelis and therefore they should not loss the elections. According to Said, Israel has successfully “propagated” among the world community and Palestinians that it is “striving for peace” and despite its practices are suggesting otherwise it had made “the opposition to its policies” in the OTs seem “tantamount to opposing peace”. He argued that Israel has “elevated itself and its four million citizens to the central focal point of the Arab and Muslim world. ...it has compelled the Palestinian leadership to believe that any unnecessary resistance on its part will upset Peres and weaken his appeal to the electorate” (Said, 2003: 54). Said criticises “such excess” done by Israel. He argues that such propaganda and tactic used by Israel “give a new meaning to preserving the status quo, which used to signify holding on to what one has, but which

now means aggressively robbing your peace partner in order to secure more gains for yourself at his expense” (Said, 2003: 54).

Talking about differences and similarities between Labour and Likud and Simon Peres and Benjamin Netanyahu on the Palestinian question, Said emphasises that if there are any difference between them they are only “relative” and not “absolute”. He further clarifies the similarities in the context of Palestinians, between Peres and Netanyahu as he states,

Neither man would seriously entertain the possibility of conceding sovereignty to Palestinians. Both are radically committed to the superiority of Israeli Jews over Palestinian Arabs, or all Arabs for that matter. Both are unshakably convinced that for Israel to survive as it has survived it must have, and be willing to use, devastating power over the Arabs. Whatever mode of coexistence would be settled on, for both Peres and Netanyahu the Arabs are seen as required satisfying Israeli demands in politics, economics, and military terms. Peres seemed to make concessions, but if one looks back at his record the pattern is quite clear. He took advantage of Arab disunity and Palestinian gullibility for Israeli economic benefit; he and Rabin manipulated the United States and the peace process so as to keep Israel in a position of superiority whereby it dictated the terms, the agenda, and every possible outcome; and all this without giving up a single strategic objective. He has continuously violated the provisions of the peace accords. *He (Rabin) signed on the peace accords because he wanted to rule Palestinians indirectly. Netanyahu want to do it directly (emphasis added)*. It was evident in the Israeli press that Labor party and Peres took credit for settlements more than Likud (Said, 2003: 59-60).

Israelis were not committed to peace as Said argued, became evident by the stand of Yossi Beili, Shimon Peres’s main ally in his cabinet, on the Final Status Negotiations agreed in the DOP. Said quotes Haim Baram, an Israeli commentator, according to him in Beili’s view, “most settlers will stay put”. Beili further proclaimed that “Israel will continue to deal with Yassir Arafat” as he will expectedly “erase the Palestinian charter” and “fight Islamic terrorism” on “Israeli behalf”. He states contrary to what had been agreed in the DOP by both the parties that, “Israel will maintain the river Jordan as a line of defense”. He completely denied any possibility to free the West Bank from illegal settlements and proclaimed “no settlement in the Jordan valley is to be dismantled; the huge settlement of Ma’aleh Edumim is to be annexed”. Beili further predetermine the yet to be started the FSN outcome on Jerusalem and showed the real intentions of the Israeli

side on it, as he proclaimed that “united Jerusalem (which constitutes twenty five percent of the West Bank) will be the ‘eternal capital’ of Israel (Said, 2003: 40).

Israel’s complete denial of any insurance on the fate of Palestinian refugees was a reason of Said’s suspicion towards the Israeli motives during the Oslo. Israel’s failures to give any concrete assurance on Jerusalem and on the boundaries of the future Palestinian state besides its indifference towards the demand of apology for what Israel has done to Palestinians in the last forty five years have been cited by Said in favor of his idea that Israel was never willing to let a Palestinian state establish. According to Said until free Palestine is a reality there can be no peace in the region.

Particularly among the Jews, Israeli and Western scholars; contrary to what Edward Said was thinking, Oslo Accords were major step taken by both the parties in the right direction. Intentions of Rabin and Peres have hardly been questioned by anyone else. But Yitzhak Rabin’s statement in the Knesset on Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles on 21 September 1993 suggests that Saidian suspicions were right. Just eight days after the “historic agreement” in which it was said that Israel accepted first time in its history, that Jerusalem will be an issue in the Final Status Negotiations and which was quoted by the supporters of the Oslo as a major success of the process, Rabin denied completely before his legislators. He stated in Knesset “on the question of Jerusalem, we said that this government, just like all its predecessors, believes there are no differences of opinion in this house over the eternalness of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital”. He emphasises, “United and united Jerusalem is not negotiable and will be the capital of the Israeli people under Israel’s sovereignty and the subject of every Jews yearnings and dreams for ever and ever”. He gave no assurance on the PSN or FSN and categorically talked about the “experimental character of the DOP” (Rabin’s address to the Knesset, Special documents on the peace process, The Peace Process, 1993: 139). This statement makes it very clear that Israel’s intentions were not in favor of peace as Edward Said has pointed out. Israel wanted to exploit the situation and the PLO and its leadership fell into the trap.

The United States was the main force behind the outcomes of Oslo peace process. It is a very well known fact that the US has been sympathetic towards Israel since the day of its establishment (Chomsky Noam, 2003). Though, the reasons behind this preferential treatment are beyond the scope of this study, one thing which is very well known is that the presence of the strong Jewish lobby in the US.⁹

At the end of the Cold War the US remained the sole superpower in the world politics. Ever since the end of Second World War till 1991 the superpowers, the US and the USSR had been fighting for their influence in the West Asian region. Due to many reasons the US had the upper hand vis-à-vis the USSR in the region. But the role of the USSR was very crucial for the anti-imperialist struggle in the region. Palestinian Liberation movement had been getting political and logistical support from it directly or indirectly from time to time. Syria and Iran had been the routes of the supply (Little, Douglas, 2003). The “Middle East peace process” was a joint initiative of US and the USSR (Russia).¹⁰ Oslo peace process was the outcome of this conference in the sense that it broke the barrier between the Israeli and PLO and helped them to understand each other (Ross, Dennis, 2006). After the disintegration of the Soviet Union in December 1991 the US remained the sole superpower in the world politics. This situation was very conducive for Israel and the US to their “imperialist designs” in the region (Said, *POD*, 1994). According to Said after the disintegration of the Soviet Union “...gone was the Palestinian and international consensus about a UN peace conference; what was now being proposed was, in effect, an American show, with Russia along as a lame-duck cosponsor”. He talked about the US’s biases towards the Palestinian cause as he argued “...self determination [of Palestinians] was never accepted by the United States, nor was a Palestinian state”. He point out the compromises of the PLO just to be a part of the peace conference as

The PLO was not to attend except as a distant observer; the Palestinians were to be a part of joint delegation with Jordan; Israel would retain the right of veto over the delegations members (which could not include any residents of Jerusalem). In addition, what was to

⁹ For the role and importance of this lobby in the US foreign policy decision making see-Chomsky, (2003).

¹⁰ In the beginning the cosponsors were US and USSR but in between the talks the disintegration of the USSR happened and its successor state Russia became the cosponsor.

be discussed at the conference was to be decided by Israel. The United States went along with all this but also asked the Palestinians to accept (Said, *POD*, 1994: xxxi).

Edward Said identifies the major fault of the US's policy in the West Asia as its emphasis on the "peace treaties" rather than crating conditions for the peace (Bill, A, 2002: 59). For most of the flaws in the Oslo, Said questions the role of the US. According to him, Israel could retain control of most of the OTs in spite of the peace Accord, it could establish new settlements, and use brutal force against civilians in the name of security only because of the United States support (Said, 1996). Said did not find any difference between the two parties, Republicans and Democrats of the US vis-à-vis the Israel-Palestine question. According to him, both the political parties have been following same policies in the region. Said argues that "The politics of both the parties are a continuation of American support for Israel at the cost of Palestinians" (Bill, A, 2002: 62). Said often argues that the media in the US and intelligentsia are totally biased against the Arabs. According to him this is a result of both, ignorance and the 'superiority complex in the West.'¹¹ Baruch Kimberling (2003) writes about this American attitude in detail in his book *Politicide*. He quotes a study done by Professor Oren Yiftachel of Ben Gurion University and Professor Rema Hemmani of Bir Zeit University in the book. This study of Yiftachel and Hemmani substantiates Edward Said's arguments regarding the biasness against Arabs, which is prevalent among the American media and intelligentsia. Noam Chomsky (2003) also writes about the same feelings among Americans. He points out the image of Arabs in general and Palestinians in particular among the American as they are not only "insignificant people", but are "much lower" in the "ranking", because they interfere with the "plans of World's" most "significant people", namely privileged Americans and Israeli Jews. This kind of thinking is very common in the Americans and according to Chomsky, as Edward Said also pointed out, "one cannot fully understand the peace process without an appreciation of the cultural milieu from which it arises, illustrated not only by such thoughts of prominent Western intellectuals but also, and more significantly, by the fact that they pass without notice, apparently being considered quite natural" (Chomsky, 2003: 171-72). He further contextualizes this American

¹¹ for more discussion on that see Said' *Orientalism* (1968), *Cultural Imperialism* (1990) and *The Question of Palestine* (1979). His *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*, (1981 and 1997) is a work fully devoted to this theme.

biasness against Palestinians and relates it with the United States' interest in the West Asia which is in the continuation of the "Israeli superiority". The Americans have acted everywhere in favour of the Israel, be it the United Nations or on the various War fields after the 1967 war. This time in Palestine, Chomsky argues that

The opportunity arose from the fact that the World now accepted the guiding principle of the New World Order "what we say goes", at least in the Middle East Europe backed away. Its only further role was to facilitate US rejectionist programmes as Norway did in 1993. The Soviet Union was gone. The third World was in disarray, in part as a result of the economic catastrophe of the 1980s. The United States was at least free to implement the two basic principles it had upheld in isolation for twenty years: (1) no international conference; (2) no right of self determination for the Palestinians. That was the framework of the Madrid negotiations, which began in fall 1991 to great fanfare and applause (2003: 189-90).

Said categorically pointed out the US's help for the Israeli policy of creating "Palestinian Bantustans" inside the OTs in the Oslo II agreement as well.¹² In brief, Edward Said's criticisms of Oslo do not spare its "most important player" the US. To sum up this section, we can say that Said's emphasis on the factual correctness, on Justice and for that matter legal aspect of the agreement are the key reasons for his critical approach towards the Oslo. His denial to join the "bandwagon" of praising it the US for its role in the peace process was due to his reservations regarding the US's biasness towards Israel. To be more precise on this point of American biasness Said add the later developments like Clinton's vocal support for the Israeli anti-terrorist strikes inside the Palestinian Authority area, his brief and failed attempt to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel as well. He point out in 1996 that after so many years of Oslo Accords US's consistent denial to remove the terrorist organization's tag from the PLO is an attempt to appease Israel (Said, 1996).

