

# **THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION AND THE PLO**

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CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation entitled "THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION AND THE PLO" by Mr. Deba Prasad Nanda in partial fulfilment for the award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other university. To the best of our knowledge this is a bonafide work.

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

  
SUPERVISOR

21st July, 1989

  
CHAIRPERSON,  
Centre for American and  
West European Studies,  
School of International Studies.

" O Country and home,

Never, never may I be without you,  
Living the hopeless life,

Hard to pass through and painful,  
Most pitiable of all.

Let death first lay me low and death  
Free me from this daylight.

There is no sorrow above  
The loss of a native land".

- Euripides.





P\_R\_E\_F\_A\_C\_E

The Middle East has always remained an area of significance for the United States and its foreign policy. The strategic interests of the United States in the region are only too well known. However, it has become a region where the rhetorics of moral commitment have been allowed a free hand. It is a region where interests have perfectly been transmuted into moral imperatives. The region's political dynamics are so complex that they have almost become intractable. The Palestinian question, the Arab-Israeli conflict, the intra-Arab politics and above all the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) are inextricably interwoven not only with one another but with the US policy.

Of all the regional actors, the PLO has been America's bete-noire. The Palestinian nationalism catalysed by the PLO is a question since 1967 that the US policymakers have over the years grappled with. They have tried to thwart it; they have tried to extract mileage out of it. But never have they been able to ignore it. The PLO and the question of Palestine have always been placed high on the U.S. agenda. And the U.S. has a determining role in the Palestinian question.

The world has always set its eye on the Palestinian

question. The Palestinian nationalism has caught the attention of the world. Sometimes, it has become a source of inspiration for similar other movements also.

Regan's policy towards the PLO has become the cynosure of all eyes precisely because of the fact that he started with branding the PLO a terrorist organisation and ended up with opening dialogue with the PLO, thus repudiating a 13-year old ban on the PLO.

The present dissertation starts with the examination of the U.S. foreign policy objectives towards the Palestinian question. An attempt has been made to point out major factors that have shaped the U.S. foreign policy. The first chapter deals with the determinants of the U.S. foreign policy in the context of the PLO, Israel and the question of Palestine. In this chapter, a brief survey of the U.S. policy towards the PLO and the Palestinian question till Carter Administration has been done. The second chapter deals with the sub-regional politics of the Middle East. The birth of the PLO and its interaction, till 1981, with Israel set against the

backdrop of Arab politics form essential aspects of the second chapter. The third chapter deals with Reagan Administration's interaction with the PLO, Israel, other Arab countries and tries to find out whether there is any break or continuity in U.S. policy towards Palestine during Reagan's presidency. The conclusion of this dissertation shows that American national interests do not afford the U.S. greater room for manoeuvrability in the conduct of its foreign policy towards the PLO. The method in this dissertation is descriptive and analytical.

In preparing this dissertation, I am grateful to many whose knowledge and experience I have freely utilised.

I owe a great debt of gratitude to my supervisor, Professor R.P. Kaushik. I have benefitted a great deal from his incisive analyses, erudite suggestions, constructive criticisms, unflagging interests and continuous support. My association with him has made me wiser in many a respect.

I thank all those academic luminaries whose books



have given me a perspective on the subject and an insight into the problem. I also thank the staff of the JNU Library and the ICWA Library. My special thanks go to the staff of the USIS Library.

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INTRODUCTION

The interplay of three variables - the geopolitical, the regional and the domestic - has shaped the American policy towards the Palestine question in general and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) in particular. American national interest and its view of other powers, principally that of the Soviet Union, constitute the geopolitical category while the regional variable includes reading of the political map of the Arab world. In the domestic category other factors come in - inter-institutional competition, public opinion, electoral considerations and the like.<sup>1</sup> And the domestic variable influences the other two categories. Policies, whether geopolitical (towards the U.S.S.R) or regional (towards the Arab World), reflect an amalgamation of all the three variables in their due proportion. However, it can be argued that the U.S. policy towards the Palestine question since the 1940s has been an asymmetric amalgam of these categories. At a given time, one variable can be perceived to have been exaggerated to the extent of denying a role to another. Sometimes the domestic, at others, the geopolitical, and just as often the two together

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1 Walid Khalidi, "Regiopolitics: Toward a U.S. Policy on the Palestine Problem", Foreign Affairs (New York), vol. 59, no.5 (Summer 1981), pp. 1051.

have been allowed to play paramount roles, at the expense of the regional variable.

The regional category in the Middle East is not just confined to the Palestine nationalistic question alone. Nor does it imply dealing with the "deterministic" actors of the area on a one-to-one basis. The U.S. foreign policy has to cope not only with the dynamics of the "inter-actor politics" but with the forces released by the actors in collusion/friction with one another. Further, the Palestine question, by itself, is not an adequate and independent matter of the U.S. policy. In it are involved the mutable intra-Arab politics, the Arab-Israeli conflict/peace process, the pan-Arabism and, of course, the Palestinian nationalism. No perceptive observer can slight these Middle Eastern peculiarities, nor can any policy maker.

The basic American interests and objectives in the Middle Eastern region are consistent with the U.S. interests and objectives around the globe. It is because of the fact that they derive first and foremost from the objective "structural factors" of American system evolved out of capitalist economic system, the basis of American society.

✓ Thus the American interests involve freedom of access to raw materials, access to market for manufactured goods, securing the environment for the expansion of American corporate and banking concern and preventing a shift in the global balance of powers.<sup>2</sup> While a variety of policies have been employed in pursuit of these objectives there has been a remarkable consistency of interests over time and around the globe. In the context of the Middle East, the freedom of access to oil is of paramount importance for the U.S.

Another factor in the geopolitical variable is American perception of the Soviet Union. Sometimes, the whole gamut of the regional problem is considered to be handiwork of the U.S.S.R and at others, they are sought to be "managed" so as not to give any leeway to the Soviet Union. Thus, the shifting mosaic of the U.S - Soviet relations determined, and still determines, to a large extent, the American policy towards the Middle East. During First and Second Cold War it took a discernible pattern (the Palestinian question was a refugee problem;

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2 Cheryl A Rubenberg, " U.S. Policy Toward the Palestinians: A Twenty Year Assessment", Arab Studies Quarterly (Belmont, Massachusetts), vol. 10, no. 1 (Winter 1988), p. 31.

the PLO was a terrorist organisation) while the Detente gave a different shape to it which manifested in the declaration that the Palestinians need a 'homeland' and in the announcement of the opening of dialogue with the PLO. However, it is of significance to note that other factors did play their role in the formation of policy.

The sweep of intra-Arab politics on the U.S. policy is also overwhelming. This is also true of the PLO which has been caught in the net of this politics ever since its inception. Apart from this, the Arab-Israeli conflict and peace processes have influenced the policy of the United States. And the fallout of this policy, set against the backdrop of Israel-Arab politics, has obviously affected all the parties, including the PLO. The Camp David Agreement of 17 September 1978 are a case in point.<sup>3</sup> The Agreements isolated Egypt from the Arabs

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3 The Camp David accords consisted of a general Preamble, a lengthy outline of plans for the West Bank and Gaza, occupied by Israel after the June 1967 Arab-Israeli war, a section committing Egypt and Israel to try to negotiate a peace treaty within three months, and a settlement of principles which both sides felt should govern future relations between Israel and the neighbouring Arab states. There was no structural linkage between the section dealing with the West Bank and Gaza and that dealing with Egypt-Israel relations. The accord on West Bank and Gaza called for the establishment of "a self governing authority" in those territories, which would, oversee administrative matters there for a transition

Towards the late 1950s, Israel became a "surrogate Power" of the U.S. to guard American interests in the region. Many factors detailed elsewhere contributed to making it, in American perception, the strategic asset of the U.S. Thereby, came the "special relationship" between the U.S. and Israel.<sup>4</sup> Over the years, this American perception of Israel being a strategic asset has been 'institutionalized'.<sup>5</sup> And this policy of pursuing

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Footnote 3 contd..

period not to exceed five years in length. Once the self-governing authority had been established, "a withdrawal of Israeli armed forces (of unspecified dimensions) will take place and there would be a redeployment of the remaining Israeli forces into specified security location". Then at a stage not later than three years into the transition period, "negotiations will take place to determine the final status of the West Bank and Gaza and its relationship with its neighbours and to conclude a peace treaty between Israel and Jordan by the end of the transitional period".

See, for details, Moshe Dayan, Breakthrough (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1981), pp.321-31.

- 4 For an analysis of the "special relationship", see Bernard Reich, The United States and Israel: Influence in the Special Relationship (New York: Praeger, 1984).
- 5 In some sociological analyses knowledge/perception about social order is said to be first constructed, then transmitted and at last institutionalized. For details, see Peter L Berger and Thomas Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality : A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge (New York: Anchor Books, 1967).

the special relationship is perceived by American foreign policymakers as an objective aspect of social reality. The United States has become from the late 1950s, in anti-colonialist terms, Israel's "metropolis".

The history of the relations between the United States and the Palestinian movement has been in the category of antagonistic relations. Despite all the hard feelings involved in this, from the middle of 1973 onwards, the PLO, in Kissinger's account, has been directed towards establishing a direct dialogue with Washington.<sup>6</sup> However, fifteen years later U.S. opened dialogue with the PLO. But the U.S. policy has always been consistent towards the PLO. The policy has been summed up by Kissinger in June 1975: "I have left the Palestinian question alone in order to work on frontier questions hoping eventually to isolate the Palestinians. And this could work."<sup>7</sup>

On the Palestinian side, the official policy of the PLO towards the U.S. has been laid down by the

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6 Henry Kissinger, Years of Upheaval (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1982), pp. 626-27.

7 "Document: 'To Isolate Palestinians' ", MERIP Reports (Washington, D.C.), no. 96 (May 1981), p. 27. Emphases added.



Eleventh Palestine National Council (PNC), the Palestinian parliament-in-exile, held in January 1973. The political programme agreed at that session refers to continuing American-Zionist-Hashemite (Jordanian) schemes and it accuses 'American imperialism' of entertaining a broad plan to securely contain and liquidate both the Palestinian and Arab revolution. Under these circumstances, the programme committed the PLO to "solidarity with the world struggle against imperialism, Zionism and reaction".<sup>8</sup>

It is of significance to note here that the PLO makes a distinction between the Zionist movement and the Jews as such. In the Palestine National Covenant of 1968, Zionism is described as the political movement organically related to World Imperialism.

It further added:

...(Zionism is) hostile to all movements of liberation and progress in the world. It is a racist and fanatical movement in its formation; aggressive, expansionist and colonialist in its aims; fascist and Nazi in its means. Israel is a tool of the Zionist movement and a human and geographical base for world imperialism.(9)

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8 International Documents on Palestine(Beirut), 1973, pp. 404-5 and 407.

9 Yehuda Lukacs, ed., Documents on the Israeli - Palestinian Conflict: 1967-1983 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 142.

The Reagan Administration followed the long-standing U.S. policy towards the PLO. It opened dialogue with the PLO towards the fag-end of its tenure. However, in the final analysis, it can be said that the American policy towards the PLO has been marked by consistency as the U.S. has never lost sight of its interests and objectives in the region. The channel for the pursuit of American interest happens to be Israel, at least for the time being.

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CHAPTER - I

THE UNITED STATES AND THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE  
- A SURVEY OF THE U.S. POLICY.

The United States policy towards the question of Palestine has been abidingly consistent in so far as it has rejected the basic and fundamental rights of the people of Palestine for a home state. The policy of the United States towards the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) has undergone changes in its contextual setting. But there has not been any fundamental shift in its policy on this issue. Washington has refused to acknowledge Palestinian people's right to self-determination. It has also refused to consider the case of an independent Palestinian State. And above all, the PLO has not been accorded the status of being the representative of the Palestinian people and their interests.

The major determinants of American refusal concerning the Palestinians include structural and ideological factors. The U.S. system has remained somewhat opposed to the Third World nationalism. It has had a concern with the Western freedom of access to Middle Eastern oil that has added to the "reactionary status quo" in the region. It has also led to a perception of Israel occupying a position of strategic importance to the United States which conditions the American reaction in the region.

American "liberal" political ideology with its

capitalistic economic philosophy has always been in juxtaposition to all revolutionary and nationalist movements. Whether American policy is understood as deriving from economic determinants, the needs of national security, or both, the consequences are the same.<sup>1</sup> The Third World countries provide the materials for the U.S. to remain a military giant and an economic superpower.

The fuel for Western economic engine is the Middle Eastern oil. The indispensability of the Middle Eastern oil has led the United States to forge de facto alliances with the existing regimes in the area. Saudi Arabia is a case in point.<sup>2</sup> For some reason or the other, there has been a convergence of perspectives on Palestinian nationalism between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia. This convergence of perspectives has left a debilitating

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1 For an analysis of the interrelatedness of the national security and economic perspective, see Richard J Barnett, Roots of War : The Men and Institutions Behind U.S. Foreign Policy (New York: Penguin Books, 1972).

2 See, for example, the analysis of Kai Bird, "Co-opting the Third World Elites: Trilateralism and Saudi Arabia", in Holly Sklar, ed., Trilateralism: The Trilateral Commission and Elite Planning for World Management (Boston : South End Press, 1980), pp. 341-51.

influence on the Palestinian nationalism. The actual Saudi opposition as running counter to its rhetorical support for the movement<sup>3</sup> coincided with the U.S. antipathy to Palestinian self-determination.