In the writings of Edward Said PLO and Yassir Arafat are the most criticised actors of the Oslo. Said, once a supporter of Yassir Arafat and PLO, an active member of the PNC

¹² "Bantustans" were the autonomous areas crated by South African white regime before 1994 for the Blacks. These regions were divide and surrounded by white areas and blacks could not move from one place to other without crossing the white area which was very difficult. This term is often used by scholars to denote the Israeli treatment of Palestinians and creation of PA areas which have almost same conditions as Bantustans.

and one of the prominent campaigners of a peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict became one of the most vocal critique of the PLO and Yassir Arafat for not only their acceptance of the DOP but also their failure to fulfill whatever aspirations Palestinian people have had from them. He often pointed out the absence of the “discipline of detail” in the PLO leadership. He used this phrase to describe the casual approach of the PLO leadership towards the aspiration of the Palestinian people and PLO’s lack of preparedness for the so important an event like Oslo Peace Process. Arafat was the whole and sole of everything and Ahmed Quire (also known as Abu Ala, the chief negotiator from the Palestinian side in the secret Oslo negotiations) had accepted that he had to ask on every occasion on every detail to Arafat before taking a step during the talks (Quire, 2006). According to Said “the DOP consolidated Israeli occupation with Palestinian acquiescence...” (Viswanathan, 2001: 344). According to Ashcroft Bill “since Oslo and the establishment of the PA, Said’ views about Arafat is that he has betrayed both the interests of the Palestinian people and the goals of the PLO” (2001: 65). Said deplores the PLO’s abandonment of “all the other resolutions (except UNSC resolutions 338 and 242) passed by the U.N. since 1948, including and above all, resolution 194 which says that Palestinian made refugees by Israel in 1948 are entitled to compensation or repatriation” during Oslo. He also describes Arafat and the PLO as having a “nigger mentality” (Said, and Barsamian, 1994: 107-11). In the same book Said argues that, after the establishment of PA it is working like a “municipal government” and “an enforcer” for Israel (123-125). For Said, Arafat and his men were responsible for the situation in which they have become “junior partner” in the peace process as the reasons we have seen earlier.

3. Specific Objections to the Accords

Edward Said was critical to the Oslo peace process. As we have seen above he was critical to every aspect of it. In this section we will see what his specific objections to The Oslo Accords were? Though there are many points on which Said showed his disagreements with the Oslo Accords due to the convenience and in order to avoid repetitions here we have divided main objections raised by him into five categories.

A. Refugees and their Right to Return to Palestine

According to Said, the issue regarding the fate of the refugees who were displaced in 1948, in 1967 and again in 1982 because of “naked Israeli ethnic cleansing” of Palestinians has been the “core of their depredation since 1948” (Aruri, 2001: 1) (Said, 2003: 20). According to him, it is a fact that Palestinian refugees are living in a very bad condition wherever they are (Aruri, 2001: 3). He, in the same piece agrees that Zionist forces, both inside and outside Israel have never accepted that they were responsible for the mass exodus of Palestinians from their homes. According to Said this has been the “strategy” of the Israelis to refute any discussion at all on the refugee’s claim to return, repatriation or compensation. This same tactic used by Israelis in the Oslo as well (Aruri, 2001: 4). Edward Said was worried about the fate of Palestinian refugees because according to him, “over 50 percent of the Palestinian population does not in fact live in the West Bank or in Gaza right now. He argued that these people have simply been “left out of the Oslo Declaration” and the discussion on their fate had been “deferred until the ‘Final Status’ negotiations began several years hence” (Said, *POD*, 1994: xlii). Palestinian refugees cannot be “left behind from any scheme of peace” now simply because, Said argues that, they were the one who initiated whole resistance against Israeli occupation and from among them emerged the leadership of Palestinian resistance (Said, 1994: xliii). Said’ simple calculation is that as every Jews in the World has the ‘right of return’ to Israel, every Palestinian should also have it. Though realistically he argues that,

Certainly it is unthinkable that all the 1948 refugees would either want to or could, in fact, return to so small a place as a Palestinian state, but on the other hand, it is unacceptable for them all to be told to “resettle” elsewhere, or drop any idea they might have about repatriation and compensation (Said, *POD*, 1994: xliv).

Edward Said was skeptical whether FSN will ever happen but, he had suggested that if it happens anytime Palestinian side should ask for refugee’s right of return (Said, 1994: xliv).

B. Territory: Land for Peace

The idea behind the Oslo Accords was that one can buy peace by giving up land. This was the idea behind Camp David Accords also (Kimmerling, Migdal, 2003: 319 & Kimmerling, 2006: 36). During the Oslo peace process the idea of Land for Peace was accepted as a idea because Palestinian resistance has been for land and independence. Israel has been in control of the Palestinian land at least from the 1967 war. And for peace it is expected and desired from Israel that it will give up the land of Palestinians. Palestinians will give recognition to Israel in return. It was believed that this mutual exchange of land and recognition will lead to peace in the region as happened during the Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel in 1978-79 (Ross, 2006). With all its complications Oslo Accords have been a matter of deep study by the Edward Said (here we are talking about Gaza-Jericho agreement of 4 May 1994 and interim agreement of 28 September 1995. Oslo II agreement regarding Hebron signed in September 1995 is also the part of this discussion). Said has given detailed accounts of these agreements in his various articles since 1994. For example he describes Oslo II agreement in detail as how it is biased against Palestinians and in favor of Israel. He argued for example that,

Take as a case in point the much-heralded agreement on West Bank re-deployment that the Palestinian Authority has just accepted (1995) from the Israel. Let us leave aside the fact that it is months late according to the schedule of dates laid down in Oslo; Israel has strung Palestinians along just as a way of keeping Mr. Arafat and his unimpressive teams under the Israeli collective thumb, revealing them for the weak and dependent village league subordinates that Israel has always wanted as its Palestinian partners. The Taba interim agreement, which immediately followed the September 1993 signature and took up the implementation of what was agreed on at Oslo, postpones still further the dates for army re-deployment, which is now to be done in six month intervals; this will not end for at least two years. Sixty two new Israeli military bases are to be established on the West Bank. Moreover, Israel will withdraw its troops from the center of the main West Bank towns (excluding Hebron), but it will retain control of exits and entries to them, and it will control all roads on the West Bank. It will be relieved of responsibility for about four hundred villages, but will hold fifty or sixty, many of which near the Green Line, in the Jordan Valley, and heights, will later be incorporated into Israel. *Not one inch of East Jerusalem will be given up, and at the same time that Israel is "negotiating" with the PLO it has begun systematically to threaten Palestinian institutions in Jerusalem. The new system of roads on the West Bank will connect all the settlements to each other, thus making it impossible for Palestinians to rule their own territory continuously; the West Bank will be divided therefore into a series of cantons, which I prefer to call reservations or Bantustans, separated by Israeli roads and settlements except in the north And,*

finally, Israel will retain control of all territory on the West Bank which it has designated as military or state or public lands; this amounts to over 50(closer to 60 or 65) percent of the whole. In effect then, through the Palestinian negotiating tactics we have ironically fulfilled the Zionist dream of giving Palestinians rule over and municipal services for their own people but not land. Israel reserves the right to the land, the total amount of which under Palestinian Authority self-rule for one million Palestinians (Israel retains sovereignty) equals about 4 percent of the total land surface (the West Bank settlements with 140000 Israelis account for 8 percent of the land); with Gaza (40 percent of which Israel still controls) it adds up to 18 percent. This is supposed at an unspecified later date to be augmented by 22 percent of jointly controlled land with Israel (2003: 15-16) (emphasis added).

Division of OTs into areas A, B, and C and differentiations among them was also not acceptable to Said. Said argued that while accepting the DOP “the Palestinians have, in effect, discounted their unilateral and internationally acknowledged claim [in the UN resolutions] to the West Bank and Gaza; these have now become, in effect ‘disputed territories’. Thus, with Palestinian assistance [while signing the DOP] Israel has been awarded at least an equal claim to them” (Said, 1994: xxxvii).

C. Sovereignty: Palestinian Self-determination

Sovereignty of the future Palestinian state was left to be decided in the FSN, according to the DOP. In the interim period what was agreed upon by the Israel was “autonomy” for Palestinians in certain pockets of the OTs. That “autonomy” was also restricted to certain subjects. The jurisdiction of the PA in the “autonomous” regions of the OTs was categorically explained in the Interim Agreement and it was very restricted as we have seen in the first Chapter. Edward Said argued that “the main effect for Palestinians [of the Oslo] seems to be that Oslo II gives the Palestinian Authority the trappings and appurtenances of rule without the reality”. He empathetically argues that “*Arafat and his people rule over a kingdom of illusions, with Israel firmly in command*”. He was skeptic that “Any West Bank town, under the new agreement, can be closed at will, as Jericho was during the last days of August and Gaza in September [1995].¹³ He further argued about the Palestinian Authority’s right to legislate that it is “incomplete and nominal”. It is because, he argues, according to the Interim Agreement Israel has the right to “veto”

¹³ In August and September 1995 Israel seized all the check points from Jericho and Gaza respectively when some suicide bombers attacked inside Tel Aviv.

any legislation passed by the PA. About the elections of the Council Said shows his reservations as “Israel has the right to decide who could be candidates in the PA elections and who could even vote” as a flawed attempt (see Introduction of this study for the details of the provisions about the elections of the PA in the Oslo Accords) (Said, 2003:16). According to Said because of the provisions of the DOP and later signed agreements, Yassir Arafat can have his own police force. But instead of providing security to the Palestinians it will “serve only Israel’s interest” because Arafat has agreed to abolish “terrorism inside his area of control”. The tragedy of the Accords for Palestinians or the reality of the “autonomy” is that now no one can move outside Gaza or West Bank “even Yassir Arafat cannot”, without the “permission of Israel” (Said, 1996 & 2003: xxx and 78).

D. Settlements

Edward Said had objections regarding the continuation of settlements inside the recognized “autonomous” areas of PA. He also criticized the provisions in the Interim Agreement in which settlements were given special status. He often criticised PLO for leaving the issue of Settlements for the FSN. For him it should be the “first criterion” of any peace talks to remove illegal Israeli Settlements from inside the “Palestinian territory” (Said, *POD*, 1994). He further criticised successive Israeli governments who pursued the policy of increasing Settlements inside the territories instead of removing them. He termed it a “violation” of Oslo Accords. According to Said, while Palestinian Arabs were very cordial to Israel, “that country has continued its drive to increase the size of, and add new land to, annexed Jerusalem and the West Bank as well as Gaza settlements”. According to Said the total lands under the illegal Settlements “about 40 percent of the ‘autonomous’ area”. According to him, “in the West bank and Jerusalem, confiscated land [under the Settlements or used for other purposes by Israel] amounts to 75 percent of the whole land, all of it earmarked for Jewish use exclusively”. He specifically mentions that “Ninety-six incidents of such acts [of illegal land confiscation] have been recorded by Israel between October 1993 and the end of January 1995” (Said, 2003: 6). This all were happenings against the aims of Palestinians and also it was against

the agreed aim of the DOP. Edward Said gives the example of Shimon Peres the Israeli Prime Minister from 1995 November to September 1996, who was once “the best hope for peace” for the Palestinians on his non commitment for removing the Settlements from the “autonomous” Palestinian land. Said argues,

Shimon Peres, who continued to be described by some leading Palestinians as their best hope, is unregenerate when it comes to Israeli rule and Israeli settlers. In an interview he gave to *Der Spiegel* on March 5, 1995 he refused to accept his questioner's premise that settlements were an obstacle to peace (emphasis added). The main issue with regard to peace, he said, categorically, was “how settlers and Palestinians get on with each other.” A moment later the interviewer said that he found it “inconceivable, that all the settlers should remain in the West Bank following the conclusion of peace”, to which Peres replied, “That is your opinion. I find it conceivable” (2003: 17).

He had quoted the Hebron agreement as an example in a sense that how one should see the “Israeli plans” to occupy more and more land inside the Palestinian territory. According to Mayor Mustafa Natshe of Hebron at the time of the Hebron agreement “it isn't just the principle of the thing that is so gullied”, Said quotes, “but the fact that giving them this foothold in our midst by partitioning the town makes it possible for them to use Hebron as a precedent for staying in all their other settlements, extending their reach further all over the West Bank.” Said argued that Natshe's objections were neglected by the PLO leadership and they went on to sign Hebron agreement in which

Palestinian had accepted a formula for “coexistence” in Hebron which gave about 450 people (no one knows the exact number) who settled there with the Israeli army guarding them the choicest 20 percent of the town's commercial center, whereas the 120000 resident Palestinians were expected to be happy that they got an 80 percent that was so bogged down with conditions, reservations, and stipulations as to sort of “strategic” calculation on the part of the Palestinian leadership produced acquiescence in that bizarre mathematics whereby an Israeli settler population of less than .03 percent got 20 of an Arab city, were allowed to carry their arms, were abetted by Israeli patrols who were given virtually the run of the hills surrounding the town, while the Palestinian police were limited to a few poorly armed men, theoretically subject to Israeli restraints in everything they did (Said, 2003: 133).

E. Jerusalem and other issues

In Said's writings, one major argument regarding the Jerusalem question has been the issue of FSN. Said was very skeptical first: whether it will begin or not? And second:

what will be its nature if it begins at all? According to him “the immediate problem is of course that final status negotiations will not be beginning from point zero; the interim agreements have already limited as well as prejudiced, the likely outcome of the next phase” (Said, 2003: 21). Whatever agreed upon in the DOP by both the parties will be limiting the scope of the bargaining for Palestinians in every issue be it territory, Jerusalem, settlements or anything else. He questions the wisdom of PLO and Arafat,

how could the Arab leaders, plus the United States, and Israel have persuaded the Palestinian leadership to sign Oslo and its subsequent phases without a word about guarantees on settlements, Jerusalem, and self determination, except that these central issues, the very core of the Palestinian claim to self determination, would be “considered” at the final stage, when there would be nothing left to negotiate (2003: 6).

On the issue of Jerusalem Edward Said does not agree with the proposals in the DOP. As it is identified as one of the “contentious issue” to be considered in the FSN, it has given Israel more time to “create facts on the ground”: to make more settlements and destroy the Arab remains of culture and inhabitation in order to make Palestinian claim weaker. For example of his suspicions regarding the provisions on Jerusalem in the Oslo Accords, Said cites the examples of how Israel is expanding the territory of the city with more and more Palestinian villages coming inside the premise of the Jerusalem’s municipality. He found it dangerous, which can destroy the Palestinian’s claim on the Eastern part of the city. From the Eastern Jerusalem Palestinians are thrown out daily by Israel and Jews are being settled. The major problem is that Israel is also trying to destroy religious sites in order to denounce the Arab interest in the form of digging tunnels under the Muslim religious sites (Said, *POD*, 1994). On Jerusalem the intentions of the Israel has the backing of the US. Said substantiates his argument of the US support to Israel in its tactics in Jerusalem to create facts on the ground. He cited President Clinton’s statement in 1996 in which he attempted openly to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. He even attempted to move the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in 1996 (Said, 2003). As we have seen earlier Israeli Prime Ministers have been vocal to denounce any Palestinian claim on the Jerusalem as well.

4. Violations of the Accords by Israel

According to Edward Said Israel has made Oslo Accords a joke with its regular violations of the Palestinian “autonomy.” He does not accept the Israeli argument that they act in “self defense” and according to the provisions of the Oslo Accords when they enter into the “autonomous areas” recognized by the agreements as Palestinians territories or seize them. He questions the intentions of the US when he finds that after so many years of Oslo being signed and PLO’s renouncement of the use of violence and terrorism why does it not strike out the name of PLO from the list of “terrorist organization?” In DOP and in the Interim Agreement as well it was agreed that Israeli side will release the Palestinian political prisoners who are illegally held in the Israeli jails without trial as a “confidence building measure”. According to Said even this small promise has not been fulfilled by the Israelis. According to Said these are the sheer violations of the agreements (Said, 2003).

According to Edward Said the violations of Oslo by the Israeli side are many and he again and again reiterates them. For example the creating facts on the ground inside the Jerusalem as we have seen above is one the most grave violations of the Oslo. the increasing number of Settlements inside the PA governed territories is another example of that. Over and above that, the no commencement of FSN even after the end of the deadline agreed in the DOP and the Interim Agreement is a violation of the Oslo Accords and shows the real motive of Israel.

CONCLUSION

According to Said morally the beginning of any negotiated settlement of any conflict should be based on the prior apology of both the parties to their misdeeds towards each other. Said argued that Israel did not accept before or during the course of the negotiations, that it had ever committed any crime towards the Palestinians. He argued that it was neither even willing to do that. He cited the example that how Israel got

compensation for *Holocaust* against Jews in Europe and how colonial forces are apologizing for their inhuman treatment of the people in their different past colonies. He mentioned that, should Israel have also expressed its apology to Palestinian people before any talks and PLO, recognition to it that would have been the real point to begin the talks (Said, 2003: 8-13). It did not happen.

Edward Said's criticism of the Oslo can be summarized in a sentence that he never accepted that "Oslo was a great opportunity" for peace in the region. For him it was an offer made by imperialists to the PLO in its awful days when it had made itself so weak, that anything thrown before it was to be conceived as an "achievement" by its leadership. For Said, Oslo was a betrayal to the Palestinian cause and Palestinian people's aspirations of a free Palestine. Yet he very realistically argued that though it is not possible to undo the Oslo completely now, Palestinians should take lessons from it. He argued that,

The destiny of the Oslo Declaration of principals-most of whose details are unclear and yet to be negotiated by two parties very unequal in power-is that for it to be implemented as Israel and the United States intend is for it to be yet another obstacle in the path toward Palestinian freedom and equality. Yet it has been signed and sealed: To oppose it now is like opposing a fact of nature. But the only way for Palestinians to deal with it realistically is to think of *overcoming* its horrendous limitations, going beyond them creatively and courageously" (Said, *POD*, 1994: xlvii).

About those who even after so many years and so detailed analysis of the agreements see it as a "victory" for Palestinians Said argued that they are trying to "avoid the fact that Israel has given "nothing" and Palestinians have given Israel "everything" from recognition to the assurance of peace. He argued clearly that,

My contention...is that from the secret negotiations in Oslo between the PLO and Israel to the Israeli-Jordanian agreement proclaimed in Washington, and after, there has run a clear and, to me, unnecessary line of Arab capitulating by which Israel has achieved all of its tactical and strategic objectives at the expense of nearly every proclaimed principle of Arab and Palestinian nationalism and struggle. Thus Israel has gained recognition, legitimacy, acceptance from the Arabs without in effect conceding sovereignty over the Arab land, including annexed international boundaries, Israel is now the only state in the world to be recognized as "legitimate and secure" by its neighbors: the formula is unprecedented (Said, 1996: xxv).

He criticized Oslo Accords not only because he was against the agreements signed with obvious Israeli advantage. He criticised the Oslo also because according to him “he has every right to dissent” against the betrayal to the cause for which he has devoted his time and energy not for any reward but for the justice. According to Said, “the fundamental law of the negotiations must, for Palestinians, be the unconditional end of the occupation. There can be no compromise on that” (Said, 2003: 25). And according to him this did not happen in any way in the Oslo Accords.

Chapter 4

AN ANALYSIS OF SAID'S ALTERNATIVES TO THE OSLO PEACE PROCESS

When I was asked for an alternative I said that the alternative had been there from the very beginning: end of occupation, removal of settlements, return of East Jerusalem, real self-determination and equality for Palestinians. I had no problem at all with the prospects of real peace and real co-existence and had been speaking about those for twenty years; what I, and most Palestinians, opposed was a phoney peace and our continued inequality in regard to the Israelis, who are allowed sovereignty, territorial integrity, and self-determination, whereas we are not (Said, 2003: 5).

Said admitted that he never suggested anything which is “noble” as an alternative to the Oslo. However, he had a vision of co-existence of both the people. His idea of peace is an idea of “comprehensive peace” in the region. He opposed Oslo because it offered no plan for peace. It rather had a general principle of exchanging land for peace which according to Said would do no good for the region. Regarding the future of the conflict and its solutions he suggested some broader principles which should be followed before any talk on the future of Palestinians.

Said was of the belief that an individual who is sitting in the room who has very less knowledge of ground realities cannot suggest anything concrete. But what was happening in the Oslo was not acceptable. It compromises the basic aims of Palestinian struggle and there should be alternatives to it. He made it very clear that, the principle of self-determination of Palestinians is not negotiable in any circumstance and this should be a basis of any peace talk (Said, 1996 and 2003). The alternatives suggested by Said, their need, their viability in the given circumstances and their relevance all are open to scrutiny in this chapter. But before Saidian alternatives are examined there is a need to look into his criticisms of Oslo in the light of others views on the Peace process, what is peace and what if at all, Oslo could have achieved? Saidian criticisms of Oslo, according to many critiques of the Oslo, were not in a good faith. They argue that all of those who are critical to it are not in favour of peace in the region at all. For some of them the criticisms

of the Oslo are products of “anti-Semitism” or anti-Arabism. The critiques of Oslo, according to this school of thought do not want either the creation of a Palestinian state or the existence of Israel. This particular thinking is very general among the contributors in the *Commentary*. Some of the Arab Scholars like Nabil Shaath also proposed the same arguments. This study proposes that, the blame game against the critics of Oslo unleashed by the Western and Hebrew media and intelligentsia should be seen in the lights of Saidian perspective of *Orientalism*.

A RECONSIDERATION OF OSLO ACCORDS

The first thing about Oslo Accords, as its critiques argue is that it is an agreement between two unequal parties. It is a biased agreement which favours the strong party. It creates a situation in which the strong can dictate terms and the weak had to, not only listen, but to act according to the dictates. Moshe Ma'oz accepts this argument. There were imbalances in the status of the two parties to the Oslo and Israeli position was of dictating terms. According to him it was a major hurdle for any successful talk (1999: 406). The PLO was not in a position to even bargain because of its very less ability to mobilise masses in the Occupied Territories and due to reasons we have seen in the earlier chapters. Suffice is to say that, from 1982 when it was forced to shift its base from Lebanon to Tunis (Tunisia) it was very far from the real ground of struggle and since then its ability to mobilise the people and retain its relevance in the day to day affairs of Palestinians got reduced which compelled it to bend before the Israeli dictates.