U.S. - Israel relationship is founded on the basis of the framework of "strategic efficacy" to which Israel, as per American perception, conveniently fits in. Over the years, American perception of Israel being a strategic asset<sup>4</sup> got 'institutionalized,'<sup>5</sup> the consequence of which

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- 3 The normative constraints of Arabism made it necessary for the ruling elite of Saudi Arabia to appear supportive of the Palestinian cause. For an analysis of the contradiction between the rhetoric of Arab state support for the Palestinian cause and the reality of non-support, see Cheryl A. Rubenberg, "Conflict and Contradiction in the Relations between the Arab States and the Palestine National Movement" in Glenn E. Perry, ed., Palestine : Continuing Dispossession (Belmont, Massachusetts : Association of Arab-American University Graduates, Inc., 1986), pp. 121-45.
- 4 The concept of Israel as a strategic asset is predicated on the belief that Israel promotes American interests by acting as a counter to Arab nationalist movements; fostering and exacerbating the divisions and weaknesses in the Arab world; stabilising the region through its absolute military superiority; containing the spread of Soviet expansionism; shoring-up, and ensuring the survival of, pro-American Arab regimes. This theory is vehemently espoused by Nadav Safran. See Nadav Safran, Israel : the Embattled Ally (Cambridge, Massachusetts : Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1978).
- 5 As a result of this "institutionalization" Washington finds very little room for manoeuvring itself according to its suitability at least in the Middle East Question.

is that Washington responds attentively to all of Israel's susceptibilities - the Palestinian question being a major one. The main factors that have contributed to the institutionalization of the belief that Israel is a strategic asset/surrogate power are its stunning military performance in the June 1967 war; the 1969 Nixon Doctrine which postulated reliance on certain states in crucial areas acting as substitutes for direct U.S. intervention in the defence of American interests; Israel's mobilisation at the request of Kissinger for possible intervention on the side of Jordan in the September 1970 crisis between King Hussein and the Palestinians; the influence of Kissinger and his commitment to the surrogate power concept; pro-Israeli forces in American society and above all, the ideological belief that Israel can play a role in anti-communism and can make contributions to "anti-terrorist" construction.

Despite the consistency and hostility of the American position on the question of Palestine, there appear to have been several policy shifts. President Carter's approach, for instance, differed from Henry Kissinger's. There are two broad approaches that the policymakers

have taken in regard to the Middle East. One approach brings out global and greater power dynamics; the other, regional policies; but both have been played out in the larger context of U.S. interests and objectives that have remained unvaried. These include ensuring America's freedom of access to raw materials and to markets for American manufactured goods, securing the environment for American investment opportunities, and preventing a shift in the global balance of power. Alfred L. Atherton, Jr. former Assistant Secretary of State for the Near East and South Asia, describes the two perspectives in the following words, " I am struck by the unanimity and consistency in America's perception of both its national interests, and its policy objectives, in the Middle East...."

He further adds:

One approach views the conflicts in the Middle East through the prism of the global East-West conflict. According to this view, consideration of global strategy and efforts to enlist the support of Middle East nations against the Soviet threat take priority over initiatives designed to resolve the underlying causes of regional conflicts, and specifically, the Arab-Israeli Conflict.

The other approach holds that regional conflicts have their own roots and are more a cause than a result



of superpower confrontation. According to this view, while we cannot ignore external threats to our interests in the region, efforts to deal with the root causes of the Arab-Israeli and Palestinian territorial claim in the area west of the Jordan River, must be dealt with before we can realistically hope to enlist the support of the Middle East states on our side of the global conflict with the Soviet Union. Underlying this view is the premise that regional conflicts like that between Arabs and Israelis, by destabilizing the area provide fertile ground for exploitation by the Soviet Union in the East West Conflict<sup>6</sup>

Between 1948 and 1967 the Palestinian nationalist aspirations were expressed through pan-Arab nationalism. During that period, even when U.S. policymakers focussed on "the regional dimensions" of Arab-Israeli Conflict, Palestinian interests were never considered except as a problem of refugee settlement, and homes. Not until the re-emergence of Palestinian nationalism in the aftermath of the June War was there any consideration of a collective Palestinian issue in American policy.<sup>7</sup> Even then, however, Kissinger's dominant role in policy making, his globalist great power orientation and his belief in Israel's

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6 Alfred L Atherton, Jr., "Arabs, Israelis and Americans: A Reconsideration", Foreign Affairs (New York), vol. 62, no.5 (Summer 1984), pp.1194-95.

7 For an excellent analysis of early Palestinian nationalism, see Ann Mosley Lesch, Arab Politics in Palestine, 1917-1939: The Frustration of a Nationalist Movement (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1970).

strategic utility, combined to effectively keep the Palestinian question off the political agenda until 1977.

President Carter's initiative for homeland for Palestinians reflected a shift to a regional approach and a concern for resolving the Arab-Israeli Conflict. Carter considered a Middle East peace settlement one means of resolving "crisis of democracy" that confronted the American system when he assumed office. However, by September 1978, when Carter presided over the Camp David accords, even the limited concept of a homeland was no longer part of the American agenda. By 1979, as a result of the Iranian revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the regional approach had given way to the global perspective. The Carter Doctrine, articulated on 24 Jan 1980, heralded a return to a simplistic and dichotomous view of the world.

A further aspect of comprehending American policy on the Palestinians involves the domestic source of foreign policy. As Alfred Atherton, Jr. has aptly commented, "Domestic political considerations have probably carried

more weight in determining American Middle East Policy over a longer period of time than they have on any other major foreign policy issue since the days of the China Lobby." <sup>8</sup> The U.S. Congress has assumed a prominent role in the formation of American Middle East policy. In this regard, the Congress frequently thwarts presidential initiatives and often undertakes independent enterprises. Congress's 1984 drive to move the American Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and its repeated denials of Administration requests to sell arms to Arab states are some cases in the point.

Israel has also the ability to exert pressure on the US government at both the Executive and the Congressional levels. AS a consequence of direct and frequent interaction between high Israeli and US officials, Israel had the opportunity to forthrightly remind the U.S. of Israel's strategic services, and of the expected quid pro quo approach in the context of Palestinian question. The promise Kissinger gave to the Israelis in September 1975

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8 Atherton, Jr., no.6, p. 1195.

in the context of the second Sinai accord, that the United States would never recognise or negotiate with the PLO unless it accepted UN Resolution 242, is one example of such an Israeli influence. There is also constant high level interaction between the Israeli officials and the American Congressmen.

In addition, pro-Israeli forces within the domestic political scene, acting on behalf of the Israeli government, have been able to exercise leverage with presidents and the congress. Such domestic pressure on President Carter has been regarded as an important weight on his Middle East policy decisions.<sup>9</sup>

An additional channel of Israeli influence on American policymaking lies at the bureaucratic level. The policymaking process has been affected in another way by the complexity and intimacy of the US-Israeli relationship and the ways and means, nature and extent, of Israel's ability to interface with a multiplicity

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9 William B. Quandt, Camp David : Peacemaking and Politics (Washington, D.C. : Brookings Institution, 1986), p. 86.

of official and private sectors in the American system. On Middle East issues the traditional role of policy planning groups as instruments of the elites' domination of policy information has been weakened. Thus, while policy planning groups have consistently advocated a comprehensive Middle East settlement including some type of resolution of the Palestinian question that involves at least partial Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza as a requirement for the realization of American interests in the Middle East, Israel has been able to resist such a settlement.

The war of 1967 has been significant in the sense that it has institutionalized the U.S. perceptions about Israel's strategic efficacy for the United States. So, it is worth noting the extent of US support and its commitment for Israel at the time. On 23 May 1967, President Johnson secretly authorised an emergency air shipment of armoured personnel carriers, spare parts for tanks and the Hawk missile air defence system, bomb fuses, artillery ammunition, and gas masks. These items were packed and sent just prior to the June 5 invasion, at a time when the President had publicly declared an

arms embargo on all items going to the Middle East.<sup>10</sup> The Administration used its veto in the United Nations to prevent a ceasefire resolution from including a call for return to the pre-war boundaries; and the United States flew aerial reconnaissance for Israel throughout the hostilities.<sup>11</sup>

The new place that Israel was to occupy in the American grand strategy after the June war was evident in President Johnson's first post-war statements - his "Five Principles for Peace in the Middle East".<sup>12</sup> This June 19 declaration avoided a call for a return to the

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10 Stephen Green, Taking Sides : America's Secret Relations with a Militant Israel (New York: William Morrow, 1984), p. 201.

11 Ibid., pp. 204-11.

12 "President Lyndon B. Johnson, 'Five Principles for Peace in the Middle East', excerpts, June 19, 1967". The Search for Peace in the Middle East: Documents and Statements 1967-79, report prepared for the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, US House of Representatives, by the Foreign Affairs and National Defence Division Congressional Research Service (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1979), pp. 286-89.

status quo ante, emphasized the political rights and territorial integrity of existing states, and referred to the Palestinians merely as refugees. "Those points which the President chose to stress, whether of substance such as the need for a real peace, or of procedure such as the necessity for direct negotiations, fully accorded with Israel's position".<sup>13</sup>

The Security Council Resolution, passed in November 1967, called for the return of territories occupied by Israel in the June war and the establishment of peace based on sovereignty and territorial integrity for all states in the area, and created the mandate for a Special Representative to help facilitate a settlement. Palestinians were referred to only obliquely in Resolution 242, which spoke of the need "for achieving a just settlement of the refugee problem".<sup>14</sup>

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13 Shlomo Slonim, United States - Israeli Relations, 1967-73: A Study in the Convergence and Divergence of Interests, Jerusalem Papers on Peace Problems No.8 (Jerusalem: Leonard David Institute of International Relations, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1974) p. 81.

14 The Search of Peace in the Middle East: Documents and Statements 1967-79, report prepared for the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, US House of Representatives, by the Foreign Affairs and National Defence Division Congressional Research Service (Washington, D.C : USGPO, 1979)p. 93.

America's official policy towards the Arab-Israeli Conflict has been based on Resolution 242. Egypt and Jordan accepted it at that time. Israel did not accept it until May 1970. The United States continued to uphold it. Moreover, Washington required the PLO to unconditionally accept Resolution 242 as a pre-requisite for U.S. recognition and negotiation with the PLO. This Resolution treated the Palestinians as "refugees" rather than as a national community. This Resolution also lent credence to Jordanian claim over the West Bank. The PLO's response had been that it would accept Resolution 242 together with all UN Resolutions dealing with the Palestinian question in the context of mutual recognition between the PLO and Israel. This had been the official PLO position at least since 1974.<sup>15</sup> Among the other Resolutions the Resolution 181 of 1947 is important from PLO's point of view. This Resolution recommended partition of Palestine into a Jewish State and a Palestinian Arab State. One more important Resolution was the Resolution 194 of 1949 which called for the repatriation of Palestinians to their homes or for compensation to those who

<sup>15</sup> For an evolution of PLO objectives, see Cheryl A. Rubenberg, "The Structural and Political Context of the PLO's Changing Objectives in the Post 1967 Period" in Yehuda Lukacs and Abdallah Battah, ed., The Arab-Israeli Conflict : Twenty Years After the Six Day War. (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1988), pp. 131-35.

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chose not to return, establishing the right of return for Palestinians who were living in exile. Of additional importance to a just settlement were General Assembly Resolutions 2535 (10 December 1969), 2649 (30 Nov 1970), 2672 (8 December 1970), 2787 (6 December 1971), 2792 (6 December 1971), which recognized the status of the Palestinian people as a colonized people entitled to independence and possessing inalienable rights; Resolution 3210 (14 October 1974) recognizing the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people; and Resolution 3236 (22 November 1974) reaffirming the rights of the Palestinians to self-determination, national independence and sovereignty.<sup>16</sup>

The United States has rejected the PLO position and continued to demand its unconditional acceptance of Resolution 242. The first Nixon Administration employed both the regionalist and globalist approach simultaneously. The regional perspective was lent by Secretary of State William Rogers and the globalist one was presided over

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16 See, for details, W. Thomas Mallison and Sally V. Mallison, The Palestinian Problem in International Law and World Order (London: Longman Group Limited, 1986).

by Henry Kissinger, the national security advisor. The State Department initiated two sets of talks - "Two Power" talks between the United States and the Soviet Union, and "Four Power" talks among the US, the USSR, France and Britain. Both discussions were based on Resolution 242, both were centred around an Egyptian - Israeli entente, and the Palestinian issue was not on either agenda. Both sets of discussions collapsed in less than a year. After this came the "Rogers Plan" of December 1969, grounded in Resolution 242, which emphasized four main points: peace, security, withdrawal and territory. Rogers made no reference to Palestinian rights. Regarding the Palestinians, Rogers spoke only of the need to "achieve a just settlement of the problem of those Palestinians whom the wars of 1948 and 1967 made homeless".<sup>17</sup> Israel strongly opposed Rogers's proposals, as did Kissinger, who persuaded Nixon to distance himself

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17 "Secretary of State William P. Rogers, 'Statement on Peace in the Middle East,' excerpts, December 9, 1969", in The Search for Peace in the Middle East : Documents and Statements 1967-79, report prepared for the Sub-Committee on Europe and the Middle East of the Committee on Foreign Affairs & National Defence Division Congressional Research Service (Washington, D.C : USGPO, 1979), pp. 292-300.

from the plan enunciated by his Secretary of State.<sup>18</sup> The Rogers Plan was quickly consigned to the dustbin of history.

A further initiative by Rogers, in July 1970, was more successful than previous efforts. It was designed to end the war of attrition between Israel and Egypt and to contain the Palestinian nationalist movement by including Jordan. Apart from doing these things, the initiative also solidified the US - Israeli relationship.

The American opposition to Palestinian nationalism and the U.S. efforts to suppress and annul the movement stood in marked contrast to the vigour and potency of the nationalist current during this period. Recognising that the governments were not going to solve their problem, Palestinians swelled the ranks of the nascent resistance groups - Fateh, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and after 1969 the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The previous

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18 Seymour M. Hersh, The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House (New York: Summit Books, 1983), p. 220.

willingness to pursue Palestinian interests through a pan-Arab nationalist framework was transformed after 1967 into an independent Palestinian nationalism, expressed in an ideology of armed struggle and national liberation. By 1969, Fateh dominated the PLO, Yasser Arafat was at the Organization's helm and the movement's independence from the Arab regimes was a critical norm for all Palestinian leaders. Even as brutal a blow as that inflicted by King Hussein could not stem the nationalist tide. Egypt and Syria initiated a limited war against Israel in October 1973. The Arab oil producing countries briefly supported the war effort with an embargo and a substantial increase in the price of oil. The United States publicly sided with Israel during the hostilities providing a massive military airlift and \$ 2.2 billion in "emergency" financial assistance, as well as permitting a major violation by Israel of the U.N. cease-fire agreement arranged by Kissinger (Resolution 338 which, alongwith calling for a cease-fire, restated the terms of Resolution 242 and called for an international conference).<sup>19</sup>

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19 On Kissinger's allowing Israel to violate the ceasefire, see Henry Kissinger, Years of Upheaval (Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1982), p. 569 and 571-611.