Not only Palestinians were weak but all Arab countries were facing the same situation. Amr G. E. Sabet quotes Egyptian president Husni Mubarak who argued before the start of the Madrid conference that “he is not ready to take risks”. According to Sabet, Arabs are weak because of the “tradition of dictatorship” and “lack of democracy” which weakens the legitimacy of the rulers. So it was clear from the beginning of the peace process that Arabs were ready to relinquish anything they have considered sacred (1998: 7). The weakness of Arabs reinforced the weakness of PLO which culminated in the “surrender of Palestinians in the Oslo” (Said, 1996). As Said argued that “real peace” can

only happen “between equals” (2003) Henry Kissinger the famous secretary of state of the US who is famous for his ‘Shuttle Diplomacy’, had also once said that “the weak do not negotiate” (Sabet, 1998: 7). Ahrari argued that “Realistically speaking, a political environment conducive to the creation of a Palestinian state has been totally absent in the mid-1990s. What both sides expect, and indeed demand, from the other cannot be delivered by either the PLO or Israel” (1996: 31).

The second important argument given against the Oslo is that it was a process which did not follow any principle and technically it was a flawed process. Talking about a theory of a successful peace process Gregory M. Maney, Ibtisam Ibrahim, Gareth I. Higgins and Hanna Herzog compared Oslo Accords with Belfast Good Friday Agreements (BGFA).¹ They came to the conclusion that “the Oslo provides a lesser degree of certainty regarding sovereignty issue than BGFA”. According to them the creation of a Palestinian Authority was a signal of a possible transition towards the establishment and mutual recognition of two independent, sovereign states - Israel and Palestine. Nonetheless, the other provisions in the Interim Agreement made it very “uncertain”. Unlike the BGFA in which every major issue was taken care of at the time of negotiation, Oslo negotiations deliberately avoided FSN which were very crucial for the achievement of peace.

According to Gregory M. Maney and others “a strong PA governing the totality of the Occupied Territories could have quelled concerns [of Palestinians] over the lack of explicit commitment to creating an independent Palestinian state”. Instead the Interim Agreement gave very less power to the PA. They further argued while referring to the Interim Agreement that the Accords provided the PA with a discontinuous set of lands covering less than half of the West Bank. It failed to provide any safeguard for the minorities in both the communities as well. The issue of minorities are very important in the context that in both the societies minorities are in substantial numbers. Palestinians who are living in the Israeli territories as citizens are around 18 percent of the Israeli population. Israeli Jewish settlers are around 20 percent of the Palestinian population.

¹ The BFGA was a comprehensive agreement signed between the British government and Northern Ireland on 10 April 1998. It established first time after 1973 an power sharing government in the Northern Ireland.

Both these peoples were left behind in the Oslo Accords. According to them the lack of farsightedness on the issue of minority was a major drawback of the Oslo. They argue,

The Oslo process never developed similar [to the Belfast Agreement] safeguards—either for the roughly 18% of Israeli citizens who are Palestinians or for the thousands of Jewish settlers in the Occupied Territories who may eventually find themselves in a Palestinian state. While certain arouse opposition among viewing political inclusion, social equality, and cultural recognition as threats to their visions of ethically pure nation states, the provision of minority safeguards in any future peace initiative constitutes a prerequisite for both long-term domestic and interstate political stability. Inclusion of an ethnic minority blunts the impetus towards the violent pursuit of irredentist objectives. Immediate opposition to measures that promote long term political stability highlights the importance of provisions and strategies for implementing negotiated settlements (2006: 189).

The narrow approach adopted during the Oslo Peace Process was criticised by the Maney and others. They say the “land for peace” formula adopted by the negotiators could not address the aspirations of both the sides. Due to this narrow vision many important issues were left out as the minority right issue. They criticised the avoidance of the issue of Palestinian refugees’ “right to return” as well in almost every agreement signed between both the parties. They identify the inherent contradiction in the Oslo Peace Process which wanted to establish peace without addressing the basic grievances of the people. They argue,

None of the agreements provided for the right of return of 3.5 million Palestinians who had been displaced as a result of colonization. None of the agreements decided the political status of Jerusalem or the fate of 200,000 Jewish settlers in the Occupied Territories. While the narrow scope of the Accords facilitated their signing, the long list of outstanding issues fuelled immediate criticisms on both sides that too much had given away for too little in return (2006: 190).

From the signing of the Oslo to the year 2000 the number of settlers in the West Bank doubled to 380000 including in Eastern Jerusalem. No prime minister of Israel ever assured Palestinians that new settlements will not be established. There were 269000 Israeli settlers in the OTs in the 1993 with 104,000 in the West Bank, and 160000 in East Jerusalem (Usher, Graham, 1995: 20) [rest were in the Gaza]. This created the suspicion among the Palestinians and they started giving support to the groups like Hamas when they found that the PLO is weak. The rise of Hamas as an alternative to the PLO was due to the weakness of PA and its leadership. Arafat never tried to get mass support for the

talks and failed miserably to implement the provisions of Oslo. According to M. E. Ahrari, Arafat was one of the “weakest links” of the “successful culmination of the Peace Process”. Arafat is so “accustomed” to his guerrilla past that he could not play “the more nuanced role of a civilian, democratic administration”. He is “corrupt and autocratic” which in result helps the rise of opposition of the Peace Process in the Occupied Territories (1996: 29-30).

Maney and others had also criticised the role played by the United States in the Oslo. When they compare it with the role played by the Americans during the BGF agreement they found very clear differences. In the BGFA case the US helped both the sides equally, while in the Oslo it was found biased towards the Israeli side. They prescribe “As long as the US government remains a partisan actor in the conflict, any agreement that it mediates will be vulnerable to accusations of pro-Israeli bias by Palestinians and their international supporters” (2006: 192). In fact, the role played by the American government in the Oslo Peace Process was a matter of great criticism for almost all sections of the intelligentsia. Due to their biasness towards Israel the Americans are not a “reliable mediator” in the Israel-Palestine conflict (Quandt, 1993, Chomsky, 2003). Aruri very clearly argued,

...despite its self-portrayal and peace-making initiatives, the United States hardly fit the role of an impartial third party. In fact, some analysts have argued that in the Middle East, as in many other parts of the world, the United States has acted more as a cobelligerent than as a peacemaker. As Israeli chief ally and protector, the United States was simply unable to discharge its self-assigned mission as a catalyst for peace; the tensions between such roles as mediator and those of Israel’s chief diplomatic backer, bank-roller, and military supplier have surfaced quite often (Sharoni, and Mohammed Abu-Nimer in Gerners, [eds], 2001: 19-21).

The major criticism of the Oslo is related to its distance from the masses. This distance has two dimensions: first, it avoided the popular participation and second, it failed to assure the masses about their aspirations to it. Not only had the Israeli side ignored the sentiments of Palestinians who had been supportive to the talks, while concluding the agreements, PLO’s leadership also failed to take the necessary approvals from masses from time to time. In fact, PLO even failed to inform the Palestinians about the developments in the talks. Maney and others identified that the “top down approach”

adopted in the Oslo created a “crisis of legitimacy” to the Oslo Accords. People generally perceived that the developments in Oslo Peace Process were result of International Pressure. According to Maney and others the lack of legitimacy made Oslo the victim of “spoiler violence”² (2006: 191-192).

Baruch Kimmerling and Joe Migdal argue on the same line about the failures of the Oslo. Without going into the obvious failures of the Oslo in the aftermath of Rabin’s death we can see the inherent weaknesses of it. They were many as Kimmerling and Migdal argued among them the First is, the failure of both sides to fulfil promises made during the initial periods of the talks. It was one of the most important reasons for the disbelief in Oslo’s significance among the general people. However Said have argued that the parties were never intended to fulfil the aspirations of the people, according to Kimmerling and Migdal Israeli side did not fulfil the promise to start the FSN because,

...Israel had already received most of what its leaders wanted, the incentives to make further painful concessions were low, especially ones that involved huge domestic costs. And most of what they had to give up-settlements, parts of Jerusalem, access to water, territory-had powerful, vocal domestic Jewish constituencies committed to maintain them for Israel (2003: 358).

The weak and unstable Israeli governments and dictatorial Arafat could not carry the talks any longer without achieving anything for their people. The section of Palestinians who were against the Oslo was never taken into the confidence by the PA. Instead, according to Said, there were attempts to repress them by the Arafat led PA, without differentiating between “secular critics and Islamic ones” like Hamas and Islamic Jihad. The difference between the secular and Islamic critiques of the Oslo are important, according to Said, in a sense that former are not against the talks with Israel and just wanted to draw the attention of the PLO towards the flaws of the talks. People like Rashid Khalidi and Edward Said himself, were representative to this section. The Islamic critics of the talks were fundamentally against any kind of talks and do not recognise the Israel’s right to exist. Arafat led PA dealt with both the groups in the same manner. The

² “Spoiler Violence” is a phrase used to denote the violence used by the opponents of the peace agreements as a way to spoil the atmosphere of talks. In the case of Oslo the spoiler violence was from both the sides.

emergence of the civil society was seen as dangerous. It resulted in the dissatisfaction among the larger section of intelligentsia which hampered the developments in the talks. Haider al Shafi, Mustafa Bargauti and Azmi Bishara who were in the support of talk in the beginning became hostile to it not only because of its deficiencies but also because of the practices adopted by Arafat and PLO (2003).

Those groups who were opposed to any talks were on both the sides (among Israelis and among the Palestinians) and gradually they increased their numbers and indulged in the continuous violence. It was however, predetermined as the talks were going on without any development. Particularly among the Palestinians the frustration was on high. The consistent violence created a new division between both the societies during the Oslo. Israeli policy of less and less contact with the Palestinians in the wake of violence resulted in “the policy of separation” and culminated in the creation of Walls as fences later in the aftermath of al-Aqsa *Intifada* (Kimmerling and Migdal, 2003: 372).

The opposition of Oslo by ‘anti-Oslo elements’ was mutual in both the societies and if Hamas was involved in many suicide bombings Israeli right wing was also indulged in many violent activities against the Palestinians. Baruch Goldstein killed 29 Palestinian Muslims in Hebron on 25 February 1994. The assassination of Rabin was a result of the opposition to Oslo in Israel. The violation of Oslo was mutual as well. Netanyahu in September 1996 ordered the opening of a tunnel in East Jerusalem near the Temple Mount³, started the construction of a Jewish neighbourhood on Har Homa near Jerusalem. He also ordered the establishment of new settlements in the West Bank (1999). These mutual opposition and violations of the Oslo Accords was a sign of the grave misjudgement of the minds of the people by the perpetrators of the Oslo and misperception of the peace.