For details of Resolution 242 and 338, see footnote 23 of this Chapter.

Kissinger, after the war, decided to deal with the regional aspect of Arab-Israeli Conflict in a very narrow way - ending oil embargo, disengaging the unstable troop configurations, bringing Egypt and Israel together in a separate peace; increasing American influence over Egypt; maintaining and strengthening US - Israeli relationship.

Kissinger relates in his memoirs that he received a message from Arafat on 10 October 1973, in the midst of the war, indicating the willingness of the PLO to take part in postwar negotiating process. Then Secretary of State and national security advisor, Kissinger records that he never for a moment entertained the idea of PLO participation.<sup>20</sup> At an Arab meeting in Algiers in November 1973, the Arab leaders issued a statement declaring their willingness to engage in a peace process based on Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories and the achievement of legitimate rights of the Palestinians.<sup>21</sup> Both Washington and Tel Aviv denigrated the Algiers resolutions and Kissinger proceeded to organise an

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20 Ibid., p. 503.

21 Ismail Fahmy, Negotiating for Peace in the Middle East (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 85 ff.

international conference at Geneva.

Kissinger, during his first meeting with Sadat promised, as per Sadat's wishes, to arrange some types of Palestinian participation.<sup>22</sup> However, Kissinger had no wish to include the PLO in negotiations; Israel's position that it would not attend the conference if the PLO is invited provided a convenient rationale that he could use with Arab leaders.

Kissinger convened the Geneva Conference (without Syria). He presided over the conclusion of a separate disengagement agreements between Israel and Egypt (the first Sinai accord) between 6-11 November 1973 through his famous "shuttle diplomacy," and between Israel and Syria. Israel refused to engage in negotiation with Jordan and Kissinger did not pressurize it to do so either.

When the U.S. was making efforts to exclude the PLO, the rest of the international community moved to recognise its legitimacy. At an Arab Summit Meeting in Rabat in

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22 Edward R.F. Sheehan, "How Kissinger Did it: Step-by-Step in the Middle East", Foreign Policy (Washington, D.C.), no.27 (Spring 1976), p. 15.

October 1974, a unanimous Resolution was passed designating the PLO as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. That Resolution stripped Hussein of any right to negotiate over the West Bank. The same month by a vote of 105 to 4, the U.N. General Assembly recognised the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people and conferred upon it full observer status.

On 1 September 1975, because of Kissinger's efforts, the official terms of the second Egyptian - Israeli interim agreement, Sinai II, were released; the agreement was signed three days later in Geneva. In return for a further Israeli pullback in Sinai, the Egyptians undertook to forswear the use of force against Israel and to allow cargoes destined for Israel to traverse the newly reopened Suez Canal.

The most significant assurances Israel gained through the agreement were those given by the U.S. in two separate annexes, whose terms remained secret until they were leaked by the New York Times in mid-September. The first annexe promised various forms of U.S. economic and military

guarantees to Israel; the second called "Memorandum of Agreement between the U.S. and Israel concerning the Reconvening of Geneva Conference" concerned the Palestinians more directly. Clause 2 of this Memorandum spelt out that :

The United States will continue to adhere to its present policy with respect to the Palestine Liberation Organization, whereby it will not recognise or negotiate with the PLO so long as the PLO does not recognise Israel's right to exist and does not accept Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.(23).

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23 International Documents on Palestine (Beirut), 1975, pp. 257-68. Emphasis added. Security Council Resolution 242 of 22 November 1967 emphasized the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and the need to work for a just and a lasting peace in which every State in the area can live in security. It affirmed that the fulfilment of Charter principles required the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East which should include the application of both the following principles:

- a) Withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict, i.e. June 1967 conflict;
- b) Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every state in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force.  
It further affirmed the necessity:
  - a) for guaranteeing freedom of navigation through international waterways in the area;
  - b) for achieving a just settlement of the refugee problem;



Another Memorandum reiterated the 1973 promise "to consult fully and seek to concert its (the U.S.) position and strategy at the Geneva Peace Conference....with the government of Israel".<sup>24</sup>

These provisions not only set tough preconditions for any future U.S. - PLO dialogue, it also implied that U.S. could not act freely as a mediator in the Arab-Israeli dispute, and gave Israel (and other participants at the

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Footnote 23 contd.

c) for guaranteeing the territorial inviolability and political independence of every state in the area, through measures including the establishment of demilitarized zones. Security Council Resolution 338 of 22 October 1973 called upon all parties to the fighting, i.e. October 1973 fighting, to cease all firing and terminate all military activity immediately, no later than twelve hours after the moment of the adoption of this decision, in the position they occupy. It also called upon parties concerned to start immediately after the cease-fire the implementation of Security Council Resolution 242(1967) in all its parts. It decided that, immediately and concurrent with the cease-fire, negotiations start between the parties concerned under appropriate auspices aimed at establishing a just and durable peace in the Middle East.

24 The Search For Peace in the Middle East : Documents and Statements 1967-79, report prepared for the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, by the Foreign Affairs and National Defence Division Congressional Research Service (Washington, D.C.: USGPO, 1970), pp. 6-17.

Geneva Conference's December 1973 session) a veto over any formula for PLO participation at a reconvened conference.

When Carter assumed the presidency in 1977 he shifted from the globalist perspective of Henry Kissinger to a regional focus and gave high priority to achieving a middle East Peace settlement. He expressed a desire to achieve a comprehensive settlement that would include the Palestinian issue, and to convene the Geneva Conference as a meaningful forum for negotiation including cooperation with the Soviet Union. Carter's initial objectives for the Middle East can be summarized as full peace and a normalisation of relations between Israel and its neighbours involving an exchange of ambassadors, trade, open borders, and tourism; secure and recognised borders including a US-Israeli pact as part of an overall settlement; and a new U.S. position on the Palestine questions comprising the creation of a "homeland" for the refugees.<sup>25</sup> Carter's national security adviser, Zbigniew Brezezinski was the architect of both the Trilateral Commission officially

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25 Quandt, no.9, pp. 58-60.

inaugurated in July '73 - which was preoccupied with continued Western freedom of access to Middle Eastern oil - and the Brookings report on the Middle East. The Brookings report spoke of the need for a "comprehensive settlement" and attested to the necessity of a multilateral forum for negotiations. The report addressed the issues of security as well as the nature of genuine peace agreements. On the question of Palestine the report has the following things to say .

There should be provisions for Palestinian self-determination, subject to Palestinian acceptance of sovereignty and territorial integrity of Israel within agreed boundaries. This might take the form either of an independent Palestinian state accepting the obligations and commitments of peace agreements . . . of a Palestinian entity voluntarily federated with Jordan but exercising extensive political autonomy.<sup>26</sup> After the oil embargo and the two oil price hikes in 1973 and 1974, Brezezinski and others were concerned about the potential power of OPEC, continued Western freedom of access to Middle Eastern oil, an "energy crisis", and ensuring continuation of the practice of quoting oil prices

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26 Brookings Institution, Towards Peace in the Middle East, Report of a Study Group (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1975), p. 2

in U.S. dollars and the recycling of petrodollars back to the US through investments, savings, and the purchase of American goods and services. For a time until the dichotomy between the reality and rhetoric of Saudi foreign policy became apparent - American officials felt that resolving the Palestinian question would be necessary to obtain Saudi Arabian cooperation on these matters. The Brookings study itself reflects these concerns. The Brookings report spelt out the linkage between oil and a peace settlement, giving the following reasons, among others, for the United States' vital interest in establishing a stable peace in the Middle East:

1. Rising tensions in the Middle East might lead to another Arab-Israeli war and even provoke a major confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union.
2. The United States has a strong interest in the security, independence, and well-being of Israel and the Arab states.....Their security and future development will remain in jeopardy until a settlement is concluded.....
3. The United States has a strong interest in the unimpeded flow of Middle Eastern oil to itself and to its European and Japanese allies... In the event of another Arab-Israeli war...Arab oil shipments to those markets might be disrupted.
4. The United States has a considerable and growing interest in trade with, investment in, and communication through the entire area.
5. Efforts by the United States to establish greater

global stability and to help manage the growing economic inter-dependence among nations more effectively are likely to be frustrated as long as conflict and confrontation seem probable in this area where so many national interests converge. US interests in this respect are congruent with those of the states in the area.<sup>27</sup>

President Carter's 15 March 1977 speech of providing "homeland" for the refugees generated a great deal of anger in Israel. Around the same time in the thirteenth Palestine National Council (PNC) the PLO formally declared its willingness to enter into an international peace process and replaced its previous policy of a democratic secular state of Palestine with acceptance of an independent national state in part of Palestine. The PLO also endorsed the joint Soviet-American statement of October 1977, but Israeli government strongly rejected it. The statement called for Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab land; resolution of Palestinian question including insuring "the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people" (this expression became the eyeshore of Israel); termination of the state of war between Israel and the Arabs with the establishment of normal, peaceful relations among the

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27 Ibid., pp. 5-6.

countries on the basis of mutual recognition, sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence; and international guarantees in which both the United States and the Soviet Union would share to ensure compliance with the terms of settlement.

Israel despatched its then Foreign Minister, Mosche Dayan, to the United States to emphasize its disapproval of the joint statement. An American - Israeli "joint working paper" was issued in which Carter agreed that the US-Soviet declaration was "not a pre-requisite for the convening and conduct of the Geneva Conference", and agreed never to use military and economic sanctions to pressurize Israel to make concession.<sup>28</sup>

A month later, in November 1977, Egypt's President Sadat made his historic trip to Israel. The September 1978 Camp David summit produced two documents: a "Framework for the Conclusion of a Peace Treaty between Israel and Egypt" and a "Framework for Peace in the Middle East". The second document purported to settle the Palestinian issue. However, it precluded Palestinian self-determination

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28 Washington Post, 10 October 1978.

and statehood in Palestine; it ignored the right of dispersed Palestinians to return to their homes. The documents effectively "legitimized" Israel's permanent control over the West Bank and Gaza after a five-year period of "autonomy" - a term not even defined in that accord.

The first agreement reached at Camp David led to the signing of a bilateral peace treaty between Israel and Egypt on 26 March 1979.

Carter, though started with a regionalistic perspective, fulfilled all Kissinger objectives: facilitating a separate Egyptian - Israeli accord that detached Egypt from the Arab world and further fragmented what remained of pan-Arab unity; increasing American influence over Egypt and constraining Egypt's ability to pursue independent domestic and foreign policies, avoiding genuine cooperation with the Soviet Union; maintaining and strengthening the US-Israeli relationship; retaining Israel as a strategic asset to US interest; and excluding the Palestinian issue and the PLO from the peace process.

Carter's volte-face, it should be pointed out,

manifested in terms of retreat on the Palestinians, foresaking of comprehensive settlement, the departure from the Geneva Conference, and the exclusion of the Soviet Union, occurred before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Iranian revolution.

A major factor in Carter's transformation on the regional issue was the obduracy of Israel. Further, if there had been any uncertainty about Saudi policies in early 1977, there was none by 1978. Additionally, once Carter understood that Sadat would agree to a bilateral peace with Israel in the absence of any substantive concessions on the Palestinians, he had little motivation to pursue the Palestinian question. And through Camp David, the United States realized the long-standing American objective of subordinating Egypt to American dominance.

In its pristine form the American opposition to Palestinian nationalism was an outgrowth of structural and ideological factors in the US system. It was reinforced and intensified by Israel's absolute rejection and by



Saudi Arabia's quiet opposition. As a result of the demands of the United States, Israel and the Arab state system, the PLO altered its fundamental objective from the national liberation of Palestine to an independent Palestinian State, from revolutionary nationalist movement to a conservative nationalism. But the negative attitude of the U.S. in its relationship with the PLO persisted.

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CHAPTER - II

ARABS, ISRAEL AND THE PLO - THE FATEFUL TRIANGLE.

On 29 November 1947, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Majority Plan which provided for the partition of Palestine. The decision was carried by a vote of 33 in favour, 13 against, with 10 abstentions amidst hesitations of some, the misgivings of others, and the warnings of the Arab and other States. The Partition Plan divided Palestine into six principal parts. Three were allotted to the Jewish State, and three, with the 'enclave of Jaffa', to the Arab State. The Partition Resolution guaranteed, among other things, that no expropriation of land owned by an Arab in the Jewish State shall be allowed except for public purposes. The Arabs, however, rejected the partition.<sup>1</sup>

The Partition Resolution of 29 November 1947 had recommended the creation of a Jewish State on fifty-six per cent of the territory of Palestine; an Arab State on forty two per cent and an International Zone of Jerusalem and Environs on the remaining two per cent. The Resolution

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1 The Arab rejection of the partition was based upon the fact that while the population of the Jewish State was to be 497,000 Arabs and 498,000 Jews, with the Jews owning less than ten per cent of the Jewish State land area, the Jews were to be established as the ruler - a settlement which no self-respecting people would accept without protest, to say the least. See Sami Hadawi, Bitter Harvest, Palestine: 1914-1979 (Delmar, New York : The Caravan Books, 1979), p. 73.

decreed that Arabs living in the area set aside for the Jewish State were to continue to reside there and to enjoy their fundamental rights and basic human liberties under the guarantees of the United Nations. The Resolution further stipulated that the Jewish and Arab States were to come into being two months after the British withdrawal on 15 May 1948.<sup>2</sup> However, instead of waiting until the United Nations Palestine Commission prescribed in the Partition Resolution took over authority from the British Mandatory and in turn handed over such authority progressively to the leaders of the Arab and Jewish States, the Zionists proclaimed the State of Israel on 14 May 1948 and faced the world with a fait accompli.<sup>3</sup> The accomplished facts were the attacks, occupations and expulsions which took place before the British left on 14 May 1948, before a single soldier from any Arab State entered Palestine and two months before Israel could legally be proclaimed according to the Partition Resolution. Prominent among the Zionist Military campaigns was the Deir Yasin massacre in the 'Jerusalem International Zone' on 9 April 1948.