³ The Temple Mount is an area surrounding the Western Wall the only remnant of the second temple of Jerusalem for Jews. Muslims call this same area as al-Haram al-Sharif because two of their most sacred mosques Dome of the Rock and al-Aqsa are located there. The creation of tunnel was seen by Muslims as Israeli attempt to destroy the al-Haram al-Sharif.

Kimmerling and Migdal blame the absence of any viable arbitration mechanism which led both the parties to do whatever they wanted to do. It made both sides dependent on the US heavily. The leaders of the both sides, Arafat and successive prime ministers of Israel, did not attempt to inform their people about the developments in the talks. They often misled them and it created much confusion among the masses. For example, the creation of PA was projected in the beginning as the creation of a Palestinian state among the Palestinians. The failure of improving the economic condition of the Palestinians and instead imposition of several restrictions on the movement of the Palestinians made the Oslo unpopular among the masses. So far as the economic well being of Palestinians is concerned the promises made in the beginning of the talk could not be fulfilled because there were provisions on the economic cooperation in the DOP. For example Article XI in the DOP talks about the establishment of a “joint economic committee” of Israel and PA but it was never implemented (Kimmerling and Migdal, 2003).

Jewish historian Ilan Pappé identifies the basic flaw of Oslo. He says “the Oslo process, if examined from a twenty-first century perspective, seems to be yet another tragic chapter in the history of peace-making in the Palestine and Israel”. Taking a holistic view he further argues, “...The Camp David Accords and then the Oslo process, tried to persuade the Palestinian leadership that the best they could expect would be limited sovereignty in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip”. He agreed with Edward Said that the way Oslo was moving it would give maximum a Bantustans like state solution in Gaza and the West Bank, “with neither territorial integrity nor a capital”. According to Pappé in the Oslo Peace Process “the Palestinian leaders were asked to forsake the only reason for their struggle since 1948, a right recognised by the United Nations in December 1948”. He referred to UN General Assembly Resolution 194 which recognised the right of Palestinians refugees to return to their homes and live peacefully (2004: 264-265).

Ilan Pappé argued that “around 1996, reality overtook the images the political leaders had created of the Oslo process. After that, the question was no longer whether Oslo had brought peace to the torn land of Israel and Palestine, but rather what price its people had paid for illusions sold to them by short-sighted politicians” (247).

ACHIEVEMENTS OF OSLO

Despite it being a flawed attempt even the strongest critics of Oslo recognise that it was an attempt worthy to be termed as ‘unprecedented in the history of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict’. Despite of Its failure to achieve anything substantial for Palestinians, as we can conclude from discussions above, it was worthy to be remembered for it set some of milestones in the history of Israel-Palestine. There are many ‘firsts’ attached to the Oslo. While Edward Said used to say “Oslo Peace Process is a simple repackaging of the Israeli occupation” Baruch Kimmerling and Joe Migdal have tried to see the nobleness in this ‘repackaging’.

The first thing Oslo did was that it made the existence of a huge mass base in both the societies who support the peaceful resolution of the conflict, explicit which was not the case before. If there was any peace constituency it was hidden. Kimmerling and Migdal say “the high profile signing had managed to pull the veil from the myth that Palestinians would accept nothing less than the destruction of Israel and throwing the Jews into the sea” (2003: 338). The popularity of the Oslo (on various occasions the popularity graph went to as high as 75 percent supporting the Peace) showed that the people of Palestine were ready to live with the reality of Israel and to be content with even fifth of the historic Palestine as an independent Palestinian state. We can say that Oslo addressed the “Primal Fear” of both the parties in the way that it addressed the basic apprehensions of them against each other. It gave them an opportunity to assure each other about their apprehensions through written agreements (2003: 341).

Second, it was only after more than forty years of the existence of Israel that in Oslo Peace Process it got the recognition from Palestinians and Jordanians⁴. PLO got recognition as well. It meant many things for both the parties. The important ramification of this recognition to each other can be seen in the modification in the perception of each

⁴ With Jordan Israel signed a declaration in 1994 after the DOP signed in 1993. In this treaty Jordan recognized Israel and it ended the decade’s long hostilities with Israel. In fact Jordan had withdrawn its claims from West Bank and East Jerusalem in 1988 and for all practical purposes it was the end of hostility between the two countries. The agreement of 1994 was a formality only.

other. First time Israel had to acknowledge publicly that 'Palestinians do exist'. It was required that the history written by Zionists in which Palestinians and their sufferings had no place, be revised. Palestinians had to change their perceptions about Israel as well. They had to recognise that reality of Israel is that it is their neighbour and not an intruder only. "Mutual recognition meant moving from national myth that were black and white to much more difficult ones that were replete with shades of grey"(Kimmerling and Migdal, 2000: 340).

Third, each of the sides (Israel and PLO) renounced the use of violence as a method to achieve their respective national goals for the first time in their history. In 1988 in the 19th session of PNC PLO renounced the use of violence. The importance of Oslo Accords only lies in the fact that through formal agreement violence was discarded by both the sides. However, Israel never committed to not to use war and aggression as a means to tackle the Palestinian resistance. Oslo opened the way for peaceful negotiations beyond the official circles. The track II diplomacy as it is known opened the arena of talks between other persons, groups and organisations. Many scholars, individuals and groups came forward in the aftermath of DOP in both the societies and started non-official talks on the issues of common concern. It helped in one way to understand each other better (Kimmerling and Migdal, 2003).

Finally, the Oslo Accords established the first ever Palestinian government inside the Occupied Territories in the form of the Palestinian Authority. Through first ever elections in the Palestinian history an 82 member Palestinian Council was elected in 1996. Yassir Arafat got elected as its president. With all the restrictions on it, imposed by the Interim Agreement and dependence on the foreign aid for its survival it was a realisation of dream for many. The autonomous regions with almost all major Palestinian cities under the rule of PA it was first step in the direction of an independent Palestinian state for many. It was the first Palestinian government established and headed by a Palestinian in the history of Palestine. Before it there were Ottomans, Egyptian, British, and Jordanian and of course Israelis ruling from time to time. For Kimmerling and Migdal this created a belief in the Palestinians that their self ruled state will be a reality some day and this

belief among Palestinians on themselves was one of greatest achievement of Oslo Accords (2003: 354).

Talking about the significance of Oslo, Ahmed Qurie (Abu Ala) chief Palestinian negotiator in the Peace Process says that it was only a first step, a moderate one in the direction of achieving much larger goal of Palestinian self determination. His enthusiasm towards Oslo reflects the hope it had generated among the common Palestinians. In his words,

When I put my initials on the Oslo Agreement... I realised that a door which had been firmly locked for many decades would now begin gradually to open. After years of sacrifice and pain, after decades of suffering beyond description, a faint light seemed at last to glimmer at the end of a long and dark tunnel (2006: 7).

After this discussion it is clear that the Oslo Peace Process was a step in the direction of achieving the peace in the region with the perception that Palestinian self government will pave the way for other Arabs to recognise Israel and establish peace with it as Jordan did in the aftermath of the DOP. It brought some much needed relief to Palestinians and temporary joy of having their own government. But, the hopes Oslo brought evaporated soon because of its own deficiencies and the inability of the leaders of both the sides as we have seen above. Kimmerling and Migdal after assessing Oslo concludes that the events of Oslo contributed in the making of Palestinian nation as the exodus of 1948 and the loss in the 1967 war have contributed. In their words,

in the half century since world war II, three series of events, all involving the Israelis, have stood above all else in the making of the Palestinian people. They are the catastrophe of 1948, with its loss of possible autonomy and the creation of the refugees; Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip since 1967; and the Oslo Peace Process, with the soaring hopes it generated for undoing that occupation and winning autonomy, at long last, and then, the deep despair it engendered less than a decade after it began (315).

THE MEANING OF PEACE

As is the case with other socially constructed concepts the perception of peace should reflect the coloring of a society's collective narrative and its experience of current circumstances (Biton, Yifat and Gavriel Salomon, 2006: 168).

Some scholars think that the greater failure of Oslo was that its supporters could not understand the meaning of the word peace. They rather misunderstood it. This argument was given by two scholars from Israel Yifat Biton and Gavriel Salomon from the University of Haifa who studied the youths and their perceptions of peace in both the societies after the Oslo Accords. They used the definition of peace given by Johan Galtung. He says peace has two meanings one is negative and the other is positive. The meaning of peace, according to Galtung, in its negative sense is 'the absence of violence in its all forms- physical, social, psychological and structural' (Biton, Yifat and Gavriel Salomon, 2006: 168). This is the general meaning of peace as well.

The positive meaning of peace is a complex one. According to Galtung, in every society there are some structural reasons of violence like social and economic inequalities. Because of these structural reasons the struggle for equality emerges which often leads towards violence. The positive meaning of peace in this context is the absence of these structural reasons of violence. In other words "peace is a 'negative peace' unless it is accompanied by the absence of structural violence and by the presence of social justice". He further defines positive peace as a situation in which cooperation and harmony prevails among the different groups or parties (Biton, Yifat and Gavriel Salomon, 2006: 168).

From the idea of positive peace one can develop the idea of 'structural peace'. According to the Biton and Salomon for positive peace the need of addressing the structural reasons of violence arrives which led to the new structures in society. Instead of social and economic inequalities independence, sovereignty, equality, and a proper structure for power sharing become the part of social structure. This led to 'structural peace'. Albert

Einstein once said “Peace is not merely the absence of war but the presence of justice, of law, of order-in short and of government” (Biton, Yifat and Gavriel Salomon, 2006: 168).

In the West Asian region the concept of peace has one more meaning. The idea of ‘Cold Peace’ is very much specific in the region. After the signing of Camp David Accords in 1978-79 both Egypt and Israel recognised each other and “peace” was established in the sense that after 1979 no war happened between the two. But the absence of hostilities did not culminate in the cooperation and harmony between the two. In fact, there were hardly any relations between the two. This kind of peace is being referred as Cold Peace. Not only Said but almost all other scholars are agreeing on the point that the peace between Israel and Palestinians if any cannot be the Cold Peace. Both cannot survive in that way long or simply there will be no peace at all.

Hence, the Oslo Peace Process was examined in keeping this discussion on peace in mind and both the scholars found that Oslo was an attempt to establish a kind of peace which had no future. The basic structural reasons of violence - the inequality between the parties, injustice done by one (Israel) on the other (Palestinians) in the form of restrictions in their movement and displacement from their own land and by other means had not been addressed in the Oslo. The idea of “land for peace” has negative understanding of peace and so it cannot survive. The mass level of violence against the Oslo in the Occupied Territories and Israel proper were the signs of this misunderstanding of the concept of peace by the supporters of the peace process (Biton, Yifat and Gavriel Salomon, 2006). There must be harmony and cooperation between the people for the achievement of sustainable peace in the region.

SAID’S ALTERNATIVES AND THEIR VIABILITY

Given the current situation, the Arab negotiators have three options. First, they can accept whatever is being “offered” or imposed, seeking the best conditions under the circumstances. Second, they can stall for time, hoping for a change in circumstances that will permit reversion to the land-for peace formula. Finally, *they can transform the negotiating rules by introducing their own formula and redefining the conflict in the terms of its broader religious and strategic horizons, while working actively*

toward the construction of new regional and systemic alliances” (Kepel, 2004: 13)
(Emphasis added).

In this context when we have seen that despite Oslo’s big promises it could not bring peace in the region, there arrives the need of having an alternative. In the given conditions the search for best alternative for the resolution of the conflict must be based on the basic principle that any solution cannot be imposed on any party without its consent. The problem in Oslo was, as argued by Said, it never taken consideration to the real aspirations of the people who were to be affected by the agreement. Until there is a mass support for an agreement it cannot be implemented by force. There cannot be a forceful conflict resolution. Saidian argument gets reflected in the arguments given by Sabet in his article *The Peace Process and Politics of Conflict Resolution*. He emphasises that,

Distinction must be made between conflict resolution as, according to John Burton, “the transformation of relationship in a particular case by the solution of the problems which led to the conflictual behaviour in the first place” and “the suppression or settlement of conflict by coercive means or by bargaining and negotiation in which relative power determines the outcome” if a yet more violent and bitter future of the Arab-Israeli collision is to be avoided (Sabet, 1998: 5)

Based on this principle the alternatives given by Said are not based on the assumption that peace can be established in the region by “bending the magic stick”. Failures of Oslo have taught the lesson even to the staunch supporters of the Oslo. Dennis Ross says there are no shortcuts to peace in the Arab-Israeli conflict and there can be no imposition of it either (2004: 777). According to Edward Said those who ask for alternatives there should be one thing very clear that Oslo is a bad alternative and it cannot be a solution for very good reasons. Basically, Said argues, on the broader level there should be criticisms of Oslo. There should not be over reliability on the present leadership of PLO and world powers like Russia, Europe and the United States for any resolution of the conflict. This should be first step towards a viable alternative (2003:118).

In fact the alternatives suggested by Edward Said were largely based on the proposals of the 1988 19th session of the PNC. Before we proceed further we should have a look on the 19th session of the PNC and its proposals. As we have seen Said was a member of the

PNC from 1977 till September 1991 when he resigned because of his health reasons and because he was not happy with the PLO's participation in the Madrid peace conference. The proposals of 19th session of PNC adopted in Algiers in November 1988 were prepared by Said and some other Palestinians and were to be the basis of future talks with Israel. The Madrid peace conference and later Oslo negotiations were not based on the PNC proposals. According to Said these proposals are very important and present a viable solution to the issue (1994).

The proposals in the PNC's 19th session had two sections or documents. First was a Declaration of Palestinian Independence (DOI)⁵ which proclaimed the establishment of a Palestinian state on "our Palestinian land" with Jerusalem as its capital. The second part of the proposals was a Political Statement (PS) in which in the first time in PLO's history Israel was recognised in the public and UN Resolutions 242 and 338 were accepted as the basis of any future talks.

According to Walid Khalidi in the DOI three sources of legitimacy for the Palestinian state were recognised: historical, natural and international recognition. It cites Article 22 of the League of Nations, the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923 and the UNGA Resolution 181 of 1947 which is commonly known as the UN Partition Plan of Palestine. According to Khalidi, this reference to the UN Partition Plan in the DOI itself recognises the State of Israel and creates the need of having an independent Palestinian state. It was a great turning point in the history of Palestinian movement and PLO which came into existence to resist the partition of the Palestine and creation of a Palestinian state in the historic Palestine.

'The Political Statement' talks about the settlements of the Palestinian problem with 'the help of UNSC as a "formulator and guarantor of the arrangements for the security and peace of all the affected states in the area including the Palestinian state" (Khalidi, 1992: 145). This statement denounces the use of violence and force, as a mean of achieving any

⁵ DOI was an attempt to establish Palestinian government in exile with the recognition of UN. Ilan Pappé argues that it was an attempt by the PLO to improve its relationship with United States (241)

goal and accepts UNSC Resolutions 242 and 338 as the bases of settlement of disputes and coexistence of both the states in future. It expressed the faith of PNC in the peaceful solutions. It expressed faith of PNC in the UN and international treaties and conventions. It demanded for an “international conference” under the UN to resolve the Palestinian issue.

This statement also provides the mechanism of the settlements of the dispute. It asks for the withdrawal of Israeli forces to the 1967 borders. It obviously includes East Jerusalem, removal of settlements established since 1967, and the settlement of the refugee problem according to the UN resolutions (particularly 194 of UNGA), freedom of religious practices in the Holy Places in the historical Palestine, a transitional period for Occupied Territories under UN supervision, as main issues to be focused during the talks. The greater role of the UN and international law was prescribed in the Political Statement as a means of settlement. The Political Statement stated that besides UNSC Resolutions 242 and Resolution 338, other bases for the international conference to be called to resolve the issue should be “non-acquisition of territory by war”, “the principle of self determination in accordance with the UN Charter and UN resolutions pertinent of the Palestinian problem” (Documents on Palestine: 69-72).

Said proposed his alternatives based on this PNC proposals. However, about the Saidian argument that the Oslo was a complete 180 degree turn arbitrarily done by the PLO, in the context of the policies adopted in 1988 PNC session, some scholars like Haider Abdel Shafi, who was a member of the PNC during this session, did not agree. Historians like Ilan Pappé also see that the participation of PLO in the Oslo was in fact a move in the direction set by 1988 PNC session. According to him, “The Palestinian negotiators came to Oslo on the basis of the resolutions adopted by the PNC accepting the principle of partition as the basis for the solution to the conflict”. This is another matter that “The shift in the PLO’s position reflected Arafat’s recognition of his organisation’s inability to force an agreement based on the establishment of a secular Arab state in the whole of ex - Mandate Palestine”. Nonetheless, Pappé appreciates Arafat’s PLO which

...retained its insistence on the establishment of a fully independent Palestinian state, free of Jewish settlements, with Jerusalem as its capital. However, these points were, for the first time in the PLO's history, negotiable rather than precepts of a national ideology (2004: 242-243).

However, based on PNC's proposals Said had alternatives but he was very upset with the criticisms coming from peoples like Haider Abdel Shafi. Shafi criticised Said for his being "blind to reality" in which Oslo Accords were signed. Said was also critical to the demands of alternatives from him because he firmly believed that "any single individual cannot provide a ready made solution". According to him, this shows the "same ideological deformation that causes us at this late to sit around waiting for as a saviour in the United States or France or Russia" (2003: 118). While answering to the critics like Dr. Haider Abdel Shafi, Said argued that if any "reality" hampering the interest of the Palestinian people it must be "improved and changed" instead of "accommodating our selves according to the reality". He argued,

point is that there are many practical steps to be taken which I have been speaking about for three years, and I am now tired of the uninteresting chorus of requests for "practical proposals" that leave Oslo and the present Palestinian power structure in place as a "reality" with which we must "deal (2003: 68).

Said denied the acceptance of the limited rights and sovereignty given by the Oslo which is, according to him, "a programme to maintain the Israeli occupation". He expressed the need of Palestinians having their own civil and cultural institutions and more coordination between all the Palestinians living inside or outside. He also suggested having an effective information policy to make the world aware about the facts. His plan of action for Palestinians was a comprehensive one and needed time and dedication to be effective.

According to Said, the first thing Palestinians should do in order to get rid of Oslo Accords is to criticise it "loudly, firmly and unitedly as a people". Next thing which can be done, according to Said is the creation of a body of representatives of Palestinian Diaspora which will take part in the proposed FSN and put their demands firmly. He was very much assured that the FSN is not going to be conclusive because Israel and the United States will not agree on the Palestinian's right of return as it is against "their

agenda". Said found PLO and PA totally incapable to represent Palestinians in the then yet to start FSN which in effect never started. He suggested that for those talks the Diaspora Palestinians should meet and set an agenda. He pressed for the need for Palestinian refugees to initiate the steps to interfere otherwise "Arafat will give away the little that is left" (2003: 23-25).

For Said the progress of talks between Syria and Israel is an ideal example of how Palestinians should handle the talks? According to Said Syria is the example of "real alternative". Syria accepted the principle of peace and negotiations with Israel and took part in the Madrid "Middle East Peace Conference". According to Said despite its acceptance of Peace Process, till date it has not discarded the principle of national priorities (2003: 19). Syria boycotted the talks with Israel on the issue of withdrawal of the Israeli forces from Golan Heights. Israel under Simon Peres was proposing partial withdrawal from the parts of Golan but Syria was asking for complete withdrawal in 1996. After the 1996 elections Netanyahu came to power who also wanted to have a settlement with Syria but was not ready to withdraw completely from Golan (Ma'oz, 1999). Syria after then on has never been in talks with Israel till date. This Syrian example is an example for those, according to Said, who "keep saying that we have no choice but to sign the Oslo" (2003: 19).

The second thing which is required, according to Said, is the preparation of an "unbendable" and "non-negotiable" set of principles for the negotiations with the Israeli side. This "Palestinian agenda" should be an "example" for those PLO negotiators who went to the talks without any "proper preparations". Said argued that during the Oslo, the PLO delegates went to the talks when they did not have any proposals to put before Israel from their own side. They did not have even "proper maps of Jerusalem" and over and above that most of them including Yassir Arafat "did not know English" in which the agreements were signed. Said quite amusingly argued that, Arafat signed most of the times on "the dotted lines" on the documents without even knowing the "proper meanings" of the words used in them. He believed that "no negotiations are better than endless concessions that simply prolong the Israeli occupation" (2003: 25). With wider

consultations and prior consent of the Palestinians this set of principles should be articulated. He argued that any peace proposal should be strictly based on the UN Resolutions 181, 194, 242 and 338. In order to have an able body to have wider coordination among Palestinians inside and outside of Palestine which is necessary to have a genuine set of principles for talks with Israelis, there should be a new set of institutions. These new institutions will be an alternative to the PA and its leadership (2003: 24).

Said suggested, Palestinians need alternative institutions because the present ones are “nothing but power hungry Israeli enforcers”. As we have seen earlier Said was very critical about the role played by the PLO during and after the Oslo Accords were signed. He emphasised the need for having the PNC revived ‘with a new membership based on true demographic representation and competence’. According to Said this body will deal with the issues beyond those which are in the jurisdiction of Palestinian Council. To deal with the technical aspects of the negotiations “in which Israel had taken lead” Said proposed to have an expert body of technicians and intellectuals which will prepare and provide the detailed studies needed during the talks. He named it “Office of Strategic Services” (2003: 23-24). Edward Said emphasised that the agenda set by Palestinians during the talks will provide a genuine representation of Palestinian demands.