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2 Ibid., p. 75.

3 Ibid., p. 76.

Over 250 men, women and children were massacred and the Arab inhabitants of Deir Yasin fled from that village.<sup>4</sup> Arnold Toynbee described the massacre "as comparable to crime committed against the Jews by the Nazis".<sup>5</sup> Zionist campaign was also undertaken in the "Arab State" and also in the "Jewish State" to extend the territory of the Jewish State and to uproot the Arabs. That the Zionists started war on the Palestine Arabs before the creation of the State of Israel is confirmed by David Ben Gurion himself. He said,

As April (1948) began, our War of Independence swung decisively from defence to attack. Operation 'Nachshon' ..... was launched with the capture of Arab Khu'ida near where we stand today and of Deir Muheisin and culminated in the storming of Qastal, the great hill fortress near Jerusalem. (6)

The Israelis later claimed that they urged the Arab inhabitants to stay; that they were not driven from their homes and that they fled of their own free will or at

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4 Jon Kimche, The Seven Fallen Pillars (New York: F.A. Praeger, 1953), p. 228.

5 Arnold Toynbee, A Study of History (London: Oxford University Press, 1953-54), vol. III p. 290.

6 David Ben Gurion, Rebirth and Destiny of Israel, (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1954), p.296. Khulda, Deir Muheisin and Qastal are three villages allotted to the 'Arab State' under the Partition Resolution. See the United Nations Resolution of Partition No. 181(II) of 29 November 1947.

the instigation of their leaders who promised them swift victory. When the problem of the Arab refugees became a tragedy which drew the attention of the world, Jewish apologists claimed that the Arabs had voluntarily become refugees and that they had not been driven out.<sup>7</sup> Professor Erich Fromm, a noted Jewish writer and thinker, had this to say on the Zionist argument that the Arab refugees left of their own accord:

It is often said that the Arabs fled, that they left the country voluntarily and that they therefore bear the responsibility for losing their property and their land....But in general international law, the principle holds true that no citizen loses his property or his rights of citizenship and the citizenship right is de facto a right to which the Arabs in Israel have much more legitimacy than the Jews....Since when is that (Fleeing) punishable by confiscation of property and by being barred from returning to the land on which a people's forefather have lived for generations? Thus, the claim of the Jews to the land of Israel cannot be a realistic political claim. I believe that, politically speaking, there is only one solution for Israel, namely, the unilateral acknowledgement of the obligation of the State towards the Arabs - not to use it as a bargaining point, but to acknowledge the complete moral obligation of the Israeli state to its former inhabitants of Palestine .(8)

By 14 May 1948, the day when the Zionists proclaimed the State of Israel, they had already seized territory

7 Sir John Bagot Glubb, A Soldier with the Arabs (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1957), p. 81

8 The Jewish Newsletter (New York), 9 February 1959. Emphasis in the original.

beyond that assigned to the Jewish state. Instead of having jurisdiction over fifty-six per cent of the territory of Palestine, the Israelis occupied seventy-seven per cent; instead of Jerusalem being internationalized, the greater part of the Holy City was "Israelized" and declared the 'capital' of the Jewish state.<sup>9</sup>

After the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, the Palestine problem - which until then was a dispute between the Palestinian Arabs on the one hand, and the British Mandatory and the Zionist Organisation on the other - was overnight transformed into an Arab States - Israeli Conflict in which the Palestinians no longer figured as a party and were from then on referred to and dealt with, as mere "refugees" in need of shelter and maintenance.

During the period 1948-64, Palestinian political activity was minimal and any resistance was unorganized because of their dispersion. The Israelis attempted to

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9 Hadawi, no.1, p. 76.

suppress Palestinian identity.<sup>10</sup> They hurried to consolidate their hold over Arab homes and lands to face the world with an accomplished fact and to build up their military strength to forestall any attempt by the Arabs to dislodge them at any future date.

During the period 1948-64, a new generation of Palestinians was born - most of them in refugee camps. They realized the blunders of their elders; they never forgot Palestine; they were incensed by the injustice which was inflicted upon them and they were resentful at having to subsist on international charity. They decided to do something about it and Al-Fateh and Al-Asifa were formed.

Sahah Khalaf, a student of literature who later emerged as chief of Fateh's security service, dates the founding of Fateh very precisely to a meeting held on 10 October 1959, "when a small group of us met in a

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10 To the Israeli leadership, the Palestinians had become, after the first initial period, a people who were now extinct. This belief made the late Golda Meir declare in 1969, "It was not as though there was a Palestinian people and in Palestine considering itself as a Palestinian people and we came and threw them out and took their country away from them. They did not exist." Sunday Times (London), 15 June 1969.



discreet house in Kuwait to hammer out the organisational structures of Fateh".<sup>11</sup>

The orientation of the new organisation was hammered out by refugee activists through their years of bitter experience in Cairo, Damascus, Gaza, the Gulf and elsewhere and this orientation continued at the "bottom line" of Fateh activities. It was based on five principal points of agreement:

1. The common goal of liberating Palestine,
2. The need for armed struggle to attain this goal,
3. Reliance on Palestinian self-organisation,
4. Cooperation with friendly Arab forces and
5. Cooperation with friendly international forces.

In the years when the Fateh organisation was fast crystallising, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the ideologues throughout the Arab World, including many Palestinians, were still dominating most Arab political

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11 Abou Iyad, with Eric Rouleau, My home, My Land (New York: Times Books, 1981) p. 29. However, some others like Khaled al-Hassan (Abdul-Said) dated the final unification of the Fateh Core only back to 1962 saying that until then all that had developed were independent local groups.

discussions with their argument, "Arab unity is the road to the liberation of Palestine." The Fateh organisers stressed instead that the liberation of Palestine was itself the most important immediate goal, and that "Arab Unity", insofar as it was important at all, would come about only after the Palestinians' own activity had liberated Palestine.<sup>12</sup> As Khaled al-Hassan, a prominent Fateh leader who later played a major role in opposing Sadat, described it, "We reversed the slogan, and this is how we reversed the whole tide of thinking."<sup>13</sup>

In January 1964, Egypt's President Nasser pulled off something of a diplomatic coup in Arab arena by gathering 13 Arab Kings, Emirs and Presidents together in Cairo for what was described as the First Arab Summit.<sup>14</sup>

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12 Helena Cobban, The Palestinian Liberation Organisation: People, Power and Politics (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 24.

13 Ibid., p. 24.

14 Actually two summit meetings of Arab heads of state had preceded the 1964 gathering, in May 1946 and November 1956. But the January 1964 summit had gone down in history as the "First Arab Summit", and subsequent summits had been numbered accordingly.

The necessary practical decisions were taken in the field of organising the Palestinian people and enabling them to play their role in the liberation of their country and their self-determination. Previous gatherings of Arab officials since 1949 referring to Palestine problem had called only for 'application of the United Nations Resolutions' on the issue; the new tougher formulation of 'the liberation of Palestine', as used in the First Arab Summit, was therefore not an insignificant departure for the heads of state; and it was on the wings of the new slogan that the new organisation was launched: the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). Veteran Palestinian diplomat Ahmed Shuqairy was entrusted with putting some flesh on the summit's bare bones of an idea.

As Shuqairy busied himself travelling around the Palestinian diaspora<sup>15</sup> to drum up support for the PLO's founding conference, scheduled for May 1964, storms of criticism swirled around his efforts. Particularly vocal

15 Israeli Arabist Yehoshafat Harkabi quotes Professor Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson as describing the "feeling of diaspora" as "expressed in the sense of being foreign in the strange land, longing for the political and national past and hunted by penetrating questions as to the causes, reasons and purposes of the present situation". See Ma'oz, ed., Palestinian Arab Politics (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Academic Press, 1975), page 60.

in its criticism was the Arab Higher Committee for Palestine (AHC), led by Hajj Amin al-Husseini. Soon after the conclusion of the First Arab Summit the AHC was putting out public statements highly critical of Shuqairy's planned organisation. Most pan-Arabist groups remained opposed to any hint of Palestinian separatism from the greater Arab cause; but since the PLO's foundation had been supported by a consensus of Arab states, including those officially dedicated to the cause of pan-Arabism (primarily Egypt), there were many reservations in these groups about opposing it outright. Before the PLO's founding conference, the Fateh group also agreed, despite its reservations about the proposed "entity", to try to coordinate with the appointed leader of the PLO. The Fateh group attended the PLO's founding conference in May 1964. The conference was convened in East Jerusalem, which was then under Jordanian rule. It brought together 422 members of the Palestinian diaspora, with the basic task of endorsing two documents presented to it by Shuqairy. The first was the Palestinian National Charter, issued on 28 May 1964. The second document adopted was the Basic Constitution of the PLO, which was thereby, with due attention to pomp and ceremony and messages of support from various Arab leaders, declared inaugurated. The PLO

was accepted as a member of the League of Arab States.

The aim of the Organization is the liberation of Palestine, a task which is deemed to be a defensive measure, necessitated by the needs of self-defence - a right provided for and upheld in the Charter of the United Nations. The organization declared its readiness from the start to befriend all nations that love freedom, justice and peace and urged all such nations to support and assist the people of Palestine in their struggle to restore what legitimately belongs to them in their own country and to enable them to exercise their national sovereignty and freedom.<sup>16</sup>

The Israelis became alarmed and charged that these objectives were aggressive, aimed at the sovereignty of

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16 On 6 December 1971, U.N. Resolution 2787 (XXVI) Confirmed in Article 1: "The Legality of the people's struggle for self-determination and liberation from colonial and foreign domination and alien subjugation ....as well as the Palestinian people, by all available means is consistent with the Charter of the United Nations."

On 30 November 1973, the General Assembly, in Resolution 3070 (XXVIII), reaffirmed the right of a "people's struggle for liberation....including armed struggle", and condemned "all governments which do not recognise the right to self-determination and independence of peoples....including the Palestinian people."

the State of Israel; they protested to the United Nations describing them as a source of danger to the Israeli security.

In early autumn 1964, the Fateh leadership met in Kuwait. The group was split down the middle on whether the time was ripe for launching military operations. In another meeting in November 1964, the decision to go ahead was taken by a single vote. The date for first commando action against Israel was set for 31 December 1964. But it was launched not in Fateh's name but in the name of Al-Asifa (the storm). Another operation, which was claimed to be more important was launched.<sup>17</sup>

Between the start of the armed struggle and the 1967 war, Fateh had been hoping to achieve its goal of liberating Palestine.<sup>18</sup> Throughout 1965, Asifa's military communiques continued to log up successive guerrilla actions - a total of 39 of them up to the end of the year. But well before that, the Fateh leaders felt confident enough of the success of their ventures to associate Fateh's name openly with that of Asifa, which

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17 International Documents on Palestine, 1969,  
p. 709.

18 Cobban, no. 12, p. 33.

name was subsequently retained as that of Fateh's military apparatus.<sup>19</sup> On 17 June 1965, Fateh addressed an open memorandum to the Secretary General of the United Nations, U. Thant, asking that Mahmoud Hijazi, who was taken prisoner by the Israelis in the second Asifa operation, be considered a prisoner-of-war.<sup>20</sup> In September 1965, the Fateh sent an angry memorandum to the Third Arab Summit complaining bitterly against the Arab action against the guerillas.<sup>21</sup>

By the end of 1965, Fateh was able to sustain a constant level of guerrilla action against Israel. The Palestinian diaspora became a strong constituency for the Fateh and the diaspora also proved to be a potential and uncontrollable source of instability for several Arab regimes. Till 1967, Fateh could go ahead with its strategy while the PLO headed by Shuqairy suffered continuous rifts and schisms. The Syria-sponsored and Fateh-undertaken guerilla raids and other raids from West Bank became one of the major causes of the outbreak of hostility between Arabs and Israel. And the war broke out in June 1967 between Israel on the

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19 Ibid., pp. 33-34.

20 Ibid., p. 34.

21 Ahmed Musa, a guerrilla, was shot dead by Jordanian troops as he returned to Jordan from Israel after the second Asifa Commando Operation.

one hand and Egypt, Syria and Jordan on the other.

The defeat of these Arab states at the hand of Israel sent their power for negotiation vis-a-vis the guerillas to near zero. On 12 June 1967, the Fateh leadership in a meeting in Damascus decided to embark on a two-pronged approach: military and diplomatic. The first approach was directed against Israel and the second one, for Arab governments. Khalaf, Wazir and other leaders of Fateh were engaged in the second approach whereas Arafat and a group of Jerusalemites and West Bankers undertook the first one. Arafat and others slipped into the newly occupied territory of West Bank in July 1967.<sup>22</sup> Arafat set up his headquarters in the Old Quarter of Nabulus, a West Bank town with a long history of Arab nationalist fervour. "Arafat hoped that the two courses of action - Fatah terrorism and local rebellion - would finally merge into one movement - a popular armed revolution, led by Arafat and his colleagues."<sup>23</sup> However, Araft's hopes were belied, partly because of tough Israeli response. By 1968,

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22 See, for details about Arafat's exploits, Ehud Yaari, Strike Terror: The Story of Fatah (New York: Sabra, 1970), pp. 125-150

23 Ibid. p. 133.



Arafat had to move its operational base to the East of River Jordan and to south Lebanon. But Fateh continued to attract floods of volunteers from Palestinian and non-Palestinians communities throughout the Arab world. And there in the occupied territories, Israeli "military outposts" grew into fullfledged civilian colonies.

The refugee camps which were in existence for 20 years after the establishment of the State of Israel were the strongest and biggest constituency for the Fateh. The camp populations became the staunch mainstay of support for the "Palestine-firsters" of Fateh. The middle class Palestinians had greater faith in pan-Arabism than working class Palestinians; the reason for it can be attributed to the fact that the former had radically different experience in the ghourba (the Palestinian diaspora) than the latter.<sup>24</sup> While Palestinian professionals, entrepreneurs and intellectuals could carve out a new life in the booming economy of the Gulf which gave them faith in the Pan-Arabism, the former Palestinian peasant communities who were now trapped in the refugee

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24 Rosemary Sayigh, *Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries*. (London: Zed Press, 1979), p. 102.

camps had only one goal - the Return to Palestine.

However, by the end of 1967, even those pan-Arabist groups which had hitherto been most strongly opposed to separatist Palestinian ambitions were forced to field their own Palestinian guerilla groups. For example, the Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM).

Fateh's relationship with Algeria dates back almost to the last part of 1962. At the invitation of Ahmed Ben Bella, the President of Algeria, a high powered delegation of Fateh which included Arafat, Wazir and Farouq Qaddumi had travelled to Algiers. But the Algerian President did not want to act openly against the wishes of his more important ally, Egypt's President Nasser, who still feared that any confrontation in the form of guerrilla action against Israel would prove damaging to Egypt and other Arab countries. So the concrete military aid from Ben Bella was very limited. It was only when Houari Boumedienne came to power (in 1965) that Fateh got its first arms shipment.<sup>25</sup> More important than Algeria, in terms of the concrete contribution

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25 Iyad, no. 11, p. 42.

made to Fateh's military preparations in the early 1960s, was the role played by Syria. Hafez al-Asad and Ahmed al-Sweidani who were then in the Syrian military, were particularly helpful to the Fateh. Fateh fedayeen (guerrillas) were given two training camps in Syria as early as 1964.<sup>26</sup> Syrian officers might have seen some value in sponsoring Fateh way back in 1964 as a counter-weight in the Palestinian arena to the influence of the PLO, which they saw as closely associated with Egypt. For some Fateh leaders, the Syrian alliance was seen as an important strategic factor: they considered Lebanon and Jordan as dangerously exposed to Israeli influence, both direct and indirect.<sup>27</sup>

In 1969 and 1970, the military power of the guerrillas grew hugely, primarily in Jordan but also in Lebanon. While the guerrillas never posed any great threat to Israeli military, they were effective in hit-and-run raids against targets in the Israeli-held areas. In the meantime, Shuqairy resigned from the PLO (24 December 1967). Most of the Fateh leaders now wanted to see the PLO as

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26 Ibid., p. 42.

27 Some Israelis also tacitly admit this. See, for example, Yair Evron, An American - Israeli Defence Treaty. (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Centre for Strategic Studies, 1981), p. 44, where Evron refers to Israel as "the guarantor of Jordan and Lebanon".

a comprehensive front for all Palestinian groupings - 'the Palestinian people in exile'. The PLO itself established its own guerrilla formation, the Popular Liberation Forces, as an offshoot of the PLA in the early part of 1968.<sup>28</sup> Thus when the Fourth Palestinian National Council (PNC) was convened in Cairo in July 1968, four months after that famous battle of Karameh in which 300 Palestinian guerrillas tried to defend the village of Karameh situated about four miles east of the River Jordan against Israeli army, the principle of the primacy of the guerrilla operations against Israel was agreed by all present. The Fourth PNC amended the Palestinian National Charter. Some of the important articles of the covenant are as follows:

Article 9 : Armed struggle is the only way to liberate Palestine and is therefore a strategy and not a tactics.(29)

Article 13: Arab Unity and Liberation of Palestine are two complementary aims.(30)

Article 19: The partitioning of Palestine in 1947 and the establishment of Israel is fundamentally null and void.(31)

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28 At present, eight guerrilla groups make up the membership of the Palestine Liberation Organisation: Fateh; As-Saiqa; The Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine; The PFLP, General Command; The Arab Liberation Front; The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine; The Palestine Liberation Front; The Palestinian Popular Front.

29 Yehuda Lukacs, ed., Documents on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: 1967-83; (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 140.

30 Ibid., p.141.

31 Ibid., p.142.

Article 20 : The Balfour Declaration and the Mandate document and what has been based upon them are considered null and void. (32)

Article 21 : The Palestinian Arab People, in expressing itself through the armed Palestinian revolution, rejects every solution that is a substitute for a complete liberation of Palestine and rejects all plans that aim at the settlement of the Palestine issue or its internationalization.(33)

Article 22 : Zionism is a political movement organically related to world imperialism and hostile to all movements of liberation and progress in the world... Israel is the tool of the Zionist movement and a human and geographical base for world imperialism.(34)

Article 28 : Palestinian Arab people insists upon the originality and independence of its national revolution and rejects every manner of interference, guardianship and subordination.(35)

Article 6 : Jews who were living permanently in Palestine until the beginning of the Zionist invasion, will be considered Palestinians (For the dating, Zionist invasion would be considered to have begun in 1917).(36)

The contents of Article 6 were interpreted by the Israelis to mean that all Jews who entered Palestine after 1917 must leave the country including their

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32 Ibid., p. 142.

33 Ibid., p. 142.

34 Ibid., p. 142.

35 Ibid., p. 143.

36 Ibid., p. 140.

off-springs. But the Article actually means that Jews who were in Palestine prior to 1917 are regarded as Palestinian citizens, and the status of those who entered the country after the issue of the Balfour Declaration to date, is covered by the statement made by Yasser Arafat, then Chairman of the PLO, before the United Nations General Assembly on 13 November 1974, namely, that "the Palestine of tomorrow" includes "all Jews now living in Palestine who choose to live with us in peace and without discrimination", provided that they "turn away from the illusory promises made to them by Zionist ideology and Israeli leadership".<sup>37</sup>

The continued growth of the guerrilla organisation, however, soon imposed its logic on the PLO superstructure. At the fifth PNC held at Cairo in 1969, Arafat became the Chairman of the PLO.

After the June war, the Fateh was working in two separate directions - to win "official Arab Commitment" and to win its version of the Palestinian cause. Now that the Fateh was at the helm of the PLO, it understand-

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37 Ibid., p. 180 Emphasis in the Original.

ably though—t of winning official Arab support. Khaled al-Hassan of Fatah had, by 1968, succeeded in persuading King Feisal to enforce the collection of a "liberation tax" from Palestinians working in the Kingdom, which thereafter brought between 50 and 60 million riyals a year to the Palestinian movement.<sup>38</sup> Qaddumi and Khalaf of Fateh went to Libya and came back with a big donation. Qaddumi and Khaled also went to Egypt twice. In the first attempt, they were unsuccessful. But after the success of Battle of Karameh, they extracted a promise from Nasser, who was suspicious that the Fateh was linked to his old opponents of the Muslim Brotherhood, to help Fateh with arms supplies and provisions of training facilities. Nasser gave the Fateh help in several key fields where the continuing friendship of Fateh with Syria could not help it as much. After this Syria supported Al-Saiqa. And it was Nasser who first introduced Arafat to the Soviets.<sup>39</sup> Although majority of Arab leaders moved towards an alliance with Fateh, Jordan's Hussein and

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38 Quoted in Cobban, no. 12, p. 45.

39 Mohammed Heikal, The Road to Ramadan (New York: Quadrangle/New York Times Book Co, 1975), p. 64.

Lebanon's Charles Helou were dismayed by the growth of guerrilla power. Palestinian communities formed twelve per cent of Lebanon's total population and one-half of the total population of Jordan. The guerrillas started clashing in open in both these countries with state security forces in the closing years of the 1960's.

King Hussein was fearful that the guerrilla power may undercut his own constituency. Although Fateh's ideology was not to interfere in the internal affairs of the existing Arab countries, other guerrilla groups did not toe the same line in the late 1960s in Jordan.<sup>40</sup> The Palestinian guerrillas' challenge of Hussein's authority went on increasing. At the end of the second week in September 1970, King Hussein resolved on an all-out confrontation with the fedayeen (guerrillas).<sup>41</sup> Hussein's loyal bedouin troops went on the offensive against guerrilla positions and refugee camps throughout the Jordanian capital, Amman. No Arab country, including Syria which initially showed some sign of helping, came to the help of Palestinians in Jordan. The lessons that

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40 Iyad, no. 11, p. 77.

41 Henry Kissinger, White House Years (Boston: Little Brown and Co, 1979), p. 609.



Palestinians learnt is that they could no longer rely on any Arab state. By July 1971, the royalist forces of Jordan had killed some 3,000 Palestinians, military and civilian.

Throughout 1972 and 1973, confrontations between the Israelis and Palestinians took the shape of a 'war of spoons' in Europe, Asia, even the U.S., Black Septemberists among the Palestinians and Israeli killing of Fateh/PLO leaders Kamal Udwan, Muhammed Youssef al-Najjar were some of the examples of the war.

On 6 October 1973, the Egyptian and Syrian armies launched a combined attack against the Israeli troops. The war was intended by Sadat to serve as a catalyst for the Middle East peace process. Sadat gave the PLO leaders a hint of the war in August 1973.<sup>42</sup> The Palestinians contributed to the 1973 war effort and hoped to gain profits from the diplomatic process that followed it. However, to Sadat's question on 26 October 1973 whether

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42 Iyad, no. 11, pp. 121-22.

the PLO would participate in Geneva Peace Conference,<sup>43</sup> they had no answer; for the ceasefire to the October 1973 war was established on the basis of Security Council Resolution 242.<sup>44</sup> The Palestinians were opposed to the Resolution 242.<sup>45</sup>

On 28 October 1974, the Seventh Arab Summit meeting in Rabat solemnly affirmed the 'right of the Palestinian people to establish an independent national authority under the command of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, in any Palestinian territory that was liberated.'<sup>46</sup> During this time, the PLO was facing unprecedented dissension in its rank over the issue of the "national authority" - euphemism for describing a Palestinian

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43 Henry Kissinger, Years of Upheaval (Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1982), p. 602.

44 Iyad, no. 11, p. 129.

45 In the statement issued on 23 November 1967, the PLO said that it rejected the Security Council Resolution 242 completely because the Resolution, among other things, "ignores the existence of the Palestinian people and their right of Self-determination. See, for details, Lukacs, ed., no. 11, pp. 138-39.

46 International Documents on Palestine, 1974, p. 525.

ministate - in the West Bank and Gaza. The "Rejectionist Front" consisting of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, General Command, the Arab Liberation Front and the Palestinian Popular Struggle Front opposed the twelfth PNC's programme which postponed the move for setting up national authority. Arafat's address to the U.N. General Assembly on 13 November 1974 did not include the expression "national authority".<sup>47</sup>

In Lebanon, the presence of the Palestinians strengthened the Arab nationalist current inside Lebanese society. The Maronite dominated internal security apparatus had therefore kept a tight lid on the Palestinian refugee camps right up until 1969; but after 1969 the rising Palestinian aspirations and the terms of Cairo agreement blew that lid right off.<sup>48</sup> The precarious indigenous conditions also helped in bringing about the civil war of 1975-76 in Lebanon. The civil war started in April 1975 and ended in October 1976,<sup>49</sup> thanks to the Riyadh

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47 For details of Arafat's speech, see Lukacs, ed., no. 29, pp. 165-81.

48 For details see Sayigh, no. 24, pp. 130-36.

49 Iyad, no. 11, p. 196.

minisummit. The civil war saw heavy battles between the Lebanese right wing and the alliance between the Palestinian and Lebanese opposition movement; the Syrian government went through deep and rapid changes throughout and after the Civil War, swinging from its original alliance with the latter to collusion or even informal alliance with the former. However, the Lebanese war of 1975-76 did not in the end prove as damaging for the Palestinian guerrilla movement as the "Black September" in Jordan. The Fateh leadership ultimately emerged from the Lebanese Civil War intact and its fighting forces, hardened.

In the months which followed the formal ending of the Lebanese civil war, the area south of the Israeli drawn "Red Line" became virtually a free-fire zone between the Israelis and their allies on the one hand, and the Palestinians and their allies on the other. There was no Arab Deterrent Force (ADF), which was created by the Riyadh minisummit to enforce the 1969 Cairo agreement and its annexes and to supervise the withdrawal of fighting elements in the Civil War to the position they occupied before 13 April 1975.<sup>50</sup> The ADF was later dominated by the Syrian troops. Thus Syrian troops north of the "Red

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50 For the text of the Riyadh minisummit's Resolutions, see International Documents on Palestine, 1976, pp. 492-93.

Line" ruled Lebanon under the ADF banner.

The thirteenth PNC held in Cairo in March 1977 spelt out the call of the previous PNC for the establishment of 'national, independent and fighting authority' on every part of Palestinian land liberated as specifically meaning the establishment of an "independent national state on the soil of the homeland".<sup>51</sup> In the thirteenth PNC, the Fateh leaders scored a victory over the Rejection Front.

With President Sadat's announcement on 9 November 1977 of his intention to visit Knesset, the Israeli Parliament, to seek peace with Israel, a new factor was thrown into the Middle Eastern balance - the direct Egyptian - Israeli rapprochement. A "Steadfastness Front" which included Libya, Syria, Algeria, South Yemen, Iraq and the PLO was constituted to coordinate the opposition to Sadat's peace initiative. At the pan-Arab level, Sadat's initiative forced the PLO into a closer alliance with Syria. Syrian and Palestinian military strategists got together towards the last part of 1977 to plan the

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51 International Documents on Palestine, 1977,  
p. 349. Emphasis in the Original.

implementation of the secret military decisions taken in Tripoli, which aimed at bolstering their defences against the eventuality of an Israeli attack.<sup>52</sup>

Israel's invasion of southern Lebanon in 1978 came in retaliation against Palestinian hijacking of a bus in March 1978. The Security Council Resolution 425 of 19 March 1978 called for an immediate Israeli withdrawal from Lebanese territory and established a new United Nations force, known as UNIFIL, to confirm the withdrawal of the Israelis. Arafat's decision to cooperate with the UNIFIL constituted the first open acceptance by the leaders of the PLO of a cease-fire agreement with Israel. The invasion perceptibly changed political and strategic balance throughout Lebanon, since it was during that invasion that the total control of Syria in Lebanon was challenged successfully.