Way back in 1991 Edward Said proposed to have a provisional Palestinian government or government in exile ‘formed by and for Palestinians’. This government in exile will be a party in the talks with Israel. He proposed to have a United Nations sanction for it as well. The details regarding the structure of this ‘government in exile’ was not discussed in the article *Palestinians in the Gulf War's Aftermath* published in *International Herald Tribune* in 1991 and republished in *Politics of Dispossession* (1994) (154) where he proposed it first and last time. The proposal do not find a direct reference in any of the Said’s works on Palestine-Israel issue but indirectly the proposals of having an alternative Palestinians institution reflects the same idea. Said not only proposed to have an alternative institution but also acknowledged the fact that without the involvement of international bodies there can be no solution to the conflict because the status of both the

parties is very imbalanced in favour of Israel. Hence, he proposed an international peace conference organised by the UN and participated by Palestinians, other Arab countries, Israelis and other relevant players like the US, EU and others (2003). This proposal of having an international peace conference was also a result of rather regional nature of the conflict. Besides Palestinians, other Arabs are also involved and so there can be no bilateral solution to the Palestine-Israel conflict.

Proposing solution to the Palestinian question Said kept in mind the necessity of perpetuity of peace required in the region. According to him peace is necessary for the welfare of people in both the societies. His peace is not the kind of peace Oslo proposed as the end of hostilities. Saidian idea of peace is the idea of “harmony and cooperation between both the people”. For this kind of peace both the people have to “sacrifice”. The sacrifice will be positive and not negative. It will be a conscious decision and there will be no need to forget what has happened in the past as well. Neither Jews have to forget their sufferings in the past nor have Palestinians to forget their sufferings at the hands of Zionists. They have to understand the situations in which they suffered and take a lesson not to repeat them.

According to Edward Said any long lasting solution of the Palestinian-Israeli question lies in the “understanding of the history of each other” and not in the practice of forgetting it. “We must think our histories together”, Said argued, in “order to coexist”. He argued that “until Arabs understand the sufferings of Jews in Europe” they will not understand the acts of the Zionists against them. Similarly, until the Zionists do not try to understand “the sufferings of Palestinians and their dispossession” they will keep justifying their occupation of the Palestinians land. If we could achieve this the rest of the things will be easier (2003: 209). On many occasions Said repeated the idea of giving respect to each other’s history. He criticised those Arabs who tried to deny the existence of *Holocaust* on the basis that, it was a ‘Zionist propaganda to get sympathy’ from the world. Said asked, “Why we expect that West will recognise our sufferings when we do not recognise the sufferings of Jews in Europe” (2003: 284).

Said emphasizes the need to understand the fact that neither of the people is “going to vanish” from the land and one cannot be thrown out by another. They have no other option but to live in the neighbourhood of each other. In the context of this understanding of each other and ‘thinking of histories together’ Said proposed a bi-national state for both the people. This state would be a federal state in the historical Palestinian land in which both Arabs and Jews would live in harmony (1979). The concept does not get attention in his later writings probably because he could not find any prospect for it. Said, however, repeated,

in my opinion only solution is to say that this is a land for two peoples, in which two peoples in fact exist, and the only hope is that they coexist in equality and not one exist as the subordinate or the subaltern class for the other” (Said and Barsamian, 2003:148-149)

Said always believed there was no solution to the problem as propagated by some Islamic groups, in having an Islamic state in Palestine. It was not possible to have an Islamic state in the historic land of Palestine because there are other religious groups and they are integral parts of Palestinian nation and its struggle for self determination. He also rejects the methods used by some Arab countries in the recent past, to boycott Israeli products. He thinks it is “counterproductive” for both Palestinians struggling for independence and their brethren Arabs in Israel. According to Said, the “boycott” of ‘Israeli products’ will make both people’s life measurable because both are heavily dependent on each other, at least in the economic sphere. It is also counterproductive for those who support the Palestinian cause despite being the citizens of Israel and being a Jew (people like Azmi Bishara and Israel Shahak). He suggested the creation of a “United Front” like the ‘United Front of Anti-apartheid Movement’ in South Africa during the apartheid period, as a common platform for those people who support the Palestinian cause wheather he or she is an Arab or an Israeli Jew (2003: 284).

Keeping in mind the above principles and tactics suggested by Edward Said, we can identify the specific alternatives to Oslo proposed by him. He was not in favour of accepting the provisions of Oslo regarding FSN and the rights and duties assigned to PA. He instead, proposed a new set of provisions for any peace agreement between

Palestinians and Israel. We will see Saidian provisions point by point. Most of these provisions have been repeated in article after article written by him and many interviews given by him time to time in the aftermath of Oslo talks and the DOP. Books like *The Peace and its Discontents* (1996) and *The End of The Peace Process* (2003) have his articles which proposes these solutions and his interviews with David Barsamian published in *Culture of Resistance* (2003) and the collection of his interviews edited by Gauri Viswanathan in *Power Politics and Culture* (2001) are the main sources of this section. The common points in all the works of Edward Said are listed below,

1. Israel should immediately apologize for its misdeeds towards Palestinians. Said emphasised “The atonement is very much required for the commencement of a reliable peace process until that happens the confidence and respect in each other will not come which is necessary for the final settlements of the disputes”. Here Said argued that “the past has to be uncovered if it has been hidden; responsibility for wrongdoing has to be assigned and volunteered, denied or affirmed; proposals for atonement, reparation, or restitution have to be brought forward, analysed, debated if in the past silence has prevailed”. He was much assured that if Israel can get support for its campaign of getting compensation from Germany for the victims of Holocaust, Palestinians should also get it. Their sufferings from the days of 1948 exodus is not less pathetic and disastrous (2003: 12). Said also put the case of reparation for the Palestinians. According to him if Iraq can pay reparation for its illegal occupation of Kuwait for only seven months⁶ why should not Israel pay for its illegal occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza for more than forty years? (2001: 24).
2. According to Said the basis of any negotiation on the Israel-Palestine issue will be the UN resolution 181, 194, 242 and 338. These resolutions can be the only possible solution of the issue. Palestinians have the right to establish their own state according to Resolution 181 of UN General Assembly passed on 29

⁶ Iraq invaded Kuwait on 2 August 1990 and thrown out from it by UN sanctioned force led by US in March 1991. After the war UN imposed sanctions on Iraq and it was forced to pay reparation to Kuwait. This was an example quoted by different scholars on different occasions to point out the “hypocrisy and dualism of the west”.

November 1947 as UN partition plan. UN Security Council Resolution 242 recognised the 1967 borders as the borders of Palestine though indirectly. It also established the right of return of Palestinians into their homes as Resolution 194 of UNGA proposed in 1948 December. UNSC Resolution 338 reiterates the Resolution 242. Said says that all relevant resolutions of UN should be seen together when negotiations starts.

3. For Said every Palestinian refugee will have the right to return to their homes whether it is inside the Occupied Territories or inside the Israeli territories at least in principle. He proposed to have a study to find out that what the “actual number of refugees inside and outside the Occupied Territories” is and what are “their needs and demands” (2003: 24). In the Oslo Israel was not willing to give any assurance on the Palestinian’s right to return and was against the inclusion of UNGA Resolution 194 in the agenda of the talks. There was an absence of any direct reference of it in the DOP. It was left out for the FSN with other major issues. Said argued that “the right to return” is a matter of Palestinians’ “human rights” and therefore it is a responsibility of world community to assure this human right to Palestinians. According to Said, it is the basic issue of Palestinian struggle and no compromise should be accepted on this issue. He was aware about the fact that around 50 percent Palestinians are living outside the land of Palestine today and it is not possible in the context that some of them are well settled in their respective countries for so long, that each refugees should come back whether he or she likes it or not. But they should have the right to return in principle because most of them are living in a very inhuman condition. They should have the right so they can chose from the options of either returning home or getting compensation.
4. The first condition Said puts for any talks is that there will no illegal Jewish settlements inside the Occupied Territories. According to Said settlements are the part of Zionist plots to occupy more and more Arab land. These are providing bases for the presence of Israeli army even inside the “autonomous areas” agreed

upon in the Interim Agreement in the name of providing security. These are the instrument of continuance of indirect Israeli rule with the consent of Palestinians. Said argued for all practical purposes as well for justice that settlements have to go before the talks begins.

5. Said proposed that an alternative leadership should take part on behalf of Palestinian people. He was not in favour of Arafat led PLO because it lacks the required “discipline of detail” which is very important to deal with the Israelis. He proposed more and more participation of Palestinians people in the talks if directly not possible then indirectly. It can be done through allowing the flourishing of “civil society organisations” in the OTs. According to Said civil societies under the ‘current regime’ are not allowed to develop their base. It can also be done through the establishment of a chain of institutions which will inform the people about the developments in the talks and get their consent. A panel of major intellectuals should be formed which can keep vigil on the talks.

6. Finally Said’s proposal is to have an International Conference under which talks should be held. He argued that under the United Nations supervisions all major powers can take part in the conference in which all the directly involved Arab countries should also take part with the Israel and Palestinians. The United States or any other major power should not be kept out of the talks because they are the ones who can influence Israel to respect the provisions of the any future agreement.

We can conclude this section with Said’s words

I have been criticised for being too pessimistic and for not presenting alternatives. Well, let me be very plain: the only alternative to what we have now is a serious attention to the meaning of words, a proper belief in the right of our cause, and an end to the rule of the present leadership (2003: 42).

CONCLUSION

Saidian alternatives are based on the principles of peaceful resolution of the conflict. Establishment of two states which will live in peace and harmony with full cooperation between each other was the purpose of Said. He wanted to see the end to the sufferings of the people under the colonial rule in Palestine. His alternatives should be seen in the light of his good intentions. There was idealism involved in Saidian thinking of solution of the crisis but his proposals were based, as we have seen on the firm grounds of consensus among the Palestinian leaders which was built in the 1988 PNC 19th session.

No one would deny the fact that before the Oslo, PLO was in no position to deny the opportunity of talks provided by Israeli side. It was simply not in a position to dictate terms. Said himself acknowledged this fact and tried to accommodate his feelings against the Oslo with the “reality”. But for Said it was simply not possible because the compromises were very costly to the Palestinian cause. PLO should not be spared because the “reality” was a result of the failure of it and its leadership during the preceding years of Oslo since 1982⁷. PLO’s casual approach for the talks was responsible for the surrender of Palestinians in the Oslo. According to Said, PLO should have consulted the people who have been involved in the Palestinian movement and should have taken them in to confidence before going for talks. According to Said, Arafat and his group were acting like dictators and they never tried to take masses with them in any point of time during the negotiations (1996 and 2003).

In the aftermath of the Oslo Accords it was the realisation of the effects of it and the disenchantment with the PLO leadership that the two main participants in the Oslo Peace process and staunch supporters of the Oslo Accords, Hanan Ashrawi and Haider Abdel al Shafi had to part with the PA. They have later become the fierce critics of Yassir Arafat and his rule in the Gaza and the West Banks during Arafat’s days (Said, 2003).

⁷ In the year 1982 PLO and its whole leadership had to leave Lebanon in the wake of Israeli attacks and the agreement between a Lebanon and Israel. This was in the first time of PLO’s history that they had to go to far from the core of Palestinians struggle. PLO and its leadership landed in Tunis the capital of Tunisia. However this was not a unique moment of the PLO’s history and before this exile from Lebanon, PLO had to leave its former base in Jordan after the 1970 Black September incidents as well.