The PLO suffered serious setbacks in 1978, principally through the conclusion of the Camp David treaty among Israel, Egypt and the U.S. in September. The Ninth

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52 Cobban, no. 12, p. 94.

Arab Summit was held on 2-5 November 1978 in Baghdad and agreed on a series of measures which would automatically go into effect against Egypt the moment Sadat should sign the proposed peace treaty with Israel which he did on 26 March 1979. These measures included Egypt's formal expulsion from the Arab League; the transfer of League headquarter out of Cairo. It also created a support fund to funnel approximately \$ 3.5 billion a year in Arab aid to those states remaining on the front~~l~~ine against Israel. The bulk of this would go to Syria, with \$ 800 million earmarked for Jordan, \$ 250 million for the PLO, and \$ 150 million to bolster the resistance of the population of the occupied territories.<sup>53</sup> It was decreed that the latter sum would be administered jointly by Jordan and PLO despite the PLO protest.

From 1979 onwards the Israelis kept up a relentless pressure on the Palestinian guerrillas and their allies in Lebanon. The attacks, the bombardments were all in pursuit of Israel's new, "pre-emptive" policy declared in January 1979.<sup>54</sup>

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53 Ibid., p. 102.

54 Jonathan C. Randal, Going all the Way: Christian Warlords, Israeli adventures, and the war in Lebanon (New York : The Viking Press, 1983),p.220.

From 1977 onwards, the different strands of Palestinian exile movement did pull together to a far greater extent than ever before. The PLO's constituency in the Palestinian diaspora now seemed wedded as never before to its invisible constituency - those Palestinians living under direct Israeli rule. This much, at least, Camp David had achieved.<sup>5</sup>

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55 Cobban, no. 12, p. 107.



CHAPTER - III

REAGAN, ISRAEL AND THE PLO

Ronald Reagan came into office in January 1981 promising a firm, and firmly anti-Communist, stance in the American government. He was elected in November 1980 amidst an uproar of accusations that sitting President Jimmy Carter had represented a failure of U.S. 'leadership' - particularly in dealing with the crisis of the American hostages in Teheran. And with Ronald Reagan, the emphasis that the U.S.S.R is an "evil empire" became an obsession.<sup>1</sup> Given his credentials, Reagan from the beginning reoriented the American foreign policy towards a global perspective. In the international sphere, the fragile Detente had already given way to the New Cold War.

International terrorism became the major foreign policy concern of the U.S.. Secretary of State, Alexander Haig announced that "international terrorism will take the place of human rights" as the focus of the U.S. policy.<sup>2</sup> And the U.S. Administration took pains to prove Soviet complicity in international terrorism. In fact, the State Department "proved" Soviet financial aid and training for "elements of the PLO" as evidence of Soviet

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1 New York Times, 12 June 1984.

2 New York Times, 29 January 1981.

sponsored terrorism.<sup>3</sup>

As a candidate, Reagan repeatedly described the PLO as a terrorist organisation, often expanding this description to refer to its role in a Soviet-dominated international terror network. When he first came into office, therefore, he added to the single pre-condition that Carter had set for the opening of a U.S. - PLO dialogue - that the PLO accept Security Council Resolution 242 - the two further preconditions that the PLO should "renounce terrorism" and that it should explicitly recognise Israel's right to exist.<sup>4</sup>

Israel launched its first bombing raid of the new year on 29 January 1981 against Palestinians in Lebanon and cited President Reagan's dictum that "terrorism" should be dealt with "swiftly and unequivocally".<sup>5</sup> It had all the blessings of the new Administration.

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3 New York Times, 30 January 1981.

4 Helena Cobban, The Palestinian Liberation Organisation: People, Power and Politics (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1984), p.110.

5 See Joe Stork, " Israel As a Strategic Asset," in Naseer Aruri, Fouad Moughrabi and Joe Stork, ed., Reagan and the Middle East (Belmont, Massachusetts: Association of Arab - American University Graduates, 1983), p. 510.

Reagan Administration's view that Israel was a strategic asset could be gauged from the fact of its reaction to the 17 July 1981 Israeli bombardment of a residential sector in West Beriut - allegedly aimed at the PLO leadership and the Joint Forces<sup>6</sup> but during which more than three hundred civilians were killed<sup>7</sup> - was a month's delay in the promised delivery of four F-16 aircraft to Israel. Moreover when the aircraft were delivered on 17 August 1981, Israel received fourteen instead of four F-16s and two F-15s.

Towards the end of April 1981, the Syrians, who had lost a score of planes in dogfight with the Israelis over Lebanon in the previous two years, moved some batteries of SAM-6 air defence missiles forward from Syria into the east Lebanese Bekka valley. This posed a "threat" to the Israelis. The U.S. Administration became aware of the potential dangers of a direct Israeli-Syrian confrontation in Lebanon because the Syrians were backed by the U.S.S.R.. It intervened rapidly to stay the

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6 The Joint Force was the joint Military Command set up in Lebanon in 1976 by the PLO and the militias of the Lebanese Nationalist Movement(LNM).

7 Facts on File (New York), vol. 41, no.21213 (24 July 1981), p. 510. The Lebanese Source said that more than 300 were killed.

Israeli hand, promising the Israelis that the U.S. would try to deal through the diplomatic channels with the "threat", the Israelis claimed the Syrian missiles posed.

On 6 May 1981, the former U.S. career diplomat Philip Habib left Washington for the Middle East at the start of the Lebanese mission with which President Reagan had entrusted him. The direct U.S. involvement in Lebanon thus initiated was to play a major role in developments there over the following two years and thereby in the affairs of the PLO. But the PLO declared its opposition to the Habib mission. A statement issued that day by Wafa, the PLO news agency, said that because of U.S. support for Israel, the U.S. can be neither arbiter nor mediator, for "it is one of the foremost parties involved in the missile crisis."<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, the U.S. State Department disclosed that it had contacted U.N. Secretary - General Kurt Waldheim 'to convey to all parties to the conflict (that is, including the PLO).... the need for moderation and restraint'.<sup>9</sup> Indirect

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8 Facts on File, vol. 41, no. 2113 (15 May 1981), p. 324

9 New York Times 1 June 1981.

contacts thereafter continued between the two sides, dealing mainly with the situation in Lebanon and conducted through the United Nations.

The Beirut air raid by Israel broadened Habib's mandate from one centring on the question of Syrian missiles in the Bekka to one encompassing the whole wider security issue in Lebanon, in which the increasingly direct Israeli-Palestinian confrontation was a major factor. Habib stepped up his indirect contacts with the PLO through the UN. and Saudi Arabia.

On 24 July a ceasefire came into operation in Lebanon. Despite the cover of a U.N. role which was draped over the ceasefire negotiations, it nevertheless remained clear that the July 1981 ceasefire represented another watershed for the Palestinians: it was the PLO's most explicit acceptance of a direct U.S. mediating role; and conversely, for the U.S., it was their most explicit recognition of the necessity of involving the PLO in issues of Middle Eastern war and peace.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Cobban, no. 4, p. 112.

On 7 August 1981, Saudi Crown Prince Fahd Ibn Abdel Aziz made public the eight points of a new Middle East peace proposal being sponsored by the Kingdom. The "Fahd Plan " called for an Israeli withdrawal from All Arab lands occupied in 1967, the establishment, after a short transition period under U.N. auspices, of a Palestinian State in the West Bank and Gaza; and, in the controversial Clause 7, "that all states in the region should be able to live in peace". (The latter clause was generally understood to imply recognition of Israel).

In October 1981, Reagan met Saudi Crown Prince Fahd during the North-South Conference at Cancun, Mexico, where he listened to Fahd's plan. Regan acknowledged the plan's recognition of Israel's right to exist within secure and peaceful boundaries and noted that it was a basis for negotiations. Subsequently, however, "clarifications" came from Assistant Secretary of State Nicholas Veliotis, who in testimony before the House Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East unequivocally

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11 Quoted in Cobban, no.4, p. 113.

reiterated U.S. opposition to the Fahd plan's proposals regarding a Palestinian State.

At an extraordinary meeting of the foreign ministers of the Steadfastness Front which convened in Aden, the capital of South Yemen, in November 1981, a Resolution was passed which appeared to commit the PLO, along with the Steadfastness Front members, to rejection of Fahd's clause 7 although Arafat and other members of the PLO seemed to have supported the Fahd Plan.<sup>12</sup>

The U.S. - Israeli "strategic partnership" - the cornerstone of U.S. diplomacy in the Middle East at least from the middle of the 1960s - was transformed into an "official strategic alliance" during the Reagan tenure. In November 1981, the United States and Israel signed a strategic cooperation agreement. That agreement formalized the U.S. - Israeli relationship at a multiplicity of levels and served a variety of Israeli interests, though how it facilitated U.S. objectives was far less clear. The accord was suspended the following month when Israel "annexed", on 14 December 1981, the Golan Heights, but

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<sup>12</sup> Cobban, no.4, pp. 113-14.



It was reinstated in November 1983.<sup>13</sup> In the interim, the United States provided Israel virtually unqualified support during its three month long invasion of Lebanon and seige of Beirut in the summer of 1982.

Palestinian artillery units in South Lebanon shelled targets inside northern Israel in June 1982 for the first time in over ten months in retaliation against Israeli bombing of Beirut and southern Lebanon. Previously, there were many Israeli attacks against Joint Forces' positions and civilian targets in Lebanon since 24 July 1981. On 6 June 1982, the Israeli army launched the massive military operation which the Israeli government named "Operation Peace for Galilee". In the war, Israel showed a sophisticated coordination of air, naval and ground activities. Israelis in this war unlike the 1978 invasion, "leap-frogged" commando units, armour and artillery in over the heads and round the sides of the terrain's Joint Forces' defenders, using their total air and sea superiority. By 14 June, Israeli units advancing northwards along the western slopes of Shouf

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13 For an analysis of the divergence of interests between Israel and the United States concerning 1983 strategic cooperation agreement, see, Leslie Gelb, "United States Israeli Talks Said to Aim at Soviets", New York Times, 20 July 1984.

See also George. T. Abed, "Israel in the Orbit of America: The Political Economy of a Dependency Relationship", Journal of Palestine Studies (Washington, D) vol. 16, no.1 (Autumn 1986), pp. 38-55.

were able to link up with the Phalangist-dominated Christian militias who had been their allies since 1976. The Israelis laid a 67-day seige of Beirut. On 8 June, the U.S. mediator Philip Habib had returned to deal with the fighting in Lebanon. A tortuous path of communication was adopted. The Palestinians would explain their stand to Shafiq al-Wazzan, the Lebanese Prime Minister; then Wazzan would relay it to Sarkis, the Lebanese president; Sarkis would then convey the message to Habib and Habib, in turn, to the Israelis. Thus PLO was forced to deal with Habib and indirectly with Israelis.

The PLO agreed to leave Beirut on an American - international guarantee for the security of civilians of Beirut. Habib guaranteed in a written document the security of the Palestinian civilians under the supervision of the international forces.<sup>14</sup> On the basis of this guarantee, the first contingent of PLO fighters<sup>t</sup> set sail from Beirut on 21 August 1982. Arafat left Beirut on

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Footnote 13 contd...

An excellent analysis of the meaning of the agreement and its contradictions is provided by Rex B. Wingerter, "Israel's Search for Strategic Interdependence and the 1983 U.S. - Israeli Strategic Cooperation Agreement" American Arab Affairs (Washington, D.C.), no.14. (Fall 1985), pp. 81-94.

14 Current Policy, no. 415 (August 1982), pp. 8-10.

30 August and the Beirut era (1971-1982) of the PLO came to an end.

Articulating the American perceptions about the expected benefits to the U.S. from Israel's Lebanon campaign, Henry Kissinger wrote the following, during the second week of the war:

.....(Israel's action in Lebanon) opens up extraordinary opportunities for a dynamic American diplomacy throughout the Middle East.....The results are congruent with the peace process in the Middle East, of all moderate governments in the area and of the United States..... The general position of the Administration is wise and Statesmanlike.....(i.e.) to re-establish a strong Lebanese central government whose authority runs throughout a genuinely neutral country.....The Lebanese crisis creates an opening for American diplomacy to overcome the impasse in the autonomy talks between Egypt and Israel.(15)

Kissinger also argued that Israel's invasion of Lebanon would solve the fourfold crises facing the governments in the Gulf region, i.e. Shiite radicalism, Muslim fundamentalism, Iranian revolutionary agitation, and Soviet imperialism.<sup>16</sup>

On 25 August 1982, the U.S. - led multi-national

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15 Washington Post, 16 June 1982.

16 Ibidem.

force entered Beirut to oversee the evacuation of the PLO and to protect Palestinian civilians left behind. The multi-national force departed in the early days of September, ahead of its own schedule and abrogating the agreement given by Habib to the PLO, when U.S. officials expressed satisfaction that the PLO evacuation had been completed successfully.

On 15 Sept, the day after Bashir Gemayyel was killed, the Israeli army moved in force to occupy the whole of West Beirut. And hundreds of Palestinians in the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila districts of West Beirut were massacred by Israel's Lebanese allies, the Phalange, while Israel looked on.

In the meantime, on 1 Sept 1982, President Reagan had put forward a proposal for a Middle East settlement - the Reagan Plan

**The President said:**

Our involvement in the search for mid-East peace is not a matter of preference, it is a moral imperative. The strategic importance of the region to the U.S. is well known. But our policy is motivated by more than strategic interests. We also have an irreversible commitment to the survival and territorial integrity of friendly states. Nor can we ignore the fact that the

well-being of much of the world's economy is tied to stability in the strife-torn Middle East. Finally, our traditional humanitarian concerns dictate a continuing effort to peacefully resolve conflicts..... With respect to Arab-Israeli Conflict, we have embraced the Camp David framework as the only way to proceed. We have also recognized, however, that solving the Arab-Israeli Conflict, in and of itself, cannot assure peace throughout a region as vast and troubled as the Middle East.....The question now is how to reconcile Israel's legitimate security concerns with the legitimate rights of the Palestinians. And that answer can only come at the negotiating table.....I recognize that the U.S. has a special responsibility. No other nation is in a position to deal with the key parties to the conflict on the basis of trust and reliability.....In the pre-1967 borders, Israel was barely 10 miles wide at its narrowest point. The bulk of Israel's population lived within artillery range of hostile Arab armies. I am not about to ask Israel to live thatway again.

The President went on:

The purpose of the five-year period of transition which would be after free election for a self-governing Palestinian authority is to prove to the Palestinians that they can run their own affairs and that such Palestinian autonomy poses no threat to Israel's security..... The United States will not support the use of any additional land for the purpose of settlements during the transition period. Indeed, the immediate adoption of a settlement freeze by Israel, more than any other action, could create the confidence needed for wider participation in these talks. Further settlement activity is in no way necessary for the security of Israel.....I want to make the American position clearly understood: the purpose of this transition period is the peaceful and orderly transfer of domestic authority from Israel to the Palestinian inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza. At the same time, such a transfer must not interfere with Israel's security requirements..... It is clear to me that peace cannot be achieved by the formation of the independent Palestinian state in those territories. Nor is it achievable on the basis of Israeli sovereignty or permanent control over West Bank and Gaza. So the United States would not support the establishment of an independent

Palestinian State in the West Bank and Gaza and we will not support annexation or permanent control by Israel .....(but) it is the firm view of the United States that self-government by the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza in association with Jordan offers the best chance for a durable, just and lasting peace....U.N. Resolution 242 remains wholly valid as the foundation stone of America's Middle East peace effort. It is the United States' position that - in return for peace - the withdrawal provision of Resolution 242 applies to all fronts, including the West Bank and Gaza.....Finally, we remain convinced that Jerusalem must remain undivided, but its final status should be decided through negotiations..... America's commitment to the security of Israel is iron-clad.(17)

The plan was consistent with the long-standing American position of denying the Palestinian right to self-determination and repudiating the PLO. Nevertheless, Israel angrily rejected it, calling the plan "suicidal" and immediately announced that forty-two new settlements with an additional 1,00,000 Israelis would be established in the West Bank within five years.<sup>18</sup>

On September 9, Arab leaders meeting in Fez, unanimously agreed on a peace plan-based on the 1981 Fahd proposals. However, Clause 4 and Clause 7 of

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17 Yehuda Lukacs, ed., Documents on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict : 1967-83(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 35-41.

18 See the analysis in Noam Chomsky, The Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel and the Palestinians (Boston : South End Press, 1983), pp.342-56

Fahd Plan were suitably amended. Into the fourth Clause had been inserted specific mention of 'the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and the exercise of its imprescriptible and unalienable national rights under the leadership of the PLO, its sole and legitimate representative.' Clause 7 now stated, "The Security Council guarantees peace among all states of the region including the independent Palestinian state".<sup>19</sup> "It is another plan for liquidation of Israel in one stage or two", said Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir.<sup>20</sup> The United States, too, denigrated the Fez Plan and proceeded as if it had never been presented.

Israel's rejection of the Reagan Plan resulted in the plan's rapid demise. Instead of using the leverage it possessed, via the huge amounts of annual economic and military aid given to Israel by it, the Reagan Administration chose to augment the annual U.S. subsidy paid to Israel by more than enough to pay the costs of the accelerating settlement programme and Congress then

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19 New York Times, 10 September 1982.

20 New York Times, 11 September 1982.

increased the tribute even further.<sup>21</sup> Israel went ahead with its settlement programme.

Now Washington's Palestinian concern was limited to its focus on Jordan. It increasingly urged King Hussein to become the spokesman of Palestinians - as the King was doing in pre-1974 period. It also wanted the King to embark on a negotiating process with Israel. The King would have gladly accepted the offer, had not the PLO enjoyed the position it was enjoying among the Arab States in 1982.<sup>22</sup>

Between November 1982 and April 1983, King Hussein and Chairman Arafat engaged in negotiations about the form of a Jordanian - Palestinian entity and the composition of a joint Jordanian- Palestinian negotiating team. At the sixteenth session of the PNC in February 1983, the assembly stipulated that "future relations with Jordan should be founded on the basis of confederation between two independent states."<sup>23</sup>

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21 George W. Ball, Error and Betrayal in Lebanon: An Analysis of Israel's invasion of Lebanon and the Implications for U.S. - Israeli Relations (Washington, D.C.: Foundation for Middle East Peace, 1984), pp. 52-54.

22 See NaSeer Aruri, "The PLO and the Jordanian Option," MERIP Reports (Washington, D.C.), April 1984.

23 Alain Gresh, The PLO, The Struggle Within: Towards an Independent Palestinian States (London: Zed Press 1985), p. 234.



In April 1983, Arafat and King Hussein arrived at an agreement, but the Fateh central committee vetoed it on the basis of Israel's ongoing settlement and colonization of the West Bank and its repeated declarations that "Judea and Samaria" (as Israel termed the West Bank) were Israeli national patrimony that would forever remain part of Eretz Israel.<sup>24</sup> Secretary of State Shultz used this occasion of the breakdown of the talks between Jordan and the PLO to "tell" Palestinians they should reject the PLO and find<sup>a</sup> new leadership.<sup>25</sup> This unsolicited advice was ignored. Negotiations were suspended for the time being but were eventually resumed. Following the seventeenth PNC in November 1984 (held in Amman), a Jordanian - PLO accord was signed in February 1985. The agreement provided for an independent Palestinian state to be followed by a Jordanian-Palestinian Confederation and a joint Palestinian - Jordanian negotiating delegation to engage in the diplomatic process.<sup>26</sup> Intensive

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24 "PLO Statement outlining its Position on Dialogue with Jordan and Rejecting the Reagan Peace Plan, Damascus, 12 April 1983", Journal of Palestine Studies, vol. 12, no. 4 (Summer 1983), pp. 218-19.

25 New York Times, 13 April 1983.

26 "Text of Jordanian - PLO Accord Released<sup>On</sup> 23 February 1985", Journal of Palestine Studies, vol. 14, no. 3 (Spring 1985), p. 206. The exact formulation said, "Right of self-determination for Palestinian People: Palestinians will exercise their inalienable right to self-determination when Jordanians and Palestinians will be able to do so within the context of the formation of the proposed Confederated Arab states

dialogue ensued for a year as the PLO attempted to meet Jordanian and U.S. demands about the modalities of a negotiating coalition and a confederated State. On 5 February 1986, the PLO submitted three proposals to American and Jordanian officials clarifying its position on the relevant issues. The PLO agreed :

.....to participate in the international conference under the auspices of the Security Council, based on Resolution 38/58 (27) on an equal footing withih a joint

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Footnote 26 contd...

of Jordan and Palestine". It should be noted that the seventeenth PNC was held in November 1984, at a time when the PLO was severely split. Fateh convened the PNC over the objections of all the other groups and was virtually the only group in attendance.

- 27 The General Assembly of the U.N. passed the Resolution 38/58 on 13 December 1983. The Resolution called for an international conference under the auspices of the Security Council with the United States, the USSR, Israel, the PLO, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt participating on an equal footing, in conformity with the following principles:
- a) the attainment by the Palestinian people of its legitimate, inalienable rights, including the right to return, the right of self-determination and the right to establish its own independent state in Palestine;
  - b) the right of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, the representative of the Palestinian people, to participate on an equal footing with other parties in all efforts, deliberations and conferences on the Middle East;
  - c) the need to put an end to Israel's occupation of the Arab territories, in accordance with the principle of inadmissibility of territory by force and consequently, the need to secure the Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem...

Footnote 27 contd....

Jordanian - Palestinian delegation and on the basis of security, the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination within a confederation with the Hashemite Kingdom.... In this context, the PLO reaffirms its condemnation of terrorism as confirmed in the Cairo Declaration.... The PLO expresses its readiness to negotiate within the framework of an international conference attended by the permanent members of the Security Council with all the concerned parties, including Israel, on the basis of the Jordanian - Palestinian accord.... and on the basis of U.N. Resolutions pertaining to the Palestine question, including Security Council Resolution 242 and 338." (28)

However, the U.S. considered the PLO's proposals insufficient. The Administration's response was revealed in a letter from Acting Assistant Secretary of State James W. Dyer, replying to an enquiry by Representative Lee H. Hamilton, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. Hamilton had addressed a letter to Secretary of State

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Footnote 27 contd.

- d) ... the right of all states in the region to exist within secure and internationally recognised boundaries, with justice and security for all the people, the sine qua non of which is the recognition and attainment of the legitimate, inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

See Approaches for the Practical Attainment of the inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People,  
pp. 19-20.

Shultz requesting clarification on the Administration's reaction to the PLO's proposals; Dyer's reply contained the following points:

The U.S. expects a clear PLO acceptance of 242, not one conditioned on simultaneous U.S. acceptance of self-determination for the Palestinians....

....they did not meet his (King Hussein's) requirement for a clear, unequivocal response to his demand that the PLO accept Resolution 242, endorse negotiations with the state of Israel and renounce the use of violence....

They do not meet long-standing requirement of U.S. policy regarding the PLO; they do not contain unequivocal acceptance of U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 and 338 and Israel's right to exist....

....therefore we cannot accept them as a basis for U.S. recognition of or negotiations with the PLO....

....The United States does not support the establishment of an independent **Palestinian state**.(29)

Since the proposals of the PLO were unacceptable to the U.S., Jordan cancelled the Jordanian - PLO accord on 19 February 1986.<sup>30</sup>

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29 Journal of Palestine Studies, vol. 16, no.4 (Autumn 1986), pp. 236-38.

30 See, " King Hussein's Address on Middle East Peace, Amman, 19 February 1986", Journal of Palestine Studies, vol. 15, no.4 (Summer 1986), pp. 206-32.

At the eighteenth session of the PNC in April 1987, the PLO reunited all its disparate groups and from a position of unity, reiterated the Palestinian right to self-determination and an independent State in Palestine and endorsed the concept of an international conference as specified by U.N. General Assembly Resolution 38/58.

The United States remained unequivocally opposed to an international conference as outlined in Resolution 38/58. Its primary objections involved opposition to permitting the U.S.S.R. an increased role in the Middle East, rejection of PLO participation as the representative of the Palestinians and disapproval of the establishment of an independent Palestinian State.

However, Israel's concept, to be precise Peres's, of an international conference which included Moscow was related to Soviet Jewish emigration and the "Jordanian option". But the Reagan Administration, especially Secretary of State Shultz, opposed Israel's promotion of an international conference.

Regarding Moscow's role in the international conference, there are many opinions. By one formula,

the Soviets would join the U.S. in any opening ceremony and then withdraw permanently, leaving all practical bargaining to regional parties and the Americans.<sup>31</sup> Shamir, a strong opponent of giving the Soviets a chance to isolate Israel, was prepared to give his conditional approval to this idea . A variant earned support in the 1988 Shultz Plan : The U.N. Secretary - General would call a conference that would include the permanent Security Council members. It would "not be able to impose solutions or veto agreements reached" by subsidiary negotiations and only parties that accepted Israel's right to exist and renounced violence and terrorism could take part. By a contrasting formula favoured by Moscow and its allies, a conference would do more than simply launch subsidiary negotiations - for example, among Israelis, Palestinians and Jordanians over the West Bank and Gaza - it would retain plenary powers for review and ratification.<sup>32</sup> The distinctions were significant. The first two approaches would have given Hussein just enough of an umbrella to get him and the Palestinians talking to Israel. In the process, Israel would have

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31 Robert E Hunter, " Seeking Middle East Peace", Foreign Policy, no. 73 (Winter 1988-89), p. 11.

32 Ibid., p. 11.

gained implicit recognition from face-to-face negotiations. The other approach would have given the Soviets and their regional allies continuing veto power.

In 1988, the prevailing view behind U.S. diplomacy has been that the process, once started, would concede to Israel the central point of face-to-face negotiations and would gain such momentum that the U.S.S.R. could not preserve a blocking position. Further, once the U.S.S.R. acceded to any form of negotiations involving Israel and an Arab partner, it would burn some bridges with rejectionist Arab States even if it did not press Syria and the PLO to be more flexible. The Soviet Union would be seen to be in the peacemakers' Camp.<sup>33</sup> But with a role to play through a conference with continuing powers, the U.S.S.R. would take positions strongly favouring the Arab side and attempt to isolate the U.S. and Israel.

It is significant to point out here that both America and Israel rejected an international conference as specified in Resolution 38/58.

Towards the end of 1987, a popular "rebellion" started

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33 Ibid., p. 12.

in West Bank and Gaza. The uprising which started on 9 December 1987 in the West Bank and Gaza strip, dubbed intifadah, meaning shudder or tremor (from the Arabic verb meaning to be "shaken off") was the first prolonged spontaneous Palestinian Arab rebellion since the 1936-39 Arab revolt in Palestine during the British mandate.<sup>34</sup> Though fully fifty years apart, both expressions of Palestinian Arab political violence took place in environments where the Palestinian Arab population felt its political aspirations were being frustrated by the protracted control of a foreign occupier. Those participating in the intifadah rebelled primarily against the unwanted controllers and the occupation. But they also reacted against various parties physically outside the West Bank and Gaza including Arab political leaders, who were long on rhetoric but short on physical or financial assistance for the Palestinians under Israeli occupation. The Intifadah was different from the sporadic, communal violence which characterised Israeli - West Bank and Gaza Palestinian relations before it in the sense that it was continuous.<sup>35</sup> While a number of different reasons impelled

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34 Kenneth W Stein, " The Palestinian Uprising and the Shultz Initiative", Middle East Review (New Brunswick, New Jersey), vol.21, no.2, (winter 1988-89), p.15.