According to Gilles Kepel “The perennial legitimacy crisis” in their respective societies “and personalised rule of the Arab regimes inevitably affect the Arab leaders negotiating performance and conflict management competence” (2004: 12). This can be applied for Arafat’s role in the peace process and his way of governing as the *Ra’ees* of PA in the aftermath of the Oslo Accords. PA had become an enforcer of Israeli rule and he could not see the Israeli tactics. Just for example, to understand Arafat’s incompetence to understand the Israeli plots one can easily see that Gaza was a problem for Israeli rulers. With only 4000 settlers there they had to deploy a huge military force for their safety. And so Rabin wanted to get rid of the responsibility of its administration in the Oslo Accords. He did it by the provision in the DOP and let the PA establish the police force (Kepel, 2004: 42-43). PLO leadership could not see the hidden agenda of the Israelis in it and counted it as an achievement. This and several other tactics of Israel could deceive PLO only because the naivety of the leadership. This should be recognised at least now and there should be an attempt to get rid of the Oslo to have a real peace process.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

After almost a decade and a half (fourteen years) of the DOP, the flaws and failures of it have become obvious to all. The hope and optimism it had generated at the moment had been replaced by despair and frustration. The Oslo Peace Process, though a big event in the history of Israel-Palestine conflict as it was the first serious effort to solve the problem, has been a victim of two things: first, wrong motives of its parties and their unpreparedness and second, lack of consensus in the Israeli politics about its future as every successive prime minister saw it differently and took it to his constituency differently. From Rabin to Netanyahu the perception regarding the other party changed dramatically which in return changed the fate of the Peace Process. One thing which never changed was the views of Said towards Oslo.

Oslo was a flawed attempt as it is declared by Said, in its very begging. The popular base on which PLO and Israel were rallying for the success of the Oslo, shrank gradually with the progress in the talks. In the aftermath of the Netanyahu's election in 1996, it reduced to the minimum level. We have gone through the reasons of this mass discontent. People were unaware of the consequences of Oslo Accords as they were enthusiastic about the outcome of the first talks between the parties in the forty years of their history of conflict. Edward Said was one of the few Palestinians who could identify the real intentions of both PLO leadership and the Israel. As talks progressed, the resistance of it got increased and beside the scholarly reservations showed by Said and others there were organisational attempts as well to gather the public support in favour of the oppositional movement. Hamas and Islamic Jihad were the first organisational attempts to deny the "gains" of Oslo, much on the same line of the pre 1988 PLO (wiping out the Israeli state and the creation of the Palestinian state on the territories of the pre 1948 Palestinians mandate). These organisations were riding on the 'Islamist surge' in the early 1990s in the West Asia and these organisations are different from the organisations like PLO in the sense that latter was a secular organisation. The popularity of these religion-based political organisations among the Palestinians is a result of mass discontent from their

leadership, their failures to achieve anything concrete from the Oslo Peace Process and regular violations and denials of Palestinians rights by the Israel. In this context, what Edward Said had been pointing out in his works regarding the flaws of the DOP and its subsequent agreements during the Oslo Peace Process are worthy of attention.

Edward Said could see the flaws of Oslo very clearly because he had the experience of the tactics of colonisers. His studies of imperialism in other societies gave him the sense to see the nuances in the US-Israeli moves. According to the supporters of the Process, assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 was a fatal blow to the prospects of it. As we have seen in the preceding chapters, for Edward Said it was not the death of the Rabin which weakened the process, neither was it the rise of Hamas. According to Said, both Israeli and Palestinian hawks got strength, during the process only because of the failures of the promoters of Oslo Accords to understand the need and aspirations of the Palestinian people. There are no two thoughts on the fact that for Palestinians DOP and the establishment of Palestinian Authority were good beginnings of a rather tough journey of getting an independent Palestinians state of their own. The massive support in favour of the talks was very obvious. Even Edward Said could not see any resentment among Palestinians for the talks despite his opposition to it. In this context, the rise of Hamas, which was totally against the Oslo Process and any talks with Israel as well as wants to wipe out Israel from the worlds map, was a strange phenomenon for the supporters of Oslo. There is a contradiction in it and here Saidian criticisms of the Oslo can be cited as a reason to convince the supporters of Oslo about the consequences of the flawed Process. This “unexpected” development in the Palestinian politics in the mid nineties can be an eye opener to the colonisers and their intentions. Again, PLO and those who supported Oslo whom Edward Said termed as “collaborators with colonisers” felt the heat of the failure of the Oslo in their declining popularity.

As we have seen in the preceding chapters PLO was almost a dead organisation at the time of Oslo’s beginning. The signing of DOP by Arafat and his colleagues was a tactical move to recreate its lost base inside the OTs. The hope of PLO’s revival was based on the assumption that people will see the establishment of Palestinians state in the DOP. PLO

leadership would have thoughts that would not mind certain minor compromises. It happened as expected though according to Said compromises were big. It happened only because of the sheer hope that Israel will ultimately agree to give Palestinians what they are ready to take. As Said could see, it was not the intentions of Israel to give up the occupation and Oslo was rather a tactic of retaining as much land as possible from Palestinians. Hamas successfully took this to Palestinians and the Palestinians frustration converted into the rage against Israel and got shelter under religion. Successive failures of talks and Palestinian Authority's failure to even sustain what it had increased the mass base of anti-Oslo elements. The popularity of Hamas has never been comprehensive because of the inherent secular attributes of the Palestinian struggle. But it is substantially increased due to the failures of the secular leadership. Therefore, the victim of Oslo's failure is Palestinian secularism and Palestinian cause.

Though there is a dispute regarding the way of achieving peace in the West Asia, there is no controversy, or two views that peace is necessary. Said argued that the real peace in the region will only come when there would be no hostilities left among the both people against each other. He was not satisfied with the way Oslo was progressing as we have seen. According to him, and correctly so, as we can argue now after almost seven years of the end of the Peace Process, until root causes of the problem are addressed, there will be no peace in the region. The root causes of the conflict, as identified by Said are continuation of Settlements in the OTs, denial of Palestinian refugees of their right to return and the question of Jerusalem. According to Said, recognition of sufferings of Palestinians by the hands of Israeli colonisers during the last sixty years is a precondition of the talks.

The framers of the DOP and its subsequent agreements never tried to address the apprehensions of the Palestinians masses. New settlements were coming up instead of removing the old ones and there were no assurance about the fate of the refugees. Instead there was a perpetual denial from Israeli side to any scheme of adjustment of the Palestinian refugees. There was no settlement of any sort about the Jerusalem question and of course the establishment of an independent Palestinian state was as distant a dream

as ever before. Practically the proposed FSN got no start and PA kept working on extensions provided to it by the Israeli state only because of the persistent pressure of the world community. As Said rightly pointed out for Palestinians, Oslo created a situation where they found themselves losing even whatever they had instead of getting something. They lost their rightful claims even agreed by UN in its different resolutions. PLO recognised Israel without even getting a proper “apology” from Israel for its deeds in the past.

In the preceding chapters we have also seen the need to have proper concept of peace for any successful conclusion of a peace process. We have seen that the framers of the Oslo Peace Process could not understand the meaning of “peace”. Simply peace could not be achieved unless there is a comprehensive understanding of the route cause of the conflict. The ‘structural peace’ as we have seen earlier is a result of elimination of ‘structural causes’ of violence. Oslo in the Palestine-Israel conflict failed to address the structural causes of the conflict. The first and foremost among them is the perpetual denial of each others history by both the people. As Said also argued, we can say that both Israelis and Palestinians need to recognise the sufferings of each other in the past and respect the history of each other. This will create an atmosphere for peace. Oslo did not do this. The peace process started without recognising the “peace” for it to achieve.

Before we discuss the merits and demerits in the Saidian criticisms of the Oslo there should be a reassessment of Saidian motives. Why Said was so critical about all the provisions of Oslo? We have seen in the second chapter that, Said’s general perceptions of different aspects of the “Palestinian question” remained intact even during the Oslo. It was Saidian thought process that was the basis of his scepticism towards the much hyped Oslo Accords. This “scepticism” regarding the coloniser’s yet another tactical move to retain its occupation has been proved in the aftermath of the *Intifada*. Israel has withdrawn from Gaza unilaterally but it has strengthened its grip on the West Bank and Eastern Jerusalem. It has succeeded to divide the Palestinian resistance in the form of Hamas and Fatah. Today’s PA, the single largest achievement of the Oslo, is a irrelevant body of irrelevant people in many ways thanks to both, consistent Israeli denials of

recognition and giving respect of its powers and jurisdictions as agreed in the DOP and the Interim Agreement, and the second mishandling and misuse of PA's by PLO leadership, particularly by Arafat.

Another aspect of the question of the intentions behind the Saidian criticisms of Oslo is the doubt often expressed by his critiques. They argue that Said's opposition to Oslo had much to do about his personal idealism and grievances than any logical analytical values. According to them, Said failed to understand the need of the hour and became adamant. In brief, Said was a torchbearer of an "unrealistic goal". As Haider Abdel Shafi argued Said was not "practical in his criticisms of the Oslo". This study and the happenings in Israel-Palestine are suggesting otherwise.

To conclude this study four things can be argued:-

1. Oslo was a good attempt despite its criticisms by Said, as it was the first serious attempt to solve the Israel-Palestine conflict. We could not and would not have gone to trace the motives of Israel and its Western supports unless Oslo would not have happened.
2. Oslo accords generated a mixed feeling of hope and despair among the different sections of the Palestinian population. It fulfilled no Palestinians demands but at the same time kept open the door of dialogue in the form of provisions of Final Status Negotiations. Establishment of PA and partial withdrawal of Israel deepened the hope but at the same time continuation of settlements and denial of refugees their right of return created suspicions regarding the real motives of Israel. Here Edward Said sounds much more convincing as a critique of the Oslo.
3. According to Said, the inherent flaws of Oslo as it was a colonial method to keep the Palestinians under the Israeli control forever, was the main reason of its failure. Regular violations of PA's authority by Israel, absence of a

consensus among the different leaders and political parties in Israel in their dealings with Palestinians and resulted inconsistency in Israeli policy towards Oslo. And over and above that, absence of any concrete grievance redressal mechanism for the conflicts were other major reasons of Oslo's failures. As many critiques of Oslo argued that at any point of time during the process, neither Israelis nor Palestinians have ever tried to address the "primal fear" of other.

4. Edward Said's alternatives to the Oslo are viable to the extent that the parties of the conflict take it in the good faith. They are both idealistic as well as practical. It depends on the will and intentions of Israelis more to show the strength to admit its mistakes and be ready to correct them.

Oslo has failed and the search of alternatives is on, many proposals have been experimented with no proper result. "Unilateral withdrawal" as it has been used by Ariel Sharon as an alternative, which resulted in the liberation of Gaza in the year 2005. But as we have seen, it has very less capacity to address the structural reasons of the conflict and so does not present a lasting solution. Saidian alternatives for both Palestinians and Israelis are most viable alternatives.

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