35 Ibid., p. 15.



West Bank and Gaza Palestinians to participate in the uprising, all the dissidents shared an overriding cumulative despair about their dismal present and their discouraging prospects. West Bank and Gaza Palestinians believed they were destined to remain in an economic and political cul de sac after two decades of Israeli rule and four decades since the establishment of the State of Israel. They saw the Israeli presence as collectively oppressive and individually demeaning. Ibrahim al-Qugah, a Gaza Palestinian leader, whom Israel deported to Lebanon, attributed the uprising to two main factors : the maintenance of Palestinian refugee status for over forty years and individual suffering during the 20-year (Israeli) occupation.<sup>36</sup> Secretary of State Shultz tried to distance the West Bank and Gaza Palestinians from their symbolic PLO ties, but his efforts proved unsuccessful. After the Intifadah started, there had been a decline in the support of the U.S. for Israel. There had been harsh criticism of some of Israeli policies, such as deportation, by American officials, though, U.S. aid and strategic cooperation had continued.<sup>37</sup>

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36 Quoted in Stein, p. 15.

37 Michael Curtis, "The Uprising's Impact on the Options for Peace", Middle East Review, vol. xxi, no.2 (Winter 1988-89), p. 3.

In early 1988, for the second time within 8 years, the Reagan Administration reacted to events in the Middle East by proposing that the stalled Arab-Israeli negotiating process be reactivated. The uprising promoted an otherwise reluctant Administration to try to revive active diplomacy as the road to peace. The Shultz initiative was exceptional because the Reagan Administration had previously operated from the premise that it would studiously avoid involvement in negotiating process until it found regional actors seriously ready to engage on issue of substance.

The Shultz initiative itself contained new concepts as well as reworked ideas presented previously in the Camp David Accords.<sup>38</sup> It sought to telescope the negotiating process from a five-year to a three-year transitional time period. It sought to interlock interim arrangements aimed at giving the Palestinians in the occupied territories steadily widening control over their political and economic affairs, while concurrently providing for adequate Israeli and Arab security. It also emphasised a joint Jordanian/Palestinian delegation as a mode of

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38 Stein, no. 34, p. 13.

Palestinian representation at a conference, thereby departing substantially from the representation formulations of the Camp David Accords. The central concept in Shultz initiative was implementation and adherence to U.N. Resolution 242, which implied that Israel would withdraw from occupied land in exchange for peace with her Arab neighbours. Procedurally, the diplomatic mechanism for driving the proposed bilateral negotiations would be the long-debated international Middle East peace conference, which was to be launched via invitations sent by the United Nations Secretary General.

The initiative foundered on several points. Israel's hydra-headed government reached a consensus neither on substance nor on procedure. Israeli Prime Minister Shamir politely rejected the Secretary of State's overtures. Jordan, Syria, Israel, and the PLO differed on procedural and substantive roles to be played by the Soviet Union, the United States, Britain, France and China at the proposed International Conference. Some wanted the conference to be merely an umbrella for bilateral action; others preferred a conference that was "empowered", "authoritative" and capable of breaking a negotiating deadlock. Jordanian and Israeli views on procedure (if

not on substance) tended towards reserving more powers for themselves, thus denying the other conference participants openings for imposing solution or for reversing agreements reached in bilateral negotiations. By contrast, the positions of Syria and the PLO were not explicitly stated but had to be derived from cryptic and contradictory reports. As far as could be inferred, they seemed to favour a more formidable and prescriptive role for the convening countries. Members of the PLO rejected the Shultz initiative for several reasons, not the least of which was its exclusion of the PLO as an independent political participant in the proposed negotiating process. However, the extraordinary Arab summit which met in Algiers in June 1988 both excoriated the U.S. for its pro-Israeli views and held back from rejecting the Shultz initiative out of hand.

On July 31, 1988, King Hussein formally delivered the message he was hinting at previously : the PLO was now responsible for the West Bank and its inhabitants, and he would not stand in its way directly or indirectly. The King said that he would sever legal and administrative links to the occupied West Bank. Hussein dissolved the lower house of Jordanian Parliament (half of whose members

were West Bankers). He also cancelled the 5-year development plan to spend \$ 1.3 billion in the West Bank; ended supplementary salaries paid to 21,000 civil servants, teachers and public servants except those working for Islamic institutions and cancelled Jordanian citizenship for residents, though allowing a temporary two year continuation of Jordanian passports for them. Jordan had exercised with Israel a virtual condominium over the West Bank. Jordan allowed about half-a-million <sup>people</sup> to cross the river every year; gave export license to West Bank farmers and bought about half their produce; paid the salaries of 21,000 public servants; granted nationality and passport to Palestinians; accepted responsibility for protecting the Islamic "holy places" in Jerusalem. The Cairo-Amman bank with branches in Nablus and Ramallah in West Bank brought money into West Bank. In all, Jordan spent about \$ 200 million a year in salaries and aid to municipalities, Islamic institutions, and agricultural projects.<sup>39</sup>

At the 19th session of the Palestinian National Council (PNC) which met at Algiers, the PLO declared on 15 November 1988 the formation of an independent State of Palestine in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza

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39 Curtis, no. 37, p. 6.

strip.<sup>40</sup> Later in a speech to the special session of the United Nations General Assembly on Palestine, the PLO Chairman offered a three-point "peace initiative" for the Middle East. He also reiterated in the General Assembly that the PLO's national council, at its Algiers meeting, rejected terrorism in all its forms, "including the state terrorism".<sup>41</sup> On 14 December 1988 the Reagan Administration announced that the U.S. would start a "substantive dialogue" with the PLO thus lifting the ban that was imposed on the PLO in 1975. The decision to lift the ban came within hours after the PLO leader, Mr. Arafat, in clarification of his 13 December U.N. speech at Geneva, declared that the PLO recognised the right of all parties in the Middle East conflict to exist in peace and security, including the State of Palestine, Israel and their neighbours.<sup>42</sup> However, both Mr. Shultz and Mr. Reagan made it clear that it did not imply in anyway U.S. recognition of a Palestinian State.<sup>43</sup> Mr. Shultz said that he had authorised the U.S. Ambassador in Tunisia to make himself available for

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40 Times of India (New Delhi), 16 November 1988.

41 Times of India (New Delhi), 14 December 1988.

42 The Hindu (New Delhi), 16 December 1988.

43 Ibidem.

contact with PLO representatives.<sup>44</sup>

The opening up of dialogue by the U.S. with the PLO marked an apparent "change" in policy of America. By the end of 1988, the international scenario had perceptibly changed from the New Cold War days of the early 1980s. Thus it can be argued that Reagan Administration which started with a "globalist perspective" shifted to "regional" one with the change in international situation. Of course, the dynamics of the intra-region politics had its impact on the Administration - the Intifadah, Hussein's announcement, PLO's acceptance for the first time, at least in the perspective of the American policymakers, of all the three conditions set by the U.S. But from a broader framework, it can be argued that the change is an indirect, if not direct, fall-out of the New Detente.

The Reagan foreign policy was far more consistent in style than in content, in focus than in direction.<sup>45</sup> In the Middle East the administration initially launched a "strategic consensus" policy that in effect told the

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44 Ibidem.

45 Terry L Deibel, "Reagan's Mixed Legacy", Foreign Policy, no. 75 (Summer 1989), p. 36.

Arabs and the Israelis to set aside their decades old differences and unite against what the United States perceived as the real threat to the area - the Soviet Union. While it met the test of being reflexively anti-Soviet, for a year and a half this policy simply ignored the American - managed peace process begun with former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's disengagement agreements and reinforced by Carter's historic Egyptian - Israeli peace treaty. It was not until Shultz got the President to sign off on the Reagan plan for a Palestinian entity in federation with Jordan in 1982 that U.S. policy got back on track, only to be derailed again by the long-running Lebanese crisis.

Where Carter believed, in the initial days of his presidency, that Soviet gains to the "South" were due to indigenous factors and local disputes that had to be "defused" through diplomacy, Reagan saw the Soviets as directly responsible for upheavals in the Third World and felt that the only response was to rebuild U.S. power to intimidate the trouble makers in Moscow.<sup>46</sup>

Even for a year or two after Reagan's overwhelming

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46 Ibid., p. 43.



re-election in 1984, his mandate appeared to have little diplomatic content. In the Middle East, the Reagan plan remained dead in the water. Moreover, as the United States embraced strategic cooperation with Israel, its credibility as an honest broker in the peace process was compromised. In the Middle East, Shultz's flurry of diplomatic activity in early 1988 could hardly make up for seven years of American neglect; indeed it could be argued that the area avoided a major war only because of Carter's successful effort to remove Egypt from the ranks of Israel's enemies. By contrast, with the exception of its last-minute recognition of the PLO, a courageous move that broadened its successor's diplomatic options, the Reagan Administration had nothing to leave behind except an over-identification with Israel and eight wasted years during which positions hardened.<sup>47</sup>

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47 Ibid., p. 48.

C\_O\_N\_CL\_U\_S\_I\_O\_N

The foregoing analysis brings out in bold measures the American foreign policy in general, and its policy towards the PLO and the Palestine question in particular. The geopolitical category in the foreign policy of the United States, as has been brought out, is the major aspect of its policy. As a result, the geopolitical factors loom large on its policy-making in regard to Palestinian nationalism. The institutionalisation of its perception of Israel as a strategic asset and a surrogate power to preserve the U.S. interest remains supreme in its rejection of Palestinian nationalism.

The United States had to reject Palestinian nationalism because of the restraints that this nationalism was only too apt to place on the pursuance of American interests and objectives in the Middle East region. Even the transformation that PLO made of itself - from revolutionary nationalist movement to a conservative nationalism - did not bring about any significant change of heart of the American policy planners. It, however, agreed to open dialogue with the PLO. Although for the most part of its tenure it did not pay attention to Arab-Israeli peace process, the Reagan Administration had to initiate two peace initiatives during the eight years it remained in office. It happened

because of the fact that there was a consensus in policy planning circles that the U.S. interests in the region needed the settlement of Arab-Israeli conflict. The Reagan Administration was only too aware of the American objectives to recognise the Palestinian State declared in November 1988. The Administration's perception of the PLO was in keeping with the U.S. policy objectives. During his first election campaigns Reagan used to say that even if the PLO accepted Resolution 242, he would not initiate a dialogue with it as he was not sure whether the PLO represented the Palestinian people. The policy of the Reagan Administration towards the PLO found its clearest manifestation when George Shultz barred Mr Arafat from addressing the United Nations General Assembly in November 1988.

But the changed Middle Eastern politics, Gorbachev's peace initiatives, the "New Detente" and above all world public opinion weighed heavily in favour of the PLO and the Administration had no other way to go but to open dialogue with the PLO. Only time can tell whether the opening of dialogue can in any way help solving the Middle Eastern impasse.

During the Eisenhower Administration policy makers believed that U.S. interests would best be served by alliances with the Arab regimes, preferably collective security arrangements (patterned after NATO as was the Baghdad Pact), but also bilateral ties. Thus for a time Eisenhower and Dulles strenuously attempted to co-opt Gamal Abdul Nasser. At that point, given the Arab-Israeli Conflict and the U.S. commitment to support Israel's "security and survival", Israel was considered an impediment to America's successful achievement of its objectives.<sup>1</sup> Eventually however, the frustrations that the policy makers experienced with Nasser's persistent independent outlook, his leadership for pan-Arab nationalism, his domestic economic policies, and his leadership of the international non-aligned movement (in addition to the growth of nationalist movements in Iraq, Syria and elsewhere) led certain policy makers to conclude that an alignment with Israel and its development as a "surrogate power" was a better means to serve American interests than were alliances with the Arabs.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Cheryl A Rubenberg, "U.S. Policy Toward the Palestinians: A Twenty Year Assessment", Arab Studies Quarterly, vol. 10, no.1 (Winter 1988), p. 31.

2 Ibid., p. 31.

The U.S. - Israel "special relationship" has matured in the context of the "threat of radical nationalism". From the 1950s, the United States increasingly came to accept the Israeli thesis that a powerful Israel is a "strategic asset" for the U.S., serving as a barrier against indigenous radical nationalist threats which are always perceived to be threats to American interests. After the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, it moved at once to underscore its status as a "strategic asset". The Reagan Administration like earlier Administrations from the time of Truman onwards, was fully committed to the support of Israel's existence. The "special relationship" between Israel and the United States is expressed in the form of the U.S. military and economic aid to Israel over many years. Even before 1967, when "special relationship" matured, Israel had received the highest per capita aid from the U.S. as compared to any other country. The "special relationship" of America is often attributed to its domestic as well as its political pressures. The Jewish lobby has been successful in turning the public opinion on weighty political matters in this region. A closer look will also reveal that the evolution of America's relationship with Israel has been determined

primarily by the changing role that it occupied in the context of America's changing conceptions of its political-strategic interests in the Middle East.

Reagan had both a moral commitment to the Jewish State and a vision of Israel's strategic importance to the United States. Because of Reagan's attitude towards the global strategic situation in general and the Soviet threat to the Middle East in particular, Israel's value as a strategic ally was a significant aspect of his thinking. Israel, perceived as a healthy democracy which had the most stable government in the region, was considered to be a more reliable ally than Arab countries friendly to the U.S. .

Thus, it can be said, in the final analysis, that Ronald Reagan stuck to the long-standing U.S. policy toward the PLO and the Palestine question. The changed regional and international situation forced him to "change " a part of the U.S. policy. But that did not necessarily entail an over-all change of policy by the United States. The change in Reagan was merely a change from "globalist" perspective to a "regional" approach, necessitated by the changed international situation.

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